

“preceding one; and when the spring was severe, seldom more than two-thirds of the lambs survived the ravages of the storms.”¹ So with the mountain cattle of North Wales and the Hebrides, it has been found that they could not withstand being crossed with the larger and more delicate lowland breeds. Two French naturalists, in describing the horses of Circassia, remark that, subjected as they are to extreme vicissitudes of climate, having to search for scanty pasture, and exposed to constant danger from wolves, the strongest and most vigorous alone survive.²

Every one must have been struck with the surpassing grace, strength, and vigour of the Game-cock, with its bold and confident air, its long, yet firm neck, compact body, powerful and closely pressed wings, muscular thighs, strong beak massive at the base, dense and sharp spurs set low on the legs for delivering the fatal blow, and its compact, glossy, and mail-like plumage serving as a defence. Now the English game-cock has not only been improved during many years by man’s careful selection, but in addition, as Mr. Tegetmeier has remarked,³ by a kind of natural selection, for the strongest, most active and courageous birds have stricken down their antagonists in the cockpit, generation after generation, and have subsequently served as the progenitors of their race. The same kind of double selection has come into play with the carrier pigeon, for during their training the inferior birds fail to return home and are lost, so that even without selection by man only the superior birds propagate their race.

In Great Britain, in former times, almost every district had its own breed of cattle and sheep; “they were indigenous to the soil, climate, and pasturage of the locality on which they grazed: they seemed to have been formed for it and by it.”⁴ But in this case we are quite unable to disentangle the effects of the direct action of the conditions of life,—of use or habit—of natural selection—and of that kind of

¹ Quoted by Youatt on Sheep, p. 325. See also Youatt on Cattle, pp. 62, 69.

² MM. Lherbette and De Quatre-fages, in ‘Bull. Soc. d’Acclimat.’ tcm.

viii., 1861, p. 311.

³ ‘The Poultry Book,’ 1866, p. 123. Mr. Tegetmeier, ‘The Homing or Carrier Pigeon,’ 1871, pp. 45–58.

⁴ Youatt on Sheep, p. 312.