

Poultry Yard.

Poultry Judging.

No class of animals at our agricultural exhibitions, require a more complete practical acquaintance with the numerous points indispensable in a first-class specimen, than do poultry. The breeds of fowls are not only many, but the distinctive points on each breed are very numerous, with all of which a competent judge should have a thorough knowledge. The combination of qualities therefore required to make up a good judge is very rare. There are few men who know many breeds well, and the difficulty of passing from one breed to another without the eye becoming biased is very great. A good judge must therefore be not of doubtful integrity and have at least a competent knowledge of all breeds of poultry, both in their merits and in their ordinary defects from a show standard. He must be cool, and yet quick of eye; patient and deliberate, and yet decisive, and able to make up his mind; have an opinion of his own and yet not be crochety or fanciful. He too, ought to be able to consider the circumstances of the day, a point little thought of by most exhibitors, who seem to expect that decisions should be always alike, that is, it may be necessary to judge differently at different times, and according to different faults prevalent at the time. For instance, supposing the case of a cochin slightly vulture-hocked, but of marked merit otherwise. The proper standard of perfection no one doubts, but if nearly bare legs were almost universal through too great fear of the hook, such a bird as we suppose might with advantage have first prize, supposing him better than the rest in other respects, whereas if vulture-hocks were becoming commonly shown, it might be equally desirable to pass him over, or only give a third or fourth place in order to discourage the popular fault. Some judges never go to an exhibition unless first furnished with the "Standard of Excellence" in their pocket, and instances might be mentioned where such a course is desirable, but the fault of all book-judging is that it is not elastic enough, and can make no allowances either for such things as we have just alluded to or many others; in fact the eye of a thoroughly experienced judge is worth all the "standards" in the world. The course lately adopted by poultry judges at some of the United States shows of "adding up all the points" of the various pens, and then awarding prizes in proportion to the number of points, is by no means the most perfect plan, besides which some of the decisions would after all be evidently wrong, after they are made for birds which would be clearly first, according to the "standard," would by no means be the best in their class. The points may put them first, yet no competent judge would like them. Better scales of these may certainly be arranged, but it is at least a matter of doubt whether an infallible "standard"—which shall correctly deal with every case—can be devised; so subtle and intangible are some of the features which at once work off a first-class bird from all its competitors, and which can be "felt" or seen much easier than they can be put upon paper. Nevertheless, a correct "Standard of Excellence" may be of the highest use. It may on occasions help even the veteran judge, it may be of much incalculable assistance to the inexperienced, and by study and patience train a good judge, it may maintain the fixed canons of a breed, and show the amateur what he has to aim at, it can tell him exactly the real quality of his birds, and almost exactly his fair chance of winning, and it can at least prevent the amateur public from being misled into breeding wrong through any glaring error in judging. Unquestionably, however, the eye and judgment of the best judges will and must continue to be the final authority at poultry shows; using "standards" as the name implies, chiefly as permanent canons to

which, if correct, it may be expected that awards will in the main conform, and especially not expecting that a book, however perfect, can enable anybody to judge fowls, as seems by some to have been expected.

The system pursued at our exhibitions of placing a trio in each pen has long since been discarded in England as unjust alike to the exhibitor and the judge. A pen of birds should consist only of a single bird or pair, (cock and hen). Nor should more than two judges be appointed to one class. With two judges, by far the best plan is for one to begin at the beginning of the class, and the other at the end, marking their books as they go through the class, and then compare the books, which will (if both are experienced judges) be often marked so much alike as to settle the prizes without further examination of the birds. When time is short, the quickest way of judging is in a preliminary walk through the class to mark off the pens possessing no particular claims to notice, and then more deliberately to consider the rest, or to attach marks to the more deserving pens, deciding their rank by degrees. In doubtful cases the scales may help to decide, but as a rule the less of these arbiters the better, though a good pair should always be at the service of the judges.

In England the idea is fast gaining ground that the best plan is to employ only single judges in each class, each judge being responsible for his own awards. A judge can always call in his colleague to advise in any case of difficulty; but by putting the real responsibility for every award on some one person's shoulders, the greatest likelihood, it is maintained, is secured of attaining all that character and ability can give to the task. If each judge would check over the awards of his colleague, remarking on any which to him appear erroneous, there will be little risk of any escaping detection. Open judging is a grave and serious blunder. In every case where it is possible to carry out the plan, no person beyond a careful man accustomed to handle poultry should be admitted to the show from the time the birds are all penned until the awards are fully completed. This one attendant, (or one to each set of judges), should be a man well practised in taking birds in and out of the show pens; and should the judges require his assistance to ascertain beyond question, by handling, any dubious points that may arise, he should always be ready to take out any fowl selected for special examination, and then withdraw beyond earshot, during the time occupied in final consideration. Judging at best is a thankless task. If all his awards are correct the judge has only done his duty, and if not he often reaps abuse in no measured terms. The least then that gentlemen who act in this capacity have a right to expect is that time and quiet be given them to perform their task with due deliberation and care.

Heat and Light—Their effect on Fowls.

Very diverse opinions prevail as to the best method of housing poultry in the winter, some entertain the idea that it is best to shut them in from light and cold, and very recently we were told by a fancier that he purposed constructing a house for his poultry having that object in view. Others think that poultry should be allowed to roost wherever they may find it convenient, either in barn, shed, or stable, and not unfrequently have we known birds being kept shut up during the entire winter months in an underground basement into which the sun's light never penetrated. We are of a different opinion. The house in which poultry should be lodged ought to be so constructed as to keep out not only frost and cold in the winter season, but also freely admit the heat and rays of the sun. The direct beneficial effects of the solar and luminous rays on animal and vegetable life are well understood and requires from us no lengthened demonstration. It is enough for us to com-

pare those who pass the greater portion of their lives in the open air, and in the sunshine, with those who are secluded from it, either by business occupation or obscure dwellings, to notice its effect on health and life. It has been proved that the quantity of carbonic acid exhaled by an animal increases with the intensity of light, and attains its lowest limit in complete obscurity, and as all animals, in the act of respiration, consume oxygen, and exhale carbonic acid, it will at once be admitted how necessary it is that a large supply of the former should be secured, especially so for poultry when kept confined, as will presently be seen. It is to the effect of the sun's rays we are indebted for the oxygen we consume, and unless the supply is equal to the demand the noxious effect soon becomes visible as well in men as in animals. But as respiration in fowls is effected more completely, extensively, and actively, than in any other class of similarly constituted animals, their average temperature is higher, and necessarily the exhalation of carbonic acid is proportionately greater. This extensive development of the respiratory process is due to the fact that air is admitted in fowls not only to the lungs but also to the interior of a greater or less number of the bones, and to a series of air receptacles which are scattered through various parts of the body.

The abdominal cavities are subdivided by means of membranous partitions into a series of cavities or sacs, which are termed the "air receptacles." These air-sacs are filled with air from the lungs, and vary considerably. They do not only serve greatly to reduce the specific gravity of the body, but also assist largely in the aëration of the blood. Connected with air-receptacles, and supplementing their actions in both these respects, is a series of cavities occupying the interior of a greater or less number of the bones, and also containing air. It will be seen then that the quantity of oxygen consumed by fowls is greatly in excess of that of any other class of the vertebrata; and in the sufficient and continuous supply of which, in a great measure, their health and profit depends. In young birds, however, these air cavities in the bones do not exist, the bones being simply filled with marrow, and to this fact may be attributed the small amount of injury sustained in over-crowding in houses, as compared with older fowls.

Poultry houses, then, should be so constructed as to freely admit the calorific rays of the sun, which are as essential to the health and recuperative powers of fowls as the food they eat is to the sustenance of their bodies—they constitute the incessant and periodically renewed source of power and life, not alone in fowls but in all other animal life; and the study and application of nature's fundamental laws are as essential to the rearing and keeping of poultry, as mating and crossing is to the production of pure breeds. Not until they are properly understood and acted upon and their beneficial effects utilized will the complaints of the unproductiveness of poultry become less general, the sooner, therefore, we apply ourselves to the task the better.

Fowls Taking Cold.

A great proportion of the ills to which fowls are subject arise from taking cold; during moulting season they are most sensitive to the changes of the atmosphere. *Land and Water* has the following timely suggestions in relation to the inducing causes, and the remedies:

The earlier symptoms are slight loss of appetite, drooping of the tail, and a clear limpid discharge from the nostrils. It is entirely due to exposure to damp and cold winds, and imperfect housing; but there are inducing causes frequently combined; improper and insufficient food is one which materially aids it by rendering the system poor and weak and incapable of resisting of shaking off any kind of hardship, however light. Breeding in and in, that is from stock related