

Some further remarks on the origin of domestic poultry

by

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Since my last paper hereon read at the International Ornithological Congress in 1884 I have carried out a few more experiments in crossing different varieties of thorough bred Game fowls. Last year one of my best pure black hens was placed with a pure blackred game cock belonging to a brother of mine and the result was most curious; the cocks so I am informed being very handsome dark red birds with spangled breasts, unfortunately through a mistake they were killed before I had an opportunity of seeing them. I however saw the hens and they resembled brown-red game, in fact to all appearances they were heavy brown-red game hens, i. e. hens with black bodies and gold hockles striped with black. It is also remarkable that a black breasted cock put to a pure black hen should produce spangled breasted cocks there is in all our domestic poultry at the present day a great inclination towards spotted breasts which points to the probability of the original or rather the early domestic birds being as I have remarked in my previous paper mottled on the breast.

In breeding black game last year and also white game the chicken in both cases showed a stronger inclination than usual to return to the original red colour of their ancestors. My experiences this season are almost nit in consequence of a bad breeding season and my poultry woman failing to rear nearly all my chicken.

Perhaps the most singular confirmation of my former paper is afforded by a case of birds now in the British

Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road London, to which my attention has since been specially called; this labelled *Gallus Domesticus*, *Common Fowl*, *Yowl*, and was presented by E. L. Layard Esq., it consists of 2 cocks, 2 hens and 1 chick, they were shot in the woods on the island of Taviuni and are descendants of domestic fowls left in the Fiji Islands by the early voyagers more than a century ago, they have now reverted to the wild state. One of the cocks is a perfect black breasted red game fowl with a small single comb and wattles, drooping tail and in size about half way between a game Bantam and a full sized ordinary blackred game cock. The other cock is the same size but is especially noticeable for its peculiar plumages which is evidently going back from the duckwing colour to the blackred. This bird has its hockle a light straw or cream colour like a duckwing cock, the rest of its plumage however except for its lighter shade very much resembles a black breasted red cock; the tail in this bird is full and carried rather upright, but this is I think the fault of the stuffer otherwise the case is a marvel of taxidermy. The hens are very light yellowish brown and are evidently in the transition stage from duckwing to blackred in the same way as the last mentioned cock. The chick however is a genuine little blackred cock chicken. In both cock birds the bar on the wing is very strongly marked.

Although naturalists generally agree that our domestic poultry originally sprang from *Gallus Bankiva* yet I have no doubt that in the early ages they existed for many centuries somewhat in the above form, that is small black breasted reds until in process of time by careful selection and breeding in different climates they very gradually developed into the various different breeds existing in the present day.

The following description of blackbreasted red game, brown breasted red game and duckwing game is taken from our »Standard of Excellence«. I therefore give it to explain the colours of the breeds above alluded to: black game should of course be all black and white game wholly white.

Tail black except the two top feathers, which should be powdered with partridge colour. Breast salmon shading off to ashy brown towards the thighs. Thighs pale salmon. Legs yellow or olive. (To match cock ear.)

Brown-red cock.

Head dark-red. Comb gibsy coloured, i. e. dark purple. Face and jaws very dark purple. Eyes black. Beak black or nearly so. Neckhockle lemon coloured with a very narrow dark streak in the middle. Back and shoulder-coverts and saddle lemon. Wing butts black. Shoulder black. Bow lemon. Coverts green-black, free from grey. Tail black. Sickle-feathers and tail-coverts green-black. Breast black ground colour feathers with brown shafts and laced with light brown. (NB. Many of the old fashioned cocks used to be spangled on the breast. E. C. P.). Thighs black. Legs black or dark yellow on aged birds.

Hen.

Head black or dark brown. Comb, face, deaf ear and wattles black or dark purple.

Black breasted red cock.

Head bright orange. Comb bright red. Face and jaws red. Eyes bright red. Beak storn colour or yellow. Neckhockle bright orange, free from stripes. Back dark rich red. Shoulder and shoulder-coverts red. Wing butts black. Bow rich red, greater and lesser. Coverts glossy black with metallic reflections forming a destruct bar. Primaries black except two lower feathers the outer web of which should be edged with bay. Secondaries clear bay outer web and black inner web. Saddle rather darker red than hockle. Tail black. Sickle feathers green-black. Tailcoverts glossy green-black but grey at roots. Breast black up to the throat. Legs yellow or olive. (NB. I say the legs may be any colour E. C. P.).

Hen.

Head golden. Face, comb, deaf ear and wattles red. Eyes bright red. Beak storn colour or yellow. Neckhockle golden with narrow black stripes. Back and shoulder-coverts, wingbow, shoulder and coverts partridge colour. Wing primaries black or dark brown. Secondaries outer edge partridge, remainder black. Eyes black. Beak black or nearly so. Neck brass with very narrow black stripes. Remainder of plumage a black or marbled, breast indifferently, the rest of the plumage black. Legs black, very dark yellow admissible in adults.

Yellow duckwing cock.

Head very pale straw. Comb, face and jaws red. Eye bright red. Beak horn colour. Neckhockle clear cream colour, absolutely free from black stripes. Back brassy. Shoulder-coverts black. Bow of the wing brassy of an even shade. Wingbutts black, greater and lesser. Coverts black, forming a distinct bar. Primaries black, excepting the lower edge of the two last feathers, which should be very pale brown. Secondaries black inner web, clear white outer web. Saddle straw colour. Breast black. Underpart of body, thighs and tail black. Sickle feathers glossy black. Tail-coverts black with grey at the roots, lower coverts straw. Legs yellow.

Yellow duckwing hen.

Head silvery grey. Comb, face, deaf ear, and wattles red. Eye bright red. Beak horn colour. Neck silvery grey with narrow dark stripes. Breast salmon. Back and shoulder coverts ashy grey. Wing ashy grey, free from pencilling. Shoulders, bow, wing, coverts, and secondaries ashy grey. Primaries black. Tail black except the two top feathers, which should be grey. Thighs very pale salmon. Legs yellow.

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Head bright orange. Comb bright red. Face and jaws red. Eyes bright red. Beak horn colour or yellow. Neck-hackle bright orange, free from stripes. Back dark rich red. Shoulder and shoulder-coverts red. Wing butts black. Bow rich red. Greater and lesser coverts, glossy black with metallic reflections forming a distinct bar. Primaries black except two lower feathers the outer web of which should be edged with bay. Secondaries clear bay outer web and black inner web. Saddle rather darker red than hackle. Tail black. Sickle feathers green-black. Tailcoverts glossy green-black but grey at roots. Breast black up to the throat. Legs willow or olive. (NB. I say the legs may be any colour E. C. P.)

Hen.

Head golden. Face, comb, deaf ear and wattles red. Eyes bright red. Beak horn colour or yellow. Neckhackle golden with narrow black stripes. Back and shoulder-coverts, wingbow, shoulder and coverts partridge colour. Wing primaries black or dark brown. Secondaries outer edge partridge, remainder black. Tail black except the two top feathers, which should be powdered with partridge colour. Breast salmon shading off to ashy brown towards the thighs. Thighs pale salmon. Legs willow or olive. (To match cock ear.)

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Yellow duckwing hen.

Head silvery grey. Comb, face, deaf ear, and wattles red. Eye bright red. Beak horn colour. Neck silvery grey with narrow dark stripes. Breast salmon. Back and shoulder coverts slaty grey. Wing ashy grey, free from pencilling. Shoulders, bow, wing, coverts, and secondaries ashy grey. Primaries black. Tail black except the two top feathers, which should be grey. Thighs very pale salmon. Legs willow.

Berichtigung: Auf Seite 578, Zeile 2 von oben lies statt „this“ — „it is“; ibidem, Zeile 3 von oben Yowl zu streichen.

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