69.

July 19 1881

DOWN,
BECKENHAM, KENT.
RAILWAY STATION
ORPINGTON. S.E.R.

My dear Professor Tait

I have been much pleased to receive your letter, but I did not expect you to answer my poor me. I think you are quite right not to answer Mr Lankester's article, for as far as I can judge, controversy does no good at all. It is best plan to modify any future publication & to acknowledge

~~recently~~ I my criticisms which

DOWN,
BECKENHAM, KENT
RAILWAY STATION
SPRINGFIELD S. E. R.

seems just; & in my view we to take

no notice. — I cannot remember

what I wrote to you, but I

know I was the it must have

upset to interest which I

felt in reading your book.

I thought the you attributed

too much weight to the direct

action of the environment; but

whether I said so, I have not

for without being asked I do

Some thought it presumptuous to have criticised your book. Now should I now say so, but I not during the last few days been struck with Prof. Hoffmans review of his own work in the Botanische Zeitung on the variability of plants; & it is really surprising how little effect he produced by cultivating certain plants under numerous conditions, as to presence of salt, lime, zinc &c &c, during several generations. — Plants, moreover ~~moreover~~ were selected, which seem to most likely to vary under such

conditions, judging from existence
of other allied forms adapted
for these conditions. No doubt
I originally attributed too little
to direct action of conditions;
but Hoffmann's paper has stagger[ed]
me. — Perhaps hundreds of generations
of species are necessary. It is a most
perplexing subject. I wish I was
younger & had more strength,
and time. But I see little of research to
follow. Hoffmann seems to
whether plants vary more under
cultivation than in their native

Sender (D)

69.

like to make them restless

conditions!

DOWN,
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RAILWAY STATION
ORPINGTON. S.E.R.

If to the astonishing variations of almost all cultivated plants must be due to selection & breeding from the varying individuals, then idea crossed my mind many years ago, but I was afraid to publish it as I thought "how he does that people will say" to the importance of "selection".

I still must believe that

Theo

changed conditions give

impulse to variability, but

this is not in most

cases in a very marked

manner. But as I said

it is a most perplexing

problem. — Very sorry

you for writing at such

length; I had no intention

of doing so when I sat

you to write. —

I am extremely sorry to
hear, for your own sake
& for that of Science,
that you are so hard-
worked & that so much
of your time is consumed
in official labour. —

Pray believe me
Dear Professor Semper
Your sincerely
Charles Darwin