

countries has not prevented their domestication. Still less could man have foreseen whether his animals and plants would vary in succeeding generations and thus give birth to new races; and the small capacity of variability in the goose has not prevented its domestication from a remote epoch.

With extremely few exceptions, all animals and plants which have been long domesticated have varied greatly. It matters not under what climate, or for what purpose they are kept, whether as food for man or beast, for draught or hunting, for clothing or mere pleasure,—under all these circumstances races have been produced which differ more from one another than do the forms which in a state of nature are ranked as different species. Why certain animals and plants have varied more under domestication than others we do not know, any more than why some are rendered more sterile than others under changed conditions of life. But we have to judge of the amount of variation which our domestic productions have undergone, chiefly by the number and amount of difference between the races which have been formed, and we can often clearly see why many and distinct races have not been formed, namely, because slight successive variations have not been steadily accumulated; and such variations will never be accumulated if an animal or plant be not closely observed, much valued, and kept in large numbers.

The fluctuating, and, as far as we can judge, never-ending variability of our domesticated productions,—the plasticity of almost their whole organisation,—is one of the most important lessons which we learn from the numerous details given in the earlier chapters of this work. Yet domesticated animals and plants can hardly have been exposed to greater changes in their conditions of life than have many natural species during the incessant geological, geographical, and climatal changes to which the world has been subject; but domesticated productions will often have been exposed to more sudden changes and to less continuously uniform conditions. As man has domesticated so many animals and plants belonging to widely different classes, and as he certainly did not choose with prophetic instinct those species which would vary most, we may infer that all natural species, if exposed to