

ATAVISM.

It need not necessarily imply that all birds varying slightly from the normal are the result of mixed union, because undoubted mongrels along the line of contact sometimes possess similar characteristics, since Darwin says: "In a breed which has not been crossed, but in which both parents have lost some character which their progenitor possessed, the tendency, whether strong or weak, to produce the lost characters might, for all that we can see to the contrary, be transmitted for any number of generations. When a character which has been lost reappears, the most probable hypothesis is that the character in question has been lying latent, and at last under unknown favorable conditions, is developed." As previously mentioned, there is an occasional specimen, more noticeable in the juvenile, having the crown more or less tipped or washed with brownish or with scarcely more than a suspicion of ash on the throat, colors belonging to the western species, just as truly as the scarlet malar stripe or ruby colored shafts, although not as conspicuous. An anomalous specimen, secured in New York markets and described by Gerrit S. Miller, Jr., in the *Auk*, Vol. XIV., p. 275, is an almost perfect intermediate between *auratus* and the Cuban Flicker *C. chrysocaulus*, and would doubtless be considered a hybrid but for the fact that the breeding ranges of the two species do not overlap. To the best of my knowledge this is the only specimen with spotted rump taken on the North American continent. Possibly the abnormal Gilded Flicker noted under the head of *Hybridism* belongs properly to this section. An old male showing the effects of previous gunshot wounds in wing and mandible, taken in DeKalb county, Georgia, Jan. 27, '99, has a single red feather over the right eye. I shot an adult male near Berwyn, Chester county, Penn'a, Oct. 3, '94, which has a narrow border of scarlet on the upper margin and end of the black moustache; a not at all remarkable condition, occurring

repeatedly in almost every State in which the Flicker is found, and quite as frequently along the Atlantic coast as anywhere. With the exception of the apparent hybrids taken near Toronto, Philadelphia and New Orleans, scarcely a well marked mongrel has been captured east of the Mississippi. The so-called hybrids varying but little from the normal, are often separated by a thousand or more miles from known points of interbreeding, and are surrounded by hundreds of pure birds as far as can be told by the plumage. In view of these facts we may ponder on the probable source of the alien blood. If it is the fading vestiges of an earlier infusion, it should have been much more noticeable twenty years ago, since a hybrid crossed regularly with pure stock would soon have a very small proportion of foreign blood, 1 in 16,384 in fifteen generations for example. Mr. James Newton Baskett is very much inclined to attribute such instances, especially when found on the Atlantic slope, as pure variation, either rudimentary or vestigial, perhaps the latter, since the genus is quite probably of southern origin, and most all southern and southwestern species and races incline to red moustaches; *C. auratus* being a late northward-tending species, showing occasional tendencies to revert. A hypothesis in part or in whole shared by not a few. Dr. W. E. Rotzell also questions the occurrence of hybrids in the East, *C. cafer* not being present; and inclines to the opinion that we must of necessity seek a better understanding; the so-called hybrids may be explained by the fact that there is a strong atavistic tendency in *C. auratus*, the form reverting so frequently in some particulars to the ancestral type, exemplified so frequently in the head of the young.