

much more numerous than the other, the former will ultimately absorb the latter. Should both varieties exist in nearly equal numbers, it is probable that a considerable period would elapse before the acquirement of a uniform character; and the character ultimately acquired would largely depend on prepotency of transmission and on the conditions of life; for the nature of these conditions would generally favour one variety more than another, so that a kind of natural selection would come into play. Unless the crossed offspring were slaughtered by man without the least discrimination, some degree of unmethodical selection would likewise come into action. From these several considerations we may infer, that when two or more closely allied species first came into the possession of the same tribe, their crossing will not have influenced, in so great a degree as has often been supposed, the character of the offspring in future times; although in some cases it probably has had a considerable effect.

Domestication, as a general rule, increases the prolificness of animals and plants. It eliminates the tendency to sterility which is common to species when first taken from a state of nature and crossed. On this latter head we have no direct evidence; but as our races of dogs, cattle, pigs, &c., are almost certainly descended from aboriginally distinct stocks, and as these races are now fully fertile together, or at least incomparably more fertile than most species when crossed, we may with entire confidence accept this conclusion.

Abundant evidence has been given that crossing adds to the size, vigour, and fertility of the offspring. This holds good when there has been no previous close interbreeding. It applies to the individuals of the same variety but belonging to different families, to distinct varieties, sub-species, and even to species. In the latter case, though size is gained, fertility is lost; but the increased size, vigour, and hardiness of many hybrids cannot be accounted for solely on the principle of compensation from the inaction of the reproductive system. Certain plants whilst growing under their natural conditions, others when cultivated, and others of hybrid origin, are completely self-impotent, though per-