

Poultry Yard.

Poultry Notes.—No. 17

Matching—Exhibition Standards.

The intending exhibitor will now commence making his selections for our Provincial and other shows, and in doing so ought to be guided by the rules which govern judges in making their awards, and which may be said to be composed only of two, that is, properly matching in the pen and the value of exhibition points. The first care of an exhibitor should be to see that his birds are properly matched in color; this is very important, and want of attention to it has been the frequent loss of a first prize to many an otherwise well deserving pair of fowls. Taken singly and examined, they may be all the most fastidious fancier could desire, but when placed together in the pen there may be a difference of color fatal to their chance of taking a prize. Every intending exhibitor ought therefore to provide himself with a few pairs of pens in which to place his birds for examination before making his final selections. This can always be much better done quietly at home in his own yards than in any other place, and defects or imperfections more easily discovered, each point can be deliberately studied. It is not always the best looking bird in the yard or on the run which appears to greatest advantage in the show pen. If shown in trios, each pair of hens or pullets should match in color and markings exactly. And here it may be remarked, that matching in the heads and breasts is perhaps the most important to secure, for this reason, that these parts are the first to meet the eye, and it is surprising what effect the opinion formed on first sight has on the mind. We do not mean to say that good judges, on closer examination or on perceiving other defects, would award a prize simply for the reason we have mentioned; but we all know that on our first introduction to a stranger, there is an undefinable something which creates either a favorable or unfavorable impression on the mind respecting him, which, although sometimes erroneous, is difficult to eradicate. So it is with the first impression formed of a pair of fowls in the show pen, and therefore more attention in selecting birds properly matched in the parts which first strike the eye is of greater importance than in the less conspicuous parts, although of course it is highly essential that matching in every part should be as perfect as possible. In selecting birds, it will be necessary to distinguish between faults which are nearly fatal, and others which are matters merely of comparison. In Hamburgs a white leg or a lopping comb would be a disqualification, but in the feather markings it would not be so; the pencilling or spangling may not be quite so sharp or well defined in one bird as in the other, yet neither is a disqualification. So also of Spanish: a red face would be fatal, but the extent of the white face is matter for competition. A very successful English breeder and exhibitor usually kept such of his cockerels as he had intended for exhibition with some other larger and fiercer birds, so as to keep them "well under," as he was pleased to term it, till some weeks before showing. They were not of course to be regularly thrashed by the fiercer birds, but sufficiently cowed down to be in fear, and so driven about as always to show a good appetite for their food. About a fortnight or three weeks before showing time these cockerels would be placed by themselves with a couple of old hens for company, and the effect of the change was wonderful. The bird would set himself up, and put on airs and style which no other treatment would produce, and thus learned to show himself off to the very best advantage.

The value of "exhibition points" is the next point to be considered. To enable judges to form definite ideas of what would constitute an exhibition bird, a certain code of rules or canons were adopted by a

number of gentlemen in London, England, forming a society known as the "Poultry Club." These were subsequently published, ostensibly for the guidance of members of the club, but found their way into the hands of other fanciers, and were first given to the general public in an appendix to the first edition of Mr. Tegetmeier's Poultry Book, much to the disgust of some of the members, who did not fail to enter a strong protest against it. Whatever may be said to the contrary, there is not the least doubt but the publication of this "standard of excellence" was of infinite value to breeders and exhibitors as well as to judges at the time it appeared; and defective though it may be, when taken in connection with the increased knowledge of poultry breeding since acquired, it cannot for a moment be doubted that it helped to mould the very minds of those who are now the loudest in proclaiming to the world its imperfections. Did we require proof of this, we can only point to subsequent standards, whether English or American, to show that although a difference of opinion may arise as to the details, the basis on which formed is substantially the same. Although issued, as has been asserted, by a self-constituted body, never possessing the confidence of the public, it is not denied that it furnished a useful basis for a more perfect system of judging. So much then as to the inception of "a standard of excellence" and its would be detractors: let us now see how to apply it to the mutual benefit of judges and exhibitors at this season. The English standard, after giving schedules or descriptions of each variety of fowls, placed a numerical value on what are known to breeders as the fancy points in a fowl, amounting altogether to fifteen in number. These values are not alike in all breeds, nor are the fancy points similar in name or number. Some breeds have a greater number of fancy points than others; hence the values of such had to be lowered in number, to keep within the arbitrary number of fifteen as a total. The American standard, for the first time published in 1871, was almost a literal copy of the English edition, excepting as to the numerical value of the fancy points, and the addition of a few breeds either unknown in England, or not considered of sufficient importance to place them in the standard. Regarding the fancy points and their numerical values there is considerable difference. It was held by American fanciers that the number fifteen was altogether too small to show the relative values to each and to the whole of the fancy points, besides which they could see no valid reason why such a number should have been adopted, it being incapable of that subdivision necessary to arrive at the true value of each fancy point, and substituted for it the number of one hundred as a total. Whether this idea was original with themselves, or merely borrowed from Mr. Wright, in forming an independent scale for judging dark Brahmas, and given to the public in a little work published by him some years since, entitled "The Brahma Fowl," we are left in ignorance by the American fanciers. Adopting the number one hundred as the total in the American standard, the separate values of each of the fancy points were then placed at five or some multiple thereof, a standard as arbitrary in itself and as unjustifiable as that condemned in the English standard, with fifteen as a total. Since the publication of both the above standards, Mr. Wright has given to the world in his "Illustrated Book of Poultry," a "standard" of his own, original in conception, and by a different mode of reasoning arriving at a somewhat similar conclusion to that of the American standard. While he denies that book-judging is the correct means of arriving at the true knowledge of the excellences of an exhibition fowl, inasmuch as it is not elastic enough, and can make no allowances for many things which he enumerates, and adds that the eye of the experienced judge is worth all the standards in the world, he highly depreciates the idea of a judge counting, according to the judgment he may

place on them, all the points of a fowl, and then coolly adding them up to find which of the pens had the greater number of points, arguing that the pens showing the larger number of points, if rewarded a prize, would after all be evidently a wrong decision. He says: "We have occasionally had to notice that birds which would have been clearly first according to the 'standard' were by no means the best in their class. The 'points' put them first, but somehow no one liked them." Admitting that better scales of points than the American may be arranged, no doubt with a view to the adoption of his own, he suggests the doubt, "whether an infallible 'standard,' which shall correctly deal with every case, can be devised, so subtle and intangible are some of the features which at once mark off a first-class bird from all its competitors, and which can be felt or seen much easier than they can be put on paper." Claiming no more for his own scales than that the results have been arrived at "by careful comparison and analysis," aided by the most eminent fanciers, whose decisions they actually embody, he further adds: "We still think, therefore, that the eye and judgment of the best judges will and must continue to be the final authority at poultry shows; using 'standards' as the name implies—chiefly as permanent canons to which, if correct, it may be expected that awards will in the mean conform, and especially not expecting that a book, however perfect, can enable anybody to judge fowls, as seems by some in both hemispheres to have been expected." In our next paper we shall give Mr. Wright's scales for judging at poultry shows.

Boiled Corn for Poultry.

In the breeding of poultry, as in all other pursuits, a little care and forethought invariably return an apparently disproportionate result. In the rearing of poultry, where the expenditure on each fowl is small and the material provided comparatively inexpensive, we are apt to overlook the small wastes which occur in the transformation of the different grains into poultry, but which aggregate quite a respectable sum.

The opinion that corn is very nourishing food for fowls is so universal that no further thought is given to the matter. If any one should suggest that corn would be easier of digestion if soaked or boiled, he would very likely receive the answer that corn was nothing hard to digest for birds, which swallow stones and other hard substances without detriment. A moment's thought, however, will convince that the mill-stones and the grist are very different things, and feeding hard grain, although not exactly like feeding the millstones with pebbles, bears a certain likeness to it. The trouble attendant on the preparation of food, if it is to be cooked, may indeed seem very disproportionate to the advantage to be derived from such treatment, but in reality little time need be spent, as before going the rounds of the nests, a little hot water may be poured over the grain, a tight cover put on the kettle, and the whole placed over the stove, where by the time your rounds are completed, the corn will have become steamed and mellow, and have lost none of its good qualities. Remember each hen has a certain amount of animal force to be expended every day in some direction, and the less she has to give to digesting her food, the more she will have to be expended in egg-producing. The advantages of the warm food in winter, when much food goes toward producing animal heat to withstand the cold, are twofold—from the direct action of the warmth, and the slower action of the food itself, to say nothing of the fact that the content produced by nourishing food will result in more eggs, for a hen thoroughly at home will lay many more eggs than a discontented one. We have performed the experiment ourselves, and know that feeding boiled corn does pay, and it is as a result of experience that we offer this plan to our friends.—*Farmer (Eng.)*

AN OLD GOOSE died at Danville, Va., in his ninetieth year, from drinking lye out of a trough.

TO AVOID all loss of manure from night-soil, it is necessary to have a barrel of dry, fine earth, or sifted coal ashes, near the outhouse, and daily sprinkle a few quarts into the vault.