

racterise, with rare exception, whole sub-families.²⁷ The wild rock-pigeon has twelve tail-feathers. With Fantails, as we have seen, the number varies from fourteen to forty-two. In two young birds in the same nest I counted twenty-two and twenty-seven feathers. Pouters are very liable to have additional tail-feathers, and I have seen on several occasions fourteen or fifteen in my own birds. Mr. Bult had a specimen, examined by Mr. Yarrell, with seventeen tail-feathers. I had a Nun with thirteen, and another with fourteen tail-feathers; and in a Helmet, a breed barely distinguishable from the Nun, I have counted fifteen, and have heard of other such instances. On the other hand, Mr. Brent possessed a Dragon, which during its whole life never had more than ten tail-feathers; and one of my Dragons, descended from Mr. Brent's, had only eleven. I have seen a Pald-head Tumbler with only ten; and Mr. Brent had an Air-Tumbler with the same number, but another with fourteen tail-feathers. Two of these latter Tumblers, bred by Mr. Brent, were remarkable,—one from having the two central tail-feathers a little divergent, and the other from having the two outer feathers longer by three-eighths of an inch than the others; so that in both cases the tail exhibited a tendency, but in different ways, to become forked. And this shows us how a swallow-tailed breed, like that described by Bechstein, might have been formed by careful selection.

With respect to the primary wing-feathers, the number in the Columbidae, as far as I can find out, is always nine or ten. In the rock-pigeon it is ten; but I have seen no less than eight short-faced Tumblers with only nine primaries, and the occurrence of this number has been noticed by fanciers, owing to ten primaries of a white colour being one of the points in Short-faced Baldhead-Tumblers. Mr. Brent, however, had an Air-Tumbler (not short-faced) which had in both wings eleven primaries. Mr. Corker, the eminent breeder of prize Carriers, assures me that some of his birds had eleven primaries in both wings. I have seen eleven in one wing in two Pouters. I have been assured by three fanciers that they have seen twelve in Scanderoons; but as Neumeister asserts that in the allied Florence Runt the middle flight-feather is often double, the number twelve may have been caused by two of the ten primaries having each two shafts to a single feather. The secondary wing-feathers are difficult to count, but the number seems to vary from twelve to fifteen. The length of the wing and tail relatively to the body, and of the wings to the tail, certainly varies; I have especially noticed this in Jacobins. In Mr. Bult's magnificent col-

²⁷ 'Coup-d'œil sur l'Ordre des Pigeons,' par C. L. Bonaparte ('Comptes Rendus'), 1854-55. Mr. Blyth, in 'Annals of Nat. Hist.,' vol. xix., 1847, p. 41, mentions, as a very singular fact, "that of the two species of

Ectopistes, which are nearly allied to each other, one should have fourteen tail-feathers, while the other, the passenger pigeon of North America, should possess but the usual number—twelve."