

shall see in a future chapter that the long-continued use and disuse of parts produces an inherited effect. Even those characters which are considered the most fluctuating, such as colour, are with rare exceptions transmitted much more forcibly than is generally supposed. The wonder, indeed, in all cases is not that any character should be transmitted, but that the power of inheritance should ever fail. The checks to inheritance, as far as we know them, are, firstly, circumstances hostile to the particular character in question; secondly, conditions of life incessantly inducing fresh variability; and lastly, the crossing of distinct varieties during some previous generation, together with reversion or atavism—that is, the tendency in the child to resemble its grand-parents or more remote ancestors instead of its immediate parents. This latter subject will be discussed in the following chapter.