

CHAPTER VII.

FOWLS.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHIEF BREEDS—ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THEIR DESCENT FROM SEVERAL SPECIES—ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF ALL THE BREEDS HAVING DESCENDED FROM GALLUS BANKIVA—REVERSION TO THE PARENT-STOCK IN COLOUR—ANALOGOUS VARIATIONS—ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE FOWL—EXTERNAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SEVERAL BREEDS—EGGS—CHICKENS—SECONDARY SEXUAL CHARACTERS—WING- AND TAIL-FEATHERS, VOICE, DISPOSITION, ETC.—OSTEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES IN THE SKULL, VERTEBRÆ, ETC.—EFFECTS OF USE AND DISUSE ON CERTAIN PARTS—CORRELATION OF GROWTH.

As some naturalists may not be familiar with the chief breeds of the fowl, it will be advisable to give a condensed description of them.¹ From what I have read and seen of specimens brought from several quarters of the world, I believe that most of the chief kinds have been imported into England, but many sub-breeds are probably still unknown here. The following discussion on the origin of the various breeds and on their characteristic differences does not pretend to completeness, but may be of some interest to the naturalist. The classification of the breeds cannot, as far as I can see, be made natural. They differ from each other in different degrees, and do not afford characters in subordination to each other, by which they can be ranked in group under group. They seem all to have diverged by independent and different roads from a single type. Each chief breed includes differently coloured sub-varieties, most of which can be truly propagated, but it would be superfluous to describe them. I have classed the various crested fowls as sub-breeds under the Polish fowl;

¹ I have drawn up this brief synopsis from various sources, but chiefly from information given me by Mr. Tegetmeier. This gentleman has kindly looked through this chapter; and from his well-known knowledge, the statements here given may be fully trusted. Mr. Tegetmeier has

likewise assisted me in every possible way in obtaining for me information and specimens. I must not let this opportunity pass without expressing my cordial thanks to Mr. B. P. Brent, a well-known writer on poultry, for continuous assistance and the gift of many specimens.