

unless these parts happened to vary under domestication: I do not positively assert that this is the case, although I have seen traces of such variability in the wing-feathers, and certainly in the tail-feathers. It would be a strange fact if the relative length of the hind toe should never vary, seeing how variable the foot is both in size and in the number of the scutellæ. With respect to the domestic races not roosting or building in trees, it is obvious that fanciers would never attend to or select such changes in habits; but we have seen that the pigeons in Egypt, which do not for some reason like settling on the low mud hovels of the natives, are led, apparently by compulsion, to perch in crowds on the trees. We may even affirm that, if our domestic races had become greatly modified in any of the above specified respects, and it could be shown that fanciers had never attended to such points, or that they did not stand in correlation with other selected characters, the fact, on the principles advocated in this chapter, would have offered a serious difficulty.

Let us briefly sum up the last two chapters on the pigeon. We may conclude with confidence that all the domestic races, notwithstanding their great amount of difference, are descended from the *Columba livia*, including under this name certain wild races. But the differences between the latter throw no light whatever on the characters which distinguish the domestic races. In each breed or sub-breed the individual birds are more variable than birds in a state of nature; and occasionally they vary in a sudden and strongly-marked manner. This plasticity of organization apparently results from changed conditions of life. Disuse has reduced certain parts of the body. Correlation of growth so ties the organization together, that when one part varies other parts vary at the same time. When several breeds have once been formed, their intercrossing aids the progress of modification, and has even produced new sub-breeds. But as, in the construction of a building, mere stones or bricks are of little avail without the builder's art, so, in the production of new races, selection has been the presiding power. Fanciers can act by selection on excessively slight individual differences, as well as on those greater differences which are called sports. Selection