

### The End of "Sir Oracle."

I DID hope I should not have to write any more for the "Chronicle," but what can I do? But man gets accustomed to everything, and my ill-nature is gradually leaving me. The pleasure of being ill-tempered would cease, if it could last uninterruptedly for three weeks: and I have been amused this morning. First, I imagined to myself the sort of person, any one who read my "Ill-natured Scraps," would take me to be; that is, if they took the trouble to think of me at all. Tall, thin, bilious, yellow, hungry-looking fellow, with a small fire in my grate, and a shabby inkstand before me. No such thing, I am comfortable looking, have a good fire, and when not ill-tempered, am a good sort of man. But my table is covered with papers, and casting my eye on a French one, I was delighted, for I met a congenial spirit. A writer, speaking of the commencement of the gay season in Paris, laments the change that has come over the people; at a late masquerade he saw two "Pierrots" seated in deep conversation; using the license of such places, he crept up to listen,—they were talking gravely of the Crimea. Soon after he observed two "Paillasses" gesticulating, and casting furtive glances around lest there should be listeners; he cautiously approached, suspecting some trick of which he would be the victim, but cheerfully exposing himself for the sake of a little mirth; what was his disgust,—they were talking seriously of the late loan. But this was not all. Everyone knows the old frequenters of masquerades, who, for all disguise, put on a nose. Truly, no other is needed; add but two inches to a nose, and you cannot be recognised. These are generally the choice spirits of the place; others may go incognito for intrigue, &c., but these go for *fun*. Well, all these men had colds in the head, and the noses were perpetually being removed for sneezing, &c. What, says the writer, can be the cause? Are people altered, or is it the weather? I

could not be thoroughly ill-natured any longer. It is certain that if a dozen people were all ill-tempered together in a room, the redundancy of the evil would cure itself, and finding some one as annoyed as myself, I felt I was getting better. I had written thus far when I came across the "word" addressed to me by "Observer," and that restored me quite. Let me assure him I do not wish my ill-nature to be painful to anyone. I will try another style, and shall be happy to meet him when next our opinions clash. If he imagines there is the slightest shade of unkindness intended in anything I have written, he is mistaken. I agree with him the decisions of the judges are open to criticism, and when that ceases, farewell to their value; but those criticisms must be correct. I saw the pen of Brahmas in question, and detected nothing against their matching. I hope to see them again at Birmingham next year, and shall look well at them. Till then, as I like an able and honest antagonist, I shall be well pleased to break a friendly lance, when occasion offers, with "Observer," but now and ever disclaim the intention to lack courtesy, or say one word that can be construed into unkindness.

### On Hybrids.

I AM pleased it is in my power to supply the information your correspondent desires.

The hybrid between the male common Pheasant, and any variety of domestic fowl, proves *invariably* unprolific, whether it be afterwards mated with a fellow hybrid, or an entire specimen of either of the species from which itself was originally produced. As an amateur, I have for years entertained a taste for raising pheasants, both of the Golden, Silver, and common varieties, which also naturally led me for several seasons to pay *unusual* attention in endeavouring to obtain "cross-breds." The product between the Chinese Golden cock pheasant and the hen of our common English pheasant, is *certainly one of the*

*most resplendent birds as to plumage* that can be placed in an aviary. It is of far larger size than either of the parent birds, but they are *quite sterile*, either among themselves, or in connection with either of the original varieties. The males will not copulate, neither do the females produce eggs, even though kept *perfectly tame* for many seasons, and enjoying all the advantages prudence and experience can bestow on them.

The product of the Silver Chinese Pheasant and an English one, is equally unique and beautiful. In the male bird, all the delicate perfection of pencillings existent in the purely bred male Silver, are as perfectly developed; the ground-colour, however, varies considerably in different specimens, but generally assumes that golden hue an amateur of Sebright bantams could not fail to covet and approve; the hen hybrids (thus produced) approach, however, very closely in plumage to the feather of the "grey-hen" (or female of the black Grouse); both sexes, as in the former instance, are unproductive, highly prone to pugnacity, and the most indomitable "egg-eaters" that any fancier can be plagued with; they never seem at ease with any other description of poultry (though they live comfortably enough among themselves); indeed, either fowls or any of the varieties of pheasants scrupulously avoid coming near them, even within the limited confines of an aviary. The hybrid, a commixture of the English pheasant and fowl, is generally exceedingly dark in its plumage; the markings, which add so greatly to the beauty of the common pheasant being only partially represented. This bird, even when raised between a pheasant and a bantam, is much larger than either parent, its colour however is somewhat dependent on the variety of hen from which it may be produced, and I have seen female hybrids of this class that were self-coloured without *any markings whatever*. In conclusion, I am fully assured, no amateur will ever raise "hybrids" with *ultimate* satisfaction to

himself; and unhesitatingly affirm their *re-production* with other poultry of any kind, is simply a popular delusion. These birds are also very difficult to produce, *most of the eggs incubated* (where the cross is first attempted) *will prove barren*, and the few chickens that are at length obtained, are far less hardy to rear than either Pheasants or poultry; therefore, I would not advise any one to attempt their production, unless it be purely as an unremunerative "hobby," or for the especial beauty of their plumage in an aviary devoted *exclusively* to their reception.

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### The Birds and the Severe Weather.

To the immediate neighbourhood of Penzance, especially westward, and extending quite to the Land's-end, a vast quantity of various birds, both land and water, indigenous and migratory, have resorted, having been driven instinctively to these more southern climes, to avail themselves of the chances of procuring their several means of subsistence. This is the reason why snipes and other wading birds—swans, geese, and the different species of the duck family—are found in severe winters in the southern districts of England. Most of the duck tribe live and breed in the northern regions; some are more Arctic than others, and those found in the more Arctic regions are the last and fewest in their visits southward. Thus, the wild swan, bean goose, white fronted goose, eider duck, velvet scoter, long-tailed duck, golden eye, scaup duck, are more rare than other ducks that are distributed more southward, such as the mallard, widgeon, teal, shovelers, tufted duck, and some others. Great quantities of ducks and mallards, widgeon and teal have been brought to Penzance market, and several tufted ducks, shovelers, pochards, and a few scaup ducks. Only one golden-eye has made its appearance, and strange to say, no pintail ducks have been offered for sale. Wild swans

were observed flying over Penzance, westward, on Thursday. Among the land birds the most conspicuous were the different species of the thrush family. A large number of the mountain finch have been captured, and peewits and golden plovers have been tolerably plentiful. A very unusual quantity of bittern have been offered for sale, and appear to have been regularly distributed over all the district. —*Cornwall Gazette.*

### Brahmas at Birmingham.

I THINK there is much truth in the observations of "P. P." and "Observer;" it is evident that colour alone has carried the day at Birmingham and other places of late. The third prize pen of chickens at Birmingham were sold lately at Stevens's rooms: they all had single combs. The cockerel was a pretty little mottled bird, the pullets dark pencilled; but for size or form certainly below mediocrity. I cannot believe that there were no larger and better birds of the light colour which competed with them, for I certainly would not give 10s. a-piece for them. I have always thought, that in Brahmas as in Cochins, *form* and *size* are the great objects to be kept in view, and that *colour* is subservient to these; but it is impossible to shut one's eyes to the fact, that colour has in this bird been placed first. I consider this very unfair to breeders of the light—when in other respects better—birds.

It is evident from the distribution of the prizes, that comb is of very trifling importance; surely colour cannot be of more consequence than this feature. I am a disappointed exhibitor; I admit it. I showed a pen of chickens of the light colour at Colchester, perfectly matched, first-rate in form, heavily feathered, with yellow beaks and legs, and uniform in comb; and though hatched in April, weighing, the cock  $11\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. and the pullets  $7\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. respectively; but these birds were not even noticed—their colour condemned them—whilst the second prize was given to a pen

of dark birds with various combs, and which were inferior to them in size and form, at least as far as I could judge without actually weighing each lot.

I am unwilling to appear censorious, but I think that the dissatisfaction that the awards in this class have given should be expressed, that judges may have an opportunity of seeing the opinions of amateurs as to the points most sought after in this breed. Judges must learn that they cannot with impunity make every point bend to a particular shade of colour. What spoiled the Cochins of 1853 but this very thing? breeding for colour! to the utter neglect of every characteristic of that fowl: don't let us repeat this folly in Brahmas.

Talking of breeding for colour in Cochins, when were *good* lemon hens so scarce as now? and yet this is the very colour that everything was being sacrificed for. Then as to the comb of the Brahma I cannot for the life of me understand why the rule as to the uniformity of comb is relaxed in the case of these birds more than for Dorkings; good pens uniform in comb can be exhibited, but as long as exhibitors know that the rule is a dead letter with regard to Brahmas they will not trouble themselves about this (non?) essential point. I would suggest that at Birmingham there should be four classes for this breed, two for pencilled adults and chickens, and two for the light adults and chickens: judges would thus have an opportunity of informing themselves as to the colour most liked, which might influence their awards. I think it should be imperative that each pen should be uniform in comb; whether this feature should be pea or single will not be settled till more is known of the actual purity of the breed; therefore, both should be permitted, but not in the same pen.

ZENAS.

### Portable Pens.

MESSRS. GREENING & Co. seem convinced that circular pens are the desideratum for poultry exhibitions. I unfortunately am