

PRIZE POULTRY.

By W. M. ELKINGTON.

KING SOLOMON was the first accredited poultry fancier with whom historians have put us upon terms of intimacy, for there is little doubt that one of the objects of his voyages to the land of Ophir was to secure specimens of a gorgeous bird defined by the Hebrew word *Tūkiyyim*, which is commonly supposed to denote the pea-fowl. In Solomon, therefore, we claim to see the first indication of instinctive love of fine feathers and symmetrical propor-

of the lucrative qualities of the *genus* hen, for the British farmer is notoriously the most conservative being in Christendom, and to all intents and purposes objects most emphatically to the invasion of his territory by the growing popularity of the poultry movement.

But in this particular instance it is with the prize breeds of poultry, and not with the common or garden laying hen, that bravely endeavours to compete with her Continental rivals, that we have business. Allowing that

King Solomon was the first fancier, and that the pea-fowl was his fancy, we have yet to seek and find the origin of the domestic fowl in the *Gallus Bankiva*, that hails from India, and is, perhaps, through the Game breeds, the progenitor of all modern varieties. There has been considerable discussion on this point, and many authorities are unwilling to believe that birds so diversified from the original could ever have descended from them without

retaining some trace of their ancestry. But of all the wild fowls, the claim of the *Gallus Bankiva* ranks highest, and without diving further into technicalities we may advisedly place it upon the pinnacle of fame as the original source of the modern fowl.

Looking back twenty or thirty years, it would be difficult to recognise the poultry fancy. In those old days, that seem so far removed by the multiplicity of events, we were accustomed to look upon the successful exhibitor as one who had striven for years through despair and disappointment, till at last the ideal was attained. But now all is changed. To-day my Lord A—, or Lady B—, having set the mind upon a bird

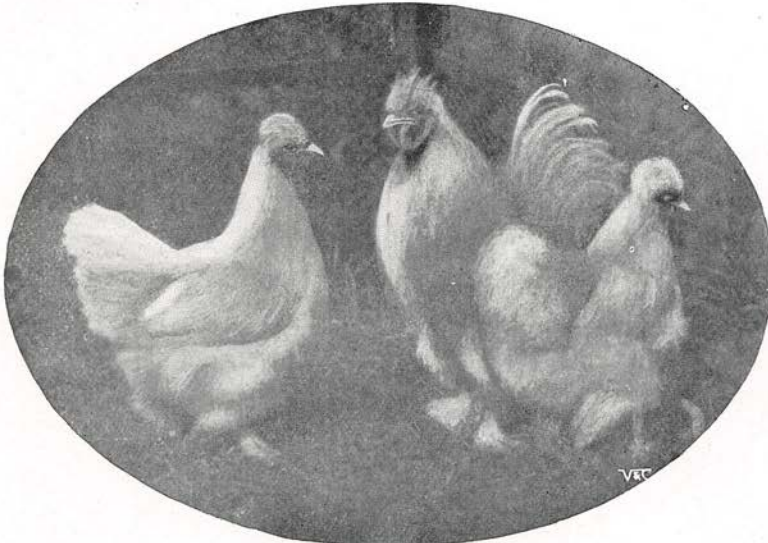


Photo by]

QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S SILKIE FOWLS.

[Gen. A. Dean, Rugby.

tions; and from Solomon, maybe, we inherit the necessary acumen and discernment that has been the means of raising fancy poultry to the standard they now occupy as objects of rural ornamentation.

But it is doubtful if as objects of ornamentation alone pure-bred poultry have risen to their present popularity. The generation of to-day has no shame in pleading guilty to pecuniary intentions in the breeding of fowls; and it is well, perhaps, that it should be so, when the cry of agricultural depression is heard in the land, and the farmer must perforce turn from his former sources of income to another that is within his reach. Not that he does take advantage to any great extent

that bids fair to win fame in the show-pen, are willing to instruct their poultrymen to buy this bird at any price; and, having secured it, they are quite agreeable to pay exorbitant prices for males, or females, as the case may be, with which to breed. And so Lord A—or Lady B—becomes the possessor of a wondrous prize strain, and their fame as clever fanciers is related as a matter of course. All this ensures the pecuniary success of poultry-keeping, and the patronage of the nobility is guarantee for its



Photo by]

[Russell & Sons.

LANGSHAN HEN (ORIGINAL TYPE).
The property of Miss Croad.

popularity. There are, however, many notorious fanciers who retain their winning strain year after year and continue to carry off the prizes in their respective classes with astonishing regularity—so much so, indeed, that other exhibitors, less fortunate, become disgusted and forsake the variety for another less subject to monopoly. The majority of our popular breeds have, however, thousands of followers, and considering that at the largest shows, such as the Dairy, Crystal Palace,

and Birmingham, as many as two hundred exhibitors compete in one variety, it may rightly be imagined that the spirit of honest competition here manifest constitutes one of the most desirable characteristics of the fancy.

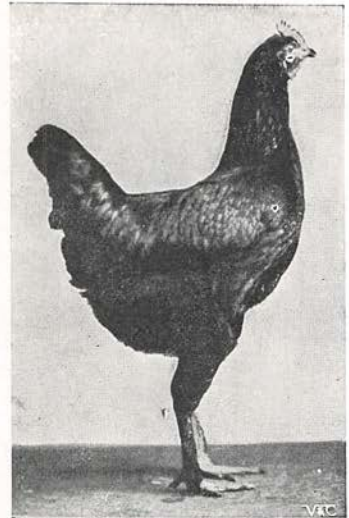
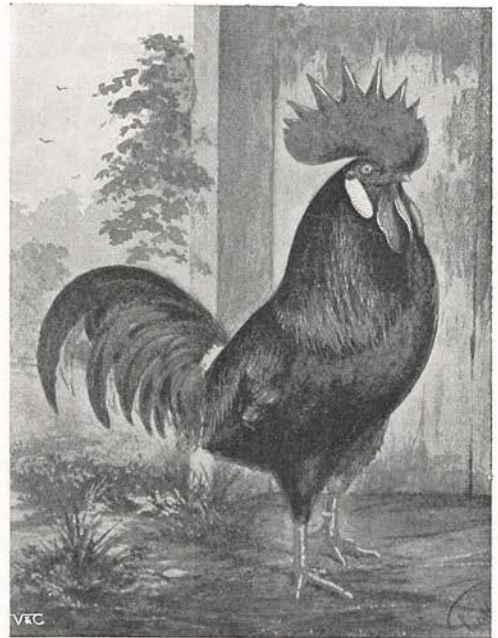


Photo by]

[Russell.

A MODERN LANGSHAN HEN.
The property of Mrs. St. John Hornby.
Winner of 1st prize, Dairy Show, 1895.

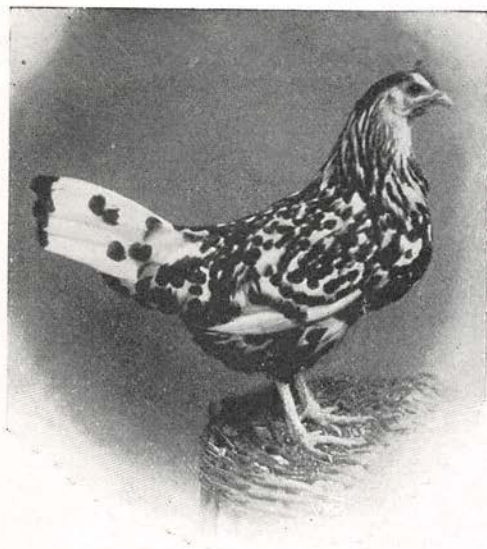
If there should exist even a shade of doubt as to the extreme present-day popularity of poultry-keeping, and its position among the fashionable hobbies, it is only necessary to mention that among our many ardent



From a painting by]

[J. W. Ludlow.

BROWN LEGHORN COCK, "HARVESTER."
The property of Mrs. Lister-Kay. Winner of 1st, Cup, and Medal, Crystal Palace; and 1st and Medal, Dairy Show, 1895.



SILVER SPANGLE HAMBURGH HEN.

The property of Miss Ada Brooks. Winner of 1st and Special at Stratford Show, 1899.

fanciers none is more enamoured of the feathered creation than Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, whose poultry yards at Sandringham bid fair to produce some of the highest class birds of the future. It is, however, as a breeder of Bantams that the Queen has become famous in the poultry world; and the only pen that can claim consideration in this article, which treats solely of the larger varieties, is the family of Silkie Fowl that we were enabled, by gracious permission of Her Majesty, to photograph. There are some who would class the Silkie as a Bantam, but it fairly deserves to be considered among the larger breeds, having originated in the East, probably from some variety of the wild jungle fowl, without having been subjected to the dwarfing process necessary for the manufacture of Bantams. As the name implies, the plumage is of a white silky texture, while the purple face, comb, and wattles of the birds have given rise to the name "Negro Fowls." Her Majesty has been very successful as an exhibitor of these curious-looking birds, and at the Ladies' Poultry Show in 1900, where competition

is confined to ladies, and where society dames vie with one another in securing the handsome prizes offered, she won first and challenge salver with a cock of this variety.

Perhaps the best-known breeder of Silkies in the country is Mrs. Campbell, who has achieved some remarkable successes at all the large shows. Of late there has been such a boom for Silkies that specimens have made wonderful prices, one bird of Mrs. Campbell's being claimed at Birmingham Show in 1900 for £30.

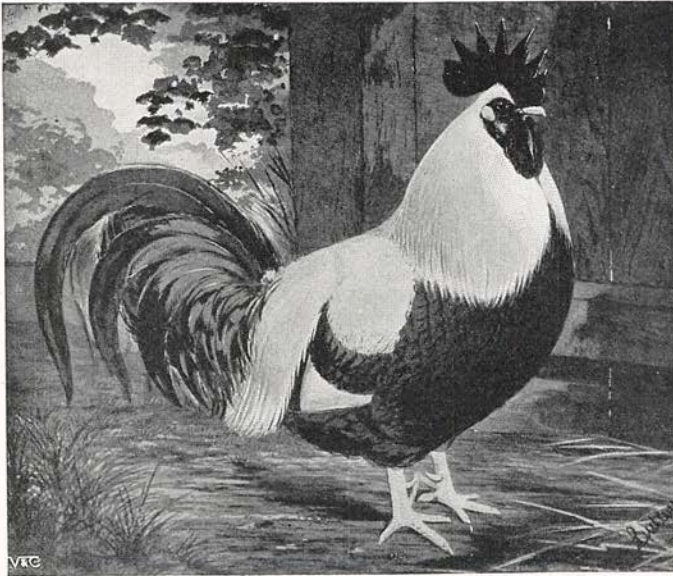
But, talking of values, the £30 paid for a Silkie is but a mite compared with the huge sums that have been paid during the past few years for birds of more popular varieties. In this respect the Game breeds are most noticeable. The days of cock-fighting are past and almost forgotten; but the Old English Game, the hard-feathered, gallant birds that provided sport for our forefathers, are still favoured by a particular section of the fancy, whilst from them has been evolved another type known as the Modern Game. It is for these birds that the most phenomenal prices have been paid, for though the fanciers of this variety are comparatively few, so valuable are the prizes and cups offered at the large



BLACK HAMBURGH COCK.

[Chas. Holt.]

The property of Miss Ada Brooks. Winner of 1st, London; 1st, Walthamstow; and 1st and Special, Stratford.



From a painting by]

SILVER GREY DORKING COCK.

[J. W. Ludlow.

The property of Capt. Phipps Hornby. Winner of 1st, Crystal Palace and Birmingham, 1893; 1st, Royal Agricultural; 1st and Cup, Crystal Palace; and 1st, Birmingham, 1894.

shows, that competition is inordinately keen, and culminated a few years ago in the purchase of a Black Red Game cockerel for the record sum of £200. The buyer was the well known sportsman and fancier, Capt. Heaton, and the lucky breeder, Mr. Hugo Ainscough, who has on other occasions sold birds for £100 each.

But turning to the more popular general utilitarian varieties, the most wonderful sale ever recorded took place in July of the present year, following upon the lamentable death of Mr. Joseph Partington, a man who had reduced the breeding of poultry to a fine art, and whose magnificent flock of birds was dispersed at his decease, the sale attracting buyers from all corners of the Kingdom. High prices were realised for several well known champions, but the sensation was reached when it came to the turn of a monstrous Black Orpington cock, whose winnings in silver cups, medals, and other

trophies would well nigh stock a jeweller's shop. Within a minute the bidding ran to £70, and, then at a more moderate pace till £150 was reached, at which sum the magnificent bird was secured by Mrs. Wilkinson.

The Orpington has made such wonderful headway during the few years of its existence as a distinct breed, that it is nowadays accepted as one of the finest general utilitarian fowls. The Buff variety enjoys almost phenomenal popularity, and at the recent Dairy Show the one particular feature was the magnificent display of seventy-nine Buff Orpington pullets in one class. Here is the breed that will solve the winter egg problem! In the Orpington the distressed Londoner may discern the first indications of a release

from the horrors of the Franco-Belgian shop egg.

There is an air of comfort about the well fed old mandarin of a Cochin cock. This variety hails, as the name implies, from the



Photo by]

CHAMPION SILVER POLAND COCK.

[Hedges, Lytham.

The property of the late J. Partington, Esq. Winner of innumerable medals, cups, and 1st prizes at all principal exhibitions; holding an unbeaten record.

land of the heathen Chinese, who in the matter of poultry-keeping is not such a heathen as he is generally painted. It is interesting to note that Her late Majesty Queen Victoria possessed the first Cochins imported into England, in 1843; but the type of those birds differs so much from the standard of the present day that it is difficult to believe they could have descended from the same origin. They created a wonderful stir when they first made their appearance and came under the direct patronage of Queen

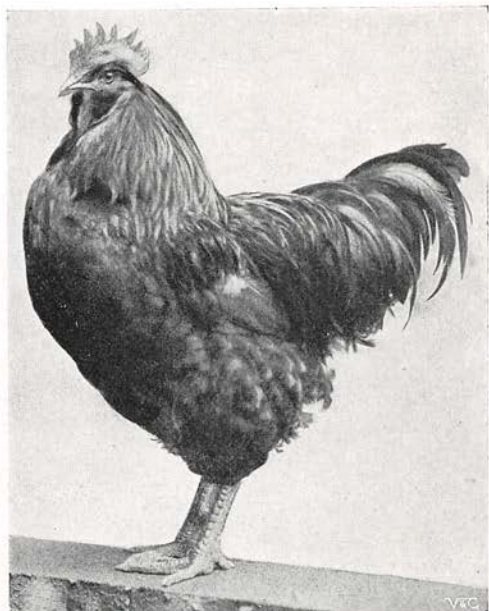


Photo by] [Milton, Lancaster.

THE CHAMPION BLACK ORPINGTON COCK.

Winner of many prizes. Bred by the late J. Partington, Esq., and purchased by Mrs. Wilkinson for £150.

will probably have to rely entirely upon its fancy claims for future popularity.



Photo by]

HOUDAN COCK AND HEN.

[J. Calce.

The property of J. P. W. Marr, Esq. Each the winner of three cups at the Crystal Palace.

Victoria. The illustrated papers of the day gave drawings and accounts of their remarkable size and qualities, and *Mr. Punch*, catching the spirit of the moment, depicted them as pets being led about the park at the end of a string. The domestic qualities of the Cochin are worthy of consideration, and especially as layers during cold weather have the birds attained popularity. But with the advent of up-to-date varieties that possess nearly all the constituted virtues the Cochin

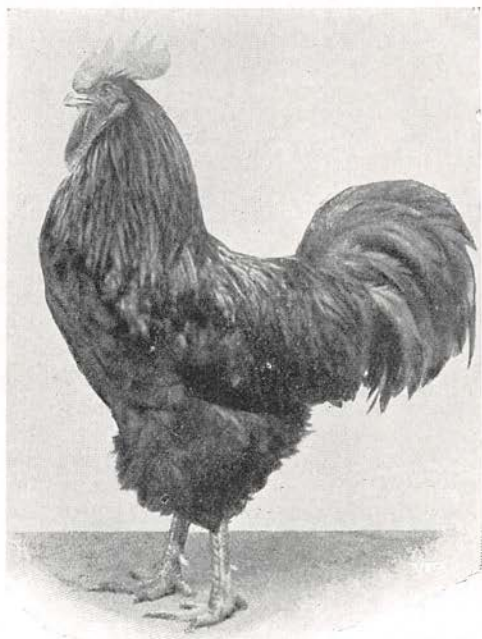


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[Hedges, Lytham.

CHAMPION BLACK ORPINGTON COCK.

The property of the late J. Partington, Esq. Winner of 1st and Medal at Dairy Show; 1st and Cup at Crystal Palace; 1st at Birmingham, etc. This bird was never beaten.

"What can this poor creature be?" So cry the uninitiated at our large poultry shows, as they pause in front of the Polish classes. Some conclude the bird must be a curious freak of Nature; others, that the uncanny



Photo by] [Hodges.

CHAMPION BUFF COCHIN COCK.

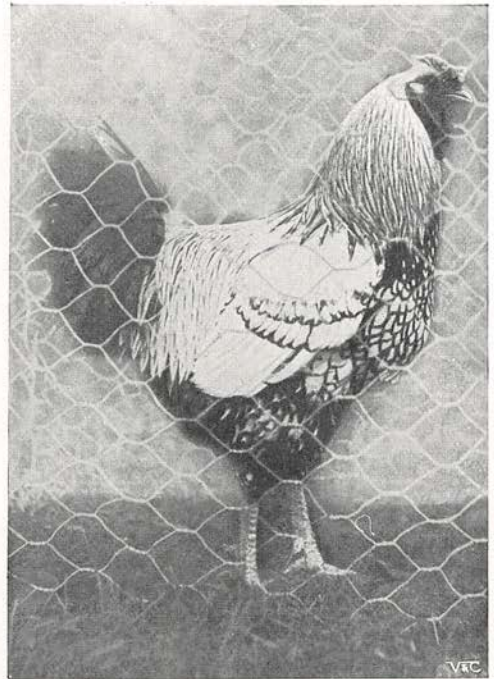
The property of the late J. Partington, Esq. Winner of 1st and Cup, Crystal Palace; 1st and Cup, Birmingham; 1st, Dairy, etc. Has never been beaten.

appearance fits it for the part of bogey among poultry; whilst quite a large section express their pity and indignation at such apparent cruelty. But the Poland fowl needs no pity. His peculiarities are quite the correct thing, and the more extensive the crest and the more effectually it hides his face, the greater are his chances of carrying off the champion cup of his variety. This time the name implies nothing, and we conclude the variety are called "Polands" because they have nothing to do with that country; unless the suggestion that the name is a corruption of "Polled," in allusion to the peculiar poll or crest, is of value.

The Dorking is the John Bull of the poultry world. It is English to the backbone, with a pedigree that extends back to the days when the Roman gourmands were just as clever in breeding fine table birds as our modern fanciers are in producing

æsthetic qualities. The bird we have here the pleasure to reproduce, perhaps one of the best Silver Greys ever bred, gives a satisfactory impression of the size and wealth of meat carried on the breast; though we fear that Captain Phipps Hornby's, champion would form an expensive dish, even on the table of a sensational millionaire, at his estimated value of £100. Other varieties of the Dorking include the Dark, the White, and the Cuckoo; though for exhibition purposes the former and the Silver Grey enjoy almost the monopoly of popularity, equally on æsthetic as on economic grounds.

But the credit of producing one of the very best varieties of poultry extant belongs to the American fanciers. The Wyandotte is justly claimed by many poultry-keepers as the most valuable all-round fowl to keep, and there is little doubt that lovers of the bird will assert that not only do its utility qualities



CHAMPION SILVER WYANDOTTE COCK, "THE OLD GENTLEMAN."

The property of Messrs. W. A. and R. F. Spencer. Claimed to have been the best Wyandotte ever seen. Winner of innumerable cups, medals, and prizes.

call for special commendation, but it is the handsomest of all domesticated fowls. Among the thousands of birds of different varieties—silver-laced, gold-laced, buff-laced, blue-laced, buff, white, partridge, cuckoo, black

and silver pencilled—bred on both sides of the Atlantic, it would seem unwise to claim for any individual one the championship. But such was the perfection of the famous silver cock, "The Old Gentleman," that he has generally been acknowledged the best Wyandotte ever bred. His value to the Messrs. Spencer must have been incalculable, for his stock at the present day are winning for their owners many of the best prizes, and in the future the progeny of this remarkable bird will doubtless carry on the champion honours to a date when the name of "The Old Gentleman" will have been forgotten.

Among the more recent varieties of the Wyandotte family, the Blue-laced lays claim to æsthetic charms of an original order. Each feather should be clearly laced with blue round a ground of dull gold, and the

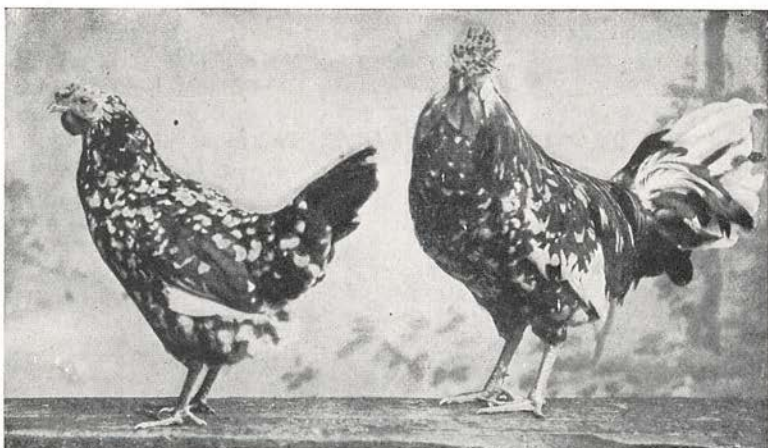


Photo by]

[E. B. Mowll.

ROSE-COMB ANCONAS.

The property of E. P. Chance, Esq. Pullet, 1st prize, Abertillery, when exhibited for the first time.

beauty of such specimens as those shown in our photograph can scarcely be realised from a mere black-and-white print. One of the first fanciers of this variety was the Countess of Craven; and one of the best collections in the country is that owned by Mr. E. P. Chance.

We have further reason to be grateful to the Chinese for the handsome and useful Langshan Fowl, the first specimens of which were imported into England by the late Major Croad, a gallant officer whose many services included that of interpreter to the exiled Napoleon at St. Helena. Since that time Major Croad and his niece, the lady who has so kindly furnished us with the portrait of a Langshan hen, have succeeded in keeping their original strain pure. But the show Langshan of the present day is of a very different type. Each is represented here by a perfect specimen.

There are fanciers ready to assert that the skill of French poultry-keepers is greatly in advance of our own, and that the French breeds excel those we are accustomed to call English, or American, in all respects. Whatever may be the relative merits of the birds of various countries, it is im-

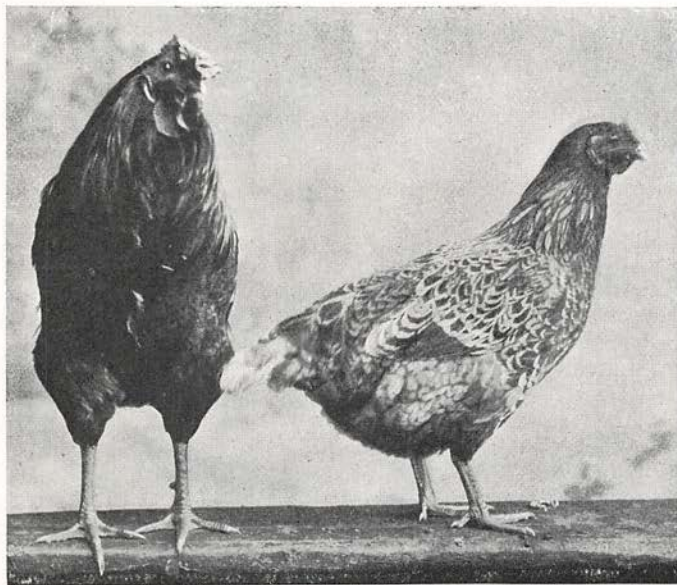


Photo by]

[E. B. Mowll.

BLUE-LACED WYANDOTTES.

The property of E. P. Chance, Esq. Cockerel winner 1st, Coombe Abbey; 1st, Abertillery; 3rd, Dairy Show. Pullet winner 1st, Broseley.

possible to deny the claims to popularity of the handsome French Houdan, with the charming peculiarity of crest and beard. So far as utility qualities extend, the Houdan occupies the place among French table fowl that the Dorking does among our own, having the fifth toe, long and well-furnished breast, and excellent quality of meat that fulfil the requirements of the epicure. As an exhibition variety the Houdan has enjoyed moderate popularity among English fanciers, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Marx and others interested in the variety.

But what would a poultry yard be without the lucrative little Leghorn? Who that

suburban poultry-keepers than the Minorca. It adapts itself to circumstances, makes itself at home whether upon a lordly demesne or in a Camden Town backyard, and lays a larger egg for its size than any other bird. As a fancy fowl it is immensely popular, with huge red comb and white lobes, whilst its activity is a thing to wonder at.

Closely allied to the Leghorn is the Ancona. Whether the former breed originally hailed from the port of Leghorn is a moot point; but it is certain that the Ancona did come from the town of that name, and, from what poultry historians have been able to gather, it owes its existence to crossings be-

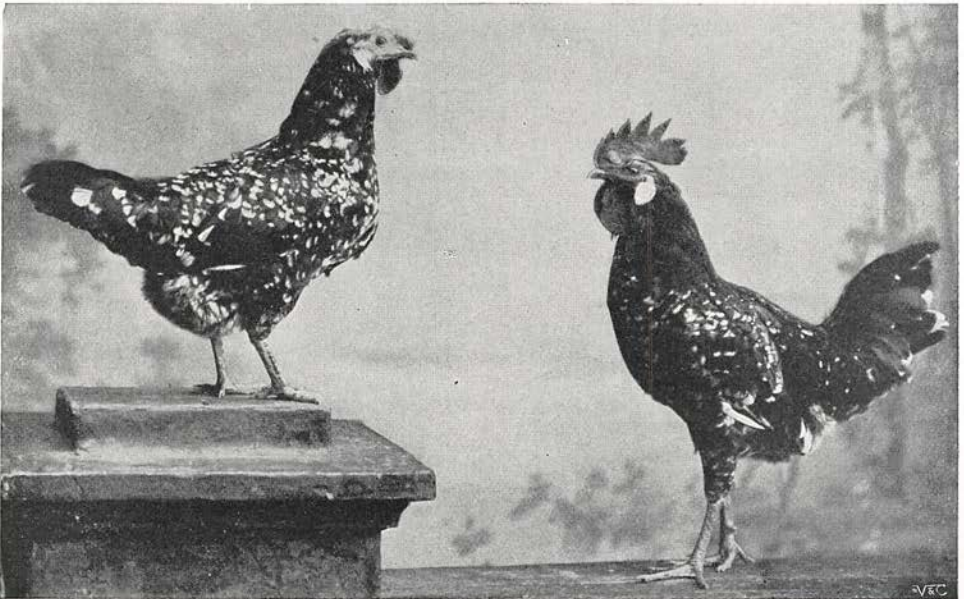


Photo by]

SINGLE-COMB ANCONAS.

[E. B. Mowll.

The property of E. P. Chance, Esq. Pullet winner of 1st and Special, Dairy Show, and numerous other prizes.

possesses a smattering of poultry knowledge does not picture the active little brown, white, or buff fowls as the ideals of domestic birds? Again it is our duty to extend our thanks to the clever American fanciers, who have fashioned this popular variety from the earlier Mediterranean or Spanish breeds. It is interesting to note, however, and significant of the skill of our English fanciers, that although the birds came to us from America, many that have been bred here have been sent back to the States to win prizes and honours out of the hands of their first friends. The brown cock "Harvester" is a typical specimen of his variety.

There is no breed more popular among

tween the black and white Leghorn. These beautiful birds were first brought to England by a certain Captain Rowle, but they fell on barren soil, and for some years seemed to have disappeared. Then suddenly, about five years ago, they began to be talked about, and they have now become one of the foremost breeds of the day. Much of their popularity is due to the efforts of Mr. E. P. Chance, who appears to have acted as a sponsor for the breed. The best of them are continually travelling about the country to shows, large and small, and scarcely a week passes but some three or four exhibitions, varying in situation from the North of Scotland to the South of England, are visited. The prizes

won include all the principal cups and specials at the large shows. During the present year Mr. Chance has added to his achievements by bringing out a variety of Rose-combed Anconas—birds which are similar to the others in every respect but the comb, which is fashioned like that of the Wyandotte, and lies flat upon the head instead of standing erect. The birds are large, and not so wild as the Single-combed Anconas.

Of the several varieties of Hamburgs, it is generally conceded that the Pencilled types were imported from Holland, where they had been for long known as "Dutch Everlasting Layers." The Spangled variety, however, is presumably an English breed of considerable antiquity, being known as "Mooney Fowls," while the Blacks, under the name of "Black Pheasant Fowls," are of equally remote origin.

To treat of all the breeds of poultry would be impossible. There are Plymouth Rocks, another American production, and one of the most popular varieties in England at the present day. There are Brahmas, huge Asiatics with a feathered resemblance to the Cochin. Then there are Redcaps, with heavy, red, wobbling combs; Spanish, with curious white faces, that hang like patriarchal beards; Scotch Greys, somewhat similar in appearance to Plymouth Rocks; Indian Game, Malays, and Aseels, all with pedigrees dating back to the origin of the species; Campines, like pencilled Hamburgs; Andalusians, like the Minorca, but with slate-blue plumage; several French varieties, such as Faverolles, Crève-Cœurs, La Flèche, Bredas, etc., etc.; Frizzles, with plumage curled up as though with a pair of curling tongs; Rumpless, suffering under the same misfortune as the guinea-pig; Phoenix, with tails six feet in length; Sultans, direct from Constantinople; and numbers of new varieties, such as Albions, Sussex Buffs, Magpies, and Klondykes. When it is realised that most of these breeds have from two to ten sub-varieties, one may form some idea of the vast multiplicity of types the modern

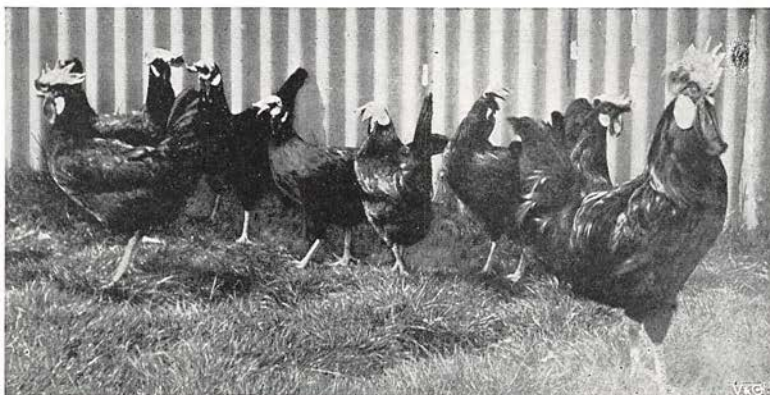


Photo by]

A BREEDING-PEN OF MINORCAS.

[Merrett Bros.

The property of Mr. Tenyson Fawkes; containing many winners.

poultry judge has to acquaint himself with before he may become an expert.

And what is the aim and object of it all? Money in some cases. There are a number of exhibitors who buy up valuable birds as a speculation, and go round the country to shows, large and small, and win their profits. And they do make profit, too, for they are clever men, and to them poultry-keeping is a cold business speculation. But they can hardly be called fanciers. They have little in common with the hundreds of men and women of high and low degree who make the poultry fancy their favourite hobby, and reap as much pleasure from the hard work and anxieties of breeding as they do from winning at the Dairy Show or Crystal Palace. To these, £ s. d. is not the primary consideration. Many of the most successful, and those who are enabled to put considerable capital into their fancy, do reap handsome profits. But these come from the sale of birds and eggs rather than from the actual prizes, for one must have a continual run of firsts, seconds, or thirds to secure a balance on the right side; and as there is such keen competition nowadays, only the very best and most expensive birds can thus win time after time.

There is no opening for the inexperienced speculator here. No livelihood is to be made by impecunious youths. The poultry fancy, if not for the rich, is at any rate for men and women of means, who can afford to lose, and very often do. Many large fanciers pay nearly £200 per year for labour in their poultry yards. But even then it is not quite such a ruinous hobby as horse-racing, yachting, or even dog-fancying; and those who are its patrons will declare its delights are just as numerous and even more lasting.