

Poultry Yard.

Standard Characteristics, and Things in General

From the controversies now being carried on in England, my Canadian friends may be somewhat perplexed in poultry matters, and a few remarks may not be uninteresting to them. They have suggested themselves to me from an article in the last *Journal of Horticulture*, and headed "Standard Characteristics," by Lewis Wright.

Does not this article savour too much of the animus (according to my reading, too plainly perceptible throughout his illustrated book of poultry) against the editor of the standard of excellence. Two of a trade never agree, it is said.

It seems strange, after the elaborate hints on judging, given by Mr. Wright, his own standard on points, &c., that he should, on the second edition of the enemy's standard being hoisted, suddenly find out that any standard is a myth, but the standard bearer has fought in many a poultry battle, and won and cannot, therefore, be in so many instances, decidedly wrong, although Wright says so. In the article before us, he says—all have a right to their opinions, certainly, from which we glean that the compilers of the standard have, and being many, have a decided advantage in the battle against the one. From personal experience, nobody knows more than I do of the immense advantage to the poultry cause the standard of excellence was, especially to novices in poultry points, and I have found it a most useful friend against disappointed exhibitors in many shows that I have exhibited in. My first debut as an exhibitor was long before its publication, but it established, on your side of the Atlantic, fixed rules, which guided the poultry breeders from chaos to which they would, without it, have remained in until this day. Judges who were appointed frequently knew nothing of exhibition points, or their value. I speak feelingly, being a sufferer therefrom. I could spin yarn after yarn, facts of what occurred, did space permit. I must say, therefore, although I admit you cannot control the whims, fancies, &c., of judges, still, as to general ideas they agree, and an ignoramus profits even if he sticks to the text, as it gives him some definite ideas of what he has to do.

It should be remembered that the standard, as published, was not compiled by Mr. Tegetmeier, but by Mr. Tebbay, and other members of the poultry club, and that it embraces the ideas of the best fanciers, and breeders, of the last ten years.

All ages should be those of advancement and improvement, therefore, a "fixed standard" can only last as trial and experience prove the necessity of no change; but I cannot see why, as things or points are altered, editions cannot be altered also; the changes are very gradual, and hence no difficulty in this respect.

There are certain fixed points that must be fixed for a time, and if not laid down, how can a novice learn.

Bailey, long ago, in his first or second edition of fowls, published a standard—the club merely went into detail of points giving them a numerical value. I freely admit that no man can take a standard in hand, unless a breeder, or fancier of poultry, and judge at a show. He must know his work beforehand, and if he had to consult any rules, why, the time consumed, would greatly exceed the duration of a show. Still, a doubt existing, a reference may be of use, and it is for the breeder, and exhibitor, that the rules of plumage are of use.

The only drawback I ever found against the standard was, that disappointed exhibitors always harked back to some fault passed over, without considering the greater superiority of other points counterbalancing the evil. As to go through an addition sum of points, especially in the one hundred point standard

of Wright, would be a labor too gigantic to be undertaken in the time given to judge a show; but, that because this is the case, that no fixed standard at all is required, I cannot admit, and, I am sure, that even Mr. Wright's American friends will bear me out in this.

I will give an illustration and conclude. I must necessarily be egotistic to illustrate my case.

It would seem curious that in their native country the points of will turkeys should not be known, and, that from carelessness, or ignorance, the several societies were robbed, I may say, of their premiums for wild turkeys, until I pointed this out at several shows, and as one of the arbiters distinctly refused to sign the judges' book. I published the points of the wild birds (following the plan of the standard), deduced from the bird kept by myself, and from dead specimens brought into the market, and, as they were not superabundantly plentiful, I saw them nearly all, for four winters.

Surely a standard was of use here; but, until pointed out, the actual points constituting the difference between wild, and half-bred, were not understood, and prizes were awarded to good and bad, wild and tame, in the will class.

Clearly, such things should not have been, and the standard acted as a preventative to their recurrence.

I think these facts show the necessity of some standard to guide amateurs, and, until another assemblage takes place, we must be content with the old one until we get on with the new.

F. C. HASSARD.

"Blood" in Breeding—What it is, and What it does.

Under the above heading, Mr. Louis Wright contributes to the *Poultry Bulletin* a series of articles the first of which we take pleasure in reproducing in these columns, the subject being one well deserving the attention of the breeder and amateur.

I have been asked to make my first paper for the *Bulletin* upon this subject, and truly none can be more important to the fancier, or its thorough understanding more essential to his success. How few do understand it is proved by the few who succeed, and by some of the statements made from time to time by various amateurs. I shall try, therefore, and be very simple in explaining what I have chiefly learnt in my own yard, since at the time I began to breed, there were no books which really taught anything about it. And I would say here, that one secret of the little success I have had, either in breeding myself, or in teaching others how to breed, has been that from first to last, I have had to look after my own yard; and that till very lately that yard was a very small one. I never knew any one learn much who depended on his 'man', he may succeed at shows, but it is his man who succeeds, not him. The advantage of a small yard is very great, in that every chicken you breed is under your eye, and its defects and beauties stamped upon your mind. If you have bred a bad chick you know it, it can't get lost to the eye in a large crowd, but your mistake is brought home to you and you are made to feel that you have not got your yard right yet. That chick is like the 'candid friend'—a great nuisance, but very useful nevertheless. A small yard, and by this, I mean such a space as I had all the while I lived in Bristol, only 67 x 33 feet in all—is the greatest friend a young fancier can have; and I honestly believe that the chief reason why—on an average—English breeders produce more good chickens in proportion than most, even of good American breeders, is their want of space. If you have acres of ground, and can raise your hundreds of chickens, it is very hard if you cannot, out of them, pick some half dozen trios fit for any ordinary competition. But that is not breeding, and such birds, almost faultless though they themselves may appear, will breed a very small proportion of good chickens. But if you have only such a space as I have described, and can rear only, say three dozen chickens, the case is altered at once. Now, if out of the three dozen chickens you want to produce half a dozen trios fit to show in good company, you must breed well; and when by this careful breeding you have got a stock that will do it, then a trio of your best birds, properly mated, will reproduce their kind.

Let me here take a text from a correspondent of the April *Bulletin*; though I differ from him, he will, I know, give me leave in the good cause. He writes: "The idea of breeding birds to a feather, is more a matter of theory than achievement—rather a fancy than a fact, I think. Two years ago I concluded that I would try and see how near to this mark I could come; procuring a very finely marked Cuck of one of the most popular varieties, from one of the most reliable and celebrated breeders and exhibitors in the Union, and putting him with a few superior hens of his kind. Out of about eighty of their progeny, there were not three that were very strikingly alike, either among the cockerels or pullets, and out of above thirty-five cockerels only one that was strikingly like his sire. From some indications in various parts of the article from which I have here extracted, I have an idea that the writer is alluding to Dark Brahmas, a variety on which I can speak from personal knowledge; and this is in fact the chief reason why I have selected his letter from several at various periods to the same tenor. Now, as to matter of fact, this variety is not easier to breed to feather than some others; but I will venture to state that I could very easily select a trio of these birds from the progeny, of which at least half, and probably two-thirds should be so uniform that only experienced eyes could tell them from the other in each sex respectively. But I could only do it from my own birds which I know, just as some other breeder could only do it from his which he knows. The experiment mentioned is in simple fact not 'breeding' at all, but merely the chance of what a first experiment in mating may produce. There was literally no 'breeder's work' about it whatever, beyond that fancy of character may have belonged to the purchased Cuck; and if this bird, as very likely, was simply one of the best from a large flock, there would not be much even of that. But I certainly do expect to get virus of a uniform high quality; and as a proof that my expectation is not a vain one, I may mention that in actual fact, I last year only hatched thirty-eight chickens, out of one brood of eight chickens in these one cockerel won the special prize at Birmingham, another was fourth prize in the same class (about one hundred cockerels competing), and a third won the cup at Dundee, in Scotland. I had also a magnificent bird which was only disqualified for showing by being hocked.

What then is good breeding, and what is the 'blood' which we say 'tells'? It is not purity of race. This is the grand mistake so many make, and which the correspondent already quoted falls into, when he says that the chicks even from the 'same hen' in an experiment, were not alike more than we are. The human race is pure enough in that it is not crescent or capable of being crossed with other species; but there is nothing in general about it of the nature of what we are now considering. In so far as there is, so far there is actual similarity in the produce. Thus, when Frederick William of Prussia, used his despotic authority to enforce the mating of his grenadiers with tall women, the result was a tall race, of which there are still evident traces in the neighborhood of Potsdam. Thus again, rich and noble families have greater power of choice in their marriages, and mankind usually preferring beautiful women, on the average these, noble families present a far greater number of examples than other classes do, of that refined style of beauty which we call 'patience'. Other similar proofs might be cited. And it is so in few cases. Purity, merely, is not what we mean by 'blood'. Let us suppose a pen of our Dark Brahmas to be bred from, and their progeny to be again bred from, and so on, never crossing the strain, but not mating up to any defined method of selection. At the end of a few years, the race will—as pure as ever, in that it consists of pure-bred or increased Brahmas; but its colors and other points will present all sorts of variation. Almost every breed will thus degenerate if not looked after to at least some moderate extent, till at length no color at all can be depended upon. It is so with cats; their nocturnal and wandering habits make any systematic mating very difficult, and the consequence is that the kittens in a litter present colors which are often not found in either of the immediate parents; though there cannot be a doubt that were they bred with care, their produce would be quite as uniform as that of other animals; indeed, such varieties of cats as from their greater value are bred with care—as the Persian or Maltese—do breed thus uniformly.

So much for what blood is not. Now for what it is. There is no recondite mystery about it; any man can understand it if he will try, and it is of great importance that he should understand it; he is ever to succeed as a breeder. I may briefly state it as follows: *Blood* in the sense in which breeders use the word—is the certainty of reproducing