

THE ONLY WHITE "ZOO" IN EXISTENCE.

LORD ALINGTON'S QUIANT HOBBY.

BY ALFRED ARKAS.

THE subject of eccentric hobbies is always fascinating, more especially when the hobby-rider need spare neither time nor expense in humouring his particular fancy.

From time to time we hope to give our readers some account of the many curious and interesting hobbies pursued by those who are distinguished in this direction, although it is doubtful if a more interesting example than the Crichel White Farm is to be found.

The White Farm belongs to Lord Alington, whose name is better known in connection with Turf matters. It was he who bred the immortal Common, one of the grandest horses that ever won the Derby. Common was sold for £15,000. The same week two other of Lord Alington's horses changed hands, the three together making a record price of £39,000. These facts are of peculiar interest in this connection, since the White Farm and the Racing Stud Farm are practically the same, one being part and parcel of the other.

Near the entrance to the White Farm there appears a long low building, over which three flags are flying. This is one of the racehorse stables; and the flags, which are of yellow silk, bear the names of three of Crichel's winners.

Mr. Bartlett, Lord Alington's trainer, is 74 years of age, and one of the most successful men the turf has ever known. In spite of his age he is as sprightly as a young man; and I should say many another "good 'un" is to be expected from his hands.

Common's stable overlooks a portion

of the White Farm, and is that seen in the illustration of the white mule.

Crichel is situated six miles from Wimborne, in Dorsetshire. It is on the edge of the New Forest.

On nearing the farm one gets the impression that there is something unusual about the place. The long low stable buildings, the tall white masts and bright yellow flags, numberless white-painted cages, aviaries, outhouses, and the spotless white of the fencings and gateways, all lend it a pleasing individuality.

On turning into the big White Farm gate one encounters the spectacle of a teeming population of bird and animal life. All are pure white, spotlessly



"ALL ARE PURE WHITE, SPOTLESSLY CLEAN."

clean, and you couldn't find a dark hair or feather if you tried to do so.

The only thing that seems to be missing at a first glance is a white elephant; but the farm is that itself in a sense, as one may readily imagine, when the difficulty of keeping it stocked is considered.

Although one could hardly conceive a more complete collection of white birds and beasts, it is by no means so large or varied as in the past. The mortality among what may be termed the "hot-house"

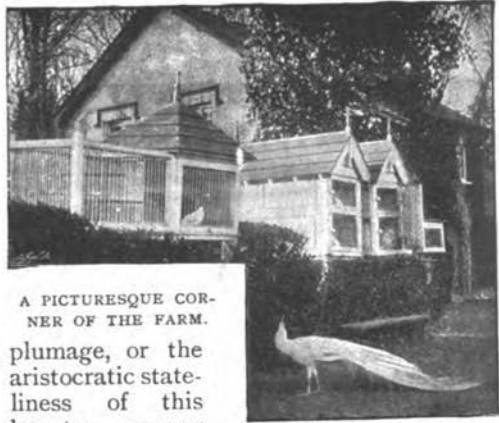
species—the birds and animals from tropical countries—was very great, and the difficulty and expense of constantly replacing them was so considerable that Lord Alington decided to dispense with them altogether.

The most striking creatures on the estate—and well they know it—are the white peafowl. The many-coloured peacock with which we are familiar is a beautiful bird, but I never saw anything in my life as

perfect as the white specimen at Crichel.

We were fortunate enough, by the exercise of the patience of Job, to stalk one of these birds, and snap him in full war paint.

The photograph



A PICTURESQUE CORNER OF THE FARM.

plumage, or the aristocratic stateliness of this beauty among beauties. Built into the hedge close to the place where our snapshot of the white peacock was taken, are several white cages devoted to some of the rarer breeds of white pigeons and guinea pigs. At the extreme end are the white rats and mice.

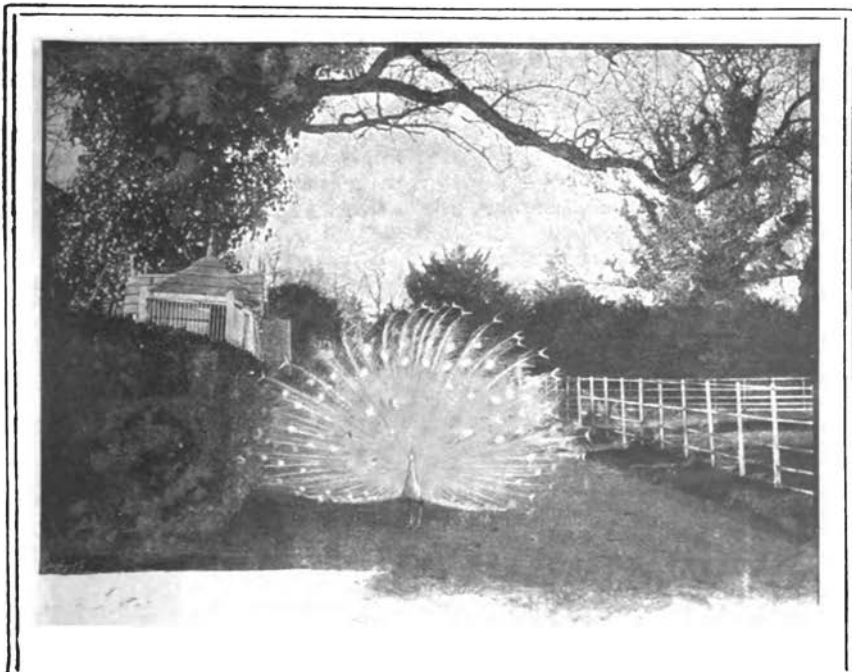
One of the rarest and most interesting members of the white family is the mule—which is really much more like a pony in appearance—shown in another illustration.

The poor brute has experienced many social vicissitudes; originally he was the property of the "Shadow of God upon



"FANNY," THE WHITE DEER.

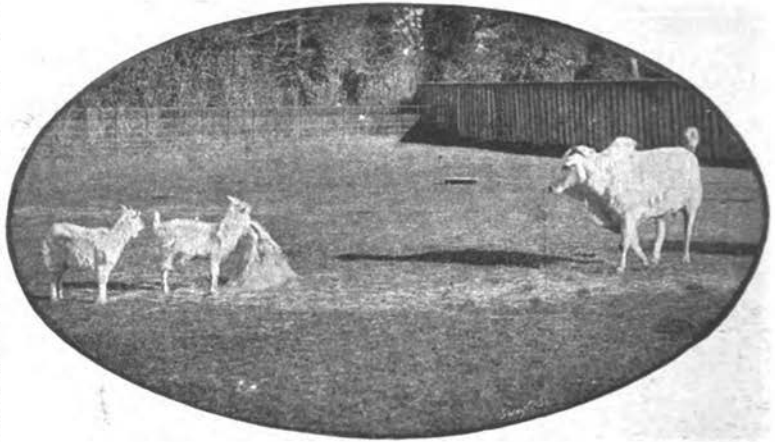
will give some idea of the beauty of the bird, but it cannot convey any adequate notion of the rich silken texture of the



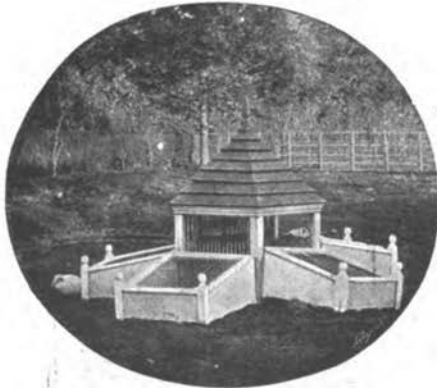
THE WHITE PEACOCK—THE KING OF THE WHITE FARM.

Earth," as the Sultan of Turkey modestly styles himself.

When Lord Alington was visiting Constantinople, the Sultan, who had heard of his hobby, presented the animal to him. The mule had not long been installed at the White Farm, when a gentleman who drove a four-in-hand of these animals was ordered abroad. He had a white mule in his team which he sold to Lord Alington, and so the farm became possessed of a pair.



THE PIGMY BULL—NOT LARGER THAN A NEWFOUNDLAND DOG—AND THE WHITE ANGORA SHEEP.



WHERE THE SHAGGY GUINEA-PIGS LIVE.

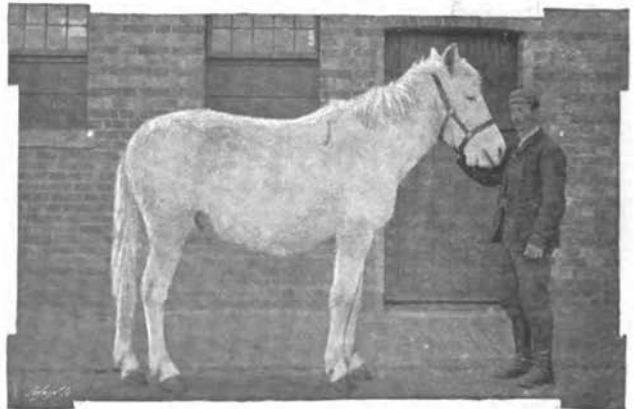
They were regularly used in harness till the death of the last-mentioned purchase. Then, as the survivor threatened to die of inactivity and crass laziness, he was given to the local baker, who uses him for the work of distributing bread round the country-side.

From the Yildiz Kiosk to a country cart! How are the mighty fallen!

In a little paddock on the left-hand side of the entrance, a small but most interesting collection of white animals attracts the attention of the visitor. It consists of four superb Angora sheep and a pigmy bull.

The pigmy bull has no history of any particular interest. But

if he lacks history, he has a temper—a temper with which it is useless to argue. The photographer, with courage worthy of a better cause, leapt light-heartedly into the paddock, with the trigger of his hand camera at half cock. With a lightning movement he took aim, but the pigmy was too quick for him. He charged our harmless snapshotter, who, "retiring in confusion," as the war correspondents say, made for the fence and fell over it, camera and all, only half a second before the infuriated animal's head rammed furiously into the iron railings. A moment's hesitation and these photographs had never seen publication. The photograph of the bull we reproduce was taken immediately after the adventure. Tiny as the animal is, it is not a creature to be trifled with. As a matter of fact the brute had



A PRESENT FROM THE SULTAN TO LORD ALINGTON.

a bad fit of tantrums during the rest of the day, and the last sound we heard as we wended our way through the quiet lanes that evening was the angry bellowing of offended majesty.

dainties, were the shaggy bright-eyed little creatures lured from their haunts. But no matter how stealthily stalked by the camera fiend, they were off like greased lightning long before he was near enough;



FEEDING TIME OF THE PIGEONS, FOWLS, AND TURKEYS.

In endeavouring to get a snapshot of Fanny, the white deer, we had quite a different experience. With the modesty and timidity characteristic of the breed, she was strongly opposed to the idea of being photographed. She literally flew round the paddock for some time after our entrance, and I was very much afraid we should have to give her up as a hopeless job.

However, by the exercise of great patience we were enabled to get a snapshot as she stood nervously surveying us from a dark corner. Fanny is one of the beauties of the farm; she is on the most friendly terms with her keeper, and follows him about like a dog. Needless to say, she has not a dark hair in her coat.

An even greater expenditure of time and ingenuity was necessary in photographing the smaller denizens of Lord Alington's Zoo.

Your ordinary guinea pig is a nervous fellow at best; the white variety suffers from hyper-sensitiveness. Over and over again, by frequent offerings of the most tempting

which circumstance explains why only two of these interesting little pets appear in the vicinity of the runs. At one time during my visit I saw the small paddock devoted to their use simply alive with them.

The White Farm guinea pigs are much larger than the ordinary cavies kept by most of us in boyhood days, and the coat is long and shaggy. Save for the head they are more like pigmy Angora sheep than anything.

For much the same reason we were unable to

photograph more than a small corner of the rabbit run. It literally teems with pure white rabbits, but they are not used to visitors, and their native modesty makes them shun the camera like the plague. Only three or four braved the ordeal, but as they are much like their companions, one has only to multiply them indefinitely to obtain some idea of what the run looks like when in full swing.

The title "King of the White Farm" undoubtedly belongs to the peacock. You have only to glance at him to realise that he is equally certain of his position.

But there is another gentleman—the white turkey cock—on the estate who obviously does not share this view, and, were it not for the fact that his consummate vanity renders him blissfully unconscious of his colleague's pretensions, I imagine there would be war. Certainly the turkey cock is a beautiful and stately creature. He was purchased by Lord Alington for £10.

Needless to say, all the ducks and fowls are of the prevailing colour, and very fine birds they are. Even the pigs must turn

grey or get themselves bleached if they wish to take up permanent quarters at Crichel.

The pigeons interested me more than anything else in the place, possibly on account of their number and intelligence. The whole farm is alive with them, and the sight of the colony whirling in mid-air above their cotes is one not readily forgotten.

They cross the sun like a white cloud, and when they swoop downwards to the ground the air vibrates with the hum of whirling wings. They have a trick of sitting along the coping tiles of the roof in single file like a company of soldiers drawn up in line, and on one

occasion I saw some hundreds resting so closely together in this fashion that there was not room for a sparrow between them the whole length of the roof.

They are perfectly tame, and are the most knowing-looking rascals I have ever seen. Feeding time is a great institution, and, to my mind, is the most fascinating sight on the farm.

They know their dinner hour to the second, and some time before it is due the air is white with returning stragglers.

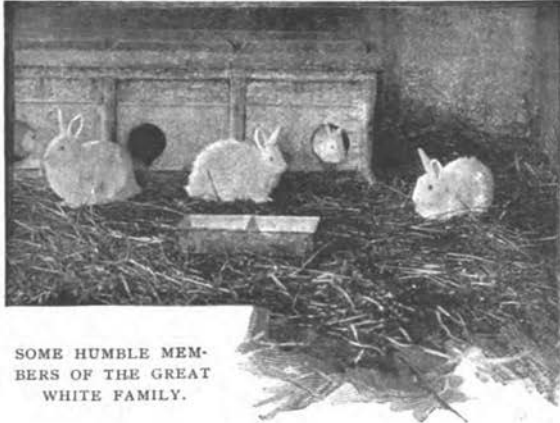
The ceremony is interesting enough to justify several illustrations, but we can find room for only one. Preparatory to the all-important function, the birds collect in their hundreds on the roofs of the adjoining buildings. A few seconds later the more impatient spirits among them fly to the ground and move restlessly about near the door from which they know the attendant will emerge.

Directly the man appears they swarm round him as he makes his way into the middle of the grass plot where the food is scattered.

There is not a single feather in any one of the birds which is not of the purest white. A dark

feather seals the doom of its unfortunate owner. However, this is a rare event. Possibly the birds conspire to preserve uniformity of colour by plucking alien shades from each other's plumage before they are noticed by the keeper.

If space would permit, one might illustrate many other interesting features of the White Farm, but enough has been said to give a general notion of the charm and interest of Lord Alington's fascinating hobby.



SOME HUMBLE MEMBERS OF THE GREAT WHITE FAMILY.



Dyrcr, Photo