

other of the parents, caused by improper feeding, too close confinement, the too-rapid laying of or excessive feeding of youngsters. 3. And by far the largest proportion, is caused by the youngsters themselves being kept under some condition or other which renders it impossible for them to thrive. Either they have to drink dirty water, or their loft is infested with insects, or a bath is denied them, or they roost in a draft, or they have not a constant supply of salt, and old mortar, and crushed oyster shells, and grit, and green food in the form of young lettuce or otherwise, or the corn on which they are fed is deficient in quality, dirty, or unsuitable in kind. Now we have exhausted all the or's we can think of on this topic. If our readers would only apply them to their pigeons they would have no occasion to write to us for recipes for physic.—*Poultry, Eng.*

### An English Fancier's Opinion on Judging by Points.

#### Editor Review.

You will be pleased to hear that one of the fraternity who manufactures prize birds was last month caught red-handed. At the Maidstone show (Kent) the point of a needle was found protruding from the comb of a Hamburg cock, having been placed there to keep the spike straight. This work of art was exhibited by a Mr. James Ashton, of Motteram, W. Manchester. The bird was of course disqualified, and Mr. A. had a gratuitous advertisement in all the poultry papers; but he was not to get off so lightly. The case was taken up by the "Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," who prosecuted the offender, and in the course of evidence it was found that he had been more than suspected of a similar case before, and in fact he admitted having a stock of needles for the purpose. The bench fined him £5 and costs. We only regret he was not provided with a short lodging at Her Majesty's expense.

The plan of judging by points or "scoring," as you term it, appears to be attracting considerable notice in your columns just now, so perhaps a few additional remarks on our experience of it in England and the reasons for its abandonment may be of interest. As you, Mr. Editor, will no doubt recollect, this is a *very* old and, I hope by this time, worn out question in the Old Country, though the mania breaks out now and again in the brains of a few persons more enthusiastic than practical, to whom it appears as an infallible panacea for any and all defects in the judging system. Though often tried it has never been found to work, for the simple reason that it is impossible to satisfactorily judge a bird by means of a tape measure and pair of scales. A Standard is very valuable as a *guide to the type aimed at*, in spite of all that

prejudice says against it, but no judge with confidence in his own ability and competence would allow himself to be thus dictated to and tied to a rigid scale of points. There is in a well-bred bird a certain *je ne sais quoi*, which is neither condition nor style, but a mixture of both and more also; we try to express it by the term symmetry. An ideal bird is presumably the most beautiful, i. e., symmetrical, of its breed, and the vaunted Standards are but efforts to define and analyze its various points with a view to fixing them as a guide to breeders. Yet in most Standards we find at the end a few points allowed for "symmetry," which, if it means anything in this place, signifies only absence of absolute deformity or "lopsidedness." Any departure from the ideal, therefore, is a loss of symmetry, which is the sole Standard a judge goes by.

Again, it is possible, and indeed of frequent occurrence, for a bird to have one point so developed that, though perfect according to the Standard, it actually detracts from the value of the bird, being out of proportion to the other properties. Yet such birds are frequently in the prize-list, and if point judging were in vogue would be there more frequently than at present. The only judges who do or are likely to use a Standard to judge by, are the so-called "circuit judges," who are ready to judge a show throughout from a cart-horse to a canary. Let us take an instance of every day occurrence. The judge gets on all right with a few classes he understands, but by-and-by comes one, say a pouter class, of which he only knows what can be gleaned from books, so he resolves to pin his faith to the Standard. We will take two typical birds, No. 1 perfect in marking, crop, and shape of body, length of flights, etc., but a little thick in the waist, and woefully short in limb, which latter fault prevents him showing his other grand points properly. No. 2 fails in marking and size of crop, but stands up grandly on a superb pair of limbs. Judged by points the former bird is *bound to win* in a canter, although the other is far away the better bird, and no breeder who knew what he was about would allow the first to enter his loft, though he were first and crop in a dozen point competitions. Such results frequently occur with incompetent judges, and are justly attributed to their ignorance, but the best judge unless he "fudged" the score could not make it otherwise, if judging by points. I take pouters as an example as the points of that breed are more pronounced than in most, but the result is the same in any breed you name.

The feeling of ninety-nine fanciers out of every hundred is well summed up in an article in the *Live Stock Journal* a few weeks since, from which I extract the following, which comes with ad-