

12. SILK FOWLS.—Feathers silky, with the primary wing and tail-feathers imperfect; skin and periosteum of bones black; comb and wattles dark leaden-blue; ear-lappets tinged with blue; legs thin, often furnished with an additional toe. Size rather small.

13. SOOTY FOWLS.—An Indian breed, having the peculiar appearance of a white bird smeared with soot, with black skin and periosteum. The hens alone are thus characterised.

From this synopsis we see that the several breeds differ considerably, and they would have been nearly as interesting for us as pigeons, if there had been equally good evidence that all had descended from one parent-species. Most fanciers believe that they are descended from several primitive stocks. The Rev. E. S. Dixon<sup>7</sup> argues strongly on this side of the question; and one fancier even denounces the opposite conclusion by asking, "Do we not perceive pervading this spirit, the spirit of the *Deist*?" Most naturalists, with the exception of a few, such as Temminck, believe that all the breeds have proceeded from a single species; but authority on such a point goes for little. Fanciers look to all parts of the world as the possible sources of their unknown stocks; thus ignoring the laws of geographical distribution. They know well that the several kinds breed truly even in colour. They assert, but, as we shall see, on very weak grounds, that most of the breeds are extremely ancient. They are strongly impressed with the great difference between the chief kinds, and they ask with force, can differences in climate, food, or treatment have produced birds so different as the black stately Spanish, the diminutive elegant Bantam, the heavy Cochin with its many peculiarities, and the Polish fowl with its great top-knot and protuberant skull? But fanciers, whilst admitting and even overrating the effects of crossing the various breeds, do not sufficiently regard the probability of the occasional birth, during the course of centuries, of birds with abnormal and hereditary peculiarities; they overlook the effects of correlation of growth—of the long-continued use and disuse of parts, and of some direct result from changed food and climate, though on this latter head I have found no sufficient evidence; and lastly, they all, as far as I know, entirely overlook the all-important subject of unconscious or unmethodical selection

<sup>7</sup> 'Ornamental and Domestic Poultry,' 1848.