

hereafter to be described), may be confidently viewed, as we shall see in the next chapter, as the common parent-form. The names in italics on the right-hand side of the page show us the most distinct breeds, or those which have undergone the greatest amount of modification. The lengths of the dotted lines rudely represent the degree of distinctness of each breed from the parent-stock, and the names placed under each other in the columns show the more or less closely connecting links. The distances of the dotted lines from each other approximately represent the amount of difference between the several breeds.

GROUP I.

This group includes a single race, that of the Pouters. If the most strongly marked sub-race be taken, namely, the Improved English Pouter, this is perhaps the most distinct of all domesticated pigeons.

RACE I.—POUTER PIGEONS. (Kropftauben, German. Grosses-gorges, or boulangers, French.)

Œsophagus of great size, barely separated from the crop, often inflated. Body and legs elongated. Beak of moderate dimensions.

Sub-race I.—The improved English Pouter, when its crop is fully inflated, presents a truly astonishing appearance. The habit of slightly inflating the crop is common to all domestic pigeons, but is carried to an extreme in the Pouter. The crop does not differ, except in size, from that of other pigeons; but is less plainly separated by an oblique constriction from the œsophagus. The diameter of the upper part of the œsophagus is immense, even close up to the head. The beak in one bird which I possessed was almost completely buried when the œsophagus was fully expanded. The males, especially when excited, pout more than the females, and they glory in exercising this power. If a bird will not, to use the technical expression, “play,” the fancier, as I have witnessed, by taking the beak into his mouth, blows him up like a balloon; and the bird, then puffed up with wind and pride, struts about, retaining his magnificent size as long as he can. Pouters often take flight with their crops inflated. After one of my birds had swallowed a good meal of peas and water, as he flew up in order to disgorge them and feed his nearly fledged young, I heard the peas rattling in his inflated crop as if in a bladder. When flying, they