

by a kind of natural selection; for the dogs of savages have partly to gain their own subsistence: for instance, in Australia, as we hear from Mr. Nind,⁷⁷ the dogs are sometimes compelled by want to leave their masters and provide for themselves; but in a few days they generally return. And we may infer that dogs of different shapes, sizes, and habits, would have the best chance of surviving under different circumstances,—on open sterile plains, where they have to run down their own prey,—on rocky coasts, where they have to feed on crabs and fish left in the tidal pools, as in the case of New Guinea and Tierra del Fuego. In this latter country, as I am informed by Mr. Bridges, the Catechist to the Mission, the dogs turn over the stones on the shore to catch the crustaceans which lie beneath, and they “are clever enough to knock off the shell-fish at a first blow;” for if this be not done, shell-fish are well known to have an almost invincible power of adhesion.

It has already been remarked that dogs differ in the degree to which their feet are webbed. In dogs of the Newfoundland breed, which are eminently aquatic in their habits, the skin, according to Isidore Geoffroy,⁷⁸ extends to the third phalanges whilst in ordinary dogs it extends only to the second. In two Newfoundland dogs which I examined, when the toes were stretched apart and viewed on the under side, the skin extended in a nearly straight line between the outer margins of the balls of the toes; whereas, in two terriers of distinct sub-breeds, the skin viewed in the same manner was deeply scooped out. In Canada there is a dog which is peculiar to the country and common there, and this has “half-webbed feet and is fond of the water.”⁷⁹ English otter-hounds are said to have webbed feet: a friend examined for me the feet of two, in comparison with the feet of some harriers and bloodhounds; he found the skin variable in extent in all, but more developed in the otter-hounds than in the others.⁸⁰ As

⁷⁷ Quoted by Mr. Galton, ‘Domestication of Animals,’ p. 13.

⁷⁸ ‘Hist. Nat. Gén.,’ tom. iii. p. 450.

⁷⁹ Mr. Greenhow on the Canadian Dog, in Loudon’s ‘Mag. of Nat. H.st.’

vol. vi., 1833, p. 511.

⁸⁰ See Mr. C. O. Groom-Napier on the webbing of the hind feet of Otter-hounds, in ‘Land and Water,’ Oct. 13th, 1866, p. 270.