

sion has taken place as to which is the best breed of fowls to keep.

On this subject I have heard some very wild and presumptuous statements. To name any one breed as being unconditionally "the best" would be, to say the least, absurd. There are so many attendant circumstances to be considered in the case of everybody, at all times, and everywhere, that an absolute decision in favor of any one variety is inadmissible.

Before asking a solution to this vexatious question, the prospective poulterer should decide positively what his object is in keeping poultry—whether it be for eggs, for spring chicks, for broilers and roasting fowls, for general utility, or for the greatest net cash profit. No one breed of fowls will fill these four conditions.

There are sixty-two varieties of fowls, exclusive of ducks, geese, and turkeys, recognized by the American Poultry Association and described in the *Standard of Excellence*, and every one of these breeds has its admirers; and fanciers of the most useless of the sixty-two varieties would look with withering scorn on the audacious critic who should be so reckless as to insinuate that their particular pets were poor layers and of very little use as table poultry.

Some fanciers of the small varieties, which cannot be classed as table fowls, expatiate on the egg-producing powers of their pets, and seem determined not to be beaten in figures by anybody, no matter what the consequences. There is every opportunity for a person so inclined to overstep the bounds of truth on the question of egg production, and I regret to say that in too many cases advantage is taken of this. It is only natural that the owners of small fowls should desire their birds to be considered useful for something, and as they cannot successfully compete for a place as table fowls, they bid for a reputation as layers. It is an unquestionable fact that some breeds of small fowls are very prolific layers; it is also equally certain that some others are very poor layers. I have often seen in poultry journals much advice that is superficial and fallacious. The following is the fashionable advice: "For eggs, keep Leghorns; for general utility, keep Plymouth Rocks; and if you want the fowl that carries the most flesh, keep Brahmas."

A rather extended experience in breeding poultry, convinces me that the above advice is misleading; at any rate, I know it is to a novice, who immediately accepts it as a fact, at its face value, without any discount, and runs away with the idea that Leghorns will lay more eggs than any other breed, at all times, in all places, and under any conditions; and the consequences is that if that man lives in a locality where the weather cuts capers, and occasionally takes a sudden tumble to zero, and remains there for a great part of the winter, the said man's little speculation, whereby he hoped to earn a honest penny by selling eggs when prices were high, (by reason of their

scarcity), is, in vulgar parlance, "busted." There is no doubt he will get lots of eggs, perhaps more than many of his neighbors who keep Plymouth Rocks and Brahmas, but the result of my observation is that he always gets them when eggs are cheap, viz.: in the spring and summer. Many Leghorn fanciers claim a yearly production of 200 eggs per hen. This is certainly good laying, over sixteen dozen, at fifteen cents per dozen, but we will call, it twenty cents—to allow for the few they lay when prices are high—this is \$3.20 per annum as the gross product from each hen. Now, for my part, I prefer a fowl that will produce eggs when they command the best prices, viz.: in winter, when the ground is covered with snow and intense cold prevails. Even if she lays less of them, in my opinion she will be the most profitable. The poorest arithmetician will readily see that a hen which lays twelve dozen eggs in the year, and lays most of them when prices are high, say at an average price of thirty cents, will be more profitable to him than the other which lays sixteen dozen when prices are at the lower figure, provided she costs no more to keep, and I will endeavor to show further on that she will not.

The advice given this man, to keep Leghorns for eggs, was good counsel, provided eggs were his ultimate object, but as eggs with most poulterers are only a means to an end, and that end is usually cash, he would have done much better had he selected the other variety.

The advice to keep Plymouth Rocks as a general purpose breed I candidly believe is good advice; they certainly are very useful fowls, and are perhaps unsurpassed as a generally useful all-round breed. But I object to the advice to "keep Brahmas if you want the fowl that carries the most flesh." I do not deny that the Brahma carries the most flesh. I believe it does; it is certainly the heaviest of the standard breeds, but a beginner in poultry keeping would naturally infer that the Brahma was good for nothing but its carcass, whereas it is a well-known fact among breeders of this variety that they are magnificent winter layers; indeed it is doing them an injustice to stop here, for they are not only winter layers, but all-the-year-round layers, never losing any time. They are longer than the other varieties mentioned in arriving at maturity, but will weigh just as much at any age, from the shell up, as any other breed, not excepting the Plymouth Rock. I have some chicks of this variety in my yards at the present time that I am testing side by side with Light Brahma chicks hatched the same day, fed in exactly the same manner, same quantity and quality, and although the Plymouth Rocks are a little better feathered, yet the Brahmas are the heaviest, and have been so from start.

In addition to producing as many eggs in the year as some other breeds that are specially recommended as layers, they will, properly managed, produce the