

stress upon it. The assertion is not true that cultivated forms descended from one and the same primary form do not differ from one another as much as wild animal and vegetable species differ among themselves. If only we make comparisons, without prejudice, we can very easily perceive that a number of races or varieties which have been derived from a single cultivated form, within a short series of years, differ from one another in a higher degree than so-called good species (*bonæ species*), or even different genera of one family, in the wild state.

In order to establish this extremely important fact as firmly as possible by experiments, Darwin decided to make a special study of the whole extent of variation in form in a single group of domesticated animals, and for this purpose he chose the *domestic pigeons*, which are in many respects especially suited for such a study. For a long time he kept on his estate all possible races and varieties of pigeons which he was able to procure, and he was helped in this by rich contributions from all parts of the world. He also joined two London pigeon clubs, the members of which passionately, and with truly artistic skill, carry on the breeding of the different forms of pigeons. Lastly, he formed connections with some of the most celebrated pigeon-fanciers; so that he could command the richest experimental material.

The art of, and fancy for, pigeon-breeding is very ancient. Even more than 3000 years before Christ, it was carried on by the Egyptians. The Romans, under the emperors, laid out enormous sums upon the breeding of pigeons, and kept accurate pedigrees of their descent, just as the Arabs keep genealogical pedigrees of their horses, and the Mecklenburg