

long beak, he says, with respect to one of intermediate length, "Don't deceive yourself. Do you suppose for a moment the short or the long-faced fancier would accept such a bird as a gift? Certainly not; the short-faced fancier could see no beauty in it; the long-faced fancier would swear there was no use in it, &c." In these comical passages, written seriously, we see the principle which has ever guided fanciers, and has led to such great modifications in all the domestic races which are valued solely for their beauty or curiosity.

Fashions in pigeon-breeding endure for long periods; we cannot change the structure of a bird as quickly as we can the fashion of our dress. In the time of Aldrovandi, no doubt the more the pouter inflated his crop, the more he was valued. Nevertheless, fashions do to a certain extent change; first one point of structure and then another is attended to; or different breeds are admired at different times and in different countries. As the author just quoted remarks, "the fancy ebbs and flows; a thorough fancier now-a-days never stoops to breed toy-birds;" yet these very "toys" are now most carefully bred in Germany. Breeds which at the present time are highly valued in India are considered worthless in England. No doubt, when breeds are neglected, they degenerate; still we may believe that, as long as they are kept under the same conditions of life, characters once gained will be partially retained for a long time, and may form the starting-point for a future course of selection.

Let it not be objected to this view of the action of unconscious selection that fanciers would not observe or care for extremely slight differences. Those alone who have associated with fanciers can be thoroughly aware of their accurate powers of discrimination acquired by long practice, and of the care and labour which they bestow on their birds. I have known a fancier deliberately study his birds day after day to settle which to match together and which to reject. Observe how difficult the subject appears to one of the most eminent and experienced fanciers. Mr. Eaton, the winner of many prizes, says, "I would here particularly guard you against keeping too great a variety of pigeons, otherwise you will know a little about all the kinds, but nothing about one as it