

instinctive feeling in man against incest any more than in gregarious animals. We know also how readily any prejudice or feeling may rise to abhorrence, as shown by Hindus in regard to objects causing defilement. Although there seems to be no strong inherited feeling in mankind against incest, it seems possible that men during primeval times may have been more excited by strange females than by those with whom they habitually lived; in the same manner as according to Mr. Cupples,²⁹ male deerhounds are inclined towards strange females, while the females prefer dogs with whom they have associated. If any such feeling formerly existed in man, this would have led to a preference for marriages beyond the nearest kin, and might have been strengthened by the offspring of such marriages surviving in greater numbers, as analogy would lead us to believe would have occurred.

Whether consanguineous marriages, such as are permitted in civilised nations, and which would not be considered as close interbreeding in the case of our domesticated animals, cause any injury will never be known with certainty until a census is taken with this object in view. My son, George Darwin, has done what is possible at present by a statistical investigation,³⁰ and he has come to the conclusion, from his own researches and those of Dr. Mitchell, that the evidence as to any evil thus caused is conflicting, but on the whole points to the evil being very small.

Birds.—In the case of the *Fowl* a whole array of authorities could be given against too close interbreeding. Sir J. Sebright positively asserts that he made many trials, and that his fowls, when thus treated, became long in the legs, small in the body, and bad breeders.³¹ He produced the famous Sebright Bantams by complicated crosses, and by breeding in-and-in; and since his time there has been much close interbreeding with these animals; and they are now notoriously bad breeders. I have seen Silver Bantams, directly descended from his stock, which had become almost as barren as hybrids; for not a single chicken had been that year

²⁹ 'Descent of Man, 2nd. edit p. 524.

³⁰ 'Journal of Statistical Soc.' June, 1875, p. 153; and 'Fortnightly

Review,' June, 1875.

³¹ 'The Art of Improving the Breed,' p. 13.