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IMPROVING THE STOCK.

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NO breeder should be satisfied with the maxim, "Let well enough alone." It may be a good maxim for many things, but it should have no place among the rules of the breeder. Better poultry each year should be his aim.

But how is he to realize such an aim? This is a very practical question.

He should, in the first place, determine what he means by better poultry. This term will have different definitions, depending upon the point of view of the one defining it. It may mean to the fancier birds of a finer type or richer and more harmonious coloring, birds nearer the ideal requirements of the Standard. Or it may mean to the practical poultryman fowls which produce more eggs or which yield more and finer meat for the food consumed. Or it may mean a combination of some or all of the above characteristics.

These characteristics are to a certain extent antagonistic. The breeder for fancy points, while he may consider practical qualities, will be tempted to make them of secondary consideration or forget them altogether. If the Standard description, however, is the description which will fit the most perfect practical bird, as in certain cases I believe it will, then the fancier, though he does not give a thought to practical qualities, will, nevertheless produce them by making the Standard's ideal his own. There is a more real antagonism between great laying and great table characteristics. The type of fowl which will produce the largest number of eggs is not the type which will produce the most meat for the food consumed. If he gets an extreme development in one direction he must

expect to make a sacrifice in the other direction. Both he cannot have. It becomes necessary, then, for the breeder to decide in what direction he will secure development, in other words to define what he means by better poultry.

Having decided this preliminary point, he needs to make a thorough study of the variety of fowls which he is breeding. Mating is the crucial test of the breeder. A man who knows how to mate his fowls aright is pretty certain to become a first-class breeder. And in making his matings he should ever keep clearly in mind the purpose he desires to accomplish.

But while mating is the most important thing it is not all. Rearing exerts a decided influence upon the characteristics of a fowl. It affects not only size and weight, but color, laying and indeed all other characteristics. The breeder of Shorthorns does not rear his young stock in the same manner as the breeder of Jerseys. He knows that as beef is his object, it is not wise to adopt the milk breeders' system of rearing. Observations have shown that Jersey calves reared for show purposes, that is upon a system of feeding which would put on great flesh and bring out the nice appearance of the young, have not equaled as milkers calves of the same breed which were reared in a different manner. Neither does the wise breeder of great layers adopt the same regimen for his chickens as that employed by the rearer of the meat breeds.

When mating for a specific purpose is followed up by rearing for the same purpose, there is reason to expect a steady improvement in the quality of the stock from year to year. But when one has no well defined purpose, and mates his fowls upon no well defined plan, the chances for improvement are small. If improvement takes place, it may be in one direction one year and in another the next, and the improve-