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FORTUNES INVESTED IN FANCY POULTRY

(Continued from Page 5)

other breeder in the country. He journeyed on to New York with his choicest specimens and swept the field.

One might assume from this that fancy poultry breeding means easy money. Wrong, very wrong! The conspicuous successes flash out from a fog bank of unfortunate failures. If poultry fanciers may be classed with poets, it may be said that they, too, are born and not made. In addition to an infinite capacity for detail, one must have the knack of mating birds so as to get the right kind of offspring, the kind that wins. Whether he has this knack or not, nobody can tell until he tries.

Many people are astonished to learn that a hen or a cock must be fitted and trained for its appearance at a show, just as a thoroughbred stallion must be groomed and trained before it is allowed to prance on the sawdust. Weeks of preparation are often necessary. In the case of light-colored birds, a thorough washing must be given and all birds must be taught to pose quietly.

The washing process in itself is not a simple matter, especially when there is a long string of birds to be tubbed; for the operation can hardly be concluded in less than fifteen or twenty minutes for each specimen.

First, the victim is soaked in water and thoroughly rubbed over with soap. Some breeders use a soap solution, while others hold a cake of good white soap in the hand. The method does not matter, so long as the bird is thoroughly lathered from comb to toe. When the fowls are gentle and not too heavy, one man may work alone, but it is a better plan to have an assistant to hold the protesting creatures. Some birds seem determined to get their heads under water and keep them there, as if they preferred slow suicide to the ignominy to which they are being subjected.

Two or three times the fowl is soaped and rinsed, the lather being worked into the feathers until it reaches the skin. Often the legs and comb are gone over with a tooth brush and thoroughly scrubbed. Special attention is always paid to the head, to which the judge is certain to give careful observation.

When the operator considers that the bird has been soaped and soaped a sufficient number of times, it is taken to the second tub and repeatedly ducked in order to rinse out every particle of soap. This is very important, as otherwise the feathers will stick together and not lay in place well.

Finally, the candidate is dipped into the bluing water and placed in a cage to dry. The bluing water must not be too blue and the material used must be of good quality, else the bird's feathers will acquire a tint not recognized by the Standard of Perfection.

Special training for a show consists in placing the bird in a cage and keeping him there several weeks, talking to him frequently and often carrying him a choice morsel from the family table, so that he will step expectantly to the front of the cage when any one approaches, thus assuming an attitude that is calculated to make a favorable impression.

Judging is done in two ways, by comparison and by score card. The first method usually is followed at the Fall shows, when the birds are likely to be rather ragged as a result of molting, while the score card is more generally used at the mid-winter shows.

The judges begin their work as soon as a show is opened and are "speeded up" by the breeders, because there is certain to be a harvest of shekels for the winners. When the awards have been made, the bargaining begins. Then it is that the wealthy fancier, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, goes down into his jeans and pulls out a big wad of bills to pay the price of a winning cock. With this bird in his yard, he hopes to raise stock which will, in its turn, command the favor of the judge. Thousands of dollars change hands and innumerable orders for eggs for hatching at from five to twenty-five dollars—for fifteen—are placed.

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