

birds liberated in the afternoon, over one hundred miles away from home, all but two arrived home the same afternoon—one the following a. m., and only one bird was lost.

My own experience in training birds, and having had charge of the leading races of the representative Homing Antwerp carrier pigeons, has convinced me that, with good specimens, a gratifying result will almost invariably follow.

In making your purchases, select men who have a reputation at stake and are known to be honorable. As the birds are very strong and hardy, you will find that they will multiply rapidly, and afford a world of sport and enjoyment—neither demoralizing nor debasing.

With highest regards to the editor of the REVIEW and members of our fraternity,

Very sincerely,

OLIVER D. SCHOCK.

Humburg, Pa., Nov. 25th, 1879.

### The Food of Homing Birds.

(From the French of Dr. F. Chapuis.)

What, and by what rule, to feed pigeons, are questions of about equal importance. Fanciers generally, imagine it is enough to calculate the quantity of food required for a certain number of pigeons, and to feed it to them two or three times a day, or to give a day's or week's portion at once, allowing the birds to help themselves. Such however, is not the custom among skillful breeders, and the rules by which they are governed we will try to make plain. The staple food for pigeons in France is the vetch (*Vicia sativa*, Linn). When this is of good quality, the pods are dark colored, well filled and heavy; the seeds of equal size. Sometimes, by reason of a wet season or from having been imperfectly harvested, the vetch remains of a dull, greenish color; when cut, it gives out a mouldy smell, and the pod is irregularly filled. It should not be fed in this state. It is sometimes mixed with rye and oats; this last mixture is bad, because of attracting mice that ruin the vetch while devouring the oats. The vetch should be a year old before being fed. Two year's old is still better, it being then more wholesome. If it is preserved unaltered through this time, it is a guarantee of its having been well harvested and when in good condition. Feeding the vetch when green or when imperfectly cured, exposes the birds to disarrangements, producing, especially, diarrhoea, which weakens them to such an extent that they seem unequal to any exertion; hence, must not be put to too long flights.

Though the vetch is the food par excellence, experience has proven it to be of greater value when mixed with small kidney beans than when fed a-

lone. In spring and summer it is, however, fed alone, or some wheat, hemp or rape seed are added, giving sparingly of the last two, as with these it is better to give none than too much. In winter, wheat forms a good basis of food, but at first is apt to prove relaxing, though the birds soon become used to it. By its long continued using, the bird gains in fat, so it is not a desirable food when training for a concourse. Some fanciers through the training season feed the vetch alone for a few days, then give a few handfulls of wheat for a change. Hemp and rape seed are very stimulating. If used with care, they are excellent for the preparation of a bird for a flight, that is, during the months of June and July. Give a handfull say to six pigeons, feeding one kind one day, and the other the next.

Pigeons are very fond of salt. If it is not indispensable to their existence, it is of great use. The various authorities upon pigeons give many ways of providing it: some in the form of a well seasoned stuffed and baked cat or fox, taken in the season of their salaciousness. Others advocate placing in the loft a block of rock salt. As this is affected by moisture, the pigeons insert their beaks into the crevices and drink the salty liquid they find there. There is another plan greatly used and found useful, as combining many excellent features. Take about half a bushel of coarse sand, an equal quantity of potter's clay well dried, and mortar from old buildings; add to these a quantity of the larger vetches, and break all into small fragments. Add further six or eight pounds of broken egg-shells, several handfulls of green anise seed, four pounds of hemp seed and two pounds of ground salt. Mix thoroughly dry, or with water. Some use one way, some another. Some substitute rape for hemp. They are equally good, but rape has the disadvantage of being very attractive to mice. The mixture is placed in a covered wooden trough or tray, set at an angle of about forty-five degrees, the cover at the lower side being pierced with five or six holes an inch and a half wide, by three inches long. Care should be taken that the mixture is not exposed to the direct rays of the sun, and that the openings are large enough to prevent the pigeons heads being caught in them.

The value of this compound is readily to be seen. The coarse sand provides the small stones necessary to the digestion. The egg-shells furnish the females with the calcareous matter needed in the formation of the egg and its shell, and the rape seed and salt are the condiments the pigeon seeks with such avidity. The pigeon, though essentially graminivorous, can be made omnivorous. It can be fed upon bread, potato, boiled meat, and become accustomed to rice and barley; but all these are unprofitable, if it is possible to procure the vetch.