

were closely allied to Carriers and Barbs, but which competent authorities cannot now identify with our present Barbs and Carriers; nor can Aldrovandi's Runts be identified with our present Runts. These four breeds certainly did not differ from each other nearly so much as do our existing English Carriers, Barbs, and Runts. All this is exactly what might have been anticipated. If we could collect all the pigeons which have ever lived, from before the time of the Romans to the present day, we should be able to group them in several lines, diverging from the parent rock-pigeon. Each line would consist of almost insensible steps, occasionally broken by some slightly greater variation or sport, and each would culminate in one of our present highly modified forms. Of the many former connecting links, some would be found to have become absolutely extinct without having left any issue, whilst others, though extinct, would be recognized as the progenitors of the existing races.

I have heard it remarked as a strange circumstance that we occasionally hear of the local or complete extinction of domestic races, whilst we hear nothing of their origin. How, it has been asked, can these losses be compensated, and more than compensated, for we know that with almost all domesticated animals the races have largely increased in number since the time of the Romans? But on the view here given, we can understand this apparent contradiction. The extinction of a race within historical times is an event likely to be noticed; but its gradual and scarcely sensible modification through unconscious selection, and its subsequent divergence, either in the same or more commonly in distant countries, into two or more strains, and their gradual conversion into sub-breeds, and these into well-marked breeds are events which would rarely be noticed. The death of a tree, that has attained gigantic dimensions, is recorded; the slow growth of smaller trees and their increase in number excite no attention.

In accordance with the belief in the great power of selection, and of the little direct power of changed conditions of life, except in causing general variability or plasticity of organisation, it is not surprising that dovecot-pigeons have remained