

Summary.

I have endeavoured in this chapter briefly to show that the mental qualities of our domestic animals vary, and that the variations are inherited. Still more briefly I have attempted to show that instincts vary slightly in a state of nature. No one will dispute that instincts are of the highest importance to each animal. Therefore, there is no real difficulty, under changing conditions of life, in natural selection accumulating to any extent slight modifications of instinct which are in any way useful. In many cases habit or use and disuse have probably come into play. I do not pretend that the facts given in this chapter strengthen in any great degree my theory; but none of the cases of difficulty, to the best of my judgment, annihilate it. On the other hand, the fact that instincts are not always absolutely perfect and are liable to mistakes;— that no instinct can be shown to have been produced for the good of other animals, though animals take advantage of the instincts of others;— that the canon in natural history, of "Natura non facit saltum," is applicable to instincts as well as to corporeal structure, and is plainly explicable on the foregoing views, but is otherwise inexplicable,— all tend to corroborate the theory of natural selection.

This theory is also strengthened by some few other facts in regard to instincts; as by that common case of closely allied, but distinct, species, when inhabiting distant parts of the world and living under considerably different conditions of life, yet often retaining nearly the same instincts. For instance, we can understand, on the principle of inheritance, how it is that the thrush of tropical South America lines its nest with mud, in the same peculiar manner as does our British thrush; how it is that the Hornbills of Africa and India have the same extraordinary instinct of plastering up and imprisoning the females in a hole in a tree, with only a small hole left in the plaster through which the males feed them and their young when hatched; how it is that the male wrens (*Troglodytes*) of North America, build "cock-nests," to roost in, like the males of our Kitty-wrens,— a habit wholly unlike that of any other known bird. Finally, it may not be a logical deduction, but to my imagination it is far more satisfactory to look at such instincts as the young cuckoo ejecting its foster-brothers, ants making slaves,— the larvæ of *ichneumonidæ* feeding within the live bodies of caterpillars, not as specially endowed or created instincts, but as small consequences of one general law leading to the advancement of all organic beings,— namely, multiply, vary, let the strongest live and the weakest die.

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