

strong a tendency to vary as is generally supposed, because many species long grown in botanic gardens, or unintentionally cultivated year after year mingled with our corn crops, have not produced distinct races; but this is accounted for by slight variations not having been selected and propagated. Let a plant which is now grown in a botanic garden, or any common weed, be cultivated on a large scale, and let a sharp-sighted gardener look out for each slight variety and sow the seed, and then, if distinct races are not produced, the argument will be valid.

The importance of selection is likewise shown by considering special characters. For instance, with most breeds of fowls the form of the comb and the colour of the plumage have been attended to, and are eminently characteristic of each race; but in Dorkings, fashion has never demanded uniformity of comb or colour; and the utmost diversity in these respects prevails. Rose-combs, double-combs, cup-combs, &c., and colours of all kinds, may be seen in purely bred and closely related Dorking fowls, whilst other points, such as the general form of body, and the presence of an additional toe, have been attended to, and are invariably present. It has also been ascertained that colour can be fixed in this breed, as well as in any other.<sup>54</sup>

During the formation or improvement of a breed, its members will always be found to vary much in those characters to which especial attention is directed, and of which each slight improvement is eagerly sought and selected. Thus, with short-faced tumbler-pigeons, the shortness of the beak, shape of head and plumage,—with carriers, the length of the beak and wattle,—with fantails, the tail and carriage,—with Spanish fowls, the white face and comb,—with long-eared rabbits, the length of ear, are all points which are eminently variable. So it is in every case; and the large price paid for first-rate animals proves the difficulty of breeding them up to the highest standard of excellence. This subject has been discussed by fanciers,<sup>55</sup> and the greater

<sup>54</sup> Mr. Baily, in 'The Poultry Chronicle,' vol. ii., 1854, p. 150. Also vol. i. p. 342; vol. iii. p. 245.

<sup>55</sup> 'Cottage Gardener,' 1855, December, p. 171; 1856, January, pp. 248, 323.