

Poultry Yard

We propose to give in the present and succeeding numbers of the CANADA FARMER, brief descriptions, with accompanying cuts, of the most approved kinds of Domestic Poultry. In drawing the attention of our readers to this subject, it is no part of our design to promote anything like a "hen fever," or to induce absurd and extravagant outlays on fancy poultry; but it is in the power of most persons who keep fowls, to improve their stock by the introduction into their yards, of some choice birds of an approved breed, without great expense. Domestic poultry are as capable of improvement as any other description of farm stock and we hope to be able to throw out some useful hints in this direction. The question is often asked, which breed of fowls is the best, and the reply must be *none absolutely*. As in other stock, a choice must be made in view of what you wish to secure. Do you want a breed of fowls merely as good layers, or do you desire a kind of first-rate quality for the table: can you give your birds unrestricted range: or have you but limited quarters for them? These and like inquiries must guide to a selection. Some fowls are fine layers but are partially or wholly non-incubators: as the Spanish, Polands, &c. Others are only medium layers, but excellent for the table, as the Dorkings. Some are impatient of restraint, and do not bear confinement well as the Spanish, Game, &c., while others are quiet in their habits, and can content themselves with but little space, as the Brahmas, Cochins, &c.



SPANISH FOWL.

The Spanish must unquestionably have the palm if laying be the only thing sought. They lay very large eggs, and are constant and regular in their visits to the nest. But they cannot be relied on as mothers. They very rarely incline to sit, and when they do, seldom persevere long enough to hatch out a brood of chickens. There is one objection to them in this climate, and that is their long, heavy combs. Ornamental as these are, they are liable to be frozen in the hardest winter weather, and then the stumps are a sad disfigurement. Of course this may be obviated by making their house frost-proof. The Spanish when well-bred are very beautiful birds, and stand at the head of the poultry list in the estimation alike of practical "henwives" and fowl-fanciers. They do not feather until nearly three-parts grown, and therefore require a steady, careful mother, that will not be in haste to leave them to themselves. The following are considered the leading requisites in this popular variety:—

'In the first place, a pure white face, deep in the lobes, and of good space above the eye, and neither too fat above nor below it, yet not so skinny-faced as to lose that angular oblong shape which imparts such reverence to the fowl in question; 2nd, erectness, or all but erectness, in comb; 3rd, length in body, and of leg; 4th, long clean neck; 5th, upright carriage; 6th, a metallic green; and, 7th, good size."

Amateurs value specimens of the breed in proportion as they have these marks. Unless birds answer pretty nearly to the above description, they have little chance of gaining honours in a good show.



DORKING FOWL.

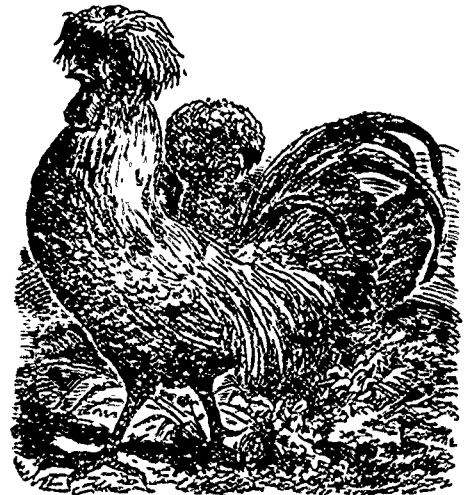
The Dorkings are pretty fair layers, good mothers, and their flesh is of the first quality. Probably no one breed combines so many excellencies as this. They are of good size and hardy constitution, and are much prized by all who have had experience of their many good qualities. They are bred of various colours, Dark Grey, Light Grey, Spangled, and Pure White. The White Dorkings are very handsome birds, but are thought by some to be more delicate than those of darker colour. It is a peculiarity of the Dorking tribe, that it usually has, more or less developed, a fifth toe. Some think this is a defect, and that it ought to be bred out. To any who can only keep one breed of fowls, we would say, by all means keep the Grey Dorkings. This breed has acquired a great reputation in England, chiefly from the superiority of its flesh over that of any other known kind. It is very white, delicate and well flavoured. The Dorkings have but one drawback, viz. the tenderness of the chickens which renders them somewhat difficult to rear.



BUFF COCHINS.

This cut may be regarded as giving the general characteristics of the large Chinese or Asiatic breeds of fowl. There are several varieties of them distinguished by the names Shanghae, or Cochin Chinas, (of which there are various colours,) Brahma Pootras, Chittagongs, &c. We regard the Buff Cochins, and the Brahmas (white with black hackles, wings and tails also edged with black,) as the most

desirable among these giants of the poultry-yard. They have often been so badly bred as to look like fowls on stilts, and cuts which may well be regarded as caricatures of the breed, have not unfrequently been published. Bred with short legs, and well-built bodies as represented in our cut, they are a fine looking bird. The Brahmas and Cochins are excellent layers, a little too much inclined to sit, faithful mothers, and if killed when very young, are good table-birds. Their chief recommendations are their tendency to lay in winter, and the ease with which they are kept out of mischief. An ordinary fence is high enough to confine them. They do not, like some other breeds, set every obstacle at defiance, and overleaping all boundary lines, invade your own, or what is worse if possible, your neighbour's garden. For towns and cities where confinement is unavoidable, these are doubtless preferable to all others. The Brahmas are especially recommended on this latter account, as they maintain themselves in good condition, and under the unfavourable circumstances of dirty weather, or living among houses, they keep up a clean, tidy appearance better than any other kind. There is difference of opinion among fowl-fanciers whether the Brahmas are a distinct breed from the Cochins. Those best qualified to judge maintain that they are. Although they bear a close resemblance in form to the Cochins, their habits are dissimilar. Their eggs larger, they are more disposed to roam about, are less inclined to sit, and have more spirit.



POLISH FOWL.

The Polands were somewhat fully described in our last, and we need not repeat what was then said. They are bred of various colours,—not only with "black plumage and a royal head-gear of white," but Golden-spangled and Silver-spangled. They are all much sought by poultry fanciers, and many persons admire them more than any other description of fowls.

Breeds of poultry have become multiplied to such an extent, and so much attention has been given to their improvement, that the most fastidious fanciers can be gratified in some one or more of them. For ordinary practical uses, it is perhaps well to keep more than one sort, so as to secure various points of excellence. Mrs. Fergusson Blair, in the *Henwife*, perhaps the best manual of poultry-keeping we have, advises amateurs who have but limited accommodation to "keep only a few first rate fowls, say a Dorking cock and two hens, two Cochin and two Brahma Pootra hens." "These latter," she adds, "lay all winter, sit soon, and bring out Dorking chickens much earlier than the Dorking hens themselves, which are tardy sitters." A cross between the Dorking and Cochin or Brahma makes a good table-bird; the former improving the quality, and the latter adding to the size. But even more important than the choice of breeds, is proper care and attention. With these, very ordinary birds will produce well, and without them the best birds will accomplish little or nothing.