

blue birds with the several characteristic marks. I have said that it must be assumed that each race has been crossed with *C. livia* within a dozen, or, at the utmost, within a score of generations; for there is no reason to believe that crossed offspring ever revert to one of their ancestors when removed by a greater number of generations. In a breed which has been crossed only once, the tendency to reversion will naturally become less and less in the succeeding generations, as in each there will be less and less of the blood of the foreign breed; but when there has been no cross with a distinct breed, and there is a tendency in both parents to revert to some long-lost character, this tendency, for all that we can see to the contrary, may be transmitted undiminished for an indefinite number of generations. These two distinct cases of reversion are often confounded together by those who have written on inheritance.

Considering, on the one hand, the improbability of the three assumptions which have just been discussed, and, on the other hand, how simply the facts are explained on the principle of reversion, we may conclude that the occasional appearance in all the races, both when purely bred and more especially when crossed, of blue birds, sometimes chequered, with double wing-bars, with white or blue croups, with a bar at the end of the tail, and with the outer tail-feathers edged with white, affords an argument of the greatest weight in favour of the view that all are descended from *Columba livia*, including under this name the three or four wild varieties or sub-species before enumerated.

To sum up the six foregoing arguments, which are opposed to the belief that the chief domestic races are the descendants of at least eight or nine or perhaps a dozen species; for the crossing of any less number would not yield the characteristic differences between the several races. *Firstly*, the improbability that so many species should still exist somewhere, but be unknown to ornithologists, or that they should have become within the historical period extinct, although man has had so little influence in exterminating the wild *C. livia*. *Secondly*, the improbability of man in former times having thoroughly domesticated and rendered fertile under confine-