

ought to be known." "It is possible there may be a few fanciers that have a good general knowledge of the several fancy pigeons, but there are many who labour under the delusion of supposing they know what they do not." Speaking exclusively of one sub-variety of one race, namely, the short-faced almond tumbler, and after saying that some fanciers sacrifice every property to obtain a good head and beak, and that other fanciers sacrifice everything for plumage, he remarks: "Some young fanciers who are over covetous go in for all the five properties at once, and they have their reward by getting nothing." In India, as I hear from Mr. Blyth, pigeons are likewise selected and matched with the greatest care. We must not judge of the slight divergences from existing varieties which would have been valued in ancient days, by those which are now valued after the formation of so many races, each with its own standard of perfection, kept uniform by our numerous Exhibitions. The ambition of the most energetic fancier may be fully satisfied by the difficulty of excelling other fanciers in the breeds already established, without trying to form a new one.

A difficulty with respect to the power of selection will perhaps already have occurred to the reader, namely, what could have led fanciers first to attempt to make such singular breeds as Pouters, Fantails, Carriers, &c.? But it is this very difficulty which the principle of unconscious selection removes. Undoubtedly no fancier ever did intentionally make such an attempt. All that we need suppose is that a variation occurred sufficiently marked to catch the discriminating eye of some ancient fancier, and then unconscious selection carried on for many generations, that is, the wish of succeeding fanciers to excel their rivals, would do the rest. In the case of the Fantail we may suppose that the first progenitor of the breed had a tail only slightly erected, as may now be seen in certain Runts,⁴⁵ with some increase in the number of the tail-feathers, as now occasionally occurs with Nuns. In the case of the Pouter we may suppose that

⁴⁵ See Neumeister's figure of the Florence Runt, tab. 13, in 'Das Ganze der Taubenzucht.'