

and many a well-meaning adviser has brought his amateur friend to shipwreck by a too lavish exposition of the qualities of his own particular "fancy." In this short paper I hope to indicate the varieties of poultry that are best suited to those who are hitherto without experience.

*Firstly*, it may be laid down unhesitatingly that it is better to keep one definite variety than a hotch-potch of mongrel blood. The reasons are conclusive. Pure-bred fowls are no more trouble than cross-bred; they are more productive in their several ways; they command a better price alive; they are of equal value in the dead-market; their eggs are always saleable at increased prices for hatching purposes. *Secondly*, the novice who is well advised will confine his efforts (at least for a year or two) to the "general utility" purpose of poultry-keeping, and will avoid the "exhibition" mania until he has had opportunities of studying both the ways of exhibitors and the points of exhibits. The most successful exhibitors of to-day are those who have made a lifelong study of breeding for scientific points; and an inexperienced beginner stands no chance at all in the keen competition which already exists.

Before deciding upon any particular variety of poultry, there are several matters to determine, thus: (1) Are eggs chiefly desired, or chickens for the table? (2) How much space is available? (3) What is the climate? These points ought to have due consideration, because a clear understanding as to our object, aided by a careful analysis of the best means of attaining that object, will aid us in no small measure if we begin wisely at the outset. Suppose we take these three points and enlarge upon them a little, by way of clearing the ground.

The breeds of poultry which are most prolific in egg production are not the best table-birds, and *vice versa*. A *Hamburgh*, for instance, though a very good layer, is not much larger than a partridge when presented at table. On the other hand, a *Dorking*, renowned for whiteness of flesh and for weight as a table-fowl, is very indifferent as a layer. The best layers are non-sitters; the worst layers are persistent sitters. It is easy to see how a bird that spends so large a portion of its time in fits of broodiness cannot produce as large an average of eggs as a non-sitter. Therefore, the best course to take is to decide for one or the other, unless accommodation can be found for both. If both are kept, they should be kept quite distinct, lest, as usually happens, the one purpose interferes with the other.

Consideration of space must always be an important factor in planning a scheme of poultry-keeping. If the room be limited, if there be only a few yards of ground available, it is far wiser to keep, say, a dozen head of laying stock. No male bird is necessary—hens lay as well without one; and to replenish the stock year by year it is best to pur-

chase half-grown pullet chickens. If the space be not quite so limited as above, but if a small paddock be available, it will prove more remunerative to cultivate egg production, although there is no reason why a little hatching and rearing should not be done to replenish stocks, and possibly to provide a few birds for consumption at home. For systematic table-fowl raising, unlimited accommodation is necessary, and unless this can be found it should not be attempted at all, beyond home needs.

Climate is of all importance. In cold exposed situations many breeds will not do well, even though carefully tended; whilst other varieties seem to thrive best where the air is bracing. A gravel soil is always to be sought for every breed, since damp is destructive, particularly to chickens. The *Dorking* and most of the "table" varieties grow best in a warm, moist climate, for the very excellent reason that their habits are of necessity somewhat different, and the activity which keeps lighter breeds in continued good health is foreign to their nature. Some breeds are better if kept in a cold climate, and their hardihood seems to be diminished in a warm locality.

But probably some one will ask whether it is not possible to find a breed of fowls in which both laying and table qualities are to be found side by side. Yes, there are several; in fact, the production of new "all-round" varieties has been one of the great modern themes among poultry-fanciers. And the new beginner cannot do better than choose one of these "all-round" varieties for a start. In the *Wyandotte* we have a combination of all the virtues. It is a splendid layer—the *best winter* layer probably; it lays a brown egg (for some inscrutable reason the public foolishly supposes a brown egg to be richer than a white); and although the egg is comparatively a small one, it is a good average size. It is a very good table-fowl. It is a "sitter," but not a persistent one—that is to say, it does not often become broody; when it does it is an excellent sitter and mother; and it is both very hardy (flourishing anywhere) and very handsome in appearance too. There are numerous colours in *Wyandottes*—gold, silver, partridge, white, buff, and so on; but the gold and silver are best established.

For laying purposes pure and simple there is nothing better than a *Minorca*. *Minorcas* are either black or white. They lay very large white eggs; and if eggs were sold by weight instead of by number, *Minorcas* would certainly be the most remunerative. They are non-sitters, and lay well all the year round; they are only moderate table-birds. Closely allied to them are the *Leghorn* and the *Andalusian*—the former white or brown, and the latter blue. Either of these will pay very well, although neither will produce quite as much value in eggs as a *Minorca* of good strain.