

the probability of the descent of all the existing races from a single, dun-coloured, more or less striped, primitive stock, to which our horses occasionally revert.

### THE ASS.

FOUR species of Asses, besides three zebras, have been described by naturalists. There is now little doubt that our domesticated animal is descended from the *Equus tæniopus* of Abyssinia.<sup>43</sup> The ass is sometimes advanced as an instance of an animal domesticated, as we know by the Old Testament, from an ancient period, which has varied only in a very slight degree. But this is by no means strictly true; for in Syria alone there are four breeds;<sup>44</sup> first, a light and graceful animal, with an agreeable gait, used by ladies; secondly, an Arab breed reserved exclusively for the saddle; thirdly, a stouter animal used for ploughing and various purposes; and lastly, the large Damascus breed, with a peculiarly long body and ears. In the South of France also there are several breeds, and one of extraordinary size, some individuals being as tall as full-sized horses. Although the ass in England is by no means uniform in appearance, distinct breeds have not been formed. This may probably be accounted for by the animal being kept chiefly by poor persons, who do not rear large numbers, nor carefully match and select the young. For, as we shall see in a future chapter, the ass can with ease be greatly improved in size and strength by careful selection, combined no doubt with good food; and we may infer that all its other characters would be equally amenable to selection. The small size of the ass in England and Northern Europe is apparently due far more to want of care in breeding than to cold; for in Western India, where the ass is used as a beast of burden by some of the lower castes, it is not much larger than a Newfoundland dog, "being generally not more than from twenty to thirty inches high."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Sclater, in 'Proc. Zoolog. Soc.,' 1862, p. 164. Dr. Hartmann says ('Annalen der Landw.' B. xlv. p. 222) that this animal in its wild state is not always striped across the legs.

<sup>44</sup> W. C. Martin, 'History of the

Horse,' 1845, p. 207.

<sup>45</sup> Col. Sykes' Cat. of Mammalia, 'Proc. Zoolog. Soc.' July 12th, 1831. Williamson, 'Oriental Field Sports,' vol. ii., quoted by Martin, p. 206.