

TWELVE BANTAMS.

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VII.

BLACK ROSE COMB.

THE black rose comb Bantam is, in shape, color and other characteristics, a true Hamburg of diminutive size. That is a good description of the little black beauty, and that is equivalent to saying that it is graceful in shape, with full flowing tail, curved lines throughout its make up, rose comb, beautiful white ear lobes, black plumage full of rich green lustre and a remarkably good layer.

I know not how it is with other strains, but the black Rose-comb, which I used to keep—I do not keep them now—laid a very long egg—an egg of peculiar shape, the shell of which was a chalky white. My strain was very prolific and the birds were small and proved to be dangerous to competitors in the exhibition, as they captured a good many prizes for me.

I have hatched some very diminutive chickens in various breeds and varieties of Bantams, but the smallest chicken I ever hatched was a black Rose-comb. This little fellow was scarcely larger than a bumble bee and seemed bright and smart for a few days, but then he began to decline, and despite of all that I could do for him he died. I would have been willing to give several dollars to have raised him if he had been as small proportionately at maturity as he was when hatched. He, or she, would have been a great curiosity. The death of this chicken from no apparent cause led me to wonder if there was not some limit beyond which a fowl could not be dwarfed. I do not know whether such a limit exists or not, but it seems as if such might be the case, I have heard of a Bantam—either Sebright or Rose-comb, I do not remember which—that weighed only four to six ounces when grown, but this bird was said to have been out of shape, with head disproportionately large and coarse. In breeding Game Bantams I have found that after I get them below about a pound the reachy quality seems to diminish and the characteristics that Game fanciers so highly prize deteriorate. And yet I know of no physical law which would prevent the continued reduction in size without a corresponding impairment of the qualities of our Bantams. This is, to me at least, a very interesting question, and if others are in possession of facts bearing upon it I should be glad to have them send them to this journal for publication or to me that I may use them at some

subsequent time. In breeding black Rose-combs, after securing the desired shape, there is an important problem in producing the most lustrous plumage. People often seem to think that there is no art in breeding black fowls, that all are of a color and one black is just as good as another. This is a great mistake, for there are blacks which are positively ugly and blacks than which few colors are more beautiful. A black to be beautiful must be full of lustre and should indeed be a rich green rather than black. A number of experiments which I have made has satisfied me that a male having some red in his plumage, mated to good rich black hens, will produce much more lustrous chickens than the most lustrous black male that can be obtained. To get this lustre there seems to be a necessity to infuse just a bit of the red into the black, through the blood. If any one doubts this let him try it, keeping the chickens apart from the others or so marking them that he can distinguish them when matured, and if the results he obtains are at all like those which I have obtained he will be satisfied that he has discovered the secret of producing the richest kind of plumage.

Avoid white in the birds. Sometimes there will be white in the first feathers but if this moults out and is replaced by good black the birds are all right, but beware of the white in wings of mature birds. The trouble is that if such birds are bred from them there is danger that it will continually increase in amount, and the strain be ruined. Yet another exception may be made and that is in favor of old birds. A bird which has been sound in color for two years may at its next moult show some white in the plumage. It would be folly to suppose that this white renders the bird less valuable for breeding than it was before its appearance. Yet we all like to have our birds moult sound in color, and if an old hen retains, year after year, her soundness in color, she is to be prized as of special value for breeding purposes.

We allow our Cochin Bantams free range and never had any trouble in getting feathers on them. The question of raising Bantams is not in the size of the yard, but in the feeding. We have seen Games as hard as a nut that, when being raised, were confined in small quarters which were moved from time to time and were given a fine bill of fare; their quarters were kept clean and there lies the secret. We give our Bantams free range because we have it to give; but if any of our readers have a touch of Bantam fever and haven't much land, do not hesitate about breeding them on that account. Proper food and clean quarters will enable you to be in it with the best of them.—*Am. Stock-Keeper.*