

analogous conditions, would, on an average, vary to the same degree. Few men at the present day will maintain that animals and plants were created with a tendency to vary, which long remained dormant, in order that fanciers in after ages might rear, for instance, curious breeds of the fowl, pigeon, or canary-bird.

From several causes it is difficult to judge of the amount of modification which our domestic productions have undergone. In some cases the primitive parent-stock has become extinct; or it cannot be recognised with certainty, owing to its supposed descendants having been so much modified. In other cases two or more closely-allied forms, after being domesticated, have crossed; and then it is difficult to estimate how much of the character of the present descendants ought to be attributed to variation, and how much to the influence of the several parent-stocks. But the degree to which our domesticated breeds have been modified by the crossing of distinct species has probably been much exaggerated by some authors. A few individuals of one form would seldom permanently affect another form existing in greater numbers; for, without careful selection, the stain of the foreign blood would soon be obliterated, and during early and barbarous times, when our animals were first domesticated, such care would seldom have been taken.

There is good reason to believe in the case of the dog, ox, pig, and of some other animals, that several of our races are descended from distinct wild prototypes; nevertheless the belief in the multiple origin of our domesticated animals has been extended by some few naturalists and by many breeders to an unauthorised extent. Breeders refuse to look at the whole subject under a single point of view; I have heard it said by a man, who maintained that our fowls were descended from at least half-a-dozen aboriginal species, that the evidence of the common origin of pigeons, ducks and rabbits, was of no avail with respect to fowls. Breeders overlook the improbability of many species having been domesticated at an early and barbarous period. They do not consider the improbability of species having existed in a state of nature which, if they resembled our present domestic breeds, would