

## THE ROUEN DUCK.

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WHAT experience I have had in ducks has taught me that in economic merits there is little to choose between the different breeds. I believe that one breed will grow as rapidly as another and that for a given amount of food one breed will produce as much flesh as another. Although I have kept no exact statistics, have never weighed or measured the food, I have observed quite closely and the above are my conclusions. From an economic standpoint, however, there is an advantage in keeping a large breed. No one rearing for the market would be apt to adopt the lovely little Call or the exquisite little black East Indian ducks. For, while these little ducks might make as many pounds of meat for a given amount of food consumed, there would be too many of them to dress when they were to be got ready for the market. Between the Rouen, Aylesbury and Pekin, for market purposes there is little to choose.

But from a fancier's view-point, between the different breeds there is much to choose. The fancier delights in beauty, and the most beautiful duck makes the strongest appeal to him. Among ducks I do not hesitate to say that I regard the Rouen as the most beautiful, and for a fancier, who also desires size for economic reasons, this breed should receive the first consideration. The Gray Call is the Rouen in a diamond edition, and if smallness of size is demanded, this is the fancier's breed.

Consider for a moment the variety of coloring that the Rouen drake presents. A rich green head, a green neck marked with a white ring, a claret throat and breast, a green glossy black tail, and a body covering of the most delicately penciled gray, each feather of which is a work of art. And the duck is scarcely less beautiful in her penciled brown suit, sober and yet rich in hue, and artistic in marking.

Few people really know how beautiful the coloring of the Rouen is. Not long ago a number of fanciers were in my office and I took out some body and breast feathers of a Rouen drake and asked them from what bird they supposed these feathers were plucked. These fanciers were not beginners but veterans among chickens, one of them having had, first and last,

nearly everything in the chicken line. They guessed, some that the feathers came from pheasants, some from wild birds, but not one of them the long domesticated Rouen duck. And if fanciers are so ill-informed as this, what must be the state of mind of the general public!

The Rouen is not an easy bird to breed to perfection. No bird is that, but the Rouen presents certain specific difficulties. The duck I believe to be more difficult to breed than the drake. The ducks will persist in showing a tendency towards a white ring on the neck and towards white in the flight feathers of the wing. The white ring of the drake tends to leave its mark on the female, and the white band on the wing to produce white where it is not desired. But what of it? The imperfect specimens are just as good eating as the much lauded Pekin, and fanciers are accustomed to cope with problems in breeding. If everyone could breed perfect specimens there would be no interest in breeding. What is easy ceases to be fascinating to a fancier. The Rouen presents just those breeding problems which fits it to be a fancier's bird. Pekins are too easy for a genuine fancier. He wants something to make him study when he comes to mate his birds.

We don't breed half enough ducks. Where we produce one we ought to produce several. Perhaps enough Pekins are bred, but of Aylesburys, Cayugas and Rouens we need very many more. People do not realize how easy it is to grow ducks, and still less do they realize how well the ducks will do in circumscribed quarters. If they but knew that anyone can keep them, that they can be successfully grown without water, and that in rearing them there is not a tenth of the difficulty there is in rearing chickens. I believe duck breeding would boom. And yet, a single trial will convince the most sceptical. I advise that trial, and if the person loves beauty I advise a trial with the Rouen or some other colored variety. As an illustration of the ease with which ducks can be reared I give my experience for the past season in these few words, "I raised every duckling I hatched." These were Rouens. The year before, with black East Indians, I raised every duckling I hatched, with the exception of three, killed by a hen within a day or two after the ducklings were brought off. I did not fuss with them, never dusted them for lice and never had one become droopy because of lice. With chickens it was a fight with lice from start to finish, but with the ducklings all that seemed to be required was plenty of food and water. And how they did grow! You could almost see them grow as you watched them feed. A week made a great change in their appearance. A month almost transformed them.

Try ducks once, my brother fancier, and see if the above is not the unvarnished truth.