

time of Aldrovandi, when in the year 1600 he admired his own Jacobins, Pouters, or Carriers, never reflected what their descendants in the year 1860 would become: he would have been astonished could he have seen our Jacobins, our improved English Carriers, and our Pouters; he would probably have denied that they were the descendants of his own once-admired stock, and he would perhaps not have valued them, for no other reason, as was written in 1765, "than because they were not like what used to be thought good when he was in the fancy." No one will attribute the lengthened beak of the Carrier, the shortened beak of the Short-faced Tumbler, the lengthened leg of the Pouter, the more perfectly enclosed hood of the Jacobin, &c.,—changes effected since the time of Aldrovandi, or even since a much later period,—to the direct and immediate action of the conditions of life. For these several races have been modified in various and even in directly opposite ways, though kept under the same climate and treated in all respects in as nearly uniform a manner as possible. Each slight change in the length or shortness of the beak, in the length of leg, &c., has no doubt been indirectly and remotely caused by some change in the conditions to which the bird has been subjected, but we must attribute the final result, as is manifest in those cases of which we have any historical record, to the continued selection and accumulation of many slight successive variations.

The action of unconscious selection, as far as pigeons are concerned, depends on a universal principle in human nature, namely, on our rivalry, and desire to outdo our neighbours. We see this in every fleeting fashion, even in our dress, and it leads the fancier to endeavour to exaggerate every peculiarity in his breeds. A great authority on pigeons,⁴⁴ says, "Fanciers do not and will not admire a medium standard, that is, half and half, which is neither here nor there, but admire extremes." After remarking that the fancier of Short-faced Beard Tumblers wishes for a very short beak, and that the fancier of Long-faced Beard Tumblers wishes for a very

⁴⁴ Eaton's 'Treatise on Pigeons,' 1858, p. 86.