

If the history of these Porto Santo rabbits had not been known, most naturalists, on observing their much reduced size, their colour, reddish above and grey beneath, their tails and ears not tipped with black, would have ranked them as a distinct species. They would have been strongly confirmed in this view by seeing them alive in the Zoological Gardens, and hearing that they refused to couple with other rabbits. Yet this rabbit, which there can be little doubt would thus have been ranked as a distinct species, as certainly originated since the year 1420. Finally, from the three cases of the rabbits which have run wild in Porto Santo, Jamaica, and the Falkland Islands, we see that these animals do not, under new conditions of life, revert to or retain their aboriginal character, as is so generally asserted to be the case by most authors.

Osteological Characters.

When we remember, on the one hand, how frequently it is stated that important parts of the structure never vary ; and, on the other hand, on what small differences in the skeleton fossil species have often been founded, the variability of the skull and of some other bones in the domesticated rabbit well deserves attention. It must not be supposed that the more important differences immediately to be described strictly characterise any one breed ; all that can be said is, that they are generally present in certain breeds. We should bear in mind that selection has not been applied to fix any character in the skeleton, and that the animals have not had to support themselves under uniform habits of life. We cannot account for most of the differences in the skeleton ; but we shall see that the increased size of the body, due to careful nurture and continued selection, has affected the head in a particular manner. Even the elongation and lopping of the ears have influenced in a small degree the form of the whole skull. The want of exercise has apparently modified the proportional length of the limbs in comparison with that of the body.

As a standard of comparison, I prepared skeletons of two wild rabbits from Kent, one from the Shetland Islands, and one from