

before in giving size and constitution to the breed. I observed in the farmyard at Betley Hall some fowls showing a strong likeness to the Malay breed, and was told by Mr. Tollet that he had forty years before crossed his birds with Malays; and that, though he had at first attempted to get rid of this strain, he had subsequently given up the attempt in despair, as the Malay character would reappear.

This strong tendency in crossed breeds to revert has given rise to endless discussions in how many generations after a single cross, either with a distinct breed or merely with an inferior animal, the breed may be considered as pure, and free from all danger of reversion. No one supposes that less than three generations suffices, and most breeders think that six, seven, or eight are necessary, and some go to still greater lengths.<sup>18</sup> But neither in the case of a breed which has been contaminated by a single cross, nor when, in the attempt to form an intermediate breed, half-bred animals have been matched together during many generations, can any rule be laid down how soon the tendency to reversion will be obliterated. It depends on the difference in the strength or prepotency of transmission in the two parent-forms, on their actual amount of difference, and on the nature of the conditions of life to which the crossed offspring are exposed. But we must be careful not to confound these cases of reversion to characters which were gained by a cross, with those under the first class, in which characters originally common to *both* parents, but lost at some former period, reappear; for such characters may recur after an almost indefinite number of generations.

The law of reversion is as powerful with hybrids, when they are sufficiently fertile to breed together, or when they are repeatedly crossed with either pure parent-form, as in the case of mongrels. It is not necessary to give instances. With plants almost every one who has worked on this subject, from the time of Kölreuter to the present day, has insisted on this tendency. Gärtner has recorded some good instances; but no one has given more striking ones than

<sup>18</sup> Dr. P. Lucas, 'Héréd. Nat.,' tom. ii. pp. 314, 892: *see* a good practical article on the subject in 'Gard. Chronicle,' 1856, p. 620. I could add a vast number of references, but they would be superfluous.