

I have remarked in my 'Origin of Species' that secondary sexual characters are apt to differ much in the species of the same genus, and to be unusually variable in the individuals of the same species. So it is with the breeds of the fowl, as we have already seen, as far as the colour of plumage is concerned, and so it is with the other secondary sexual characters. Firstly, the comb differs much in the various breeds,⁵⁰ and its form is eminently characteristic of each kind, with the exception of the Dorkings, in which the form has not been as yet determined on by fanciers, and fixed by selection. A single, deeply-serrated comb is the typical and most common form. It differs much in size, being immensely developed in Spanish fowls; and in a local breed called Red-caps, it is sometimes "upwards of three inches in breadth at the front, and more than four inches in length, measured to the end of the peak behind."⁵¹ In some breeds the comb is double, and when the two ends are cemented together it forms a "cup-comb;" in the "rose-comb" it is depressed, covered with small projections, and produced backwards; in the horned and crève-cœur fowl it is produced into two horns; it is triple in the pea-combed Brahmas, short and truncated in the Malays, and absent in the Guelderlands. In the tasselled Game a few long feathers rise from the back of the comb: in many breeds a crest of feathers replaces the comb. The crest, when little developed, arises from a fleshy mass, but, when much developed, from a hemispherical protuberance of the skull. In the best Polish fowls it is so largely developed, that I have seen birds which could hardly pick up their food; and a German writer asserts⁵² that they are in consequence liable to be struck by hawks. Monstrous structures of this kind would thus be suppressed in a state of nature. The wattles, also, vary much in size, being small in Malays and some other breeds; in certain Polish sub-breeds they are replaced by a great tuft of feathers called a beard.

The hackles do not differ much in the various breeds, but

⁵⁰ I am much indebted to Mr. Brent for an account, with sketches, of all the variations of the comb known to him, and likewise with respect to the tail as presently to be given.

⁵¹ The 'Poultry Book,' by Tegetmeier, 1866, p. 234.

⁵² 'Die Hühner- und Pfauenzucht,' 1827, s. 11.