

Prepotency in the Transmission of Character.

When individuals, belonging to the same family, but distinct enough to be recognised, or when two well-marked races, or two species, are crossed, the usual result, as stated in the previous chapter, is, that the offspring in the first generation are intermediate between their parents, or resemble one parent in one part and the other parent in another part. But this is by no means the invariable rule; for in many cases it is found that certain individuals, races, and species, are prepotent in transmitting their likeness. This subject has been ably discussed by Prosper Lucas,² but is rendered extremely complex by the prepotency sometimes running equally in both sexes, and sometimes more strongly in one sex than in the other; it is likewise complicated by the presence of secondary sexual characters, which render the comparison of crossed breeds with their parents difficult.

It would appear that in certain families some one ancestor, and after him others in the same family, have had great power in transmitting their likeness through the male line; for we cannot otherwise understand how the same features should so often be transmitted after marriages with many females, as in the case of the Austrian Emperors; and so it was, according to Niebuhr, with the mental qualities of certain Roman families.³ The famous bull Favourite is believed⁴ to have had a prepotent influence on the short-horn race. It has also been observed⁵ with English race-horses that certain mares have generally transmitted their own character, whilst other mares of equally pure blood have allowed the character of the sire to prevail. A famous black greyhound, Bedlamite, as I hear from Mr. C. M. Brown "invariably got all his "puppies black, no matter what was the colour of the bitch;" but then Bedlamite "had a preponderance of black in his "blood, both on the sire and dam side."

² 'Héréd. Nat.,' tom. ii. pp. 112-120.

³ Sir H. Holland, 'Chapters on Mental Physiology,' 1852, p. 234.

⁴ 'Gardener's Chronicle,' 1860, p.

270.

⁵ Mr. N. H. Smith, 'Observations on Breeding,' quoted in 'Encyclop. of Rural Sports,' p. 278.