

in ancient times and in semi-civilized countries took pains to keep the breeds distinct, and who therefore valued them, would not occasionally have destroyed inferior birds and occasionally have preserved their best birds? This is all that is required. It is not pretended that any one in ancient times intended to form a new breed, or to modify an old breed according to some ideal standard of excellence. He who cared for poultry would merely wish to obtain, and afterwards to rear, the best birds which he could; but this occasional preservation of the best birds would in the course of time modify the breed, as surely, though by no means as rapidly, as does methodical selection at the present day. If one person out of a hundred or out of a thousand attended to the breeding of his birds, this would be sufficient; for the birds thus tended would soon become superior to others, and would form a new strain; and this strain would, as explained in the last chapter slowly have its characteristic differences augmented, and at last be converted into a new sub-breed or breed. But breeds would often be for a time neglected and would deteriorate; they would, however, partially retain their character, and afterwards might again come into fashion and be raised to a standard of perfection higher than their former standard; as has actually occurred quite recently with Polish fowls. If, however, a breed were utterly neglected, it would become extinct, as has recently happened with one of the Polish sub-breeds. Whenever in the course of past centuries a bird appeared with some slight abnormal structure, such as with a lark-like crest on its head, it would probably often have been preserved from that love of novelty which leads some persons in England to keep rumpless fowls, and others in India to keep frizzled fowls. And after a time any such abnormal appearance would be carefully preserved, from being esteemed a sign of the purity and excellence of the breed; for on this principle the Romans eighteen centuries ago valued the fifth toe and the white ear-lobe in their fowls.

Thus from the occasional appearance of abnormal characters, though at first only slight in degree; from the effects of the use and the disuse of parts; possibly from the direct effects of changed climate and food; from correlation of