

INBREEDING.

While no great advance has ever been made in the improvement of type in domestic stock without inbreeding of the selected foundation animals, there are serious dangers following on the train of this method of fixing type, especially if the inbreeding is followed out without a definite method and aim. The danger is especially great with poultry, as there are very, very few breeders who know exactly the sire and dam of their breeding-pens. They may probably know the male parent, but seldom or never know the mother. We have yet to realize the great importance of studying the individual, be it cock or hen—having definite knowledge of pedigree of performance, knowing the exact relationship of the birds we mate, and thereby have some guarantee that the type we are aiming at will be secured. Unless we work on exact principles inbreeding will not only prove a delusion and a snare, but it will probably bring about a deterioration in the stock which will prove disastrous. I have seen birds which have been injudiciously inbred badly affected with vermin and a palpable prey to the first trouble that happens along, while in an adjoining pen were unrelated birds which were absolutely free of pests and as healthy and vigorous as one could desire. Again, when disease makes its appearance, especially tuberculosis, it will be found that the weak bird—weak because too closely inbred—will be a highly susceptible subject. To sum up the inbreeding problem, it should only be practised by those working on correct principles, who know just what they are doing, and who realize the paramount importance of maintaining constitution. To inbreed in a haphazard manner, as too many do, is simply to court failure and disappointment.

More than half the troubles being experienced are the result of inbreeding, not the inbreeding deliberately done with stock of which the true history is known, but that regrettable inbreeding arising from a want of knowledge of the stock being handled. This ignorance of the breeding-birds is too often not the fault of the breeder, but more the result of many of the small army of specialist breeders who, either designedly or unknowingly, do not possess an accurate knowledge of the strains with which they are working. For instance, I often receive requests for cockerels of a certain breed "to mate with hens of Mr. B——'s strain." As Mr. B—— has only Government stock, the inquirer is practically asking, in all innocence, for a related bird. We cannot know too much about the pedigree of the birds we desire to breed from. Unfortunately, the life of the domestic fowl is too short to warrant the compilation of stud-books, and the purchaser must perforce depend on a breeder's word as to a bird's breeding. This naturally tends to loose breeding methods, and thereby renders it a most difficult matter to place poultry-breeding on that sound foundation