

from abroad. These ideas look feasible, but they won't stand examination.

As to the endless layers, the chief difficulty is this, that the most prolific layers are always the most unfertile; and furthermore, the few chickens that can be got from them are not nearly so strong as chickens from more moderate layers.

The most prolific hen I ever had was a valuable Plymouth Rock. She fell very sickly from five to seven months old and I had some trouble to rear her. To this circumstance I attribute the fact that she did not commence laying until eight months old. It is important to delay pullets laying where size is desired. This pullet began laying the first week in November, took third prize at the Crystal Palace the same month, and continued laying at the rate of nearly six eggs a week till the following June, when she became broody; however, she began laying again in a fortnight, and continued to the end of August. She then went through a rapid moult, and again commenced laying in November, and has continued without interruption to the present time (six and a half months), and shows no sign of broodiness.

Well, I regard that excessive laying as a great misfortune. This hen's chickens are almost perfect in quality, but are not vigorous, and I cannot get many of them.

The next best layer I have had was a cross-bred Brahma. She laid just 200 eggs in thirty-five weeks, nearly six eggs a week for the whole time, including a fortnight's broodiness. But that effort seemed to exhaust her, for she did not lay again for six months, and then only produced 110 eggs the whole year. I made special efforts to get plenty of chickens from her, but only reared about half a dozen, though other hens in the same pen produced very fertile eggs and strong chickens. The unfertility of extraordinary layers, and the comparative weakness of their chickens, are now recognized facts among experienced fanciers.

Then as to the combination of laying and table qualities. As our able president (Mr. J. W. Ludlow) pointed out in a recent lecture, these qualities are absolutely incompatible and contradictory. A fowl whose vitality goes in producing eggs cannot lay on flesh and shape up well for the table; and a fowl that makes much flesh has not much surplus vitality for egg production. The two qualities naturally modify each other, and the attempt to combine them merely results in a useful fowl, but without excellence in either respect.

Then the idea of the possibility of replacing the four millions worth of imported eggs and poultry by home production is an amiable delusion, with which I have much sympathy, but which I am sure is impracticable under our present land and commercial system. So long as the ruling

principle of our industry and commerce is private profit, instead of general social and national welfare, so long will many forms of production and occupation, however pleasant, useful and even necessary, be neglected for those forms of production which are immediately more profitable.

At present we are a commercial people, caring little or nothing about the production at home of the common necessities of life, and their wide distribution and enjoyment among our people, so long as the "captains of industry" and territorial lords are increasingly enriched by the production of minerals, and the manufacture of iron and cotton. The dominant idea of the nineteenth century has been to make Britain the workshop of the world, instead of (as I think it should be) the pleasant home of culture and comfort for her people. The economics of our commercial system practically prohibit the production at home of those necessities which can be more cheaply obtained from abroad in exchange for our manufactured products, because the latter are more profitable to capital here.

Besides, the breeding of fancy poultry pays better than mere utility poultry. It is probable that this country's aggregate returns from poultry exceed that of France, in spite of the fact that France raises three times as many fowls and eggs as we do; simply because our stock of poultry is so much more valuable than theirs. I don't think any figures can be given, but the greater skill and value of our stock breeding is well shown in connection with horses. Last year English breeders exported only 11,000 horses, against 20,000 imported. This looks bad, and as though we lost on the transaction; but the average value of the horses sold to foreigners was £50 each, while the average value of the horses bought from foreigners was only £20 each; so that although we only sold about half as many horses as we bought, yet the total price paid to English breeders by foreigners was half as much again as the total price paid to foreigners. A very substantial profit to British credit.

The British are unquestionably pre-eminent in the breeding of the very best class of live stock of all kinds. It is the quality and not the quantity which is most remunerative. This certainly applies to poultry; and it is clear that while British poultry breeders can produce high-class birds which realize good prices it would be wasting energy to breed inferior fowls in quantities, for the mere sake of competing with continental peasants. It would merely return peasants' wages at best. Well, I think I have shown that we do not lose much, but really gain, in not competing with foreign peasants in the production of eggs at four a penny and chickens at equally starvation prices.

In starting to breed the highest class of fowls there are