

THE PROGENITORS OF THE DOMESTIC HEN OF TODAY

According to the best authorities, the domestic fowl belongs to a group of scratching birds which includes turkeys, guinea-fowls, pheasants, partridges and others. The progenitors of the domestic hen of today were wild species, and it is probable that they originated from the crosses or mingling of the blood of two quite different species, the most important one being the wild fowl common in the jungles of India and southern China, which is known as the Gallus bankiva species. This jungle fowl is about one-third the size of the domesticated bird, having a flattened tail, single comb and wattles resembling those of the domestic fowl. The female is much smaller and has less comb and wattles than the male, and the shanks of both sexes are willow colored, resembling those of the black-breasted red game fowl. They are said to be capable of considerable flight, but in other habits resemble to a great extent the domestic birds of today. Breeding experiments show that they are completely fertile with the domestic birds of all varieties, but the offspring of the cross seems to retain most of the characteristics of the wild fowl, such as shyness, great flying ability, etc., there is reason to conclude that a second species other than the Gallus banhiva, was present in the evolution of the present domestic fowls, because of characteristics which they have which would be impossible to breed from the jungle fowl alone. According to scientific theories, the Aseel or Malay fowl has played a great part in the development of the present-day fowl. This ancient Aseel fowl is now practically extinct, but was undoubtedly the oldest fowl in domestication, having been bred in India 3000 years ago. These Aseel fowls show a pea comb, stout yellow legs, a stocky body, and an unwillingness to fly high in the air, characteristics which are entirely different from those of the banhiva fowls, which are so prominent in the heavier broods, as the Brahmas and the Cochins. This process of domestication can be traced from about 1000 B. C., where the Institute of Menu alludes to the sport of cock-fighting, which was probably carried on with the Aseel. From that time on we find domestic fowls constantly referred to in early records, and their improvement was consistent with the

advance of civilization. They were gradually distributed westward over the continent, coming into Europe from central China by way of Siberia and Russia, and were carried to the new world early in the period of colonization, where they had formerly been entirely unknown. The domestic fowl may be given two distinct classifications, one based on the origin, which has been given above, and the other on the commercial possibilities, which will take in a large number of the present-day breeds, and will make it necessary to arrange them in a definite and logical fashion if they are to be studied successfully. The American class includes the breeds which have originated in America and which were created and improved with the idea of dual purpose achievement. They constitute such breeds as: The Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds, etc. The Asiatic class are larger meat producing fowls and constitute the Brahmas, the Cochins and the Langshans. The Mediterranean class had their origin on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and are recognized as the world's best egg producers. The Leghorns are by far the most popular bird of this breed or class, and are considered the world's most economic egg producers. The other breeds of this class of lesser importance are Minorcas, Blue Andulasian, Anconas and White-Faced Black Spanish. The English class is represented by the Dorkings, Red Caps and Orphingtons, and are said to have been imported from England by the Romans. In America this class has not attained any degree of popularity. The Dolish, Hamburgs, the French breeds, game and bantams, have gained very little popularity in America, hence are very thinly distributed over the country.

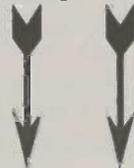
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