NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

PASSING ON BIRDS WITH KNOWN FAULTS CAN MAKE A NOVICE GIVE UP

One of the most disquieting phrases that occasionally meet the eye is the expression "giving-up". It is always a matter of sincere regret to the Fancy at large, that another name will have to be erased from the annals of bird-keeping, and its loss made up by the enlisting of yet another enthusiastic beginner.

Everyone knows that age and ill-health always take their toll, and that even the keeping and breeding of Budgerigars, which are possibly the easiest birds to keep these days, can be a strain to some. Fanciers retiring for this reason always go out with distinction and honour and for the most part, can be relied on to show continued interest in the Fancy and give sound advice whenever needed.

BAD LOSERS

But it is quite another matter when the reasons cited are hardly in accord with either of the above, and more often that not accompanied with uncomplimentary remarks directed at the Fancy in general and the immediate circle in particular. In many cases, however, these can be disregarded, as it is always a peculiarity of human nature to expect more of anything that it is prepared to put into it. Other cases can also be put down to bad losers, people who are constantly changing their hobby, and more rarely, sheer bad luck. Still, we can be very complacent about this sometimes, and fail to realise that many of them have been put off and discouraged by having bought birds which have had things wrong with them, which are not brought to light until they are in the breeding pen. It is rarely deliberate on the part of the breeder, as often he is not in a position to prove it, but that should be no excuse to disclaim responsibility altogether.

FEATHER-PLUCKERS

One of the oft-quoted complaints is that of feather-pluckers, particularly hens. Opinion is more or less evenly divided as to whether this annoying trait is inherited or acquired, but all will agree that to pass on such birds without due warning is unforgiveable, yet many do this rather than lose their intrinsic value.

Moreover, youngsters bred from feather-pluckers should not be held above suspicion until definitely proved to be free from the habit, although even then there is no guarantee that it will not arise later. Fostering out youngsters does not always present the habit catching on in the next generation, and once they start, it is never lost.

FRENCH MOULTERS

Much the same also applies to French Moulters and birds bred from them. It is not easy to "try it on" with an actual French Moulter, as this complaint is usually evident at an early age, but some breeders sell "healthy" youngsters bred from them with the result that there is a known risk of F.M. birds appearing at one time or another in the offspring. It is often said that this trouble sometimes appears spontaneously in healthy stock with no known F.M. background, but this impression could well only persist because it is very seldom possible to go back far enough in any bird's ancestry.

STERILITY

Another bad case is the passing-on of sterile birds, particularly cocks, the use of which results in clear eggs time after time. This debility, however, cannot be proved to have been inherited, but appears from time to time in an odd bird, and is a risk that all breeders have to take. It is quite another matter when such birds are sold in the knowledge that they are incapable of breeding.

Egg-Eaters

The same also could be said of the passing on of birds which are proved'"bad" breeders by "bad", I mean parent birds who eat their eggs or fail to incubate them; do not rear their chicks, are unduly nervous or vicious, and so on. Such symptoms are acquired rather than inherited and damage can be avoided if one is quick enough, by fostering out the eggs or chicks. None the less, it is still a point of honour in the Fancy that such birds should not be passed on without warning.

RECORDS

Another sad state of affairs is when birds are sold whose genetical make- up is not accurately described, although in many cases it is the result of ignorance rather than design. An example of this is when someone offers a bird as a "split" Fallow, but breeding results in the production of not a single Fallow when paired to a visible Fallow through several nests. On enquiry, it is found that the bird was bred from two "split" Fallows, and that the presence of actual Fallows in the same nest gave the breeder the impression that the non-Fallows were "split". As we all know, only a proportion (theoretically 50%) are so "split", and it is an error to pass off Normal young from such pairing as "splits" unless they have been proved. This also applies to all other Recessive factors where the bird(s) concerned is Dominant in appearance. Fortunately, all this bother could be avoided if all buyers insisted on full pedigree details before purchase and automatically rejected any bird purporting to be a "split" whose, pedigree does not indicate that the hidden factor was carried in visible form by one parent.

BRED FROM VOILETS

A variant of the above is the impression that still persists among many breeders that non-violet-factored birds bred from Violet parents are specially useful for Violet breeding, whereas, in point of fact, they are of no more value than ordinary birds with no Violet ancestry. Therefore, these "Violet-bred" birds should be discounted unless they show the Violet factor in some degree. In most cases the suffusion on the rump indicates whether the violet factor is present or not, as it comes out stronger here than anywhere else.

COMMUNICATION

Sufficient has been said to make clear the problems that often arise in connection with the purchase of birds, much of the bother and bad feeling of which could be avoided by sensible behaviour on the part of both parties. The aggrieved purchaser, for instance, instead of getting "rankled" and starting a whispering campaign against the seller, should raise the trouble in a letter to him and ask his advice in the circumstances.

HELPFUL BREEDER

Any breeder of repute and integrity, on the other hand, far from resenting such a communication, would appreciate it, in as much as it would help to locate any fault in his stud or mistake on his part. He could also offer to replace the particular bird, especially if relevant evidence is forthcoming, as the usual period of grace at the time of purchase can hardly be expected to cover such hidden contingencies. Apart from instances where mistakes and oversights have been made, the root of the matter is the attitude that breeders should adopt towards "unsatisfactory" birds, with special reference to the first four kinds mentioned in this article. What he does with them within his own establishment is obviously his own business, but when it comes to dealing in them with other fanciers, he has to consider not only their best interests but also his own reputation for quality and fair dealing.

ENCOURAGE NEWCOMERS

From this, we can take it that no breeder of integrity and good sense would ever pass on a bird about which he may have the slightest shadow of doubt concerning its health or breeding abilities. Furthermore, he would rather sustain the financial loss involved than the risk that by such an action a budding fancier "gives up" the Fancy in despair.