

cannot thus connect the turbit or the pouter. The degree of distinctness between the various domestic breeds depends on the amount of modification which they have undergone, and more especially on the neglect and final extinction of intermediate and less-valued forms.

It has often been argued that no light is thrown on the changes which natural species are believed to undergo from the admitted changes of domestic races, as the latter are said to be mere temporary productions, always reverting, as soon as they become feral, to their pristine form. This argument has been well combated by Mr. Wallace;² and full details were given in the thirteenth chapter, showing that the tendency to reversion in feral animals and plants has been greatly exaggerated, though no doubt it exists to a certain extent. It would be opposed to all the principles inculcated in this work, if domestic animals, when exposed to new conditions and compelled to struggle for their own wants against a host of foreign competitors, were not modified in the course of time. It should also be remembered that many characters lie latent in all organic beings, ready to be evolved under fitting conditions; and in breeds modified within recent times, the tendency to reversion is particularly strong. But the antiquity of some of our breeds clearly proves that they remain nearly constant as long as their conditions of life remain the same.

It has been boldly maintained by some authors that the amount of variation to which our domestic productions are liable is strictly limited; but this is an assertion resting on little evidence. Whether or not the amount of change in any particular direction is limited, the tendency to general variability is, as far as we can judge, unlimited. Cattle, sheep, and pigs have varied under domestication from the remotest period, as shown by the researches of Rüttimeyer and others; yet these animals have been improved to an unparalleled degree, within quite recent times, and this implies continued variability of structure. Wheat, as we know from the remains found in the Swiss lake-dwellings,