

## TO IMPROVE FARM-YARD FOWLS.

Mr. C. N. Bement of Rochester is the author of a useful book on Poultry. In a recent communication to a Rochester journal (*R. N. Yorker*) he thus discourages on the subject of improving barn-yard fowls:—

Every one is aware, or should be, of the fact that, generally speaking, the fowls commonly kept by our farmers are but poor specimens of the race—are small in size and usually but indifferent layers. Neither the inferiority in their size, nor their poor egg-laying qualities are, however, to be attributed to the kind of food they receive, for farmer's fowls generally fare pretty well, particularly in threshing time, nor to any want of attention; but to the fact that in very many cases the stock is never changed, or if changed at all, so seldom as to be productive of no good results. Thousands of miserable, weak-minded people, idiots, lunatics, attest the evil results of marrying between blood relations. If such be the consequences resulting from "breeding-in-and-in," as it is generally termed, from the human family, will not the same principle apply to fowls? Will not a stock of fowls, let us ask, degenerate from year to year, both in size and other good qualities, if no additions from other varieties or yards are made? Look to the chicken commonly called "dung-hill fowl," a variety more generally had than any other kind in this country, and which, although small and comparatively of little value, were doubtless, at one time, in every respect equal to those for which such enormous and unwarrantable prices have been paid.

The reason of this degeneracy is very easily explained. The idea of improving the breed of fowls rarely visits a farmer's mind; and in the multiplicity of duties resting upon him, he does not think it a matter of sufficient importance to change the cocks with neighbors, or to kill off his old ones and purchase new. This is a great error, as we shall endeavour to show by facts gathered from experience.

We are convinced, from our own experience and observation, that by changing the plan of breeding of chickens we can materially improve them in some essential particulars, by procuring the very best cocks that can be found, paying attention to size, form and vigor only—color being a secondary consideration. Then, by selecting the finest formed and largest pullets of the previous season, cross them with selected cocks, provide comfortable quarters for them during the cold weather, and feed them well with animal and other good, substantial food, and, our word for it, you will receive in return a fair supply of eggs. None of the young cocks should be retained; they should either be sent to market or "to pot." The old cocks should be displaced and an entire new supply of young ones procured, of the best size and form that can be purchased. To give them size at once we should advise a cross with the Dorking, or any of the Asiatic tribes, the Brahma or Coch-in for instance. Some of the finest fowls we have seen were a cross of Dominique on the Coch-in and Brahma. To keep up vigor and stamina, we would recommend on occasional cross with larged sized Game cocks. By pursuing this system every spring, or, at least, every other spring, the progeny would attain a size superior to their progenitors. Their constitution and laying qualities would certainly be much better.

The third year the chickens will not only be greatly improved in size and appearance, but in the quantity of eggs from the same number of hens. This plan pursued, or even that of selecting the largest and most vigorous cocks of the common "dung-hill," we cannot but commend to our farmers generally, as the fowls will be one-half larger, and cost no more food or trouble to keep them, and when sent to market they will command a much better price.

It is hardly necessary to draw the attention of breeders generally, to the fact—how few our fowls maintain their superiority for a series of years in any particular variety. All being of the same blood their offspring are puny, weakly, and highly susceptible to disease. This can only be obviated by procuring the cock birds from another strain or family, and if well selected, there is little fear but there will be ample cause for self-congratulation as to their produce.

If we were to give what we consider the points of excellence desirable in fowls, we would say—they should have a small head, beautifully poised upon a taper neck, which sweeps in a gracefully expanding line to the broad shoulders. The breast must be very full, round and prominent, like that of the Durham cow, broad and well developed in the cock; the body square, the legs light-colored and small. They should be of good size, quick of growth, hardy, meaty, and fit for the table at an early age; abundant layers, especially in winter, good mothers, and quiet in their habits and disposition.