

1631 Gervaise Markham writes, "You shall not, as in other cattell, looke to their shape, but to their richnesse, onely elect your buckes, the largest and goodliest conies you can get; and for the richnesse of the skin, that is accounted the richest which hath the equallest mixture of blacke and white haire together, yet the blacke rather shadowing the white; the furre should be thicke, deepe, smooth, and shining; they are of body much fatter and larger, and, when another skin is worth two or three pence, they are worth two shillings." From this full description we see that silver-grey rabbits existed in England at this period; and what is far more important, we see that the breeding or selection of rabbits was then carefully attended to. Aldrovandi, in 1637, describes, on the authority of several old writers (as Scaliger, in 1557), rabbits of various colours, some "like a hare," and he adds that P. Valerianus (who died a very old man in 1558) saw at Verona rabbits four times bigger than ours.²

From the fact of the rabbit having been domesticated at an ancient period, we must look to the northern hemisphere of the Old World, and to the warmer temperate regions alone, for the aboriginal parent-form; for the rabbit cannot live without protection in countries as cold as Sweden, and, though it has run wild in the tropical island of Jamaica, it has never greatly multiplied there. It now exists, and has long existed, in the warmer temperate parts of Europe, for fossil remains have been found in several countries.³ The domestic rabbit readily becomes feral in these same countries, and when variously coloured kinds are turned out they generally revert to the ordinary grey colour.⁴ Wild rabbits, if taken young, can be domesticated, though the process is generally very troublesome.⁵ The various domestic races are often crossed, and are

² U. Aldrovandi, 'De Quadrupedibus digitatis,' 1637, p. 383. For Confucius and G. Markham, see a writer who has studied the subject, in 'Cottage Gardener,' Jan. 22nd, 1861, p. 250.

³ Owen, 'British Fossil Mammals,' p. 212.

⁴ Bechstein, 'Naturgesch. Deutsch-

lands,' 1801, b. i. p. 1133. I have received similar accounts with respect to England and Scotland.

⁵ 'Pigeons and Rabbits,' by E. S. Delamer, 1854, p. 133. Sir J. Sebright ('Observations on Instinct,' 1836, p. 10) speaks most strongly on the difficulty. But this difficulty is not invariable, as I have received two