

THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE
FANCY.

BY H. S. BABCOCK, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

IN all ages writers regarded friendship as one of the chief possessions of man. None of Cicero's writings is more valued than that which treats upon friendship. Poets have sung about it, philosophers have analyzed it, novelists have romanced about it. At all times, in every place, by all men, friendship has been and is regarded as the softener of the asperities and as the multiplier of the delights of living. The verdict is unanimous, no discordant voice is raised, no adverse vote is given.

The true basis of friendship is a community of interests, a similarity of tastes. This was illustrated in a very happy manner by an incident in the Franco-Prussia war. Two student soldiers of Prussia were quartered upon a French host. It requires not a very vigorous imagination to understand that their welcome was far from warm. Sullen looks and few words greeted them. They were received, not because they were wished, but because their host feared to do otherwise. The night was stormy. Hail and sleet were descending. Outside, as in, all was cheerless. As one of the young men looked out of the window upon the storm, he repeated to himself the words of a line or two of that ode of Horace, descriptive of a similar scene.

The host, overhearing the words, added those which immediately follow, and, advancing with extended hand and smiling countenance, asked if his guest knew Horace. For a reply the young man repeated the rest of the ode. No longer sullen looks and sullen words greeted them, but the warmest and most cordial hospitality, and what had begun so unpropitiously ended in a most delightful evening spent in cheerful conversation and pleasant feasting.

Poultrymen, as well as scholars, possess a true basis of friendship. Their tastes and their interests are held in common. Though they may keep different breeds of fowls, the principles of breeding, the methods of care, and the promotion of one branch of agricultural life, are of common interest. The way for profitable and interesting conversation is already paved for them. There is no ice to break

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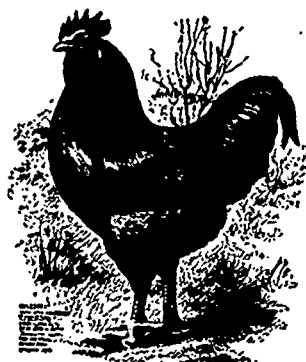
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through, no fumbling after topics of common interest, but they can pass at once to those subjects in which they know each is interested. Society, as the world knows it, does not possess such common topics for conversation, and so has established a fund of small talk, mere dribbles of nothingness, to take their place. The society man and the society woman, for lack of such topics, are forced to speak about and listen to subjects which bore both hearer and speaker, and with which they must appear, perforce, to be delighted. Ordinary society, then, while it establishes a *modus vivendi*, does not naturally result in friendship. Friendships do arise in society, but they arise only after the conventionalities are swept away and topics of real interest take their place—after a sufficient acquaintance has been made to allow each to know what the other is really interested in. Poultrymen have, therefore, the decided advantage in knowing from the outset the topics of real vital interest to each other, and where other elements like true manliness and unselfishness are not wanting, friendship finds a natural soil upon which to spring and flourish.

While men do not become poultrymen for the sake of the friendships which thereby arise, this is of no slight advantage to the poultrymen. I know from personal experience that many beautiful friendships have come into my life as an incident to my interest in poultry breeding. And I regard their friendships as some of the most valuable successes of my life. I have been so often personally benefited and have received such hearty sympathy in times of trial and loss and such cordial congratulations in times of success, that I would be a base ingrate if I did not recognize the

value of such friendships. In this way, if in no other, poultry breeding has paid me handsomely. And I am no exception to this beautiful experience. I know of many others, who have made life-long friends through their interest in poultry. While all poultrymen do not necessarily become permanent friends, I have yet to find a real fancier who was unfriendly. And it is something, is it not, to know that wherever you go there are friendly hands to grasp yours and friendly voices to utter words of good cheer? The friendship of the fancy is truly a beautiful thing.

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