

birds, are at first of one colour, but in a year or two acquire feathers of the colour of the other parent; for in this case the tendency to a change of plumage is clearly latent in the young bird. So it is with hornless breeds of cattle, some of which acquire small horns as they grow old. Purely bred black and white bantams, and some other fowls, occasionally assume, with advancing years, the red feathers of the parent-species. I will here add a somewhat different case, as it connects in a striking manner latent characters of two classes. Mr. Hewitt⁶⁴ possessed an excellent Sebright gold-laced bantam hen, which, as she became old, grew diseased in her ovaria, and assumed male characters. In this breed the males resemble the females in all respects except in their combs, wattles, spurs, and instincts; hence it might have been expected that the diseased hen would have assumed only those masculine characters which are proper to the breed, but she acquired, in addition, well-arched tail sickle-feathers quite a foot in length, saddle-feathers on the loins, and hackles on the neck,—ornaments which, as Mr. Hewitt remarks, “would be held as abominable in this breed.” The Sebright bantam is known⁶⁵ to have originated about the year 1800 from a cross between a common bantam and a Polish fowl, recrossed by a hen-tailed bantam, and carefully selected; hence there can hardly be a doubt that the sickle-feathers and hackles which appeared in the old hen were derived from the Polish fowl or common bantam; and we thus see that not only certain masculine characters proper to the Sebright bantam, but other masculine characters derived from the first progenitors of the breed, removed by a period of above sixty years, were lying latent in this henbird, ready to be evolved as soon as her ovaria became diseased.

From these several facts it must be admitted that certain characters, capacities, and instincts, may lie latent in an individual, and even in a succession of individuals, without our being able to detect the least sign of their presence. When fowls, pigeons, or cattle of different colours are crossed, and

⁶⁴ ‘Journal of Horticulture,’ July, 1864, p. 38. I have had the opportunity of examining these remarkable feathers through the kindness of Mr.

Tegetmeier.

⁶⁵ ‘The Poultry Book,’ by Mr. Tegetmeier, 1866, p. 241.