

Cross-bred Fowls.

Quite a discussion has been going on lately in the English poultry papers about cross-bred fowls. I almost think it is like all other things on this earth, we get tired of one particular thing, and a fancier will get tired of one particular strain, and he tries another and another, and so on until he runs through, perhaps, nearly all the pure breeds. He has nothing left then to do unless to cross-breed, and I am of the opinion this is why so many are now trying cross-breeds, for if excellence of flesh, or for laying purposes is the object, surely we have varieties of pure-bred fowls which fill the bill. But no, we want changes, and the poultry fancier is no exception to the rule, he must have a change too, so he turns his attention to the cross breeding of his stock. I suppose it is this disposition for change which seems planted in the human breast which has given us all the pure-bred fowls we now have, for no doubt even if we do not want to introduce any Darwinian theory into the subject, all the different breeds of fowl we have come from one, and the continual cross-breeding of two distinct breeds will produce a breed of itself equally pure as either of the original breeds they were bred from, and I know no reason why a fancier can't carry out the bent of his inclinations by giving his time to the producing of new varieties as well as the breeding up to perfection of old established strains. Perhaps it pays better to breed what are known as pure-bred fowls because they are in the fashion and there is a steady demand for them, whereas cross-bred fowls are looked on as mongrels, and are only worth their value for the table till one would succeed in producing a strain, and after producing it, it has to be introduced to the fancier and made fashionable. No doubt this is more like work for the experimentalist than for one breeding fowls for profit. Fashion is a wonderful thing, and when people take a craze for any one particular theory it is amazing how far they will sometimes go to gratify their taste.

Many will remember the introduction of the Cochin. Poultry fanciers went crazy over them; and in this, my opinion is, they made a mistake, for with the exception of giving some of our varieties size, I am not at all favorably disposed towards any of the Asiatics. You get a great lot of flesh on one bird, but although I do not believe in small birds for the table, I think a very large Cochin in two birds, and with correspondingly finer meat, is preferable to one big coarse fowl, a very few of which will eat as much as a pig.

I think the object should be to produce a good sized fowl that is a good layer, and makes a good dish when brought to the table; and the bird that approaches the nearest to that is, in my opin-

ion, the best bird, no matter whether it be cross-bred or of one pure strain. Some of our pure-bred birds to-day are good layers but are not good for the table. The White Leghorns have a good name as egg-producers, but for the table an old cast off Indian moccasin fried in lard, except for a very hungry man, is just about as good a dish.

The favorite strain used in England for crossing is Houdans and Dorkings, and Brahas and Games. It will be seen here that either the Dorking or Game are selected for a cross. No doubt this is for their well-known edible qualities.

At a show recently held in England for cross-bred table fowls the Houdan and Dorking cross carried off the prizes, and were allowed to be the best birds exhibited.

I think that cross bred birds are more apt to lean to the side of the mother than to the male side, at least this is my limited experience. This season I put a pure-bred Light Brahma with some mongrel Black Hamburgs and other cross-bred hens; the result is I have some very fine chickens. The pullets are large, close and compact, heavy bodies and short legs, and but for the little feather on the leg, which I should like to get rid of, I would call them very handsome fowl. They do not show any trace of the Light Brahma. A neighbor bred some from a Game hen and Buff Cochin; they lean to the Game side, and some he had from Game and a Cochin hen look just like poor specimens of pure-bred Cochins.

A writer in the London *Field* says he bred from a Light Brahma hen and a Brown red Game; result was the pullets resembled the Game, and the male birds resembled the Brahma mother. This differs from the experiments I have given above, but I think if I wanted a cross-bred bird to take more of the qualities of one particular breed, I would select the hen from the breed I wanted my fowl most to resemble.

Next season I intended putting a Plymouth Rock with the pullets I now have, and hope to get a fowl good both as layers and for the table. I like everything about the Plymouth Rock except his color, and I can't see any beauty in that; but fashion is everything, and no doubt a Plymouth Rock fancier thinks their plumage is very elegant, although it is just like the homely old Cuckoo hen, which I remember when a boy in the old country used to trail around the barnyard with a flock of chickens after them that would stagger a modern fancier to look at. This was in the days before the Asiatics were homesteaded in English barnyards, the days before poultry shows, and before a buff-colored egg was known to the English hen-wife. No one in those days could have thought that the big, bob-tailed Asiatics would displace the Dorkings and other old English breeds as they