

BREEDING GAME FOWLS.

In breeding Game fowls great care should be taken that no Game hens or pullets are ever allowed to run with or near any farm-yard cocks, or any other than Game cocks, as if they mix with such they will sometimes throw back to the cocks in breeding after a long separation from them, and though such is not generally supposed to be the case, it certainly sometimes takes place. Game cocks and stags may be kept on the same walks as hens of any breed (rather small hens the best), but Game hens and pullets must never mix with any cocks, or stags, but Game on any account whatever, as it is very likely to injure the purity of breed in their progeny.

In breeding it is often said that two-thirds of the influence over the progeny comes from the hen, and only one-third from the cock. I have found it in general as follows:—That the cock has two-thirds of the influence over the male progeny, and the hen two-thirds of the influence over the female progeny, the cock having only one-third influence over his female progeny, and the hen only one-third influence over her male progeny. The best chickens, however, of both sexes will take most after the cock, if cock and hens are equal in strength of blood and constitution, and in goodness; the weakest and worst chickens will in like manner take most after the hen, as a rule. Many breeders, however, will differ from my experience as to this, I dare say, as I have heard some assert to the contrary, but not the majority of those I have compared notes with. Most, however, agree that the cock influences the fighting properties the most, unless the hens bred are of gamier blood than the cock is. I always like to see the cock influence the progeny as much as possible, as this shows more vigor in general in the brood, especially when with a large proportion of cock chickens. The cock influencing the progeny most shows he is a good brood cock; and if he does not he may be called an inferior brood cock.

Crossing different colors together I could never recommend, as the proper way to improve is to cross with better shades of the same color. In breeding and crossing colors of different sorts together, I have noticed that when most of the progeny take after the cock, the

cross has "hit right," to speak technically, and, on the contrary, when few or the fewest chickens take after the cock, and more or most after the hens, the cross has usually been unsuccessful. If a first-rate cross, all or most of the cock chickens will take after the cock, and when they do not, I always think the cross inferior, unless the cock is of weaker blood and color, and not so good as the hens, which would alone, perhaps, make the cross a bad one.

In crossing colors, all know, or should know, that dark colors will always prevail, as for instance, the dark original colors, such as Brown Reds, and Black breasted Reds, must prevail in all crosses.

The selection of a first-rate brood cock is, I think, the main point in crossing, and in all breeding of Game fowls, as no good stock can be expected except from a really good brood cock. A first-rate brood cock, in crossing colors, will always make the hens "throw to his color," and when this is the case the progeny is always vigorous and healthy, and this, together with having plenty of cock chickens, is one of the best signs of having a good brood cock. Chickens that do not take after the male parent at all, are not so good as a general rule.

A cock makes a good brood cock from rising two years old until four years old: a cock five years old is too old in general, unless an extraordinarily good bird, and stags are certainly inferior for breeding from, in my opinion, and in that of many other good breeders of Game fowls, though many like them for it. Pullets are in like manner too weak to make good brood fowls, and their eggs are also too small. Some assert that pullets will produce more cock chickens than hens will, but I think most decidedly not. As to the age of brood hens, it is not material if they are strong healthy birds, but both cocks and hens are well known to be in their prime at two years old, and therefore, in crossing, this is the best age to breed from; but in breeding in-and-in old cocks to two year old hens, and young cocks (not stags) to old hens, will be best, avoiding, if cousin blood can be had, breeding from father and daughter, mother and son, and brother and sisters, as this is breeding too near, and is unnatural.