

above the wings and the fingers grasping her legs underneath. In this way she cannot flap or kick, and will not be needlessly frightened.

Some hens are very nervous, and need the greatest care, and when put in front of the eggs will go anywhere but on to them. The only way to do in these cases is to leave the hens quite alone in front of the eggs, and, unless most determined, their maternal instinct will be usually too much for them, and they will settle without a murmur.

Always feed a broody hen well before first putting her on the nest, and then shut her in and leave her quite quiet for one day; that is to say, put her on at night, and don't attempt to feed her until another night has passed.

Of course many hens will sit anyway and anyhow, and seem as though they could bear any amount of noise and disturbance; and certainly if any reader wishes to make a study of hen character, let her have a succession of broody hens all through the breeding months; she will afterwards fully realise what a hen is, and what individual characteristics each displays.

Broody hens brought from a distance by train are a mere delusion. They cost, with the carriage, a great deal, and are generally speaking no use whatever, as I can testify from painful experience.

I shall hope to continue my remarks on the mode of treating a sitting hen next month.

Last month we finished the description of most of the so-called sitting breeds, so this month we will turn our attention to the non-sitters. These are, to my mind, more interesting than the others, as though the great, heavy, fluffy Cochins, Brahmas, etc., look exceedingly handsome, and have their uses, yet I don't think they are to be compared with some of the non-sitters. Of course it is quite impossible to fully detail the various points of each particular breed, and for mere domestic poultry keeping I do not think it necessary to know them, as breeding for egg production is more useful than for fancy points; still, should any girl wish to keep pure-bred fowls, so that she may combine beauty and utility, I will endeavour to give a few directions in order that she may not be beguiled into buying feather-legged Leghorns, or red-faced black Spanish, or black-legged white Dorkings!

Houdans.—This is one of the best and most popular French breeds that we possess. They look ragged enough in our illustration, but Houdans have a decided tendency in that direction.

The Houdan is a large, broad-breasted bird, with comparatively small bones and short legs. The feathers are marked black and white, very irregularly as a rule, giving the bird a splashed look. Both cock and hen should have a firm black-and-white topknot, with also a fringe of small feathers round the face. The comb in the hen is very small, but

in the cock is larger, and stands out in two leaf-like wings. The Houdan is a very good table bird, and is also a good layer of white eggs, and would do well in a mild district with a grass run.

La Fleche.—This is another good French table breed, and is suitable for crossing purposes, but should not be kept where eggs are the object.

As the illustration shows, they are black fowls, with curious horn-like combs, and have broad breasts, suggesting abundance of firm, white meat.

Polands.—I always feel sorry for Polish fowls, for they never look as if they could enjoy life with their huge crests, which often effectually prevent their seeing before them. The chief varieties are the gold and silver spangled and the white-crested black.

Polands are a small breed, and are more of a fancier's fowl, though people who keep them say that they hold their own in the egg production line if they have a free, dry range. Polands have no combs, but instead have a fine full crest, which looks exceedingly handsome on a bright day, but very miserable on a wet one.

The colouring in each variety is what the name implies—gold and silver spangled, the white-crested black being a pure black fowl with a pure white crest.

Hamburghs.—For girls living in the south of England, or any warm climate with a free range, no handsomer or better breed of fowls could be kept than these, especially if no objection be made to small eggs.

There is no breed, I suppose, that has been known to have such high egg averages as the Hamburgh, though some object to them because the eggs are small and white.

All five varieties are very handsome. They are small elegant birds, and should be in contour compact, and sprightly, and all agree in having a rose comb—that is a low, broad, double comb, tapering to a point behind.

Black Hamburghs are the largest, and next come the gold and silver spangled, and gold and silver pencilled.

A spangled feather is one of any light shade with a dark spot at the tip, while a pencilled feather has more or less regular bars of light and dark all the way up.

Hamburghs, although looking so handsome on a lawn or grass field, should not be kept in confinement, or they will suffer immediately.

Black Spanish.—These birds are splendid layers of large white eggs if kept in a warm district, and sheltered from storm and wind; otherwise they are delicate.

Black Spanish are slenderly built birds of a rich black colour, the cock having a large upright comb, the hen's falling down over one side of the face. The wattles in the cock are red and very long, and in the hen shorter.

On first looking at a black Spanish cock, one naturally thinks that he is very ill; this is owing to his curious white face, which some people admire immensely, but which really is decidedly ugly, having been so unnaturally exaggerated by breeding. The hen has the same feature, but is not quite so unsightly.

Minorcas.—This is another black breed of fowls, but differs from the Spanish in being very much harder and having a brilliant red face. The comb of the cock is large and upright, and in the hen should fall over on one side. The legs are dark and unfeathered.

The Minorca breed of a good laying strain is one of the very best kind to keep. They are quite hardy, and lay well in the winter, though they are not, perhaps, quite so good in this respect as some of the feather-legged varieties.

Minorcas lay on an average the largest eggs known. At the Dairy Show last year the first prize was taken by a set of enormous Minorca eggs.

Minorcas are hardy as chickens, and stand confinement well if properly cared for, and if hatched in March or early in April will make good autumn and winter layers, and as they do not become broody they make splendid summer layers. There is also a white variety, but if white fowls are preferred it would be better to keep white Leghorns, which are very much the same in appearance and are a good deal harder.

Leghorns.—We now come to a very favourite breed. People that keep Leghorns, especially the white variety, cannot speak too highly in their favour.

Leghorns are small birds, but are well-shaped, very active, and hardy. They lay quantities of moderate-sized white eggs, and do well either with a free grass range or in close confinement. In the latter case, perhaps, the brown variety are the best, as far as appearance goes, as they do not show the dirt in the same way as the white.

Where there is a grass field at liberty, the white look very lovely as they chase about looking for worms; and if their house is kept clean, and shelter is given them in summer from the rays of the sun, they will keep up their spotless appearance right through the year.

Leghorns have bright yellow legs and yellow skins, large single combs, upright in the cock, falling over in the hen. The brown variety have feathers of different shades of golden brown and red.

One great advantage in keeping Leghorns is, that though they are a small breed they mature early, and often lay at five months, and the cockerels, if hatched early in February, will make quite nice spring chickens, even though rather small.

(To be continued.)

A LETTER OF THANKS.

MY DEAR MR. EDITOR,—Let me beg you to convey to all those generous friends who have sent through you such a rich store of woollen comforts for the smacksmen, the assurance of most cordial appreciation of their sympathy.

Seven years ago a rough fisherman, after telling me some thrilling stories of accident, illness, and death, away upon the fishing grounds, two days' steaming from medical or surgical aid, exclaimed, "Do you suppose, sir, as folks ashore cares anything about it?" I very promptly assured him that "folks

ashore" did not know, and that if they knew they would certainly care very much indeed.

Here then, Mr. Editor, is a case in point. As I glanced down column after column containing the names of those who had so readily and kindly responded to your invitation, I thought at once of my fisherman friend of August, 1881, and wished he could see this very practical answer to his sneering inquiry.

Your readers will all be pleased to learn—and the competitors especially so—that the smacksmen are most thankful for the interest thus shown in their welfare. Indeed, I have

myself heard them again and again exclaim, "God bless those kind ladies ashore who have made these warm wraps for us!" an invocation which I heartily endorse.

If it were not such a Spartan adventure I would invite a select committee of your readers to visit the fishing-grounds before the close of the winter season, and inspect for themselves the conditions under which 12,000 of our fellow-countrymen toil to supply our tables with a necessary article of food. But perhaps it would be better if you, Mr. Editor, were to make the cruise in one of our

mission vessels, and then furnish a detailed report of your voyage, from which your fair friends could draw their own inferences. If you will consent to such an arrangement, I will pledge myself to make you as comfortable as circumstances will permit, and you will have the satisfaction, on your return, of having vicariously performed a pilgrimage to which you would indeed be sorry to consign any of your tenderly nurtured subscribers.

Will you allow me to mention, in case any of those who took part in the recent competition are disposed to offer further help, that sea-boot stockings, stout steering-gloves and guernseys are the articles specially wanted at this season?

May I ask that your readers will one and all remember these poor storm-tossed smacksmen at the throne of heavenly grace, and also pray for the mission which seeks to minister to their necessities—"as well for the body as the soul"?

And in conclusion let me relate one of the many instances in which we have been encouraged to trust implicitly to Divine Providence for the supply of the numerous and urgent needs of this work. Four years ago an invitation reached me to lecture upon the mission, and exhibit dissolving view illustrations to the aged inmates of a metropolitan workhouse. At first I hesitated, for clearly there could be no collection in aid of the funds, but remembering what Holy Scripture says about "the poor in this world, rich in faith," I obeyed the citation of the ladies who had arranged the entertainment. During the evening I mentioned the gift of the *Euston* by the Duchess of Grafton, playfully adding, "of course I don't anticipate a similar gift as a result of to-night's meeting," a remark which the old folks appeared to consider very unnecessary.

That evening spent with the paupers

had quite passed from my memory, when, a few weeks ago, came a cheque for £3,500 to cover the cost of building a cruising hospital mission-ship, coupled with a stipulation that the donor's name should not be divulged.

I was naturally curious to learn what had been the means of arousing the sympathy of this new contributor, and subsequent inquiry led to the interesting discovery that this, the largest donation ever made to the mission, was a direct outcome of the workhouse meeting—the one gathering of all others from which least was expected!

I trust, my dear Mr. Editor, that neither you nor your readers will be bored by my long "yarn," and that both they and you will believe me to be,

Very gratefully yours,

E. J. MATHER.

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BIRD LIFE IN MARCH.

By A NATURALIST.



BLUSTERING winds of March sweep over our Surrey chalk hills, which are covered with short, velvety turf, affording fine pasture to the flocks of South Down sheep that range there, dotting the landscape in every direction. The South Downs are grand and beautiful; so are the green valleys and the hillsides, broken, and gleaming white in parts where the chalk has been dug and lime manufactured. That trade is still carried on to a great extent.

Jackdaws, hawks, and owls shelter in the cracks and the rents in the old abandoned workings, giving life to those quiet places, which are seldom visited except by the shepherd and his dog. Great fleecy clouds sail over these breezy uplands, throwing huge shadows on the hillsides as they come in a carry of wind from the sea. Light and shade shift and play continually when the clouds are moving overhead, frightening the wheatear that has come again to spend his summer on and about the South Downs. He is a beautiful bird, with his blue-grey back and rich buff breast contrasting with his dark wings and black and white tail, which he flirts out continually in some form or other with every movement. You will hear him "Chack! Chack!" as he flits from hillock to hillock or from stone to stone.

Although very numerous, they do not congregate together. You will see them in

pairs, and when their young are capable of flying, then small families flit hither and thither. The wheatear compels your observation, for his plumage shows out on the rich green turf. A timid creature and gentle, the shadow of a crow's wing thrown on the turf as he passes overhead is enough to make him crouch and run for shelter. The shepherd and his lads know his weakness; when he runs to hide from the cloud-shadows that alarm him, they cut a turf and form a little lean-to shelter, and set a horsehair noose. Into this the wheatear runs. Great quantities are caught so, and sold for the table.

That noble bird, the buzzard, which once roamed in flocks over the South Downs, has become extinct; he is no longer the well known bird he was. Agricultural changes and the increase of population have caused him and his relatives to leave us for good.

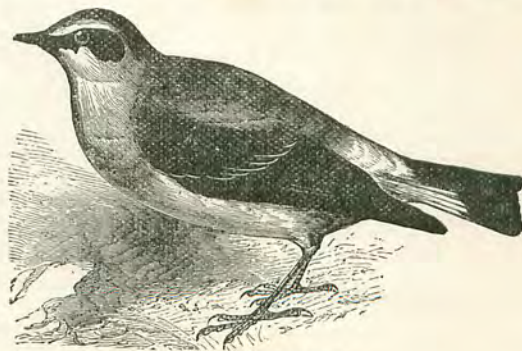
March is not a favourable month to bird life; many of our winter visitors are shifting quarters, or have already done so, and unless the season prove a very warm one, very few of our spring emigrants will have put in an appearance.

The crows, both hooded and common, are on the look out for any lamb that may be so unfortunate as to have anything the matter with it. Happily the watchful and sturdy mothers are on the alert. The great plover or thick knee may be found on the downs and in the cultivated stretches. Those spots at the foot of some great hill where the ground is covered with flints—rustics would tell you these places grew flints all the year round—suit him best, and his plumage falls in with the earth and speckled flints admirably. He is a game-looking bird when you can get a sight of him, and very swift of foot and wing. A wild call note generally betrays his presence long before you catch sight of him.

The lapwings, or pewits, are in full activity, looking out their nesting places. March is the month when Master Pewit sticks his crest up, flaps with his broad wings here and there, and

darts and tumbles about his mate, crying out "Pewit!" as loud as he can call. Now he and his partner alight and run nimbly here and there. Some huntsman's horse has left the print of his hoofs in the soft ground in places during the wet season. Into these slight hollows, now dry enough, fragments of dead fern, grass, and little twigs have blown; they are minutely examined by the full, bright eyes of our pair. Then they spring up to join hundreds of their family that are flapping and wheeling about in all directions on the upland fields and pastures. A pewit sometimes does good service in a garden. One I knew lived, a tame bird, in one for some years, and his master told me he kept the place quite free from insect pests; he was continually on the hunt.

As you travel on the downs or below them, you get many glimpses of birds that are the pioneers of incoming or outgoing migrants. It would be difficult to give any definite time



THE WHEATEAR.

as a rule for the arrival or departure of birds. They are governed by circumstances, such as the forwardness or lateness of the seasons. Some species occur plentifully, too, in some seasons and are few in others, to account for which it is difficult to offer any theory. They almost seem, like people we know who are habitual wanderers, to come and go when least expected.