

as we hear from Pliny,³³ immense prices were given for pigeons; "nay, they are come to this pass, that they can reckon up their pedigree and race." In India, about the year 1600, pigeons were much valued by Akber Khan: 20,000 birds were carried about with the court, and the merchants brought valuable collections. "The monarch of Iran and Turan sent him some very rare breeds. His Majesty," says the courtly historian, "by crossing the breeds, which method was never practised before, has improved them astonishingly."³⁴ Akber Khan possessed seventeen distinct kinds, eight of which were valuable for beauty alone. At about this same period of 1600 the Dutch, according to Aldrovandi, were as eager about pigeons as the Romans had formerly been. The breeds which were kept during the fifteenth century in Europe and in India apparently differed from each other. Tavernier, in his Travels in 1677, speaks, as does Chardin in 1735, of the vast number of pigeon-houses in Persia; and the former remarks that, as Christians were not permitted to keep pigeons, some of the vulgar actually turned Mahometans for this sole purpose. The Emperor of Morocco had his favourite keeper of pigeons, as is mentioned in Moore's treatise, published 1737. In England, from the time of Willughby in 1678 to the present day, as well as in Germany and in France, numerous treatises have been published on the pigeon. In India, about a hundred years ago, a Persian treatise was written; and the writer thought it no light affair, for he begins with a solemn invocation, "in the name of God, the gracious and merciful." Many large towns, in Europe and the United States, now have their societies of devoted pigeon-fanciers: at present there are three such societies in London. In India, as I hear from Mr. Blyth, the inhabitants of Delhi and of some other great cities are eager fanciers. Mr. Layard informs me

Européennes,' 1859, p. 399) states that there are in the ancient Sanscrit language between 25 and 30 names for the pigeon, and other 15 or 16 Persian names; none of these are common to the European languages. This fact indicates the antiquity of the

domestication of the pigeon in the East.

³³ English translation, 1601, Book x. ch. xxxvii.

³⁴ 'Ayeen Akbery,' translated by F. Gladwin, 4to edit., vol. i. p. 270.