

countries, such as Sierra Leone, the Malay archipelago, and Madeira, they are exposed to new conditions of life; and apparently in consequence vary in a somewhat greater degree. When closely confined, either for the pleasure of watching them, or to prevent their straying, they must be exposed, even in their native climate, to considerably different conditions; for they cannot obtain their natural diversity of food; and, what is probably more important, they are abundantly fed, whilst debarred from taking much exercise. Under these circumstances we might expect to find, from the analogy of all other domesticated animals, a greater amount of individual variability than with the wild pigeon; and this is the case. The want of exercise apparently tends to reduce the size of the feet and organs of flight; and then, from the law of correlation of growth, the beak apparently becomes affected. From what we now see occasionally taking place in our aviaries, we may conclude that sudden variations or sports, such as the appearance of a crest of feathers on the head, of feathered feet, of a new shade of colour, of an additional feather in the tail or wing, would occur at rare intervals during the many centuries which have elapsed since the pigeon was first domesticated. At the present day such "sports" are generally rejected as blemishes; and there is so much mystery in the breeding of pigeons that, if a valuable sport did occur, its history would often be concealed. Before the last hundred and fifty years, there is hardly a chance of the history of any such sport having been recorded. But it by no means follows from this that such sports in former times, when the pigeon had undergone much less variation, would have been rejected. We are profoundly ignorant of the cause of each sudden and apparently spontaneous variation, as well as of the infinitely numerous shades of difference between the birds of the same family. But in a future chapter we shall see that all such variations appear to be the indirect result of changes of some kind in the conditions of life.

Hence, after a long course of domestication, we might expect to see in the pigeon much individual variability, and occasional sudden variations, as well as slight modifications from the lessened use of certain parts, together with the