

Thorough-bred vs. Common Poultry.

The question frequently asked respecting thorough-bred poultry by persons who raise for the food market is, "Are they any better than the common sort?" We have heard just these words repeated, we know not how many times, by farmers who depend on taking a basket of eggs along when they go to the grocery, and by mechanics and others who look to their own poultry yards for home supply, but who are not initiated into the mysteries of the numerous breeds in vogue, and at a poultry show could not name half the varieties on exhibition.

"Do you suppose they are any better than the old-fashioned ones?" with a suspicious tone, and an emphasis suggestive of incredulity, as if thinking of the "sundry humbugs,"—willow hedges, combination bee-hives, and similar tock in trade, with which glib-tongued agents are wont to beguile honest people.

The proper answer is neither yes nor no. It depends. A sharp knife is better to cut sticks with than a dull one, and is also worse to cut fingers with. A dull knife even the old-fashioned "Barlow"—is better than a sharp one for children. Unless people know how to use finely-bred poultry, they are best off with the dull "Barlow" kinds. Not only is increased skill necessary in order to use improved breeds to advantage, but there must be a good degree of knowledge at the start, to govern the choice of breeds, while preparing to buy stock. Rushing to an exhibition-room and purchasing whatever variety offers, merely because it is not of the common kind, but "blooded," and up to the "standard," is almost always a sacrifice of money and ends in disgust.

Fowls are kept, mainly, for either utility or ornament. Considered from the first standpoint, the thorough-bred fowls, selected intelligently from the more useful breeds, have a great advantage over the barn-yard fowls, because one breed is remarkable for eminence in some one respect, and another for excellence in another particular. The objects of different owners are different; one breeder wants eggs chiefly, and another wants table poultry. So in raising eggs, one person desires winter layers, as the chief source of profit, and constructs his buildings, and lays his plans to that end, while another is content with cheaper buildings, and aims to secure a great number of eggs at a season when the fowls may roam abroad and be supported, chiefly, by foraging. We might enumerate many variations, in the objects of fowl-keepers, depending on the difference of localities, markets, etc. Now, the barn-yard fowls are not particularly remarkable for anything, as a class, except a degenerate, neglected look, and their unproductiveness; though it is no small thing to be said in their favor that they are thoroughly acclimated, owing to their having been in the country for so many generations, and they will generally bear exposure well, if winter layers are wanted, excelling in that matter, like Cochins and Brahmas, or if a breed is wished that prove as prolific in summer and fall as the Spanish,—the barn-yard fowls are remarkable in neither respect. If steadiness and gentleness as sitters and mothers are desired, or if on the other hand, no sitting at all is wished for, the barn-yard fowls will not fill the requirements. If a very large bird is demanded, substantial enough to almost rival a turkey, or a small-bodied fowl that runs to eggs, as the saying is, rather than flesh, just as the Jersey cow "runs to rich milk," then we must not look to the common fowls. They are moderately useful in everything, and excel in nothing in particular. Human society has progressed through the division of labor. In its early and savage state each individual was hunter, soldier, house-builder, and so on. All callings were followed by all, and as a necessary consequence, none were thoroughly developed. In a civilized state, the watchmaker succeeds by cultivating a delicate touch and sight, and the blacksmith by means of muscular strength. By exclusive cultivation in his craft, each workman is perfected in it and society benefited. Like advantages ensue from the application of like principles to the improvement of domestic animals. Had not the horse become, through careful breeding, adapted to the various requirements of men, we should not have the draught-horse, fitted for the coal-cart, nor the racer bred for speed. What an interruption to business and pleasure, as now followed, would be experienced, if all the horses in the world were to become merely moderately fleet and moderately strong! A flock of common fowls, taken as a whole,

are not remarkable for any good trait in particular; whereas a flock of poultry, each breed has certain qualities that may be depended upon. Some excel in laying, some in the size of their eggs, and some in respect to their flesh with perfect abundance. There are old breeds who are fit for raising chickens, Brahmas best for the exhibition for the great beauty, and they in this respect, and will be disappointed in one or more in a hundred, and so on through the category. We have only to decide what we want most, and by proper selection of breed we may be sure that we have it. *Poultry World.*

Washing Fowls for Exhibition.

The great secret of good washing is to admit the thorough drenching of the birds; the most frequent cause of failure being an attempt to keep the under plumage dry. We were once much amused at hearing one of the most successful and "knowing" men in the fancy—one who rarely shows for his employer now without winning—relate his first experience, when, as a youth of eighteen, he entered a "pen of Whites," on his own account, for a neighboring show. "You would hardly believe it, sir," he said, "but I stopped up all night washing 'em, and they was as black as sweeps when they was done." The following remarks are by Mr. Elijah Smith, well known to fanciers as one of the best breeders and most successful exhibitors of White Cochins. No one could be better qualified to give instruction on this subject, and the following is his method of proceeding:—Take a wash-tub ten or twelve inches deep, oval shape is the best, on account of the bird's tail; let the tub be sufficiently large to hold the bird comfortably. Then take clean soft warm water and fill the tub (or tub) about three parts full, so that the bird when pressed down by the hand in the water will be covered over its back, up to the neck. Then take white soap, and a sponge, and rub it in the water until it is well mixed and you have good suds; and rub the bird well with soap on all the dirty parts, and keep sponging the bird well until you can see that it is quite clean which you will be able to see very plain when wet. Do not be afraid to rub the feathers as it will do them no harm, so long as you will not lay on so heavily as to break them. If the bird is rough in the water, as some that have never been washed before sometimes are, keep one hand across the bird's back and wings, by which means you will easily hold it quiet. Be sure and rub your hand well among the fluff and feathers about the breast.

To wash the head, take it between both hands, and rub it well backward and forward, as if you were washing something in the balls of your hands. Do not be afraid of the water going into its mouth, as the soap and water will do it no harm whatever, but the contrary, as it will tend to clean it out; in fact I have often washed birds when I could not get anything else to cure them of disease, and it has answered remarkably well on many occasions.

When you see the bird is quite clean, then take and rinse thoroughly with clean cold water; put plenty on it until the soap is well out, for if you leave any soap in, the feathers will not come right in a reasonable time. When clear of soap, let them stand to drain a little, and don't be afraid of their taking cold, as the cold water prevents that by closing all the pores of the body; then press as much water off the feathers with your hand as possible, and as I said before, don't be afraid of hurting the feathers, as they will come all right again as they begin to dry, and will begin to web again in the course of an hour. When this is done, take the bird and put it before a nice fire—not too hot, but what we should call a good fire—and keep turning them with the wet part towards it, taking care not to have them so near as to blister their face and combs, as they soon blister after washing. When the birds are nearly dry, you may put them in baskets that have got lined in, such as we use for exhibition; and if night, you may put three or four together, if the basket is large enough for them to lie down in comfortably. By this means it will create a warm steam that will pass through the whole of the body feathers, and cause them to web

beautifully, and the bird will be quite ready for exhibition in twenty-four hours.

If the bird is looking very ill after rinsing, keep it in motion as much as possible, by getting hold of it under the breast with one hand and lifting it up, when it will use its wings freely, and this will cause the blood to circulate; also give one or two cayenne pills, which will warm it as well. This is when you see a bird that goes black in the comb, and looks as if it would die, which heavy birds sometimes do; also handle them pretty freely, as it will do them good, sometimes a bird will faint when put in warm water to wash; in that case I always throw cold water on it, when the bird will recover at once, and after a minute or so you may put it in again, and flush washing it without its showing any symptoms of fainting again.

Many good washers prefer to dry the fowls, after washing, in a cage or box of ample size, littered with clean and well broken straw. This box is to be wired in the front and top, but closed at back and sides to prevent draught, and placed with the open front at just such a distance from an ample fire that a genial warmth may fill the box; but avoiding a scorching heat. We may add that it is in drying that judgment and experience are chiefly required as too strong a heat withers up the plumage and makes it ragged, while too little causes it to hang together and appear dragged; but if the right temperature be hit upon and the soap has been thoroughly washed out, by degrees the plumage fills out, and in a few hours the birds assume their "company clothes." It is to assist this that Mr. L. Smith so strongly advises leaving the birds with a little dampness still in the plumage, the steam assisting the fresh webbing of the feathers. In summer time the cage may be put out in the sun if preferred; but the glare seems to distress the birds much, and we should prefer a fire. Some poultry men are unusually clever in drying fowls, and by holding them near the fire and carefully removing them for a little whenever they appear distressed with the heat, manage to avoid the scorching we have spoken of, and can dry a pen of Cochins in about two hours; but we cannot pretend to give the precise details of such a management, which can only be successfully practised after great experience has been attained. As an example of what may be done by an adept, however, we may relate as within our own knowledge that the writer of the preceding remarks on a certain occasion received back his birds at about ten o'clock in the morning, fed them, washed them, returned them to the hampers all wet as they were, and got off with them by rail for another show at twelve, taking them out and drying them at a fire in a junction waiting-room on his way to the exhibition, where he again carried off the first prize.

Poultry Raising.

I see, through some paper, that M. D. Sord, of France, finds the business very profitable. He commenced with a few hundred dollars, and now employs over a hundred hands in his poultry houses. His product of eggs a few years ago averaged 50,000 dozen weekly, which, with the sale of his early chickens, yielded him \$280,000. His expenses, all paid, were some \$145,000, leaving him a profit of \$135,000 for one year. Why cannot like results be obtained in this country?

In large cities the demand for early chickens and eggs is always large; the price, too, is very good, chickens bringing from \$6 to \$10 per dozen—eggs from 25 to 60 cents per dozen. If poultry raisers could manage to get their chickens into market six weeks earlier, they would bring a much better price. In raising poultry for market it is of great importance to have the best breed. By the introduction of improved fowls, and by judicious crossing, our own native birds can be greatly improved, both in size and weight, at a certain age, and also in number of eggs. By crossing the Leghorns, Houdans or Brahmas with our common stock, they can be greatly improved, either for market or home use.

The poultry house is a matter of great importance in raising chickens. A mere rail pen or some old out-house, is supposed, by some, to be good enough. No one will be successful who makes no better provision for his fowls. The requisites are light, cleanliness, good food, pure water, range, grass, shelter from cold winds and storms, and plenty of gravel and ashes for them to roll themselves in—with these advantages and proper attention, poultry raising would be very profitable. Who, then, will go to work in earnest in this important pursuit in rural life? Whoever does will not only benefit the country, but will richly feather his own nest.—*Rural World.*