

Russian Orloffs.

By J. Pettipher

IN this time of stress and shortage of shows I do not propose to say much about the Orloff as an exhibition breed further than to claim that provided it is standardised and judged to useful properties, its exhibition breeding is a decided advantage inasmuch as it tends to encourage breeding to a fixity of type, which is an advantage to all and particularly profitable to those who keep that breed for utility purposes, because by fixity of type more dependable results are possible. I see no reason to doubt that strains vary in Orloffs just as they do in other breeds, and anything I say about them must be taken as my own experience with my own birds. They are not sprinters, or in pullets a breed that starts to lay at an inordinately early age. As a rule I find them take about six to seven months to develop—varying of course, as do other breeds, with the time of year they are hatched—but having furnished, they settle down to business and do it well. They are decidedly hardy and don't seem to mind how much they rough it in any season, and the cockerels usually come to table well direct off the run, and do not seem so inclined to get "razor" breasted as is the case with some breeds—in fact, to my mind one of the most advantageous features of the Orloff is its useful combination of laying and table properties.

At time of writing (last week in January) as everyone knows, we passed through a very severe winter with, as yet, no sign of change. I have some seven or eight birds knocking about, including Black and-White Leghorns, both of the most popular laying strains, and though like, I presume, most other folk, we have not been sufficiently burdened with eggs at present to have recourse to water glass, it has been the Orloffs and the Rosecomb Rhode Islanders that have stood by us, accompanied by some Sicilian Buttercups; whilst the Leghorns have looked on and waited for better weather. The latter certainly made a start, but discreetly retired under the pressure of Jack Snow and Jim Frost!

Something has recently been written about certain Malay characteristics in the Orloff not being indicative of good layers, but it does not follow that because the Malay is not perhaps famous as a layer, that another breed with a strain of its blood may not be so. Take the Indian Game as an example. I don't suppose anyone ever claims for the pure Indian the qualification of a champion layer, its advantages run in another direction, but I have known it when crossed with another breed to produce pullets that were extraordinarily good layers. The amalgamation evidently disturbed and developed latent properties. And supposing it to be correct that our Russian Allies did use some Malay blood in the make up of their original Orloffs, it is more than likely that the result was the same as in the Indian crosses I have noted. In the foregoing remarks it should be understood that I have had in mind the Mahogany variety, which so far has been the colour most favoured in England since the breed became generally popular, and it is the one with which I have had most experience. I have had a few Spangles, but though I never admire that colour just as I do Spangled in other breeds such as Old English Game, I cannot say after another year's trial that they have proved as hardy or successful with me as the Mahoganies, but this is most likely a

matter of chance, as I hear of others who have been very successful with them. The White variety I have not yet tried. I hope to do so some day as I like to know a bit about 'em all. But. Mrs. Colbeck tells me hers have proved most satisfactory, very hardy, good layers, and that she has at this time already some of their eggs shortly due to hatch. She seems very confident that they will become as great favourites as the Mahoganies. One or two points that I noted last year which might perhaps well be repeated, one is that both sexes can be bred well up to type by a single mating, and consequently, according to present standards there should be no temptation to anyone to introduce the system of double-mating which has proved the downfall of so many breeds. And this raises the question of standards. So far, we have two, the original Russian and one drawn up in England since the Club was formed. They are very similar, the original Russian, as translated by Mr. Edward Brown, appeared in The Feathered World No. 1366, and reproduced at the end of these notes. Personally, I rather favour the latter in some respects, chiefly because it allows more latitude in colour, and so more discourages double mating and encourages utility advantages, but the English one is fairly all right if it is not pressed too closely in such points as cock's breast; it reads (in Mahoganies, of course) "The nearer it approaches to a solid black the better." I fear this is getting rather close to the border line, because once you introduce a breast differing from the hen, in comes double mating such as ruined the Partridge Wyandotte. It has been part of my hobby during a long poultry experience to give all breeds that have any reasonable claim to popularity a run for their money and a fair trial. I have done so with the Mahogany Orloff, and it has come out so well that I class it as a "stayer."

Translation of the Russian standard adopted by the Imperial Russian Poultry Society, December, 1914. Kindly obtained for us by Mr. Edward Brown.

COCK.

Head.—Medium size, with broad frontal bone and flat occiput.

Beak.—Thick, short and curved, yellow in colour, shading to pink at the base ; pink nostrils.

Comb.—Like a raspberry cut lengthwise, covered with small hard hair.

Face.—Red, almost covered by feathers of the beard and whiskers.

Eyes.—Amber, or orange with a yellow shade.

Ear Lobe.—Small, red, and nearly covered with the beard feathers.

Wattles.—Small, red, and almost hidden by the beard.

Neck.—Long and straight with very big nape, formed by a swelling of the camail in its upper part.

Chest.—Broad, stout, and very prominent.

Wings.—Medium in length, carried high on the shoulders, and tight to the body.

Back.—Very broad and sloping to the tail.

Tail.—Thick, of a medium size, with stout sickles and close to the hangers, carried at a right angle to the back and very slightly sloped to the body.

Thighs.—Well developed, strong, with very tight feathers.

Legs.—Very strong and thick, yellow in colour and without any feathers.

Toes.—Four, yellow in colour.

Toe Nails.—Stout and yellowish.

Ball of Foot.—Light yellow colour.

HEN.

Head.—As in the cock, but more developed in beard and whiskers.

Beak.—As in the cock.

Comb.—Same in shape as in the cock, but smaller.

Face.—Eyes, ear lobes, wattles, neck, chest, wings, thighs, legs, toes and toe nails, as in the cock.

Back.—Broad ; not so much sloping to the tail as in the cock.

Tail.—Thick, of medium size, forming a right angle with the back and slightly sloping to the body.

General Appearance of Cock and Hen.—Broad, massive, upright in carriage, very long neck and legs, plumage very tight.

VARIETIES.

(i) Reds (a) black breast, (b) chestnut breast; (2) Speckled; (3) White.

Red with Black Breast.—Cock : Plumage of head, neck, shoulders, back and thighs, very bright velvet red; covert feathers of wings, breast and tail, black with greenish reflections ; beard and whiskers, black with greyish under-colour ; primaries and secondaries of wings, outside dusky red, inside black; under-down grey. Hen : Head, beard, whiskers, neck, back, breast, body and thighs, dusky red ; primaries and secondaries of wings, red with some black ; under-colour, greyish with red.

Red with Chestnut Breast.—Cock : Head, neck, shoulder, back and thighs, bright light red; beard, whiskers, breast, body and thighs, light dusky red ; primaries and secondaries of wings, outside light dusky red, inside blackish ; tail, black with greenish reflections ; under-colour, light dusky red. Hen : Head, beard, whiskers, neck, breast, body, thighs, light dusky red ; first and second primaries, as in the cock; tail, light dusky red with dark lines ; shafts, light dusky red; under-colour ditto.

Speckled.—Cock : Head, tuft, back, shoulders, thighs, breast and under-parts, dusky red near base of feather, black in centre, and white at outer

end ; primaries of wings, white ; secondaries, dusky red at base, black in centre, white at outer end ; sickles of tail, black with greenish reflections ; hangers, black with white stripes; beard and whiskers, red, white and black; under-down, light grey. Hen : Generally like cock, but not so much speckled ; tail, dusky red at base, black in centre and white tip.

White.—Cock and Hen : Pure white without any shading.

WEIGHTS.

Cockerel, 6 lbs. ; cock, 8 lbs. ; pullet, 4 lbs. ; hen, 5 lbs.

DEFECTS.

1. Faulty comb.
2. Light-coloured legs, especially in older birds.
3. Long head and beak.
4. Small beards and whiskers.
5. Plumage : (a) in whites, shaded ; (b) in reds, presence of grey feathers in wings or tail of older birds ; hens, black on back and shoulders.

DISQUALIFICATIONS.

Straight beak. Bad comb.

Orloff adverts in Feathered World 1917

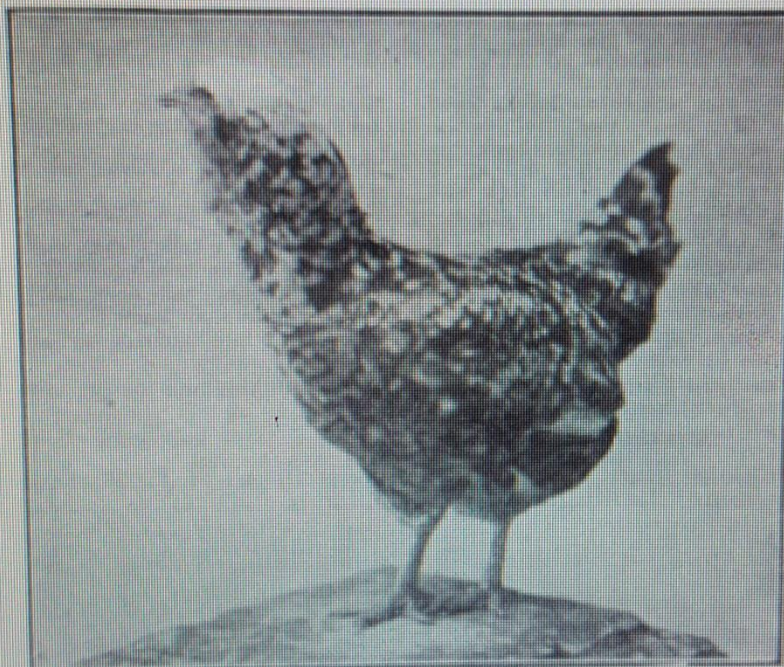
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