

without any trouble. On attempting, however, to carry the idea into effect, those who have made the experiment have frequently failed to produce specimens up to the standard of the breed they were aiming at, and considerable surprise has, I believe, consequently been expressed at the failure.

I am of the opinion that there is a somewhat general inclination in many varieties—especially in a first cross—to throw wholly black or white offspring: those who have kept Andalusians, for example, will know to their cost what a number of chickens come black or white. Breeders for the table who have introduced a cross among their Plymouth Rocks will know that a great preponderance of the birds result in being nearly black. Those who have bred cuckoo Dorkings—of recent years—are aware how a goodly number, unfortunately, of the pullets, end in being of the same sombre colour; and before me, as I write, I have a letter from Colonel Annand, of The Firs, near Ash, in Surrey, saying that the result of introducing three white Dorking cockerels, a couple of years ago, into his flock of fowls which live at his home farm, has ended in his having a yard of almost pure white poultry. It is from such facts as these I think, that the idea is disseminated, that pure black and white poultry are so easily manufactured, but the error nevertheless, is a great one, anyhow as far as exhibition specimens are concerned.

For over a quarter of a century, I have been without two or three varieties of black or white fowls, Bantams or ducks, and during that time nearly every recognized breed in some way or other, has had a home—temporary or otherwise—in my runs. For that long period I have had, moreover, as fairly satisfactory a record to give of my black and white birds, in the breeding and exhibition pens, as have most fanciers. I venture, however, to affirm, after this somewhat extensive experience, that there is as much skill and knowledge required in breeding chickens of these colours, as ever there is to produce a buff Cochin cockerel, or a light Brahma pullet.

The only difficulty that is not experienced in breeding exhibition birds—black-and-white—is that separate pens to produce cockerels and pullets are not required, in the case of Brahmas, Hamburgs, and many other varieties, which surely is, to the amateur especially, a boon of great magnitude. Not only is this double-pen system most aggravating to beginners, who do not, naturally understand the proper mating of the birds, but for birds requiring this arrangement double space is, of course, required, since it virtually amounts to keeping two varieties, although one breed is only really exhibited. Not so, however, with blacks and whites, for from well-bred and properly-mated pens cockerels and

pullets of equal quality may confidently be looked for from the same breeding pen.

The prices, however, of these whole coloured breeds, run a great deal lower than, what I may term, birds of feather. I have never been able to properly account for this, but such, undoubtedly, is the case. On two or three occasions, at the great National Show, I have seen a white Cochin at the top of the prize-list, unclaimed at £15, and even at £20, when a buff or a partridge of the same quality would have been snapped up in almost the twinkling of an eye, and again to my own knowledge, the challenge cup white Dorking cockerels, at Sydenham, on two occasions have only realised a paltry £7 or £8 at the auction, when an unnoticed silver-grey or a coloured *confre* would be greedily bought at £15, £20, and £25 each. This, I confess, is not exhilarating. Nor does it tend to intensify the further spread and production of fowls of these colours. Yet I ask why should they be apparently snubbed? It is because the white birds are difficult to keep clean and require washing for successful exhibition? But do not buff Cochins, do not many varieties of the Leghorn, do not some Game fowls, and Polish, and Houdans, and Silver Hamburgs, and many others have to be tubbed? Is it because the black look dark and dingy in colour? Surely this is not the case with birds in good bloom and lustrous feather, which moreover have the advantage of looking well in confinement, when other varieties would be foul and discoloured. Is it because the white chickens when newly hatched are supposed to be delicate? I have bred hundreds and hundreds of the colour, and can at once scatter to the winds that familiar heresy, for I have ever found them to be strong and sturdy, save in most exceptional instances, as the youngsters of the colored varieties. Is it because black and white poultry look often smaller in a pen than they really are? (This, I suppose is an acknowledged fact, for put, say, a black or white Cochin alongside of a buff or a partridge of similar size and equal weight, and either of the two later would probably have the larger appearance.) This may be a possible reason, but, if so, it is a very lame one. I remember, however, Mr. Lewis Wright calling my attention to this very point a score of years ago at the National Show. Why, I ask, then, is the cause of the unpopularity, to a certain extent, of black and white poultry on the whole? I make reply, because I believe that they are supposed to be so easily bred that they are beneath the notice of those who call themselves high-class breeders, men of intelligence, fanciers of skill and research.

(To be Continued.)