

The eggs laid in March and April are of high fertility, and the young birds are very hardy, and it is easy to raise 95 per cent. of them if they are kept safe from rats. Ducks are such voracious eaters that they cannot be kept the year round as we keep hens, without eating more than they are worth. It will be seen by this that three years' experience in duck-raising has cooled my enthusiasm, and that I have found difficulties which I did not know of when I wrote on this subject before.—Waldo F. Brown in "The Country Gentleman."

THINNING OUT POULTRY.

EXCELLENCE, not to say perfection, will always be the exception in poultry as in everything else. The Lord Rivers, who was so well known for his love of Greyhounds, and his almost uniform success at coursing meetings, was one day asked the secret of it. He said, "I breed well, train well, and hang well." We believe this to be necessary wherever there is to be great competition.

We have passed the breeding stages, and we now have a yard full of promising chickens, rather an "embarras de richesses"—too many to exhibit, too many to keep, far too good to kill, and much too valuable to sell at market price. "What am I to do?" asks the owner. "I wish you would advise me." So we will, respected reader, and, it may be, fair correspondent. We are not intending to tell you that there is a place in London where they will make their weights in gold, or that there is a person somewhere who will buy any number at any price, we are simply bent on advising you to ask the advice of a friend or neighbor about your birds. It is astonishing how easily they will overcome all your difficulties.

We will go with you among your Minorca chickens. Your arrangement is an admirable one, and having, as they have, a cottage run, we do not wonder at their looking so well. Now they are brought together, be good enough to show us your best. You cannot. Well, then, we will show you your worst. Kindly tell whoever has charge of them, to catch up any chicken we point out. Look at that young Minorca cock, his comb is certainly not straight; now that scarcely per-

ceptible twist will never be less, it may be larger, it will become more objectionable, but it will never disappear, and it will very likely bring the comb over with it. Catch him up. Bad comb cock again, take him away. Very seedy pullets, take them away. This would be the burden of the song, and although you probably might in some instances have cause for remonstrance, yet you would be surprised with what facility a judge—without leaning, partiality, or favor—can divide and condemn chickens from a run, where the owner could see only perfection.

Having mentioned Minorcas as the first, we will make a few more remarks on that breed. There was last season a large sale for them at very good prices; they were also better in quality than they had been for some years. There has been an unusual demand for eggs, and among the many chickens hatched some will perplex their owners.

Those to whom poultry keeping is a mere pastime, and with whom the expense is unimportant, can of course do as they like, and they may not care for our scribblings; but to those who wish to combine the fancy and the pocket we say, Beware of pets and beware of fancies. Let neither your wife nor daughters go with you when you have hardened your heart and determined to destroy some. There is a very kind-hearted, nice, blue-eyed girl who will not hear of the chickens she reared being killed; she is very mild, but she speaks with great firmness when she says she will not eat them if they are. Her dark sister says she hasn't patience with papa, and he may rear his early chickens himself next year. The wife and mother thinks it is unkind to tease the girls and try their dispositions. The smaller ones don't care for the big chickens, but there are two or three little dears—one with a broken wing and another with a crooked bill—that shall not be taken away; and when mischief says, Stop till they have gone to bed, they declare they will take the darlings up with them.

Do not be led away with the notion that chickens will grow out of faults; they cannot do it. The curve in the comb of the cock, the slight hump or twist in the back of the pullet, the very trifling, almost imperceptible, bowing of one leg will only increase as the birds grow older. As we are still dealing with Minorcas, let us say that as the cocks must have upright combs, there will be no excuse for keeping chickens that lack the quality. A defect in the comb is visible at ten weeks old in the cock chicken. It is impossible to speak with so much certainty about the pullets. It is never safe to reject pullets too young, as many a valuable hen has been in danger when a pullet.—"Poultry, Pigeons, Cage Birds, Rabbits, etc."