

longer than I could get rid of it.

It is all nonsense for any one to labor under the idea for a moment that fancy stock is worth no more than common. Reflection would convince the merest tyro of the stupidity of such an idea. To commence with good stock costs more, they need better houses, attention and accommodation, and a hundred little etceteras and expenses are coupled with successful breeders' operations that the owner of common stock know nothing about. He cannot afford to sell at prices paid for common, and he does not do it, and his best specimens he never parts with at the price of ordinary ones; and the best possible proof that I know of that the really grand first-class prize winning specimens are worth what they fetch, is, that the very best breeders and fanciers are generally the men who are the purchasers.

✕ ROADS.

Ostriches at the Cape.

In the Cape Colony in 1865 there were eighty domesticated ostriches, according to Government returns; in 1875 there were about 140,000; and now there are in South Africa nearly 500,000. Thus ostrich farming, as at present practised, has only been carried on for about fifteen years, and an interesting point yet to be settled is the average duration of an ostrich's life. Some farmers fix it at twenty or twenty-five years, others at forty or fifty. There are at the present time in the Cape Colony ostriches which have been domesticated for sixteen or eighteen years, and to judge from the quality and quantity of feathers they produce, their procreative energy, their sprightliness and general plisique, show no more sign of declension than birds of four years old. But there are also birds which were known before domestication was attempted, whose ages are put at about twenty-five years, of which the same may be said. One of these formerly the property of Sir Walter Currie, may now be seen in the Albany district. Another is to be found on the farm of a Mr. Van der Reit, near Port Elizabeth. According to the story of the natives on the farm, this bird, a female, has been domesticated six years, and had been known to pay periodical visits to the neighborhood for twenty years previously. This would make its age scarcely less than thirty years. This ostrich, from being a creature of the "veldt," became a creature of the farm in an unusual manner. Wandering near the camps where some of the farm ostriches were kept, she suddenly leaped the fence, mated with the cock of the camp, and from that day became as tame as the average of farm birds. This freak seems the more singular when it is known that ostriches except when panic struck, never jump fences.

The simplest and most flimsy fences are not unfrequently used by farmers, and wild birds have been observed even to avoid going over pieces of uneven ground. When panic struck with fright, however, they are more terribly impetuous than any flock of sheep, and nothing will stop them. They have even been known at such times to run against a stone wall, killing themselves by the concussion. These panics occur often from the most trifling unusual sight, and among troops of birds in the highest state of domestication.

It has been said that there are two different species of the South African ostrich, and Mr. Anderson in his interesting book on the birds of Damaraland, endeavors to make out such a case, but on evidence which must be insufficient. He formed his opinion from the examination of imperfect remains of two or three birds, which he believed were black females, the ordinary female being brown or drab. But it is quite possible he may have mistaken the sex; and travellers and hunters do not corroborate him. Moreover, ostrich farming has repeatedly exhibited such difference in birds, that it would take more than isolated cases to prove the condition. Differences in the size of birds, the hue of plumage, the color of the visible skin, and the size and appearance of the eggs, such as Mr. Anderson pointed out, may be seen in almost in any part of the Cape, on almost any farm. If birds are well managed their feathers will be full and of richer color; if in poor condition the feathers will be affected. If their health is low the skin will be pale and sickly, and if in good health, particularly at the breeding season, it will be of a rich and fresh tone. Some birds may be nearly six feet high in body, with the top of the head eight or nine feet above ground when in a natural position; others may be scarcely more than half the size. The same remark applies to the eggs, some of which may weigh only 2½ lb., others 4 lb. Some egg shells are closely pitted, others are as smooth and polished as a billiard ball; but this, to the experienced farmer, would merely indicate that the latter was a sterile egg, incapable of producing a live chicken. Another point of difference which Mr. Anderson supposed he had discovered was that the specimens he found had double rows of long quills on the wing; but numerous instances have occurred where birds have developed as many as four rows of white feathers on each wing. But while there appears no just ground for believing there are two distinct species of the ostrich in South Africa, the fact remains that the birds habituated to different districts develop slight differences of color and size. The ostriches caught on some of the sandy plains of the Transvaal, for example, are alleged to have larger and broader feet, while those reared on the hard rocky soil of the