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PIGEONS:

THEIR.

STRUCTURE, VARIETIES, HABITS, AND MANAGEMENT.

BY

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WITH COLOURED REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DIFFERENT VARIETIES, DRAWN FROM LIFE BY

HARRISON WEIR,

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE FINNIKIN, SMITER, AND TURNER.

THERE are several breeds described by Moore and the older writers which are no longer recognized as distinct varieties; some of these have been already alluded to in the course of this work, such as the Uploper, the Mahomet, and those that appear to be closely related to existing breeds. Others, such as the Finnikin, the Smiter, and the Turner, remain to be mentioned. We will quote the older authors on the subject, as it is desirable to put on record the existence of these lost breeds. Of the Finnikin, Moore states:—

“This pigeon is in make and shape very like a common Runt, and much about the same size. The crown of its head is turned much after the manner of a snake’s head; it is gravel-eyed and has a tuft of feathers on the hinder part of the crown, which runs down its back not unlike a horse’s main. It is clean-footed and legged and always black, and blue pied. When it is salacious, it rises over its hen and turns round three or four times, flapping its wings, then reverses and turns as many the other way. Were a gentleman in the country to stock a dove-house with this sort of pigeons, their whimsical gestures might engage the country people to imagine he kept an enchanted castle. Some people disapprove of this sort of pigeons as apt to vitiate their other strains by making a hen squat by these antic gestures; but in fact they are no more dangerous that way than any other breed when salacious.”

Respecting the Turner, Moore writes:—

“This pigeon is in many respects like the Finnikin, except that when it is salacious and plays to the female it turns only one way, whereas the other turns both; it has no tuft on the hinder part of the head, neither is it snake-headed.”

In the work ascribed to Girton, the variety termed the Smiter is described. The writer says:—

“This pigeon, in shape, make, and diversity of plumage, nearly resembles the Tumbler, the size excepted, it being a much larger bird. The Smiter is supposed to be the same species that the Dutch call the Drager; when it flies it has a peculiar tremulous motion with its wings, and commonly rises in a circular manner; the male, for the generality, flying much higher than the female, and though it does not tumble it has a particular manner of falling and flabbing its wings, with which it makes so loud a noise as to be heard at a great distance, which is frequently the cause of its shattering or breaking its quill-feathers.”

These birds were also alluded to by Willughby, in the passage quoted at page 55.

Writing of these varieties, Mr. Brent says:—

“I have seen some pigeons of this sort in Germany, where they are called ‘Ring-Schlagen Tauben,’ *i. e.*, Ring-beating pigeons; and, apart from their strange movements and actions, I could see nothing else in them different to other common kinds. They are considered very productive, but I am not aware that any are now to be found in England.

“The Smiter is described by M. Boitard and M. Corbie, French writers, as follows:—‘They are a little stouter than the Tumblers, have a small cere round the eyes, which are black; the feet are feathered. Whatever the size of the place in which they are, they rise to the top, and come down again in circles, turning first one way and then the other, and they turn round in flying even in their dovecots; but they are quarrelsome and jealous. In plumage (they say) they are grey, with black marks on the wings, red, or pearly white, with a pure white horse-shoe mark on the back. They frequently break some of their wing feathers by the violence of their movements, which seem to resemble convulsions; and they are generally very productive.’”