parts now in a more or less rudimentary condition,—the reappearance of organs of which not a vestige can be detected,—and to these may be added, in the case of animals, the presence during youth, and subsequent disappearance, of certain characters which occasionally are retained throughout life. Some naturalists look at all such abnormal structures as a return to the ideal state of the group to which the affected being belongs; but it is difficult to conceive what is meant to be conveyed by this expression. Other naturalists maintain, with greater probability and distinctness of view, that the common bond of connection between the several foregoing cases is an actual, though partial, return to the structure of the ancient progenitor of the group. If this view be correct, we must believe that a vast number of characters, capable of evolution, lie hidden in every organic being. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the number is equally great in all beings. We know, for instance, that plants of many orders occasionally become peloric; but many more cases have been observed in the Labiatæ and Scrophulariaceæ than in any other order; and in one genus of the Scrophulariaceæ, namely Linaria, no less than thirteen species have been described in this condition.[73] On this view of the nature of peloric flowers, and bearing in mind certain monstrosities in the animal kingdom, we must conclude that the progenitors of most plants and animals have left an impression, capable of redevelopment, on the germs of their descendants, although these have since been profoundly modified.

The fertilised germ of one of the higher animals, subjected as it is to so vast a series of changes from the germinal cell to old age,—incessantly agitated by what Quatrefages well calls the *tourbillon vital*,—is perhaps the most wonderful object in nature. It is probable that hardly a change of any kind affects either parent, without some mark being left on the germ. But on the doctrine of reversion, as given in this chapter, the germ becomes a far more marvellous object, for, besides the visible changes which it undergoes, we must

[73] Moquin-Tandon, 'Tératologie,' p. 186.