

“Two men whose authority on such subjects was held in great esteem, the Duke of Newcastle and Sir John Fenwick, pronounced that the meanest hack ever imported from Tangier would produce a finer progeny than could be expected from the best sire of our native breed. They would not readily have believed that a time would come when the princes and nobles of neighbouring lands would be as eager to obtain horses from England as ever the English had been to obtain horses from Barbary.”

The London dray-horse, which differs so much in appearance from any natural species, and which from its size has so astonished many Eastern princes, was probably formed by the heaviest and most powerful animals having been selected during many generations in Flanders and England, but without the least intention or expectation of creating a horse such as we now see. If we go back to an early period of history, we behold in the antique Greek statues, as Schaaffhausen has remarked,⁷⁵ a horse equally unlike a race or dray horse, and differing from any existing breed.

The results of unconscious selection, in an early stage, are well shown in the difference between the flocks descended from the same stock, but separately reared by careful breeders. Youatt gives an excellent instance of this fact in the sheep belonging to Messrs. Buckley and Burgess, which “have been purely bred from the original stock of Mr. Bakewell for upwards of fifty years. There is not a suspicion existing in the mind of any one at all acquainted with the subject that the owner of either flock has deviated in any one instance from the pure blood of Mr. Bakewell’s flock; yet the difference between the sheep possessed by these two gentlemen is so great, that they have the appearance of being quite different varieties.”⁷⁶ I have seen several analogous and well-marked cases with pigeons: for instance, I had a family of barbs descended from those long bred by Sir J. Sebright, and another family long bred by another fancier, and the two families plainly differed from each other. Nathusius—and a more competent witness could not be cited—observes that, though the Shorthorns are remarkably uniform in appearance

⁷⁵ ‘Ueber Beständigkeit der Arten.

⁷⁶ Youatt on Sheep, p. 315.