

A Chapter from Early History.

CHAP. VIII.—THE FEVER WORKING.

ABOUT this time an ex-member of Congress, formerly from Pennsylvania, was invited to deliver the address before one of the country agricultural societies of that state (where the fever had now begun to spread with alarming rapidity) who, in the course of his speech on that occasion, delivered himself of the following pointed and forcible remark.

Speaking of poultry and the rare qualities of certain domestic fowls, he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, next to a beautiful woman, and an honest farmer, I deem a Shanghae cock the noblest work of God!"

Now, this expression might be looked upon, by some persons, as savoring of demagogism, or, at the least, as an approach to "running the thing into the ground" (or into the air); but the honorable gentleman no doubt felt just what he said. I have seen many sensible men who felt worse than this—a good deal—on this self-same subject; and who expressed themselves much more warmly in regard to the characteristics and beauties of domestic poultry; but to be sure, it was *after* they had "gone through the mill," and had come out at the *small* end of the funnel.

In New England, especially, prior to the *second* show of poultry in Boston, the fever had got well up to "concert pitch;" and in New York State "the people" were getting to be very comfortably interested in the subject—where *my* stock, by this time, had come to be pretty extensively known.

The expenses attendant upon this part of the business, to wit, the process of furnishing the requisite amount of information for "the people" (on a subject of such manifestly great importance), the *quantum sufficit* in the way of drawings, pictures, advertisements, puffings etc., through the medium of the press, can be *imagined*, not described.

The cost of the drawings and engravings which I had executed for the press, from time to time, during the year 1850, '51, '52, and '53, exceeded over eight hundred dollars; but this, with the description of my "rare" stock (which I usually furnished the papers, accompanying the cuts), was *my* chosen mode of advertising. And I take this method publicly to acknowledge my indebtedness to the press for the kindness with which I was almost uniformly treated, while I was thus seriously effected by the epidemic which destroyed so many older and graver men than myself, though few who survived the attack "suffered" more seriously than I did, during the course of the fever. For instance, the large picture of the fowls which I had the pleasure of sending to Her Majesty Queen Victoria (in 1852), and which appeared in *Gleason's Pictorial*,

bet *New York Spirit of the Times*, *New England Cultivator*, &c., cost me, for the original drawing, engraving, electrotyping, and duplicating, eighty-three dollars.

All these expenses were cheerfully paid, however, because I found my reward in the consciousness that I performed the duty I owed to my fellow-men, by thus aiding (in my humble way) in disseminating the information which "the people" were at that time so ravenously in search of, namely, as to the person of whom they could obtain (without regard to price) the *best* fowls in the country.

This is what "the people" wanted; and thus the malady extended far and wide, and when the fall of 1850 arrived, buyers had begun to be as plenty as blackberries in August, whilst sellers "of reputation" were, like the visits of angels, few and far between. I was, by this time, considered "one of em." I strove, however, to carry my honors with Christian meekness and forbearance, and with that becoming consideration for the wants and the wishes of my fellow-men that rendered myself and my "purely bred stock" so universally popular.

Ah! when I look back on the past,—when I reflect upon the noble generosity and disinterestedness that characterized all my transactions at that flush period,—when I think of what I did for "the cause," and how liberally I was rewarded for my candor, my honesty of purpose, and my disingenuousness,—tears of gratitude and wonder rush to my eyes, and my evercharged heart only finds its solace by turning to my ledger and reading over, again and again, the list of prices that were then paid me by "the people," week after week, and month after month, for my "magnificent samples," of "pure bred" *Cochin-China chickens*, the original of which I had imported, and which were *said* to have been bred from the stock of the Queen of Great Britain.

But, the Mutual Admiration—I mean, the "Society" whose name was like

"Lengthened sweetness, long drawn out," was about to hold its second annual exhibition; and as the number of its members had largely increased, and as each and all of those who pulled the wires of this concern (while at the same time they were pulling the wool over the eyes of "the people") had plans of their own in reference to details, I made up my mind, although I felt big enough to stand up even in this huge hornet's nest of competition, to have things to suit *my* "notions."

I *now* had fowls to sell! I had raised a large quantity of chickens; winter was approaching, corn was high, they required shelter, the *roup* had destroyed scores of fowls for my neighbors, and I didn't care to winter over three or four hundred of these "splendid" and "mammoth" specimens of ornithology, each one of which could very cleverly