

CHAPTER XXI.

SELECTION, *continued.*

NATURAL SELECTION AS AFFECTING DOMESTIC PRODUCTIONS—CHARACTERS WHICH APPEAR OF TRIFLING VALUE OFTEN OF REAL IMPORTANCE—CIRCUMSTANCES FAVOURABLE TO SELECTION BY MAN—FACILITY IN PREVENTING CROSSES, AND THE NATURE OF THE CONDITIONS—CLOSE ATTENTION AND PERSEVERANCE INDISPENSABLE—THE PRODUCTION OF A LARGE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESPECIALLY FAVOURABLE—WHEN NO SELECTION IS APPLIED, DISTINCT RACES ARE NOT FORMED—HIGHLY-BRED ANIMALS LIABLE TO DEGENERATION—TENDENCY IN MAN TO CARRY THE SELECTION OF EACH CHARACTER TO AN EXTREME POINT, LEADING TO DIVERGENCE OF CHARACTER, RARELY TO CONVERGENCE—CHARACTERS CONTINUING TO VARY IN THE SAME DIRECTION IN WHICH THEY HAVE ALREADY VARIED—DIVERGENCE OF CHARACTER, WITH THE EXTINCTION OF INTERMEDIATE VARIETIES, LEADS TO DISTINCTNESS IN OUR DOMESTIC RACES—LIMIT TO THE POWER OF SELECTION—LAPSE OF TIME IMPORTANT—MANNER IN WHICH DOMESTIC RACES HAVE ORIGINATED—SUMMARY.

Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest, as affecting domestic productions.—We know little on this head. But as animals kept by savages have to provide throughout the year their own food either entirely or to a large extent, it can hardly be doubted that in different countries, varieties differing in constitution and in various characters would succeed best, and so be naturally selected. Hence perhaps it is that the few domesticated animals kept by savages partake, as has been remarked by more than one writer, of the wild appearance of their masters, and likewise resemble natural species. Even in long-civilised countries, at least in the wilder parts, natural selection must act on our domestic races. It is obvious that varieties having very different habits, constitution, and structure, would succeed best on mountains and on rich lowland pastures. For example, the improved Leicester sheep were formerly taken to the Lammermuir Hills; but an intelligent sheep-master reported that “our coarse lean pastures were unequal to the task of supporting such heavy-bodied sheep; and they gradually dwindled away into less and less bulk: each generation was inferior to the