

stronger degree, all that we do not know,⁷⁰ of the history of the great majority of our breeds, even of our more modern breeds, agrees with the view that their production, through the action of unconscious and methodical selection, has been almost insensibly slow. When a man attends rather more closely than is usual to the breeding of his animals, he is almost sure to improve them to a slight extent. They are in consequence valued in his immediate neighbourhood, and are bred by others; and their characteristic features, whatever these may be, will then slowly but steadily be increased, sometimes by methodical and almost always by unconscious selection. At last a strain, deserving to be called a sub-variety, becomes a little more widely known, receives a local name, and spreads. The spreading will have been extremely slow during ancient and less civilised times, but now is rapid. By the time that the new breed had assumed a somewhat distinct character, its history, hardly noticed at the time, will have been completely forgotten; for, as Low remarks,⁷¹ "we know how quickly the memory of such events is effaced."

As soon as a new breed is thus formed, it is liable through the same process to break up into new strains and sub-varieties. For different varieties are suited for, and are valued under, different circumstances. Fashion changes, but, should a fashion last for even a moderate length of time, so strong is the principle of inheritance, that some effect will probably be impressed on the breed. Thus varieties go on increasing in number, and history shows us how wonderfully they have increased since the earliest records.⁷² As each new variety is produced, the earlier, intermediate, and less valuable forms will be neglected, and perish. When a breed, from not being valued, is kept in small numbers, its extinction almost inevitably follows sooner or later, either from accidental causes of destruction or from close interbreeding; and this is an event which, in the case of well-marked breeds, excites attention. The birth or production of a new domestic race is so slow a process that it escapes notice; its death or

⁷⁰ Youatt on Cattle, pp. 116, 128.

⁷¹ 'Domesticated Animals,' p. 188.

⁷² Volz, 'Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte,' 1852, s. 99 *et passim*.