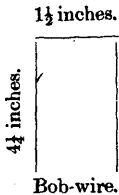


The "bob wires," or means of shutting or opening the pigeon's entrance to and exit of the loft, are inefficient; in fact a dropping door and a sliding door have been substituted, improperly, for "bob wires."

The object served by "bob wires" is at discretion either to shut the pigeons without the loft, while admitting those that may be outside to enter; to exclude any from coming in or passing out, or to leave the passage free in both directions.

The passage-way should be from 6 to 9 inches high, and from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 inches broad, the breadth of the opening being divided into three equal spaces by the two ends of a twice rectangularly bent stiff wire, hanging vertically from staples at the upper edge of the passage-way.



The staples and wire are so adjusted that the wire may swing freely inwards or outwards, but not move laterally.

If a cleat be now permanently placed across the bottom of the passage-way outside it will serve to prevent the wires swinging outwards, but will admit of their swinging freely inwards. Thus arranged, birds, by pressing from the outside, may enter the loft, but cannot pass outwards.

To close the passage against ingress or egress a removable cleat—otherwise corresponding to the outside permanently fixed cleat—is placed, when desired, against the inside of the wires.

To clear the passage-way of obstruction by the wires, so that birds may pass inwards or outwards at pleasure, the staples supporting the wire are driven into a piece of wood which is so arranged as to be capable of being slid upwards or downwards. A cord is attached to the upper part of this piece of wood, passed over a small pulley fixed above and thence led through a hole in the floor to the chamber beneath the loft. On pulling this cord downwards the pendant bob-wires will be raised clear of the cleats, or even clear of the whole passage-way as desired, and the birds be thus afforded freedom to pass inwards or outwards.

Occasionally it is well to raise the wire clear altogether of the passage-way, but at other times it should be lowered so as to swing only just clear of the cleats. This arrangement is with a view to accustoming the birds to make use of the entrance when the wire is down, because, on the receipt of messages conveyed by pigeons, the birds have to pass into their loft while the bob-wire is arranged to admit of their entrance, but to prevent their exit. If the birds are not accustomed to push the wires inwards on entering the loft their entrance and capture may be much delayed when they arrive with messages.

It was observed that a net, something in the nature of a butterfly net, or a landing net, was in the loft for use in catching pigeons.

Such a contrivance should never be used, at least in a messenger pigeon loft where there is constant recurring occasion for catching birds. The use of the net terrifies, not merely the bird hunted, but all others in the loft, and this at a time when there is every reason to avoid alarming them in handling.

If the loft be thoroughly darkened, and then only so much light admitted by shutter or lamp arrangement as may be just sufficient to enable the loft keeper to see, the birds will remain quietly on their roosts while being taken in the keeper's hands; and if the keeper avoids hurry, sudden movements and discomfort to the birds in holding them, these will soon learn to submit quietly to capture and handling.

The shutter fitting of the loft is defective. When closed the shutters do not exclude the light, and although not essential it would be desirable to have them so arranged as to be capable of being operated from the chamber below the loft, similarly to the bob-wire fitting, with a view to the loft being darkened and the birds allowed to roost quietly for a short time before the keeper entered for stock-taking, or catching birds to send out for training.

Provision should be made for regularly supplying the pigeons with peas—small field peas—or with vetches, as food.

I found that whole Indian corn was being provided, a difficulty having been experienced in procuring peas or vetches.