

that there is no decided opinion upon what the real shape of the fowl should be. Its indefiniteness allows various types, from the Shanghai, with its length of limb and neck and angularity of body, to the short-legged, compactly-made Wyandotte, to exist side by side and to be considered of equal value. So long as such indefiniteness remains in the standard of the breed its chances of improvement in shape will be small. Almost any red fowl of the desired size can be considered a Rhode Island Red. But if the popularity of the breed—and that it has a great popularity was shown by the immense exhibit at the Boston show—if the popularity of the breed is to continue, this amorphous standard must take on a definite form and its descriptions become sharp and clear. If its promoters desire to secure recognition by the American Poultry Association, the breed will have, I believe, to become distinct in color, in shape, and be brought to produce but one style of comb, instead of the three which are now produced, or the two which this club recognizes.

Fortunately, the breed, though much remains to be done to perfect it, is much better than its standard. Many of the fowls have a type about midway between that of the Plymouth Rock and the Wyandotte, which is a type indicative of excellent economic qualities—a type that is consistent with the union of excellent laying and table properties. Some one type, and the type indicated seems to be as good as any, ought to be insisted upon as the ideal type, the one which will give the best appearance to the fowl and at the same time insure its greatest utility. Whatever else is sacrificed, utility should not be. The Rhode Island Red has gained its reputation upon its economic merits. It was originated as a profitable fowl. Farmers have kept and reared it in great numbers because

it paid better than other breeds. And the type which will insure a continuance of its best qualities is the one which should be made the ideal of the breed.

The same may be said in respect to the type of comb. Some one type of comb, and that the most useful, should be selected. Of the three types of comb produced, the most useful is the pea; and, as this is also a style of comb different from that of the buff Plymouth Rock and Buff Wyandotte, it is the one which will give the breed the best chance of becoming a recognized standard breed. If the choice lay between the rose and the single only, the rose, as being of greater utility than the single, should be selected. For comb, the pea is the best, the rose next, and the single the poorest; and yet to-day the order would probably be reversed in respect to the relative numbers bred. If this be so; would it not be a serious objection to make the change? The answer to this question is an emphatic no; for there is no single feature of a fowl which can be more easily modified than the comb. If it were decreed that all Rhode Island Reds should have pea-combs, in three years the result would be practically obtained. As a farmer's fowl, this is certainly a result to be desired; for even a small advantage to each fowl would make a very great advantage to the breed. Among the fanciers who have taken up the breed the tendency at present in breeding is against the pea-comb, but that tendency need not deter the farmer or practical poultryman who keeps fowls for eggs and meat, and not for the prizes which they may win, from selecting the best comb for utility. It is due, however, to the breed to state that, whatever style of comb may eventually be selected, it is a good, practical, and useful farm fowl.

It would seem desirable that the standard for color should be so

framed that a single mating would produce the ideal coloration in both sexes. In most standards, the most beautiful color, as it is thought to be, is arbitrarily selected for each sex, the result being that it is necessary to make a special mating to produce cockerels of the desired color and another and quite different mating to produce pullets of the desired color. Practical men do not like to take all the trouble which these double matings entail. And it will be found that where a double standard (i.e., an ideal is sought for each sex) is made, these double matings will have to be resorted to. Take the B.P. Rock for an example. In this breed the ideal is to have cockerels and pullets of one, rather light shade—light enough to avoid any suggestion of smut-tiness, and dark enough to give an impression of blue when the plumage is viewed as a mass. The variety does not naturally produce this uniformity. The cockerels tend to run towards the lighter and the pullets toward the darker shades of color. To bring them to the required uniformity, art has to fight against nature, and special matings for each sex have to be made. But in a fowl bred chiefly for utility, art and nature ought to be in harmony and not to antagonize each other. To do this, and so secure the triumph of a single mating, the standard should describe the highest ideal of one sex, and describe as the ideal of the other sex the bird which mated to the first will produce the ideal plumage. Suppose the cock is selected as the sex to be idealized. The hens which, mated to such a cock, will produce cockerels like him should be made the ideal hens of the variety. In this way, and in this only, is it possible to make a standard for color in which the highest standard type of both sexes can be produced from a single mating.

The ideal color of the cock ought