

that most of the known breeds are kept in Ceylon. In China, according to Mr. Swinhoe of Amoy, and Dr. Lockhart of Shanghai, Carriers, Fantails, Tumblers, and other varieties are reared with care, especially by the bonzes or priests. The Chinese fasten a kind of whistle to the tail-feathers of their pigeons, and as the flock wheels through the air they produce a sweet sound. In Egypt the late Abbas Pacha was a great fancier of Fantails. Many pigeons are kept at Cairo and Constantinople, and these have lately been imported by native merchants, as I hear from Sir W. Elliot, into Southern India, and sold at high prices.

The foregoing statements show in how many countries, and during how long a period, many men have been passionately devoted to the breeding of pigeons. Hear how an enthusiastic fancier at the present day writes: "If it were possible for noblemen and gentlemen to know the amazing amount of solace and pleasure derived from Almond Tumblers, when they begin to understand their properties, I should think that scarce any nobleman or gentleman would be without their aviaries of Almond Tumblers."³⁵ The pleasure thus taken is of paramount importance, as it leads amateurs carefully to note and preserve each slight deviation of structure which strikes their fancy. Pigeons are often closely confined during their whole lives; they do not partake of their naturally varied diet; they have often been transported from one climate to another; and all these changes in their conditions of life would be likely to cause variability. Pigeons have been domesticated for nearly 5000 years, and have been kept in many places, so that the numbers reared under domestication must have been enormous: and this is another circumstance of high importance, for it obviously favours the chance of rare modifications of structure occasionally appearing. Slight variations of all kinds would almost certainly be observed, and, if valued, would, owing to the following circumstances, be preserved and propagated with unusual facility. Pigeons, differently from any other domesticated animal, can easily be mated for

³⁵ J. M. Eaton, 'Treatise on the Almond Tumbler,' 1851; Preface, p. vi.