Finally, from the numerous races of cultivated plants and domestic animals, in which the seeds or eggs, the young or old, differ from one another and from those of the parent-species;—from the cases in which new characters have appeared at a particular period, and afterwards been inherited at the same period;—and from what we know with respect to disease, we must believe in the truth of the great principle of inheritance at corresponding periods of life.

Summary of the three preceding Chapters.—Strong as is the force of inheritance, it allows the incessant appearance of new characters. These, whether beneficial or injurious,—of the most trifling importance, such as a shade of colour in a flower, a coloured lock of hair, or a mere gesture,—or of the highest importance, as when affecting the brain, or an organ so perfect and complex as the eye,—or of so grave a nature as to deserve to be called a monstrosity,—or so peculiar as not to occur normally in any member of the same natural class,—are often inherited by man, by the lower animals, and plants. In numberless cases it suffices for the inheritance of a peculiarity that one parent alone should be thus characterised. Inequalities in the two sides of the body, though opposed to the law of symmetry, may be transmitted. There is ample evidence that the effects of mutilations and of accidents, especially or perhaps exclusively when followed by disease, are occasionally inherited. There can be no doubt that the evil effects of the long-continued exposure of the parent to injurious conditions are sometimes transmitted to the offspring. So it is, as we shall see in a future chapter, with the effects of the use and disuse of parts, and of mental habits. Periodical habits are likewise transmitted, but generally, as it would appear, with little force.

Hence we are led to look at inheritance as the rule, and non-inheritance as the anomaly. But this power often appears to us in our ignorance to act capriciously, transmitting a character with inexplicable strength or feebleness. The very same peculiarity, as the weeping habit of trees, silky feathers, &c., may be inherited either firmly or not at all by different members of the same group, and even by different