

THE ORIGIN  
OF SPECIES

DARWIN

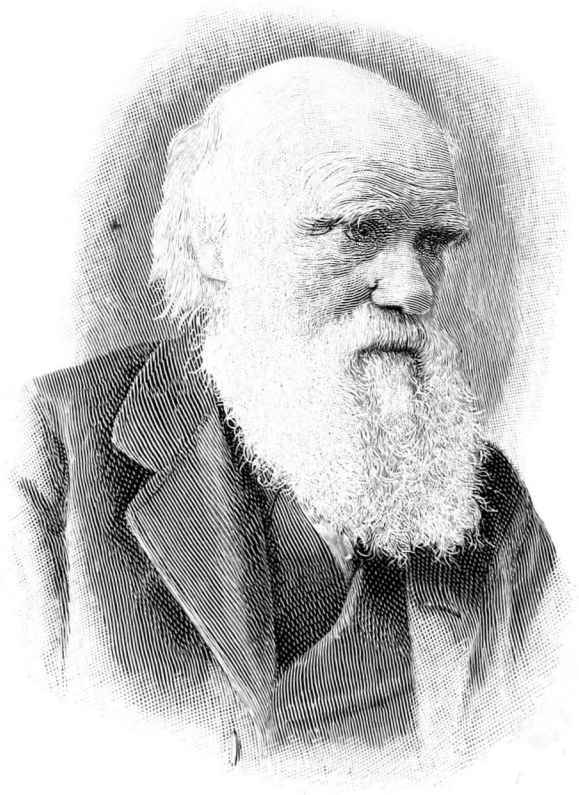
ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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THIS edition of *The Origin of Species* is an exact reprint of the first edition (published 1859-60), which has now gone out of copyright. The third and subsequent editions were considerably revised and amplified by Mr. Darwin, but without any alteration of fundamental importance being made. He strengthened, but did not rebuild, the structure.

Mr. John Murray, the original publisher, is now issuing the final edition in cloth binding at 2s. 6d. net, and in paper covers at 1s. net. Students and all admirers of Darwin should compare the first and last editions of this great work in order to fully understand the development of the doctrine of Evolution.



ON THE  
**ORIGIN OF SPECIES**

BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION

OR

THE PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN  
THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

BY

CHARLES DARWIN, M.A.

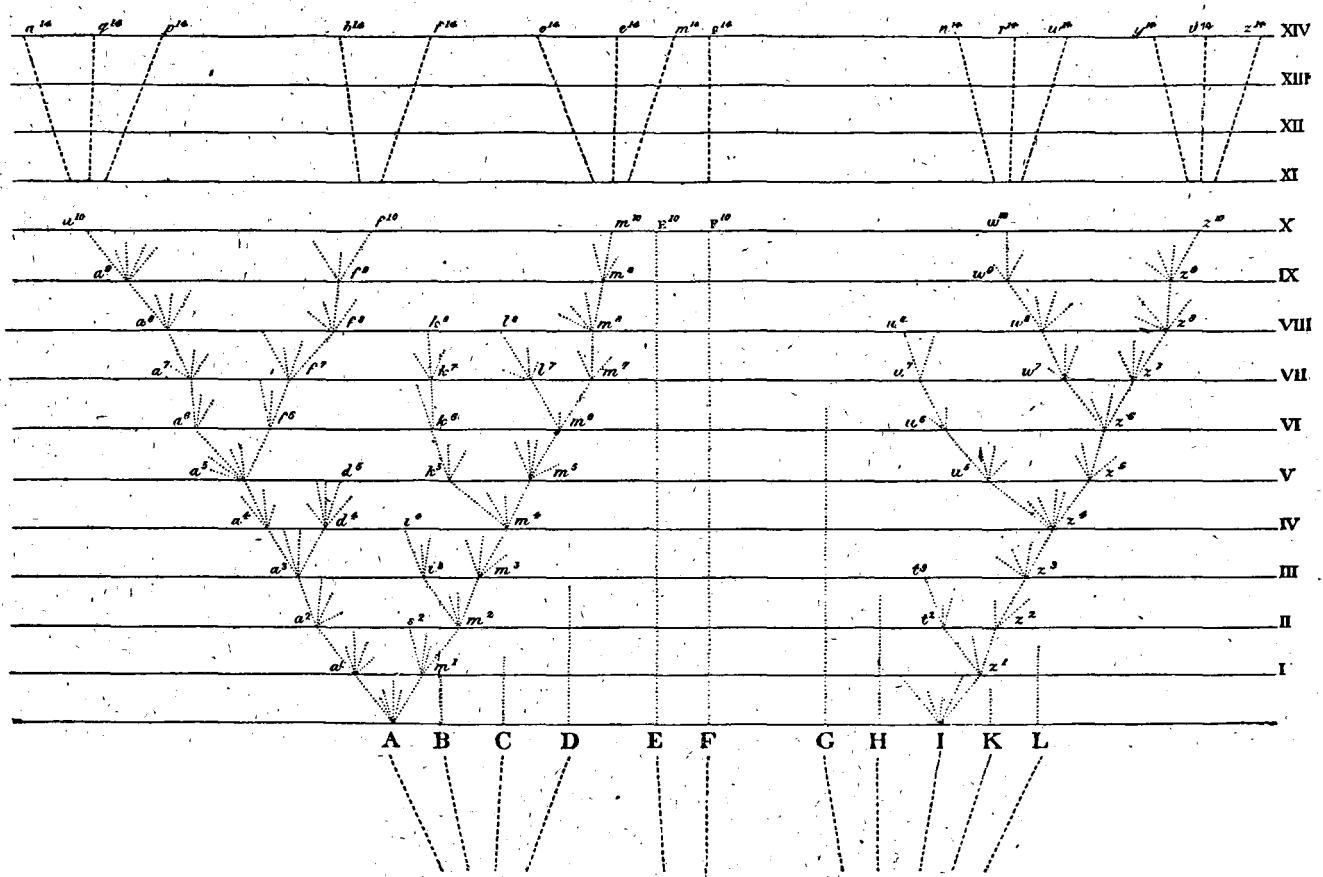
[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

WATTS & CO.,  
17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

1911

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	7
I. VARIATION UNDER DOMESTICATION	11
II. VARIATION UNDER NATURE	25
III. STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE	31
IV. NATURAL SELECTION	39
V. LAWS OF VARIATION	58
VI. DIFFICULTIES OF THEORY	73
VII. INSTINCT	87
VIII. HYBRIDISM	102
IX. ON THE IMPERFECTION OF THE GEOLOGICAL RECORD	114
X. ON THE GEOLOGICAL SUCCESSION OF ORGANIC BEINGS	127
XI. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION	140
XII. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION— <i>Continued</i>	154
XIII. MUTUAL AFFINITIES OF ORGANIC BEINGS: MORPHOLOGY: EMBRYOLOGY: RUDIMENTARY ORGANS	165
XIV. RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSION	183
INDEX	196



See pp. 53 ff.

# ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

## INTRODUCTION

WHEN on board H. M. S. *Beagle*, as naturalist, I was much struck with certain facts in the distribution of the inhabitants of South America, and in the geological relations of the present to the past inhabitants of that continent. These facts seemed to me to throw some light on the origin of species—that mystery of mysteries, as it has been called by one of our greatest philosophers. On my return home, it occurred to me, in 1837, that something might perhaps be made out on this question by patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts which could possibly have any bearing on it. After five years' work, I allowed myself to speculate on the subject, and drew up some short notes; these I enlarged in 1844 into a sketch of the conclusions, which then seemed to me probable: from that period to the present day I have steadily pursued the same object. I hope that I may be excused for entering on these personal details, as I give them to show that I have not been hasty in coming to a decision.

My work is now nearly finished; but as it will take me two or three more years to complete it, and as my health is far from strong, I have been urged to publish

this Abstract. I have more especially been induced to do this, as Mr. Wallace, who is now studying the natural history of the Malay archipelago, has arrived at almost exactly the same general conclusions that I have on the origin of species. Last year he sent me a memoir on this subject, with a request that I would forward it to Sir Charles Lyell, who sent it to the Linnean Society, and it is published in the third volume of the *Journal* of that Society. Sir C. Lyell and Dr. Hooker, who both knew of my work—the latter having read my sketch of 1844—honoured me by thinking it advisable to publish, with Mr. Wallace's excellent memoir, some brief extracts from my manuscripts.

This Abstract, which I now publish, must necessarily be imperfect. I cannot here give references and authorities for my several statements; and I must trust to the reader reposing some confidence in my accuracy. No doubt errors will have crept in, though I hope I have always been cautious in trusting to good authorities alone. I can here give only the general conclusions at which I have arrived, with a few facts in illustration, but which, I hope, in most cases will



suffice. No one can feel more sensible than I do of the necessity of hereafter publishing in detail all the facts, with references, on which my conclusions have been grounded; and I hope in a future work to do this. For I am well aware that scarcely a single point is discussed in this volume on which facts cannot be adduced, often apparently leading to conclusions directly opposite to those at which I have arrived. A fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question; and this cannot possibly be here done.

I much regret that want of space prevents my having the satisfaction of acknowledging the generous assistance which I have received from very many naturalists, some of them personally unknown to me. I cannot, however, let this opportunity pass without expressing my deep obligations to Dr. Hooker, who for the last fifteen years has aided me in every possible way by his large stores of knowledge and his excellent judgment.

In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings, on their embryological relations, their geographical distribution, geological succession, and other such facts, might come to the conclusion that each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species. Nevertheless, such a conclusion, even if well founded, would be unsatisfactory, until it could be shown how the innumerable species inhabiting this world have been modified, so as to

acquire that perfection of structure and coadaptation which most justly excites our admiration. Naturalists continually refer to external conditions, such as climate, food, etc., as the only possible cause of variation. In one very limited sense, as we shall hereafter see, this may be true; but it is preposterous to attribute to mere external conditions the structure, for instance, of the woodpecker, with its feet, tail, beak, and tongue, so admirably adapted to catch insects under the bark of trees. In the case of the mistletoe, which draws its nourishment from certain trees, which has seeds that must be transported by certain birds, and which has flowers with separate sexes absolutely requiring the agency of certain insects to bring pollen from one flower to the other, it is equally preposterous to account for the structure of this parasite, with its relations to several distinct organic beings, by the effects of external conditions, or of habit, or of the volition of the plant itself.

The author of the *Vestiges of Creation* would, I presume, say that, after a certain unknown number of generations, some bird had given birth to a woodpecker, and some plant to the mistletoe, and that these had been produced perfect as we now see them; but this assumption seems to me to be no explanation, for it leaves the case of the coadaptations of organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life untouched and unexplained.

It is, therefore, of the highest importance to gain a clear insight into the means of modification and coadaptation.

At the commencement of my observations it seemed to me probable that a careful study of domesticated animals and of cultivated plants would offer the best chance of making out this obscure problem. Nor have I been disappointed; in this and in all other perplexing cases I have invariably found that our knowledge, imperfect though it be, of variation under domestication, afforded the best and safest clue. I may venture to express my conviction of the high value of such studies, although they have been very commonly neglected by naturalists.

From these considerations I shall devote the first chapter of this Abstract to Variation under Domestication. We shall thus see that a large amount of hereditary modification is at least possible; and, what is equally or more important, we shall see how great is the power of man in accumulating by his Selection successive slight variations. I will then pass on to the variability of species in a state of nature; but I shall, unfortunately, be compelled to treat this subject far too briefly, as it can be treated properly only by giving long catalogues of facts. We shall, however, be enabled to discuss what circumstances are most favourable to variation. In the next chapter the Struggle for Existence among all organic beings throughout the world, which inevitably follows from the high geometrical ratio of their increase, will be treated of. This is the doctrine of Malthus, applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. As many more individuals of

each species are born than can possibly survive, and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be *naturally selected*. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form.

This fundamental subject of Natural Selection will be treated at some length in the fourth chapter; and we shall then see how Natural Selection almost inevitably causes much Extinction of the less improved forms of life, and leads to what I have called Divergence of Character. In the next chapter I shall discuss the complex and little known laws of variation and of correlation of growth. In the four succeeding chapters the most apparent and gravest difficulties on the theory will be given—namely, first, the difficulties of transitions, or in understanding how a simple being or a simple organ can be changed and perfected into a highly-developed being or elaborately-constructed organ; secondly, the subject of Instinct, or the mental powers of animals; thirdly, Hybridism, or the infertility of species and the fertility of varieties when intercrossed; and, fourthly, the imperfection of the Geological Record. In the next chapter I shall consider the geological succession of organic beings throughout time; in the eleventh and twelfth, their geographical distribution throughout

space ; in the thirteenth, their classification or mutual affinities, both when mature and in an embryonic condition. In the last chapter I shall give a brief recapitulation of the whole work, and a few concluding remarks.

No one ought to feel surprise at much remaining as yet unexplained in regard to the origin of species and varieties, if he makes due allowance for our profound ignorance in regard to the mutual relations of all the beings which live around us. Who can explain why one species ranges widely and is very numerous, and why another allied species has a narrow range and is rare? Yet these relations are of the highest importance, for they determine the present welfare, and, as I believe, the future success and modification of every inhabitant of this world. Still less do we know of the mutual relations of the innumerable inhabitants

of the world during the many past geological epochs in its history. Although much remains obscure, and will long remain obscure, I can entertain no doubt, after the most deliberate study and dispassionate judgment of which I am capable, that the view which most naturalists entertain, and which I formerly entertained—namely, that each species has been independently created—is erroneous. I am fully convinced that species are not immutable ; but that those belonging to what are called the same genera are lineal descendants of some other and generally extinct species, in the same manner as the acknowledged varieties of any one species are the descendants of that species. Furthermore, I am convinced that Natural Selection has been the main, but not exclusive, means of modification.

## INDEX

- ABERRANT groups, 172**  
**Abyssinia, plants of, 151**  
**Acclimatisation, 61**  
**Affinities of extinct species, 133**  
 — of organic beings, 165  
**Agassiz on Amblyopsis, 61**  
 — on groups of species suddenly appearing, 123-4  
 — on embryological succession, 137  
 — on the glacial period, 148  
 — on embryological characters, 168  
 — on the embryos of vertebrata, 175  
 — on parallelism of embryological development and geological succession, 180  
**Algae of New Zealand, 151**  
**Alligators, males, fighting, 42**  
**Amblyopsis, blind fish, 61**  
**America, North, productions allied to those of Europe, 150**  
 — boulders and glaciers of, 150  
 — South, no modern formations on west coast, 119  
**Ammonites, sudden extinction of, 131**  
**Anagallis, sterility of, 103**  
**Analogy of variations, 69**  
**Ancylus, 155**  
**Animals, not domesticated from being variable, 15**  
 — domestic, descended from several stocks, 15  
 — acclimatisation of, 62  
 — of Australia, 52-3  
 — with thicker fur in cold climates, 59  
 — blind, in caves, 60  
 — extinct, of Australia, 137  
**Anomma, 100**  
**Antarctic islands, ancient flora of, 160**  
**Antirrhinum, 70**  
**Ants attending aphides, 88**  
 — slave-making instinct, 92  
 — neuter, structure of, 98  
**Aphides, attended by ants, 88**  
**Aphis, development of, 177**  
**Apteryx, 77**  
**Arab horses, 22**  
**Aralo-Caspian Sea, 137**  
**Archiac, M. de, on the succession of species, 132**  
**Artichoke, Jerusalem, 62**  
**Ascension, plants of, 157**  
**Asclepias, pollen of, 82**  
**Asparagus, 145**  
**Aspicarpa, 167**  
**Asses, striped, 70**  
**Ateuchus, 60**  
**Audubon on habits of frigate-bird, 79**  
**Audubon on variation in birds'-nests, 89**  
 — on heron eating seeds, 156  
**Australia, animals of, 52-3**  
 — dogs of, 90  
 — extinct animals of, 137  
 — European plants in, 151  
**Azara on flies destroying cattle, 36**  
**Azores, flora of, 147**  
**BABINGTON, Mr., on British plants, 27**  
**Balancement of growth, 64**  
**Bamboo with hooks, 83**  
**Barberry, flowers of, 46**  
**Barrande, M., on Silurian colonies, 128**  
 — on the succession of species, 132  
 — on parallelism of palaeozoic formations, 133  
 — on affinities of ancient species, 134  
**Barriers, importance of, 141**  
**Batrachians on islands, 158**  
**Bats, how structure acquired, 77**  
 — distribution of, 159  
**Bear catching water-insects, 73**  
**Bee, sting of, 85**  
 — queen, killing rivals, 85  
**Bees fertilising flowers, 37**  
 — hive, not sucking the red clover, 44  
 — hive, cell-making instinct, 94  
 — humble, cells of, 94  
 — parasitic, 91  
**Beetles, wingless, in Madeira, 60**  
 — with deficient tarsi, 60  
**Bentham, Mr., on British plants, 27**  
 — on classification, 168  
**Berkeley, Mr., on seeds in salt-water, 145**  
**Bermuda, birds of, 157**  
**Birds acquiring fear, 89**  
 — annually cross the Atlantic, 147  
 — colour of, on continents, 59  
 — footsteps and remains of, in secondary rocks, 124  
 — fossil, in caves of Brazil, 137  
 — of Madeira, Bermuda, and Galapagos, 157  
 — song of males, 42  
 — transporting seeds, 146  
 — waders, 155  
 — wingless, 59, 77  
 — with traces of embryonic teeth, 180  
**Bizcacha, 141**  
 — affinities of, 172  
**Bladder for swimming in fish, 81**  
**Blindness of cave animals, 60**  
**Blyth, Mr., on distinctness of Indian cattle, 15**  
 — on striped Hemionus, 70

- Blyth, Mr., on crossed geese, 105  
 Boar, shoulder-pad of, 42  
 Borrow, Mr., on the Spanish pointer, 22  
 Bory St. Vincent on Batrachians, 158  
 Bosquet, M., on fossil Chthamalus, 124  
 Boulders, erratic, on the Azores, 147  
 Branchiæ, 81  
 Brent, Mr., on house-tumblers, 90  
 — on hawks killing pigeons, 146  
 Brewer, Dr., on American cuckoo, 91  
 Britain, mammals of, 159  
 Bronn on duration of specific forms, 120  
 Brown, Robert, on classification, 167  
 Buckman on variation in plants, 12  
 Buzareingues on sterility of varieties, 111
- CABBAGE**, varieties of, crossed, 46  
 Calceolaria, 104  
 Canary-birds, sterility of hybrids, 105  
 Cape de Verde Islands, 160  
 Cape of Good Hope, plants of, 50, 151  
 Carrier-pigeons killed by hawks, 146  
 Cassini on flowers of compositæ, 63  
 Catasatum, 170  
 Cats, with blue eyes, deaf, 13  
 — variation in habits of, 43  
 — curling tail when going to spring, 85  
 Cattle destroying fir-trees, 36  
 — destroyed by flies in Paraguay, 36  
 — breeds of, locally extinct, 50  
 — fertility of Indian and European breeds, 105  
 Cave, inhabitants of, blind, 60  
 Centres of creation, 142  
 Cephalopoda, development of, 177  
 Cervulus, 105  
 Cetacea, teeth and hair, 63  
 Ceylon, plants of, 151  
 Chalk formation, 131  
 Characters, divergence of, 51  
 — sexual, variable, 73  
 — adaptive or analogical, 171  
 Charlock, 38  
 Checks to increase, 34  
 — mutual, 36  
 Chickens, instinctive tameness of, 90  
 Chthamalina, 118  
 Chthamalus, cretaceous species of, 124  
 Circumstances favourable to selection of domestic products, 24  
 — to natural selection, 47  
 Cirripedes capable of crossing, 47  
 — carapace aborted, 65  
 — their ovigerous frena, 81  
 — fossil, 124  
 — larvæ of, 176  
 Classification, 165  
 Clift, Mr., on the succession of types, 137  
 Climate, effects of, in checking increase of beings, 35  
 — adaptation of, to organisms, 61  
 Cobites, intestine of, 80  
 Cockroach, 38  
 Collections, palæontological, poor, 118  
 Colour, influenced by climate, 59  
 — in relation to attacks by flies, 84
- Columba livia, parent of domestic pigeons, 17  
 Colymbetes, 155  
 Compensation of growth, 64  
 Compositæ, outer and inner florets of, 63  
 — male flowers of, 180  
 Conclusion, general, 191  
 Conditions, slight changes in, favourable to fertility, 110  
 Coot, 79  
 Coral-islands, seeds drifted to, 146  
 — reefs, indicating movements of earth, 126  
 Corn-crake, 79  
 Correlation of growth in domestic productions, 12-13  
 — of growth, 63, 84  
 Cowslip, 27  
 Creation, single centres of, 142  
 Crinum, 104  
 Crosses, reciprocal, 107  
 Crossing of domestic animals, importance in altering breeds, 15-16  
 — advantages of, 45  
 Crustacea of New Zealand, 151  
 Crustacean, blind, 61  
 Cryptocerus, 99  
 Ctenomys, blind, 60  
 Cuckoo, instinct of, 91  
 Currants, grafts of, 108  
 Currents of sea, rate of, 145  
 Cuvier on conditions of existence, 87  
 — on fossil monkeys, 124  
 — Fred., on instinct, 87
- DANA**, Prof., on blind cave-animals, 61  
 — on relations of crustaceans of Japan, 150  
 — on crustaceans of New Zealand, 151  
 De Candolle on struggle for existence, 32  
 — on umbellifera, 64  
 — on general affinities, 172  
 — Alph., on low plants, widely dispersed, 163  
 — on widely ranging plants being variable, 29  
 — on naturalisation, 52  
 — on winged seeds, 64  
 — on Alpine species suddenly becoming rare, 75  
 — on distribution of plants with large seeds, 146  
 — on vegetation of Australia, 153  
 — on fresh-water plants, 155  
 — on insular plants, 157  
 Degradation of coast-rocks, 116  
 Denudation, rate of, 117  
 — of oldest rocks, 125  
 Development of ancient forms, 136  
 Devonian system, 135  
 Dianthus, fertility of crosses, 106  
 Dirt on feet of birds, 146  
 Dispersal, means of, 144  
 — during glacial periods, 147  
 Distribution, geographical, 140  
 — means of, 144  
 Disuse, effects of, under nature, 59  
 Divergence of character, 51  
 Division, physiological, of labour, 52  
 Dogs, hairless, with imperfect teeth, 13  
 — descended from several wild stocks, 15  
 — domestic instincts of, 90

- Dogs, inherited civilisation of, 90  
 — fertility of breeds together, 105  
 — of crosses, 110-11  
 — proportions of, when young, 178
- Domestication, variation under, 11
- Downing, Mr., on fruit trees in America, 41
- Downs, North and South, 117
- Dragon-flies, intestines of, 80
- Drift timber, 146
- Driver-ant, 100
- Drones killed by other bees, 85
- Duck, domestic, wings of, reduced, 12  
 — logger-headed, 77
- Duckweed, 155
- Dugong, affinities of, 166
- Dung-beetles with deficient tarsi, 60
- Dyticus, 155
- EARL, Mr. W., on the Malay Archipelago, 159
- Ears, drooping, in domestic animals, 12  
 — rudimentary, 181
- Earth, seeds in roots of trees, 146
- Eciton, 99
- Economy of organisation, 64
- Edentata, teeth and hair, 63  
 — fossil species of, 138.
- Edwards, Milne, on physiological divisions of labour, 52  
 — on gradations of structure, 82  
 — on embryological characters, 168
- Eggs, young birds escaping from, 42
- Electric organs, 82
- Elephant, rate of increase, 33  
 — of glacial period, 62
- Embryology, 175
- Existence, struggle for, 31  
 — conditions of, 87
- Extinction, as bearing on natural selection, 50  
 — of domestic varieties, 51  
 — 129
- Eye, structure of, 79  
 — correction for aberration, 85
- Eyes reduced in moles, 60
- FABRE, M., on parasitic sphecx, 92
- Falconer, Dr., on naturalisation of plants in India, 33  
 — on fossil crocodile, 127  
 — on elephants and mastodons, 136  
 — and Cautley on mammals of sub-Himalayan beds, 138
- Falkland Island, wolf of, 158
- Faults, 117
- Faunas, marine, 141
- Fear, instinctive, in birds, 89
- Feet of birds, young molluscs adhering to, 155
- Fertility of hybrids, 103  
 — from slight changes in conditions, 110  
 — of crossed varieties, 110
- Fir-trees destroyed by cattle, 36  
 — pollen of, 85
- Fish, flying, 78  
 — teleostean, sudden appearance of, 124  
 — eating seeds, 146, 156  
 — fresh-water, distribution of, 154
- Fishes, ganoid, now confined to fresh water, 49  
 — electric organs of, 82  
 — ganoid, living in fresh water, 131  
 — of southern hemisphere, 151
- Flight, powers of, how acquired, 78
- Flowers, structure of, in relation to crossing, 43  
 — of compositæ and umbelliferæ, 63
- Forbes, E., on colours of shells, 58  
 — on abrupt range of shells in depth, 75  
 — on poorness of palæontological collections  
 118  
 — on continuous succession of genera, 129  
 — on continental extensions, 144  
 — on distribution during glacial period, 148  
 — on parallelism in time and space, 164
- Forests, changes in, in America, 37
- Formation, Devonian, 135
- Formations, thickness of, in Britain, 116  
 — intermittent, 123
- Formica rufescens, 92  
 — sanguinea, 92  
 — flava, neuter of, 100
- Frena, ovigerous, of cirripedes, 81
- Fresh-water productions, dispersal of, 154
- Fries on species in large genera being closely allied to other species, 30
- Frigate-bird, 79
- Frogs on islands, 158.
- Fruit-trees, gradual improvement of, 22  
 — in United States, 41  
 — varieties of, acclimatised in United States, 62
- Fuci, crossed, 107
- Fur, thicker in cold climates, 59
- Furze, 176
- GALAPAGOS Archipelago, birds of, 157  
 — productions of, 160-1
- Galeopithecus, 77
- Game, increase of, checked by vermin, 34-5
- Gärtner on sterility of hybrids, 102-3  
 — on reciprocal crosses, 107  
 — on crossed maize and verbascum, 111  
 — on comparison of hybrids and mongrels, 112
- Geese, fertility when crossed, 105  
 — upland, 79
- Genealogy important in classification, 168
- Geoffroy St. Hilaire on balancement, 64  
 — on homologous organs, 174  
 — Isidore, on variability of repeated parts, 65  
 — on correlation in monstrosities, 12-13  
 — on correlation, 63  
 — on variable parts being often monstrous, 67
- Geographical distribution, 140
- Geography, ancient, 194
- Geology, future progress of, 194  
 — imperfection of the record, 114
- Giraffe, tail of, 82
- Glacial period, 147
- Gmelin on distribution, 148
- Gnathodon, fossil, 149
- Godwin-Austen, Mr., on the Malay Archipelago, 122
- Goethe on compensation of growth, 64
- Gooseberry, grafts of, 108
- Gould, Dr. A., on land-shells, 159

- Gould, Mr., on colours of birds, 59  
 — on birds of the Galapagos, 160  
 — on distribution of genera of birds, 162  
 Gourds, crossed, 111  
 Grafts, capacity of, 108  
 Grasses, varieties of, 51-2  
 Gray, Dr. Asa, on trees of United States, 46  
 — on naturalised plants in the United States, 52  
 — on rarity of intermediate varieties, 75  
 — on Alpine plants, 143  
 — Dr. J. E., on striped mule, 71  
 Grebe, 79  
 Groups, aberrant, 172  
 Grouse, colours of, 41  
 — red, a doubtful species, 27  
 Growth, compensation of, 64  
 — correlation of, in domestic products, 12-13  
 — correlation of, 63
- HABIT**, effect of, under domestication, 12  
 — effect of, under nature, 59  
 — diversified, of same species, 78  
 Hair and teeth, correlated, 63  
 Harcourt, Mr. E. V., on the birds of Madeira, 157  
 Hartung, M., on boulders in the Azores, 147  
 Hazel-nuts, 145  
 Hearne on habits of bears, 78  
 Heath, changes in vegetation, 36  
 Heer, O., on plants of Madeira, 49  
 Helix pomatia, 160  
 Helosciadium, 145  
 Hemionus, striped, 71  
 Herbert, W., on struggle for existence, 32  
 — on sterility of hybrids, 103  
 Hermaphrodites crossing, 45  
 Heron eating seed, 156  
 Heron, Sir R., on peacocks, 42  
 Heusinger on white animals not poisoned by certain plants, 13  
 Hewitt, Mr., on sterility of first crosses, 109  
 Himalaya, glaciers of, 150  
 — plants of, 151  
 Hippeastrum, 104  
 Holly-trees, sexes of, 44  
 Hollyhock, varieties of, crossed, 111-2  
 Hooker, Dr., on trees of New Zealand, 46  
 — on acclimatisation of Himalayan trees, 62  
 — on flowers of umbelliferæ, 63  
 — on glaciers of Himalaya, 150  
 — on algae of New Zealand, 151  
 — on vegetation at the base of the Himalaya, 152  
 — on plants of Tierra del Fuego, 151-2  
 — on Australian plants, 151, 160  
 — on relations of flora of South America, 152-3  
 — on flora of the Antarctic lands, 153, 160  
 — on the plants of the Galapagos, 158, 160  
 Hooks on bamboos, 83  
 — to seeds on islands, 158  
 Horner, Mr., on the antiquity of Egyptians, 15  
 Horns, rudimentary, 181  
 Horse, fossil, in La Plata, 129  
 Horses destroyed by flies in Paraguay, 36  
 — striped, 71  
 — proportions of, when young, 178  
 Horticulturists, selection applied by, 20-1
- Huber on cells of bees, 96  
 — P., on reason blended with instinct, 88  
 — on habitual nature of instincts, 88  
 — on slave-making ants, 92  
 — on *Melipona domestica*, 94  
 Humble-bees, cells of, 94  
 Hunter, J., on secondary sexual characters, 66  
 Hutton, Captain, on crossed geese, 105  
 Huxley, Prof., on structure of hermaphrodites, 47  
 — on embryological succession, 137  
 — on homologous organs, 175  
 — on the development of aphids, 177  
 Hybrids and mongrels compared, 112  
 Hybridism, 112  
 Hydra, structure of, 80
- IBLA**, 65  
 Icebergs transporting seeds, 147  
 Increase, rate of, 33  
 Individuals, numbers favourable to selection, 47  
 — many, whether simultaneously created, 144  
 Inheritance, laws of, 13  
 — at corresponding ages, 13, 41  
 Insects, colour of, fitted for habitations, 41  
 — sea-side, colours of, 59  
 — blind in caves, 61  
 — luminous, 82  
 — neuter, 98  
 Instinct, 87  
 Instincts, domestic, 90  
 Intercrossing, advantages of, 45  
 Islands, oceanic, 156  
 Isolation favourable to selection, 48
- JAPAN**, productions of, 150  
 Java, plants of, 151  
 Jones, Mr. J. M., on the birds of Bermuda, 157  
 Jussieu on classification, 167
- KENTUCKY**, caves of, 60-1  
 Kerguelen-land, flora of, 153, 160  
 Kidney-bean, acclimatisation of, 62  
 Kidneys of birds, 63  
 Kirby on tarsi deficient in beetles, 60  
 Knight, Andrew, on cause of variation, 11  
 Kölreuter on the barberry, 46  
 — on sterility of hybrids, 102  
 — on reciprocal crosses, 107  
 — on crossed varieties of *nicotiana*, 112  
 — on crossing male and hermaphrodite flowers, 180
- LAMARCK**, on adaptive characters, 171  
 Land-shells, distribution of, 159  
 — of Madeira, naturalised, 162  
 Languages, classification of, 169  
 Lapse, great, of time, 116  
 Larvæ, 175  
 Laurel, nectar secreted by the leaves, 43  
 Laws of variation, 58  
 Leech, varieties of, 37  
 Leguminosæ, nectar secreted by glands, 43  
 Lepidosiren, 49, 134  
 Life, struggle for, 31  
 Lingula, Silurian, 125

- Linnæus, aphorism of, 167  
 Lion, mane of, 42  
 — young of, striped, 176  
 Lobelia fulgens, 36  
 Lobelia, sterility of crosses, 104  
 Loess of the Rhine, 155  
 Lowness of structure connected with variability, 65  
 Lowness, related to wide distribution, 163  
 Lubbock, Mr., on the nerves of coccus, 26  
 Lucas, Dr. P., on inheritance, 13  
 — on resemblance of child to parent, 113  
 Lund and Clausen on fossils of Brazil, 137  
 Lyell, Sir C., on the struggle for existence, 32  
 — on modern changes of the earth, 45  
 — on measure of denudation, 116  
 — on a carboniferous land-shell, 118  
 — on strata beneath Silurian-system, 125  
 — on the imperfection of the geological record, 126  
 — on the appearance of species, 127  
 — on Barrande's colonies, 128  
 — on tertiary formations of Europe and North America, 131  
 — on parallelism of tertiary formations, 133  
 — on transport of seeds by icebergs, 147  
 — on great alternations of climate, 154  
 — on the distribution of fresh-water shells, 155  
 — on land-shells of Madeira, 162  
 Lyell and Dawson on fossilised trees in Nova Scotia, 121
- MACLEAY** on analogical characters, 171  
 Madeira, plants of, 49  
 — beetles of, wingless, 60  
 — fossil land-shells of, 137  
 — birds of, 157  
 Magpie tame in Norway, 89  
 Maize, crossed, 111  
 Malay Archipelago compared with Europe, 122  
 — mammals of, 159  
 Malpighiaceæ, 167  
 Mammæ, rudimentary, 180  
 Mammals, fossil, in secondary formation, 124  
 — insular, 158  
 Man, origin of races of, 84  
 Manatee, rudimentary nails of, 181  
 Marsupials of Australia, 52-3  
 — fossil species of, 138  
 Martens, M., experiment on seeds, 145  
 Martin, Mr. W. C., on striped mules, 71  
 Matteucci, on the electric organs of rays, 81  
 Matthiola, reciprocal crosses of, 107  
 Means of dispersal, 144  
 Melipona domestica, 94  
 Metamorphism of oldest rocks, 125  
 Mice destroying bees, 37  
 — acclimatisation of, 62  
 Migration, bears on first appearance of fossils, 122  
 Miller, Prof., on the cells of bees, 95  
 Mirabilis, crosses of, 107  
 Missel-thrush, 38  
 Mistletoe, complex relations of, 8  
 Mississippi, rate of deposition at mouth, 116  
 Mocking thrush of the Galapagos, 162  
 Modification of species, how far applicable, 192
- Moles, blind, 60  
 Mongrels, fertility and sterility of, 110  
 — and hybrids compared, 112  
 Monkeys, fossil, 124  
 Monochanthus, 170  
 Mons, Van, on the origin of fruit-trees, 19  
 Moquin-Tandon on sea-side plants, 59  
 Morphology, 157  
 Mozart, musical powers of, 88  
 Mud, seeds in, 155-6  
 Mules, striped, 71  
 Müller, Dr. F., on Alpine Australian plants, 151  
 Murchison, Sir R., on the formations of Russia, 119  
 — on azoic formations, 125  
 — on extinction, 129  
 Mustela vision, 77  
 Myanthus, 170  
 Myrmecocystus, 99  
 Myrmica, eyes of, 100
- NAILS**, rudimentary, 181  
 Natural history, future progress of, 193  
 — selection, 39  
 — system, 166  
 Naturalisation of forms distinct from the indigenous species, 52  
 — in New Zealand, 85  
 Nautilus, Silurian, 125  
 Nectar of plants, 43  
 Nectaries, how formed, 43  
 Nelumbium luteum, 156  
 Nests, variation in, 89  
 Neuter insects, 98  
 Newman, Mr., on humble bees, 37  
 New Zealand, productions of, not perfect, 85  
 — naturalised products of, 137  
 — fossil birds of, 137  
 — glacial action in, 150  
 — crustaceans of, 151  
 — algæ of, 151  
 — number of plants of, 157  
 — flora of, 160  
 Nicotiana, crossed varieties of, 112  
 — certain species very sterile, 106  
 Noble, Mr., on fertility of rhododendron, 104  
 Nodules, phosphatic, in azoic rocks, 125
- OAK**, varieties of, 28  
 Onites apelles, 60  
 Orchis, pollen of, 82  
 Organs of extreme perfection, 79  
 — electric, of fishes, 82  
 — of little importance, 82  
 — homologous, 174  
 — rudiments of, and nascent, 180  
 Ornithorhynchus, 49, 167  
 Ostrich not capable of flight, 60  
 — habit of laying eggs together, 91  
 — American, two species of, 141  
 Otter, habits of, how acquired, 77  
 Ouzel, water, 79  
 Owen, Prof., on birds not flying, 59  
 — on vegetative repetition, 65  
 — on variable length of arms in ourang-outang, 65



- Owen, Prof., on the swim-bladder of fishes, 81  
 — on electric organs, 82  
 — on fossil horse of La Plata, 129  
 — on relations of ruminants and pachyderms, 134  
 — on fossil birds of New Zealand, 137  
 — on succession of types, 137  
 — on affinities of the dugong, 166  
 — on homologous organs, 174  
 — on the metamorphosis of cephalopods and spiders, 177
- PACIFIC Ocean, faunas of, 141  
 Paley on no organ formed to give pain, 85  
 Pallas on the fertility of the wild stocks of domestic animals, 105  
 Paraguay, cattle destroyed by flies, 36  
 Parasites, 91  
 Partridge, dirt on feet, 146  
 Parts greatly developed, variable, 65  
 — degrees of utility of, 85  
 Parus major, 78  
 Passiflora, 104  
 Peaches in United States, 41  
 Pear, grafts of, 108  
 Pelargonium, flowers of, 64  
 — sterility of, 104  
 Pelvis of women, 63  
 Peloria, 64  
 — Period, glacial, 147  
 Petrels, habits of, 78  
 Phasianus, fertility of hybrids, 105  
 Pheasant, young, wild, 90  
 Philippi on tertiary species in Sicily, —  
 Pictet, Prof., on groups of species suddenly appearing, 123-4  
 — on rate of organic change, 127  
 — on continuous succession of genera, 129  
 — on close alliance of fossils in consecutive formations, 136  
 — on embryological succession, 137  
 Pierce, Mr., on varieties of wolves, 43  
 Pigeons with feathered feet and skin between toes, 13  
 — breeds described, and origin of, 16-17  
 — breeds of, how produced, 23-4  
 — tumbler, not being able to get out of egg, 42  
 — reverting to blue colour, 69  
 — instinct of tumbling, 90  
 — carriers, killed by hawks, 146  
 — young of, 178  
 Pistil, rudimentary, 180  
 Plants, poisonous, not affecting certain coloured animals, 13  
 — selection applied to, 21  
 — gradual improvement of, 22  
 — not improved in barbarous countries, 23  
 — destroyed by insects, 34  
 — in midst of range, have to struggle with other plants, 38  
 — nectar of, 43  
 — fleshy, on sea-shores, 59  
 — fresh-water, distribution of, 155  
 — low in scale, widely distributed, 163  
 Plumage, laws of change in sexes of birds, 42  
 Plums in the United States, 41  
 Pointer dog, origin of, 22  
 — habits of, 90  
 Poison not affecting certain coloured animals, 13  
 — similar effects of, on animals and plants, 193  
 Pollen of fir-trees, 85  
 Poole, Col., on striped hemionus, 71  
 Potamogeton, 156  
 Prestwich, Mr., on English and French eocene formations, 133  
 Primrose, 27  
 — sterility of, 103  
 Primula, varieties of, 27  
 Proteolepas, 65  
 Proteus, 61  
 Psychology, future progress of, 194
- QUAGGA, striped, 71  
 Quince, grafts of, 108
- RABBIT, disposition of young, 90  
 Races, domestic, characters of, 14-16  
 Race-horses, Arab, 22  
 — English, 144  
 Ramond on plants of Pyrenees, 148  
 Ramsay, Prof., on thickness of the British formations, 116  
 — on faults, 117  
 Ratio of increase, 33  
 Rats, supplanting each other, 38  
 — acclimatisation of, 62  
 — blind, in cave, 61  
 Rattle-snake, 85  
 Reason and instinct, 87  
 Recapitulation, general, 183  
 Reciprocity of crosses, 107  
 Record, geological, imperfect, 114  
 Rengger on flies destroying cattle, 36  
 Reproduction, rate of, 33  
 Resemblance to parents in mongrels and hybrids, 112  
 Reversion, law of inheritance, 13-14  
 — in pigeons to blue colour, 69  
 Rhododendron, sterility of, 104  
 Richard, Prof., on *Aspicarpa*, 167  
 Richardson, Sir J., on structure of squirrels, 77  
 — on fishes of the southern hemisphere, 151  
 Robinia, grafts of, 108  
 Rodents, blind, 60  
 Rudimentary organs, 180  
 Rudiments important for classification, 167
- SAGARET on grafts, 108  
 Salmon, males fighting, and hooked jaws of, 42  
 Salt-water, how far injurious to seeds, 145  
 Saurophagus sulphuratus, 78  
 Schüdt on blind insects, 61  
 Schlegel on snakes, 63  
 Sea-water, how far injurious to seeds, 145  
 Sebright, Sir J., on crossed animals, 46  
 — on selection of pigeons, 20  
 Sedgwick, Prof., on groups of species suddenly appearing, 123  
 Seedlings destroyed by insects, 34  
 Seeds, nutrient in, 38  
 — winged, 64

- Seeds, power of, resisting salt-water, 145  
 — in crops and intestines of birds, 146  
 — eaten by fish, 146, 156  
 — in mud, 155  
 — hooked, on islands, 158  
 Selection of domestic products, 19  
 — principle not of recent origin, 21  
 — unconscious, 21  
 — natural, 39  
 — sexual, 42  
 — natural circumstances favourable to, 47  
 Sexes, relations of, 42  
 Sexual characters variable, 68  
 — selection, 42  
 Sheep merino, their selection, 20  
 — two sub-breeds, unintentionally produced,  
 22  
 — mountain, varieties of, 37  
 Shells, colours of, 59  
 — littoral, seldom embedded, 118  
 — fresh-water, dispersal of, 154  
 — of Madeira, 157  
 — land, distribution of, 159  
 Silene, fertility of crosses, 106  
 Silliman, Prof., on blind rat, 61  
 Skulls of young mammals, 83  
 Slave-making instinct, 92  
 Smith, Col. Hamilton, on striped horses, 71  
 — Mr. Fred., on slave-making ants, 92  
 — on neuter ants, 100  
 — Mr., of Jordan Hill, on the degradation of  
 coast-rocks, 116  
 Snap-dragon, 70  
 Somerville, Lord, on selection of sheep, 20  
 Sorbus, grafts of, 108  
 Spaniel, King Charles's breed, 22  
 Species, polymorphic, 26  
 — common, variable, 29  
 — in large genera variable, 29  
 — groups of, suddenly appearing, 123, 125  
 — beneath Silurian formations, 125  
 — successively appearing, 127  
 — changing simultaneously throughout the  
 world, 131  
 Spencer, Lord, on increase in size of cattle, 22  
 Sphex, parasitic, 91-2  
 Spiders, development of, 177  
 Spitz-dog crossed with fox, 110-11  
 Sports in plants, 12  
 Sprengel, C. C., on crossing, 46  
 — on ray-florets, 64  
 Squirrels, gradations in structure, 77  
 Staffordshire heath, changes in, 36  
 Stag-beetles, fighting, 42  
 Sterility from changed conditions of life, 12  
 — of hybrids, 102  
 — laws of, 105  
 — causes of, 109  
 — from unfavourable conditions, 109  
 — of certain varieties, 111  
 St. Helena, productions of, 157  
 St. Hilaire, A. G., on classification, 167  
 St. John, Mr., on habits of cats, 43  
 Sting of bees, 85  
 Stocks, aboriginal, of domestic animals, 15  
 Strata, thickness of, in Britain, 116  
 Stripes on horses, 71  
 Structure, degrees of utility of, 85  
 Struggle for existence, 32  
 Succession, geological, 127  
 Succession of types in same areas, 137  
 Swallow, one species supplanting another, 38  
 Swim-bladder, 81  
 System, natural, 166  
 Tail of giraffe, 82  
 — of aquatic animals, 83  
 — rudimentary, 181  
 Tarsi deficient, 60  
 Tausch on umbelliferous flowers, 64  
 Teeth and hair correlated, 63  
 — embryonic, traces of, in birds, 180  
 — rudimentary, in embryonic calf, 180, 191  
 Tegetmeier, Mr., on cells of bees, 95, 97  
 Temminck on distribution aiding classification,  
 168  
 Thouin on grafts, 108  
 Thrush, aquatic species of, 79  
 — mocking, of the Galapagos, 162  
 — young of, spotted, 176  
 — nest of, 101  
 Thuret, M., on crossed fuci, 107  
 Thwaites, Mr., on acclimatisation, 62  
 Tierra del Fuego, dogs of, 90  
 — plants of, 152-3  
 Timber-drift, 146  
 Time, lapse of, 116  
 Titmouse, 78  
 Toads on islands, 158  
 Tobacco, crossed varieties of, 112  
 Tomes, Mr., on the distribution of bats, 159  
 Transitions in varieties rare, 74  
 Trees on islands belong to peculiar orders, 158  
 — with separated sexes, 46  
 Trifolium pratense, 37, 44  
 — incarnatum, 44  
 Trigonias, 131  
 Trilobites, 125  
 — sudden extinction of, 131  
 Troglodytes, 101  
 Tucutucu, blind, 60  
 Tumbler pigeons, habits of, hereditary, 90  
 — young of, 178  
 Turkey-cock, brush of hair on breast, 43  
 Turkey, naked skin on head, 83  
 — young, wild, 90  
 Turnip and cabbage, analogous variations of,  
 69  
 Type, unity of, 87  
 Types, succession of, in same areas, 137  
 UDDERS enlarged by use, 12  
 — rudimentary, 180  
 Ulex, young leaves of, 176  
 Umbelliferae, outer and inner florets of, 63  
 Unity of type, 87  
 Use, effects of, under domestication, 12  
 — effects of, in a state of nature, 59  
 Utility, how far important in the construction of  
 each part, 84

- VALENCIENNES** on fresh-water fish, 155  
 Variability of mongrels and hybrids, 112  
 Variation under domestication, 11  
   — caused by reproductive system being affected  
     by conditions of life, 11  
     — under nature, 25  
     — laws of, 58  
 Variations appear at corresponding ages, 13, 42  
   — analogous in distinct species, 69  
 Varieties natural, 25  
   — struggle between, 37  
   — domestic, extinction of, 51  
   — transitional, rarity of, 74  
   — when crossed, fertile, 110  
   — when crossed, sterile, 111  
   — classification of, 169  
 Verbascum, sterility of, 104  
   — varieties of, crossed, 111  
 Verneuil, M. de, on the succession of species,  
   132  
 Viola tricolor, 37  
 Volcanic islands, denudation of, 117  
 Vulture, naked skin on head, 83
- WADING-BIRDS**, 155  
 Wallace, Mr., on origin of species, 7  
   — on law of geographical distribution, 144  
   — on the Malay Archipelago, 159  
 Wasp, sting of, 85  
 Water, fresh, productions of, 154  
 Water-hen, 79  
 Waterhouse, Mr., on Australian marsupials, 53  
   — on greatly developed parts being variable,  
     65  
   — on the cells of bees, 94  
   — on general affinities, 172  
 Water-ouzel, 79  
 Watson, Mr. H. C., on range of varieties of  
   British plants, 27  
   — on acclimatisation, 62  
   — on rarity of intermediate varieties, 75
- Watson, Mr. H. C., on flora of Azores, 147  
   — on Alpine plants, 148, 152  
 Weald, denudation of, 117  
 Web of feet in water-birds, 79  
 West Indian islands, mammals of, 159  
 Westwood on species in large genera being  
   closely allied to others, 30  
   — on the tarsi of Engidæ, 68  
   — on the antennæ of hymenopterous insects,  
     167  
 Wheat, varieties of, 51-2  
 White Mountains, flora of, 147  
 Wings, reduction of size, 59-60  
 Wings of insects homologous with branchiæ, 81  
   — rudimentary, in insects, 180  
 Wolf crossed with dog, 90  
   — of Falkland Isles, 158  
 Wollaston, Mr., on varieties of insects, 27  
   — on fossil varieties of land-shells in Madeira,  
     28  
   — on colours of insects on sea-shore, 59  
   — on wingless beetles, 60  
   — on rarity of intermediate varieties, 75  
   — on insular insects, 157  
   — on land-shells of Madeira, naturalised, 162  
 Wolves, varieties of, 43  
 Woodpecker, habits of, 79  
   — green colour of, 83  
 Woodward, Mr., on the duration of specific  
   forms, 120  
   — on the continuous succession of genera, 129  
   — on the succession of types, 137  
 World, species changing simultaneously through-  
   out, 131  
 Wrens, nest of, 101
- YOUATT, Mr., on selection, 20  
   — on sub-breeds of sheep, 22  
   — on rudimentary horns in young cattle, 181
- ZEBRA**, stripes on, 71

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