

The savages of North and South America easily reclaim the feral horses, so that there is no improbability in savages in various quarters of the world having domesticated more than one native species or natural race. M. Sanson¹⁷ thinks that he has proved that two distinct species have been domesticated, one in the East, and one in North Africa; and that these differed in the number of their lumbar vertebra and in various other parts; but M. Sanson seems to believe that osteological characters are subject to very little variation, which is certainly a mistake. At present no aboriginal or truly wild horse is positively known to exist; for it is commonly believed that the wild horses of the East are escaped domestic animals.¹⁸ If therefore our domestic breeds are descended from several species or natural races, all have become extinct in the wild state.

With respect to the causes of the modifications which horses have undergone, the conditions of life seem to produce a considerable direct effect. Mr. D. Forbes, who has had excellent opportunities of comparing the horses of Spain with those of South America, informs me that the horses of Chile, which have lived under nearly the same conditions as their progenitors in Andalusia, remain unaltered, whilst the Pampas horses and the Puno ponies are considerably modified. There can be no doubt that horses become greatly reduced in size and altered in appearance by living on mountains and islands; and this apparently is due to want of nutritious or varied food. Every one knows how small and rugged the ponies are on the Northern islands and on the mountains of Europe. Corsica and Sardinia have their native ponies; and there were,¹⁹ or still are, on some islands on the coast of Virginia, ponies like those of the Shetland Islands, which are believed to have originated through exposure to unfavourable conditions. The Puno ponies, which inhabit the

¹⁷ 'Comptes rendus,' 1866, p. 485, and 'Journal de l'Anat. et de la Phys.,' Mai 1868.

¹⁸ Mr. W. C. L. Martin ('The Horse,' 1845, p. 34), in arguing against the belief that the wild Eastern horses are merely feral, has

remarked on the improbability of man in ancient times having extirpated a species in a region where it can now exist in numbers.

¹⁹ 'Transact. Maryland Academy,' vol. i. part i. p. 28.