

so that on most old birds you may expect to see the feet feathers considerably damaged by "wear and tear."

OLD UNCLE NED.

For the Canadian Poultry Review.

Homing Antwerps.

By J. VAN OPSTAL, 4, LEWIS ST., NEW YORK.

It was with pleasure I read the article in August number of REVIEW on the Belgian Carrier Pigeon, and being from the city of Antwerp, in Belgium, where I was an ardent fancier for many years before coming to the United States, I have taken the liberty to address a few lines to your readers, in which I will correct a few errors made by your correspondent, and will also give you some items of my experience in training and rearing birds in Belgium and New York.

As your correspondent states, the advent of railroads and telegraphs put aside the use of the Carrier pigeon; but that for this reason the bird was almost threatened with extinction, is a fallacy, as there was as much flying and racing with the Carrier pigeon in Belgium twenty-five years ago as there is at the present time. That the Franco-Prussian war, when these intelligent and true birds did so much for the besieged Parisians, has sent a new impulse into this amusing sport of the training and racing of the Belgian Carriers, there is no doubt; but this must only be said of other countries, and is not applicable to Belgium.

Your correspondent is in error when he thinks that in no country is there so much flying done as in Germany and in Belgium. He should leave Germany out, as it is only since 1871, or since the Franco-Prussian war, that pigeon flying has been done to any extent in Germany. Certainly since 1871 a great many "fancy pigeon" fanciers have exchanged their fancy pigeons for the flying breed, and now the last named kind is all that is spoken of. What will exalt and make them stronger fanciers yet is that they have beaten the Belgian birds in the great prize race from Rome.

1,101 birds were sent to Rome from Belgium, and only 65 from fanciers of Germany and France. They were liberated at Rome on the 23rd of June, and only on the 2nd of July did the first bird arrive; this bird belonged to Mr. Heuts, of Aix-la-Chapelle, a city in Germany, near the Belgian border. It must be said, though, that this pigeon was of the pure Belgian breed, and the parents were bought from a Belgian fancier. The second bird that arrived from Rome belonged to a gentleman named Mr. Rey, of Underlecht, near Brussels, and came home on the 4th of July; and on the 7th of August only 53 Belgian, and 3 German birds had arrived.

That the flying of pigeons from Rome to Belgium is a difficult task is proven by the unsatisfactory results which the experiments have furnished. Twice before the last trial were the birds liberated at Rome. The first trial took place in 1856, by a society of Leige. One hundred and twenty-five birds were liberated there on the 22nd of July, at 4 o'clock, a.m. On the 29th of the same month the first prize was won, and on the 3rd of August the seventh bird arrived; so that in thirteen days only seven birds had been able to reach their destination.

In 1868 another trial took place from the city of Rome. One hundred and eighty pigeons took part in the race, and were liberated on the 22nd of July. The first bird arrived on the 3rd of August, and on the 9th only nine birds had found their way home.

It must be admitted, then, that at each trial it has been a failure to fly the birds from the capital of Italy to Belgium, and that it is a real pity that such good birds—in fact the best birds that Belgium possesses—are sacrificed to accomplish an almost impossible undertaking. It is not the great distance that make it so difficult for the birds to find their way home, but having to come over Switzerland, and having to cross the Apennines and the Alps, those immense mountains, whose tops are always covered with snow, and most of the time encircled by the clouds, that offers a natural obstacle that the greatest part of the birds cannot surmount.

It is also since 1873 that the sport of flying the Belgian Carrier has commenced in the States, and, I think, later yet in Canada. In 1874 I commenced to import my first birds from Antwerp. As I said in the beginning of my communication, I had been an ardent fancier in my native city, and, although a great many years in New York, I at once felt my natural love for these pets revive. Another gentleman, also a Belgian, being from the city of Brussels, named Louis Waefelaer, commenced soon after me to keep the Antwerps; and it may be said that in these four or five years the homing birds have, so to say, superseded the fancy birds to a great extent.

A few years ago an Antwerp Carrier pigeon was almost unknown here, and it was only in 1872 that the fancy of racing with these birds was started in Philadelphia. The races were then of a few miles distance only, and when, at that time, a few birds flew from New York to Philadelphia, which is eighty miles, air-line, people thought they had accomplished a great feat.

In 1874 I flew my birds from Philadelphia, and in 1875 I flew them from Lock Haven, Pa., a distance of two hundred and forty miles by rail, or about two hundred miles air-line. In 1876, I flew my birds from Elmira, N. Y., also about two hun-