

## The Plymouth Rock—Its Origin, and How to Breed and Mate.

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Continued.

In mating there are three things to be considered, viz: size, color, and points. I have already pointed out that to obtain the exact balance of color between the male and female, it is advisable to mate two yards—one for males and one for females, or to mate for both in one yard by using a medium colored cock with both light and medium dark hens, thus contracting the tendency to run too light in males and too dark in females. Of course, as I pointed out in my last article, there will be a certain number of both males and females from these yards which will be off-color but the average will be good.

Great care must be exercised to see that no matter how light the male bird may be, he is distinctly barred from head to toe, as it were, and has good yellow legs and a bright yellow beak, low, well set comb, and no white in earlobes. Then, again, as to selecting the females, let them be of good size, the larger the better. You will never raise large, good sized birds by using small hens or pullets. I would much prefer using a small and vigorous cock with large hens than small undersized females with a large cock. From the former you will keep up the standard as to size, whilst with the latter your stock will deteriorate in size. Of course if you are fortunate enough to possess size in both male and female so much the better, but since the American Poultry Association have cut down the weights in the *Standard* there is not now the same necessity for breeding for great size, although I must admit that as a farmer's and marketer's fowl size is still desirable, and I find that in all English orders, size, and large size too, is one of the chief points insisted upon.

Now, in mating for pullets there is one point which is very little understood, and unless it is attended to, light and equally marked pullets may not be looked for. I allude to the necessity of selecting females with the light spaces equal in width with the bars, and the wider the light spaces the greater will be your success in breeding light colored pullets. It is only a well marked pullet that has the bars equal in width with the bars themselves, and from that the spaces grow less all the way down to no space at all, or solid color. I take as a medium the specimen upon which the bars and spaces are equal in width. From this the males will vary all the way to white, the females all the way to black. To illustrate this point, pluck some feathers from the breast of a very dark hen; naturally one would suppose that the hen

was dark because she was badly marked, but upon examining the feathers you will find that she is evenly and distinctly pencilled and marked, every feather in fact, but that the dark bars are much wider than the light spaces and consequently overlap, causing the hen to assume that dark and objectionable color which has so often disgusted the amateur, and spoiled his season's breeding as far as correctly marked pullets were concerned. So, my young friends, pay particular attention to this point if you would succeed. If you have no light females better at once get some from a reliable breeder—of the same strain as your male bird if possible. Far better to breed from one correctly marked female alone—if your means will not allow you to purchase enough for a yard—than to continue to go on breeding the dark colored ones.

There are, of course, other points to be looked to in both male and female if you would attain excellence. In this particular the *American Standard of Excellence* must be your guide. It is not, of course possible to obtain all the points; but keep them all in view, and get as many as you can. Low comb, with good solid base, bay eye, breast, broad deep and full; breast-bone, straight, this does not so much matter, however, in breeding birds as it is generally the result of accident or of roosting on too narrow a perch. Body deep, full and compact. Tail, in cocks, comparatively small, with rather short feathers, moderately expanded, and carried moderately upright. Tail, in females, small and comparatively upright, and rather pointed. These points are of great importance, especially the latter, nothing detracts so much from the bird's appearance as a great high hen tail.

And now a few words as to in-breeding and strain. There are several strains, but only a few good ones. Of these I consider the old "Essex" strain to be the best, (it has been the foundation of my own strain). Judging from results, this strain has won more prizes and has stamped its potency in more yards than any other strain in the country. Of this there is ample proof. I am not forgetting that various writings have been made upon the influence of the sire or of the dam, the stronger bird will have the more influence. It is just here that heredity and prepotency come in to play their part. Prepotency is the measure of vital force in the individual bird. Heredity is the force of the tendency to revert to some strong ancestor, and some individual bird may be so strong (prepotent) in this power to impress his offspring that all his descendants may take back to him (or her) by heredity, to remote generations. Here is where the forces come in that render a strain possible. There are