

500 miles from South America, I found myself surrounded by peculiar species of birds, reptiles, and plants, existing nowhere else in the world. Yet they nearly all bore an American stamp. In the song of the mocking-thrush, in the harsh cry of the carrion-hawk, in the great candlestick-like opuntias, I clearly perceived the neighbourhood of America, though the islands were separated by so many miles of ocean from the mainland, and differed much in their geological constitution and climate. Still more surprising was the fact that most of the inhabitants of each separate island in this small archipelago were specifically different, though most closely related to each other. The archipelago, with its innumerable craters and bare streams of lava, appeared to be of recent origin; and thus I fancied myself brought near to the very act of creation. I often asked myself how these many peculiar animals and plants had been produced: the simplest answer seemed to be that the inhabitants of the several islands had descended from each other, undergoing modification in the course of their descent; and that all the inhabitants of the archipelago were descended from those of the nearest land, namely America, whence colonists would naturally have been derived. But it long remained to me an inexplicable problem how the necessary degree of modification could have been effected, and it would have thus remained for ever, had I not studied domestic productions, and thus acquired a just idea of the power of Selection. As soon as I had fully realized this idea, I saw, on reading Malthus on Population, that Natural Selection was the inevitable result of the rapid increase of all organic beings; for I was prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence by having long studied the habits of animals.

Before visiting the Galapagos I had collected many animals whilst travelling from north to south on both sides of America, and everywhere, under conditions of life as different as it is possible to conceive. American forms were met with—species replacing species of the same peculiar genera. Thus it was when the Cordilleras were ascended, or the thick tropical forests penetrated, or the fresh waters of America searched. Subsequently I visited other countries, which in all their