

have attempted to show in the fourteenth chapter that this belief apparently resolves itself into the following proposition, namely, that all characters whatever, whether recently acquired or ancient, tend to be transmitted, but that those which have already long withstood all counteracting influences, will, as a general rule, continue to withstand them, and consequently be faithfully transmitted.

Tendency in Man to carry the practice of Selection to an extreme point.

It is an important principle that in the process of selection man almost invariably wishes to go to an extreme point. Thus, there is no limit to his desire to breed certain kinds of horses and dogs as fleet as possible, and others as strong as possible; certain kinds of sheep for extreme fineness, and others for extreme length of wool; and he wishes to produce fruit, grain, tubers, and other useful parts of plants, as large and excellent as possible. With animals bred for amusement, the same principle is even more powerful; for fashion, as we see in our dress, always runs to extremes. This view has been expressly admitted by fanciers. Instances were given in the chapters on the pigeon, but here is another: Mr. Eaton, after describing a comparatively new variety, namely, the Archangel, remarks, "What fanciers intend doing with this bird I am at a loss to know, whether they intend to breed it down to the tumbler's head and beak, or carry it out to the carrier's head and beak; leaving it as they found it, is not progressing." Ferguson, speaking of fowls, says, "their peculiarities, whatever they may be, must necessarily be fully developed: a little peculiarity forms nought but ugliness, seeing it violates the existing laws of symmetry." So Mr. Brent, in discussing the merits of the sub-varieties of the Belgian canary-bird, remarks, "Fanciers always go to extremes; they do not admire indefinite properties."⁵⁸

This principle, which necessarily leads to divergence of character, explains the present state of various domestic

⁵⁸ J. M. Eaton, 'A Treatise on Fancy Pigeons,' p. 82; Ferguson, on 'Rare and Prize Poultry,' p. 162;

Mr. Brent, in 'Cottage Gardener,' Oct. 1860, p. 13.