

only result of rejecting gay-sickled birds would be to reduce the size of Dorkings by making the choice of show specimens more difficult, or else to introduce the plucking-and-trimming system which is such a curse to many other breeds." There is much sense in these remarks. To breed the very dark pullets, now so fashionable, the cock's hackles should have a clear black stripe in them, the feathers between the shoulders should be examined by parting the neck hackles, to make sure that the white shafting is there, and any black feathers in the cock should be very glossy, with a brilliant purple or green sheen on them. Cocks with a very considerable amount of rich red mixture on the back are often good breeders of pullets of this colour; but, after all is said and done, the most important thing is to make sure that the cock is himself bred from a bird of this description, for cocks have a tendency to get their pullets of the same colour as their own mothers, though the rule is that each parent breeds birds of its own sex like itself. Clearly, whatever colour is desired, both males and females, should be bred from birds of similar colour. Now as to the hens. Many of the above remarks apply equally to them. The hen's comb must fall naturally and neatly to the side; a prick-combed hen should be rejected, unless extraordinarily good in other respects. Whatever the colour may be there should be a clear white shaft to each feather, even to those on the thighs, if possible, and the tail should be tightly compressed together, not fan-shaped. More especially should the color of the feet be looked to in this sex, for white feet are very hard to get in combination with the almost black feather. As the color of the feet, so the color of the skin, and the skin is of vital importance in a table breed. Hence, holding the views I do, what I have written as to the breeding for this color I have written more or less under protest. By all means let the birds chosen be as big as possible on both sides, but if size must be dispensed with on one side, let it be on the male side, the female *must* be big. Size and constitution chiefly depend upon the female parent, color and form upon the male—of course, this is speaking broadly, and the breeding stock should be as good as possible on both sides. Having then obtained, stock birds, say, in the autumn, they should be turned on to the run they are to occupy as early as possible, in order to get a good supply of eggs for setting on December 11th, to produce chickens on New Year's Day. A leg of a horse will cost about half a crown, and if hung up where the birds can peck it at pleasure will last for months in cold weather, and usually start and keep them laying. If incubators, and foster-mothers cannot be bought, I believe broody hens will answer almost as well (though certainly more trouble—I use both) for the hatching and rearing, but not more than six or seven eggs should be put under an average-sized hen at Christmas, or more than five or six chicks allowed to her in the early months. I used to give the newly-hatched chickens chopped eggs, bread-crumbs, with curds and all manner of things, but have discarded them all in favour of small seeds, such as millet (especially at first), hempseed (particularly in wet weather), canary-seed, etc., varied with a few groats, mixed sharps and ground oats and cracked wheat, and I only gradually introduce whole corn

and-meal. The small-seed system is infinitely less trouble than the chopped egg business, and the birds thrive on it from the first, so much so that last year I only lost one chicken of all that were hatched. All chickens should be constantly supplied with chopped grass when small they don't mind cold a bit, provided they are sheltered from the wind and have a dry place to run into. My coops are set on boards and sprinkled with dry earth, grit, sand, and wheat-hulls, but the chicks must not be kept altogether on boards or leg weakness will quickly supervene. In the case of a succession of wet days a little "Walton's Tonic Paste" dissolved in their drinking water is a great help to them. I used to lose a very large proportion of my chickens annually from "gapes," but have not had a case of it now for five years, and as I am constantly reading in the poultry papers that there is no known preventative of the disease, and, consequently, innumerable so-called remedies are advertised and sold, I suppose the tip given me by a well-known and successful Dorking breeder, Mr. Patrick Ogilvie, cannot be widely known. He gave it to me as an infallible preventive, and infallible I have found it. He explained that the germs of the disease were taken up in the drinking water, and that by simply boiling it shortly before use, and keeping a lump of camphor in the drinking-trough, the germs would be destroyed. I believe that any one who will give this a trial—and it is so exceedingly simple that it deserves a trial—will meet with the like success. Of course, whether boiled or not, the drinking water should be constantly changed, for there is no more fruitful source of diseases of all kinds than foul water. As the chickens grow and faults are developed the wasters should be slaughtered or removed, cull early and cull hard, for if there is an extra good chicken amongst them the presence of these useless birds might make all the difference between his winning the Palace Challenge Cup or only the second prize. Cockerels and pullets should be parted as soon as the sexes can be distinguished, and, if possible, placed, not only out of sight, but also out of sound of each other. The young birds, to insure straight breasts, should be kept in large coops, or in houses from which the perches have been removed, till they commence their final moult, when the perches can be replaced and the birds will at once take to them, for up to this time damage caused to the plumage by their scrummaging against the sides of the coop, or houses will not matter in the least. It will be found a good plan to keep an old cock with the cockerels, to prevent fighting. I feed my chickens principally, and always once a day upon the best wheat; but the first feed in the morning (and they should be fed as soon as it is light) consists of meal, generally barley and oatmeal, mixed with skim milk instead of water. Space will not permit me to enter upon the subject of shows, preparation for shows, judging, etc., and I must bring this long letter to a close; but indeed, Mr. Editor, this kind of article is tantalizing to the writer, for he can be but superficial, and where he had written a line he would like to have written a page. However, if any young fancier has waded so far through it and thinks himself in anyway helped by it, that fact alone will amply repay me for having written it.