

It is just this fact that they are not profitable as compared with many other breeds, which has unquestionably prevented their free adoption by poultry keepers generally. Take my own case as an example. It is now several years since I gave up Silkies altogether, because I had not sufficient time to go in for exhibiting them on anything like a decent scale, and because, consequently, they were occupying valuable space which could more profitably be occupied for the Langshans, which were naturally of much greater importance to me.

Nevertheless, anyone who can spare time and space will be well rewarded from the "fancy" point of view, and should be able to win, with the necessary care and attention, a fair proportion of the prize money at the shows. It is, of course, well known that at only a few of the larger shows are separate classes provided for these birds, and undoubtedly if there were more of these special classes provided there would be a much better chance of winning for the painstaking fancier who breeds and exhibits Silkies; but even allowing for this serious disadvantage, it is still possible to render a good account of oneself with them.

As "fancy" or exhibition fowls, Silkies have many good points, which can and should be properly developed by anybody devoting sufficient time and care to the purpose. Of course, this term of "anybody" does not include the absolute novice who is only just entering into the world of poultry. He is certain to be one of the disappointed exhibitors if he rushes headlong to the show room. But those who already know the fundamental principles of successful exhibition, and who have never seriously given Silkies a serious thought, might well do so now. As they know, for breeding exhibition poultry careful mating, namely, careful selection of the cock and his mates, to correct the faults on one side by the excellencies of the other, or at any rate not to "breed in" to a bad fault, is very necessary. And to get good, strong chickens for the show pen it is desirable that an excessive number of hens should not be run with one cock. When eggs alone are the object aimed at, it does not matter at all to the vendor or the eater of the egg whether it would have hatched into a strong chicken or not; but for breeding and rearing good exhibition stock it is of the utmost importance.

Hence it follows that it is most unwise to overcrowd the breeding pens.

If the prospective exhibitor of Silkies has a good grass run, little preparation for showing is necessary beyond occasional penning of the birds, to accustom them to the close confinement of the pen. After this occasional penning, they need only be put in the pens finally about four days before the show, when they should be carefully washed, and just as carefully dried after the washing. The length of this essay will not permit of my giving more detailed instructions for preparation, so I can only refer my readers to the several excellent essays which have appeared from time to time in these columns of on this especial subject of preparing birds for exhibition.

There is one curious purpose to which Silkies—the hens, of course—are sometimes put. They are set on pheasant and partridge eggs in the large game rearing establishments, and make first-rate sitters and equally good mothers to the young game birds after they are hatched.

To close, just a few words of description of the leading characteristics of Silkies. The head and beak are small, the face being a dark purple. The comb is a queer, lumpy, round rosecomb, of dark purplish color; the crest full and round, and not of the cockatoo shape. Wattles are long and purplish; ear lobes are purplish too, but tinged with white. The body is somewhat square, and covered with silky, fluffy feathers, the wings being carried rather low. The legs are short and moderately feathered, bluish black in color, and the outer toes are feathered. Altogether they present a very pleasing appearance to the eye and are in all cases a welcome addition to the poultry yard.

#### MANITOBA POULTRY ASSOCIATION.

The proprietors of the "Nor'-West Farmer" have kindly offered two handsome gold watches as special prizes at the next annual poultry exhibition. One watch will be given for the pen of fowl, consisting of one male and three females, making the highest score. The other will be given for the pen of turkeys, consisting of one male and two females, making the highest score. In each case the Association will offer a suitable second prize. Competition is restricted to the members of the household of a farmer living upon and working a farm in Manitoba or the Northwest Territories during 1899. All birds must be hatched and grown in these provinces in 1899.