

Year after year it continued to degenerate, and to exhibit a smaller leaf and shorter stem, until the successors of what in the first year of trial had been vigorous plants, of some three to four feet in height, had in the sixth or eighth become mere weeds of scarce as many inches. But while the as yet undegenerate plant had merely borne atop a few florets, which produced a small quantity of exceedingly minute seeds, the stunted weed, its descendant, was so thickly covered over in its season with its pale yellow bells, as to present the appearance of a nosegay; and the seeds produced were not only bulkier in the mass, but also individually of much greater size. The tobacco had grown productive in proportion as it had degenerated. In the common scurvy-grass, too,—remarkable, with some other plants, for taking its place among both the productions of our Alpine heights and of our sea-shores,—it will be found that, in proportion as its habitat proves ungenial, and its leaves and stems become dwarfish and thin, its little white cruciform flowers increase, till, in localities where it barely exists, as if on the edge of extinction, we find the entire plant forming a dense bundle of seed-vessels, each charged to the full with seed. And in the gay meadows of Gairloch and Orkney, crowded with a vegetation that approaches its northern limit of production, we detect what seems to be the same principle chronically operative; and hence, it would seem, their extraordinary gaiety. Their richly blossoming plants are the poor productive *Irish* of the vegetable world; for Doubleday seems to be quite in the right in holding, that the law extends to not only the inferior animals, but to our own species also. The lean, ill-fed sow and rabbit rear, it has been long known, a greatly more numerous progeny than the same animals when well cared for and fat; and every horse and cattle breeder knows that to over-feed his animals proves a sure mode of rendering them sterile. The sheep, if tolerably well pastured, brings forth only a single lamb at a birth; but if half-starved and lean, the chances are that it may bring forth two or three. And so it is also with the greatly higher human race. Place them in circumstance of degradation and hardship so extreme