

of grumblers who are continually harping on the many impracticabilities (to them) contained in the covers of that much reviled book. That many errors have crept in there can be no doubt, but now is the time to correct all this, and the meeting in London, of the American Poultry Association would do much to satisfy the aforesaid "army."

The following is our correspondents letter:—

"Where the next meeting of the A. P. A. will be held is agitating the minds of a good many fanciers just at present. To have a fair representation of the fancy, it will be necessary to secure the most central point available. The last revision was held in Worcester, Mass., which was too far east for numbers of our western fanciers to attend. What is wanted, is that the north, south, east and west shall all be well represented at the revision. Syracuse is already the field as a candidate for the honor, and Indianapolis, where they intend to hold a big show from the 18th to 25th of January, intend to give the Association a cordial invitation to meet there.

Buffalo has not made any move yet which is to be regretted, as it would, if held there, bring a large attendance from Canada.

The Ontario Poultry Association should invite the A. P. A. to meet in London during their exhibition and thus make the revision of the *Standard* a thoroughly international affair. The voting will soon take place, and our London friends should take steps at once to have an invitation sent to the executive of the A. P. A.

#### HOW TO SELECT THE BEST LAYING HENS TO BREED FROM.

I think it is now a well established fact that, if you want good layers, it is useless to select any one particular breed. Every breed has its good laying strains, and strains that are the reverse. Hence the variety of opinions that are expressed whenever the merits

of any breed are discussed. Poultry papers tell us that we must get hens from strains that have been especially selected for laying. But how are you to distinguish a laying strain? Are you to trust to advertisers, who say their hens average over 250 eggs per annum, or are you to go to friends upon whose integrity you can rely? If you adopt the latter alternative, you will, I venture to say, not find one whose books show much over 125 a year. Are you to be content with the certain 125 or go for the apocryphal 250?

However, whichever plan you adopt, your hens will certainly not keep up any unusually good average unless you select only the best layers to breed from. Poultry books tell us with grave simplicity that we are to note the hens that lay the most eggs, and that this is very easy, as each hen lays an egg with some distinctive feature, and thus you can keep an accurate account of what each hen lays. Have any of your readers ever tried this easy plan? For my own part, I maintain that it is practically impossible, unless the hens are all kept in pens of two or three each. And to adopt this plan raises the question of whether the game is worth the candle. In order to do any good you must have a flock of twenty or thirty hens. You must not only know each hen by name, but you must at the beginning of the season watch each hen lay, and learn to distinguish the egg of each. If there are any pullets among them you will find the eggs vary in shape and size a good deal as the season goes on, and if these are a pure breed the hens and eggs will be so very uniform that you will be sorely puzzled. I do not mean to say that it is utter impossibility, for I have heard of many wonderful feats of memory that quite equal this. For instance, in some of the large American hotels the hall porter will take the hat of every diner, hang it up on a peg without any

ticket, and unfailingly give it up to the right owner on his leaving the hall. He will do this with 200 hats, and never make a mistake. But this man has devoted his life to the feat. No ordinary mortal could manage even twenty hats; and yet men and their hats certainly vary more than hens and their eggs.

The only workable plan that I have ever been able to hit upon is to go into the hen-house two or three times a day on, say, ten days during the months of November, December, and January, and carefully turn out the laying hens into a separate pen. At night, when there is no chance of injuring the hen, which you might do if you handled her roughly, and broke an egg on the point of being laid, mark these hens with numbered rings, such as are advertised for this purpose, and by keeping a record you will not fail to pick out all the best winter layers. Hens that do not lay in these months are seldom worth keeping for eggs. Breed only from these hens, selecting the largest eggs, and by continuing the process for three or four years you will undoubtedly improve the laying qualities of your flock. From a mixed lot of twenty-seven hens and pullets, I this year selected six that laid in December, and these six produced in January sixty-six eggs against sixty from the twenty-one hens, and in February they laid fifty-six, as against eighty odd from more than three times the number of hens. Had I picked out twelve instead of six, as I might have done, I feel sure they would have laid ten times as many eggs as the remaining thirteen. I may mention that my hens are a cross between brown Leghorn, modern Game, and partridge Cochin. Their average certainly does not come up to that mentioned by the gentleman who, in your issue of April 7th, said that a pen of six Leghorns laid an average of five eggs per week per hen.

I think it only fair to this gentleman