

(whom we look up to) a few questions about his Light Brahmas.

1st Suppose an intelligent and experienced poultry-keeper was to take some of your pullets, matched by you with your own cocks, and breed till he had, say one hundred hens, and suppose he fed and tended them according to your directions, but did not kill any, but kept all the pullets that were hatched (without any culling of the best), what would the average yield of eggs be per hen, per year? As near as you can judge.

2d. Do you know whether the yield is greater or less than it was ten years ago, with your Brahmas?

3d. If the yield is greater than ten years ago, or, again, if it is less, how do you account for it?

4th. Do light Brahmas lay more or less eggs, in your opinion, than dung-hill fowls, under the same treatment?

LEARNER.

[On sending the above to Mr. Felch, he kindly sent the following reply:]

DEAR WORLD:— In answer to Learner's first question, I should say one hundred and fifty eggs to each hen, per annum, besides rearing a brood of chicks.

Question second. I should say less.

Question third. To answer this in full is to open a large field of why and wherefore. That, ten years ago, few breeds could beat the Light Brahmas in the production of eggs, is very well known, but why now find them falling short in this merit, few understand.

The year 1868 was the one in which all ran riot for large birds. Judges gave to weight the prizes, even to the sacrifice of many fine points. One pound in weight I have seen carry a show-pen against twelve points, as would now be required by our "Standard of Excellence," and I claim that the fearful falling off in the production of eggs in this brood was caused solely by breeding for large size. It is a rule among fowls that the larger and more masculine individual hen is the poorer layer. We have only to go back to boyhood and recollect the large hen with spurs, to also recollect that from her we can not remember of ever getting an egg.

So great, in 1867-8, was the desire for large hens, that even those known to be not of full blood were used by many breeders, who would gladly now retrace their steps. I have known parties to use hens raised from single-combed birds with white necks, because they weighed thirteen pounds, and besides that known to be comparatively barren, all to procure greater weight. And others have used out-and-out half-bred birds because of their great size. None can fail to see that such a course is injurious to the breed. Even those desirous of adhering strictly to purity of blood have been compelled, in order to meet the demands of a vitiated public taste, to make such selections, to secure size, as were less prolific, and thus assail the merits of the breed. This is every day being done by all of the breeders, for none of us have come out squarefooted and said "Let public taste go where it may, I will not cater for it." The most we do is to take a middle ground and try to please all. Ten years ago I used to think it safe to guarantee one hundred and sixty eggs and one brood of chicks as the product of a hen.

In 1864 eight hens in one run laid one hundred and ninety-two eggs and hatched and reared eight chicks each, in the year. It is safe to say a like number could not be produced now by a like number of hens from the modern breeders. Then one hundred pounds was considered a large weight for a breeding flock of twelve hens, and I did not think it good judgment to use breeders of above that weight, for I had learned that fowls of above seven and a half pounds average were less productive as layers, and I believe that to-day, with all our great weights to choose from, one thousand pounds of poultry can be made at less cost from Brahmas, the hens weighing, say eight and

the cocks ten pounds, as breeders, than by the use of the enormously large fowls.

The excessively large fowls are produced at a larger per cent. of cost, according to the weight, than are medium-sized birds, no matter what the breed. It all resolves into this: obesity is not profitable.

I believe that we can get the size and the productiveness too. Make it a rule to discard every thing, no matter what its appearance, if it fail in the merit of producing eggs.

There are strains of Light Brahma which do not commence to lay till eight and even nine months old, and the reason can be traced directly to this cause, "breeding for weight, and the use of comparatively barren fowls."

I have said enough on this subject for once. I do hope breeders, and not only the breeders, but that the public will set their faces against this mode of breeding. Instead of writing to ask the breeder what such and such pullets weigh, ask, if past five months old, how many eggs they have laid. If public opinion would say, "Unless a pullet has laid at six months old I do not want her," we should soon see fowls bred for merit and not from "caprice."

I think I have demonstrated why the yield of eggs is less now than fifteen years ago. I think all will agree with me when I say that "where the size has been kept up to the public requirements, the falling off of eggs has been at least fifteen and probably twenty per cent."

There is a larger per cent. of bone in the Light Brahmas now than ten years ago, in some strains, but this is not true of my own. Nearly every one of my Brahmas that to day weighs twelve pounds, I consider finer and as possessing less bone, by far, than when I first commenced to breed them. I have always looked upon a Brahma without a full breast with pity, and a part of my work for ten years has been to produce that feature in a larger degree, and I think any beholder of "Optimus" would not fail to see that *breast was a feature of a good Brahma*. There are different tastes in this matter. Some desire a very short leg. I like a medium length of leg. There are others whose whole ideal of a Light Brahma is found in the expression, "He is a big bird!" Such generally go for long legs and coarse, rangy fowls, and in these of course we find a larger per cent. of bone than in those that are bred very fine.

I like to see a nice short-horn heifer weighing two thousand pounds, whose leg I can clasp with my hand below the knee. Now, farmers can understand me when I say I like to see a Light Brahma cock that will weigh twelve and one-half pounds bred on the same principle.

It is not the bird that will weigh the greatest number of pounds, but the one that has the largest per cent. of fine points for its weight.

Breeders, breed as large as you can, and breed fine, and save all there is of merit in your breed.

When the time comes (and I hope it will come soon) when exhibitors will have to know that the fowls they exhibit must be known to be thorough-bred, then people will cease to buy half-bred, birds to show. Such things are done now. Are they right? I hope breeders will set their faces against such things.

Having occupied so much time and space upon the third question of "Learner," I proceed to answer the fourth, briefly. I do not hesitate to say that a good Light Brahma hen, with the same care, will lay thirty eggs more, in a year, than the common fowl. My experience in 1858, with a number of coops, as below, shows the following results:

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|-----------------------|---------------|-----|------|-------|
| A coop of common fowl | laid | 71 | eggs | each. |
| " | Leghorns | 101 | " | " |
| " | Black Spanish | 80 | " | " |
| " | Light Brahmas | 82 | " | " |