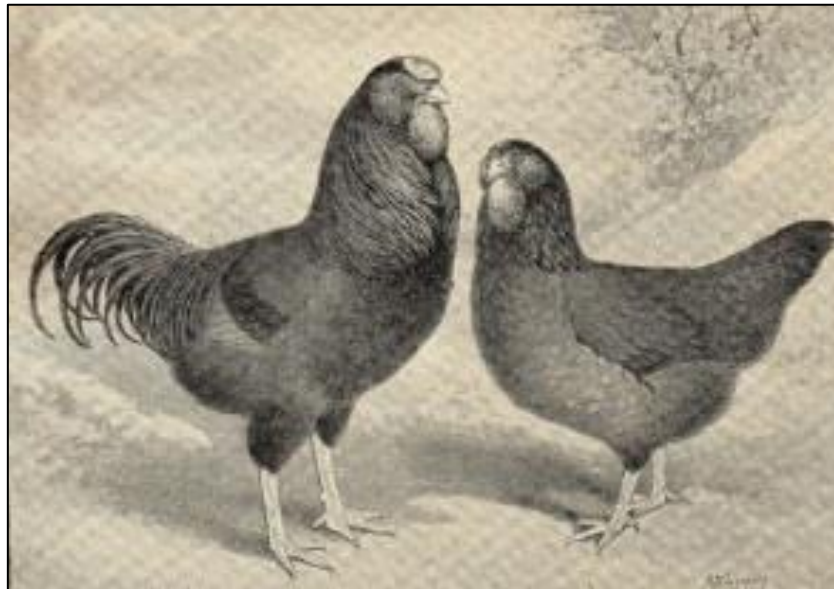


Extract from "The Feathered World" Year Book 1915

Russian Orloffs

By J. Pettifer

Say something about Orloffs? Oh yes; very pleased to do so! It is always encouraging to write about a popular variety that is on the up grade, just poking its head over the poultry horizon and saying how-de-do to an admiring public: anxiously ready to welcome the leading breed of our great Ally, and something calculated to improve the quality and increase the quantity of our home production of eggs and table fowls.



MAHOGANY RUSSIAN ORLOFFS

1st Penistone, two 1sts Haywards Heath, two 1sts Dairy, 1st Wilmslow and other 1915 shows.

The property of Mrs C Colbeck, Boyle Hall, West Ardsley, near Wakefield

For where it must be remembered that the real Orloff comes from a country where fowls are kept almost entirely for utility purposes, however much they may be carefully bred to a breed-strain for that purpose; and, therefore however much the English fancier may make a hobby of breeding them for exhibition their first and foremost use is that of a combination utility breed: not perhaps producing here and there a sprinter of an inordinate number of eggs, whilst her sisters look on admiringly but incidentally forget their own contribution to the egg basket, and not possibly specially intended to knock spots off everything at the Smithfield dead poultry show, but a good serviceable combination – each hen or pullet putting up a good fair record

of eggs under ordinary conditions of poultry keeping and each cockerel picked up off the run where he has had anything like a fair menu being formed fit to put on the table with "something to carve" on the best parts. For, be it noted the Orloff is hardy, it come from whence a delicate breed would soon become extinct, and all that remains is for us to keep and retain this hardy and prolific nature by sticking close to the true imported strains, avoiding too close in breeding and ostracising the mongrels "made in England", which I am sorry to say, have already put in an appearance ready to catch the unwary. "But" I fancy the reader may say, "How are we to avoid too close in-breeding, as the imports have been from *very distinct sources*, and if not before, when this terrible war is over and Prussian militarism snuffed out, I know several leading breeders are awaiting further imports, and doubtless there are others of whom I have not heard. Meanwhile there are sufficient possibilities of interchange of strains to satisfactorily keep us going.

Now what have we got in the Orloff further than above stated to commend it specially to our attention? Well, the primary feature is that we have no breed with similar characteristics that is a non-sitter, and at the same time lays a tinted-shelled egg. I am aware that the latter is not quite a fixed feature, shell colour varies, some strains and some individuals lay browner shells than others, but the more or less latent characteristic is there and only requires development and encouragement to show itself and become more fixed. In one of my own runs at the present time I have five Mahogany Orloffs, all laying tinted eggs, some of them as rich a colour of any Rhode Islander you ever saw, some not quite so pronounced, but still well tinted, and I feel very strongly we must encourage this feature.

What about colours and standard? I suppose everyone at all interested knows that colouring is in Russia a secondary consideration, still they have, I believe followed a certain line so far as it tended to the retention of the type which gave them the best combination of a useful all round fowl. The colours so far imported have been the two I am given to understand are those most generally favoured in Russia, viz, the Mahogany and the Spangled. The former has, so far taken the lead here, chiefly, I believe, because they happen to be the ones that were first introduced, but the Spangles are coming forward rapidly, they have the same generally useful points as the others, and their appearance is certainly very attractive and likely to appeal to the fancier who likes the pleasure of breeding for exhibition as well as the egg basket and his dinner. Personally the Spangles, and particularly perhaps, the male birds, appeal to me as being the most pleasing in appearance, but is merely a matter of fancy.



ORLOFF COCKEREL

2nd Dairy, 1915. The property of Mr Harry Huskin, Criagalt, Neath.

As to the standard itself, I do not propose to include one in these rambling notes; two have already been published in *The Feathered World*. One translated from the Russian, sent by Mr Edward Brown (who, by the way told us of the qualities of these Orloffs years before anyone seriously considered them), and one recently drawn up by the executive of the newly-formed English Orloff Club. I do not at this juncture wish to particularise between the two standards – in most respects they are very similar; but I would impress upon readers that so far the Orloff can be bred well up to type in both sexes without resource to that bugbear double-mating which has been the ruin of so many breeds and will continue to be so of any future ones where the standard is so drawn as to encourage it. Mr Browns standard appeared in *The Feathered World* No 1366, and copies can probably be had by sending 2½ d to this office.

Another feature of the Orloff which gives it claim to our consideration is that it is so very distinct and dissimilar to nearly every other pure-bred denizen of the English poultry yard. We have been told it has several Malay characteristics, possibly that may be so, but if it has, they are combined with others that make for distinctiveness. No one need deny our Russian friends have given us a composite breed, but it should be borne in mind that in fixing this variety they were actuated by a desire to produce something suitable to, and consequently profitable in, their rigorous climate, and when we consider how changeable is our own and how variable the conditions under which English poultry culture has to be conducted, we add another reason why the Orloff is deserving of our favourable consideration. This is my first year with the Spangles, so that I cannot yet speak with the same personal degree of certainty as to their points of profitable production as I can of the Mahoganies, but they appear so similar in all respects save marking that I have every confidence in their quality. I

should, however, say that the spangles, at all events those I am acquainted with lay eggs with paler coloured (almost white) shells than the Mahoganies, but their eggs are usually the larger, and if a brown shell is desired it is doubtless easily attainable by a little careful breeding and selection.

One thing that very strongly commands the Orloff to my mind is that its hardy nature and generally useful points make it so suitable to the farmyard and those similar places where so many fowls are kept for utility purposes and which are specially just now in this time of scarcity desirably to be encouraged and increased. I am not out to decry every other breed as inferior to the Orloff. I do not think any one of its ardent admirers or breeders desires to do so either, but what I do say is that it constitutes a very useful addition to our poultry yards – one that has unique features of a desirable type, and consequently, one deserving of consideration, specially by those just starting in poultry keeping and who will be encouraged over and above the usual methods of profitable production by the constantly increasing demand for eggs for hatching and stock birds of both sexes, which is practically inevitable in this breed for some time to come.