

and even denied that they "could be accomplished without prejudice to the primary and sterling qualities of the fowl." He himself, he says, when he had produced "some splendid cock" (I am bound to say that I never had one from his yard of any remarkable excellence) found him so unwieldy that his daily exercise was taken with difficulty, and his special function only accomplished with difficulty "in one among many attempts." (Actual breeders who know the vigor of the Brahma will appreciate this statement). But he finally concludes that "hence" comes our inferiority to France in poultry produce; that the farmer who buys prize stock may probably "deteriorate even his stock of farm-yard mongrels;" and that "until the whole system of breeding for prize birds is swept away," we shall be dependent upon foreign powers.

One object I have in writing again about the old controversy thus revived—for it is a very old one—is to urge that there are some evils in our present standards which admit of remedy; but Sir Henry Thompson will have none of this at all. In a second letter he maintains that all is irredeemably bad, and that "no compromise is possible" between the useful fowls and the show system. The latter has already done tremendous harm, as stated above, and must go on doing harm. He has found this out, and so he sold off and retired in disgust.

I am not quite sure that Sir Henry Thompson quite knew himself when he wrote all this. It is very easy to mistake our own springs of action; and unless I have been grievously misinformed by some who have the honor of the great surgeon's acquaintance, this is not the first time he has rushed into a pursuit by way of diversion, pursued it with ardor for a while, and then retired from it as suddenly when the ardor had cooled. Small blame to him, either, for men like him need ever fresh interest to recruit their busy brains: only he need not damage the character of the discarded friend. But again: the plan of his yard has been published. He drew it himself, and an uncommonly good one it is—so good that I have reproduced it in the new edition of the *Practical Poultry Keeper* as one of the best I can give. But—it is from one side to the other purely a *fancier's* yard—one less adapted to the breeding or keeping of poultry for merely edible purposes could not possibly be!

Yet again, it is difficult to understand how this wonderful knowledge only came to him after three years. He bought and read the books, he says; and is plain he includes my books in particular. Well: Every atom that is true in his indictment had been clearly pointed out by me twenty years ago! I had shown in the very first edition of the *Practical Poultry Keeper* how judging by fixed standards must in some degree injure, and had injured, hardiness and fecundity, for the simple reason that in selective breeding

a man only gets in perfection *the points he breeds for*, whatever they are. I had repeated it at large and in detail in the *Book of Poultry*, showing how nevertheless the fancier *had* left matters much better than he found them. And in all the books he could not fail to learn how fowls were judged for the various points accepted. If he was ignorant of all this, in the face of the plainest teaching from all quarters, it surely shows a want of intelligence or observation which augurs ill for strict accuracy in observing other phenomena, or for success in even his own breeding, as witness his unhappy results in breeding and rearing Brahma cocks!

For before examining what is really true in his invective, but which being true is not new, I must state that Sir Henry Thompson's alleged facts, as regards England, are *not* accurate by any means. It is true that fanciers import and breed some races which are no particular use from the food point of view, as others breed canaries—simply for the pleasure of it. But it is not true that we "produce races inferior to those of France." Our races that *are* meant for eggs or table, are as good as any in the world. Madame Ailleroit told me herself, at a Crystal Palace show, after looking over the Dorkings—large classes of *modern exhibition Dorkings*, remember: the very class so anathematized—that these show Dorkings were perfection," and she would desire no better. The French do not beat us in breeds, but by their greater skill in dressing and greater care in fattening for market. This is caused by a *demand* for the best class of fowls in France which does not exist in England at all. No one here would pay a sovereign for a well-fatted prize fowl, merely for eating, but the French do it to a large extent, and the consequence is naturally a supply for such a demand, at a cost which our lower prices cannot afford.

In brief, Sir Henry Thompson's statements on this head are marked by a sheer ignorance of the whole facts, especially market facts, which has hardly ever been paralleled. The cheaper classes of dead poultry have been cheaper lately than for years, in London at least. At an eating house just outside Temple Bar, for the last year or more, half a fowl has been served, with either a sausage or rasher of bacon, for the charge of from tenpence to one shilling. When were such prices charged in the old days? So much for the cheaper poultry. As to the better class, I have made careful inquiry, and find that the supply of good English fowls has largely fallen off in some degree, for the simple reason that prices have so declined *it has not paid to fatten them!* It was once said this was owing chiefly to "Russian" importations, at prices which no home breeder could contend with. If that were true, it would in no degree help Sir H. Thompson's argument; but the chief salesmen do not give that opinion, and do not consider such imports are much in fault. What they state is, rather, that the