

A Miracle?



Once upon a time, there lived an elderly, somewhat grumpy, Australorp hen in a chook house with ten younger hens of other breeds.

One day, Sunday October 9th, 2016, to be exact, she attended the Saint Francis Blessing of Animals Service at All Saints, Kempsey. She didn't particularly want to be there, but it was more exciting than sitting at home alone in her yard. You see, Moaner, that was her name, had a leg that didn't quite work as well as it once did. This meant that she didn't move around much, and stayed at home when the younger hens went out into the garden.

There was music and talking in the Saint Francis Service, but the important part was at the end. Moaner received a blessing, along with a number of splendid dogs and a two colourful Scarlet-chested parrots. Afterwards, people took her photograph, and admired her. They didn't know that her black glossy feathers hid a secret. A few years ago, Moaner had been bitten by a dog that came into her yard. Her owner carefully sewed up the torn skin, twice, and twice Moaner

picked the stitches undone! The wound was then left to heal by itself, which it did....

Back home, life in the hen house continued more or less as usual for the next few weeks. Some of the younger hens were being a bit slack with their egg laying, not all, but a few. So a lecture was in order, to encourage an increase in production. It was certainly not directed at Moaner! As far as Moaner was concerned there seemed little to show for her special blessing, no obvious changes. She still moaned about not having the food she wanted, and complained when it was furtively stolen from under her beak by a younger hen.

Actually life *did* become a little more interesting when four small New Hampshire and two crossbred chickens, four weeks old, suddenly arrived in the next pen. They made a lot of noise and rushed around in a rather pointless manner from time to time, which 'sort of' entertained Moaner when she was on her own.

Then one day, November 9th, 2016, to be exact, Moaner was sitting in her yard with something white poking out from under her black feathers. Perhaps it was a bit of her leg? No. It was a white egg! "Impossible", said her owner, "She hasn't laid an egg for years. She is far too old."

Nothing was said publicly in case it was an awful mistake, but there were no other hens around at the time, and only a couple of wild galahs that strayed in through the open door for a brief feed. The egg even looked like the eggs Moaner used to lay earlier in her life, but it could not be— could it?

A week later, on November 16th 2016, to be exact, Moaner was not in her yard. There was a momentary panic before she was found sitting in a nest in her house. She was carefully lifted out, and, yes, another white egg! It had to be hers as all the other hens were elsewhere. This time the miracle began to be quietly talked about. Would it stop at two, or would it be a weekly phenomenon? Neither.

Two *days* later, November 18th, 2016, to be exact, Moaner was again seen in the nest. Again she was lifted out to expose her third white egg. Two more days later, November 20th, 2016, to be exact, (it is important to be exact in these

matters!), Moaner indicated she might want to lay. A few hours later, the fourth white egg appeared. During December 2016 three more eggs appeared, on the 1st, 3rd and 5th. Then the eggs stopped.

What can we say about this extraordinary prolonged event? Is there something to learn from such an amazing happening? It seems that no one is too old to surprise others. And everyone is to be valued, not ignored, even when they are often grumpy!

Do miracles still happen in today's world, even in a fowl house?

*Sister Helen CSC
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