

have been highly abnormal in comparison with all their congeners. They maintain that certain species, which formerly existed, have become extinct, or are now unknown, although formerly known. The assumption of so much recent extinction is no difficulty in their eyes; for they do not judge of its probability by the facility or difficulty of the extinction of other closely-allied wild forms. Lastly, they often ignore the whole subject of geographical distribution as completely as if it were the result of chance.

Although from the reasons just assigned it is often difficult to judge accurately of the amount of change which our domesticated productions have undergone, yet this can be ascertained in the cases in which all the breeds are known to be descended from a single species,—as with the pigeon, duck, rabbit, and almost certainly with the fowl; and by the aid of analogy this can be judged of to a certain extent with domesticated animals descended from several wild stocks. It is impossible to read the details given in the earlier chapters and in many published works, or to visit our various exhibitions, without being deeply impressed with the extreme variability of our domesticated animals and cultivated plants. No part of the organisation escapes the tendency to vary. The variations generally affect parts of small vital or physiological importance, but so it is with the differences which exist between closely-allied species. In these unimportant characters there is often a greater difference between the breeds of the same species than between the natural species of the same genus, as Isidore Geoffroy has shown to be the case with size, and as is often the case with the colour, texture, form, &c., of the hair, feathers, horns, and other dermal appendages.

It has often been asserted that important parts never vary under domestication, but this is a complete error. Look at the skull of the pig in any one of the highly improved breeds, with the occipital condyles and other parts greatly modified; or look at that of the niata ox. Or, again, in the several breeds of the rabbit, observe the elongated skull, with the differently shaped occipital foramen, atlas, and other cervical vertebræ. The whole shape of the brain, together with the