

## PIGEON DEPARTMENT.

### Several Toys.

A flight of several first-class nuns on the wing is a beautiful sight, especially if they have been taught to fly high. The dark color tipping each of the four extremities: head, tail, and wings, gives a pleasing contrast to the white body as we look at it outlined against a clear sky. But they are equally attractive when at rest about their cot or on a roof. The variety should be kept by itself to be seen and bred to the best advantage. It is easily bred, being one of the oldest and best established varieties, and well cared for and carefully bred, there remains but little to do beyond culling out those foully marked. This culling however, be it remembered, must be of birds not of foul fathers, and means the killing of young whose coloring is not as nearly perfect as it should be.

The nun is a small white bird with the head, tail and flights of either black, blue, red or yellow. The head is colored as far back as the lower inside edge of the hood, the color extending from the points of the hood to a point in the neck an inch and a half below the insertion of the beak, forming a sort of bib. The color of the tail begins in a line covering the vent, and encircling the posterior portion of the rump. The wings have the ten outer flights also colored. The beak is black; eyes pearl; hood large and evenly turned, the inside perfectly white in fine birds; the legs bare and red; toe nails in standard birds black. A flight of nuns of the four colors is a good problem for the fancier. As he breeds them he will find some of the young have the colored head and tail, but no colored flights. These he can call moorcaps or moorheads, and enter them for premiums in those classes as other men do. The German name for these is the bearded pigeon, but we call them German nuns. There will be other young with the colored head only, the rest of the plumage being white. These, in Germany, would be called the death's head. Again some of the young will have well marked tails and wings, but the head color will stop at the line of the eye instead of continuing lower to form the bib. Old fanciers call such helmets; we know them as snells, especially if the flights should also be white. Therefore to be a good snell is to be an indifferent nun, that is, a nun that has lost all color except a little on the top of the head and the tail is called a helmet or snell.

These snells have their admirers, and have been bred as a separate variety for years, in all colors, and both plain headed and capped. They are pretty toys for young fanciers to trifle over, but

not worth perpetuating as a variety. A careful description would read as follows: Color, white, with black tail and scalp, of the latter covering the head upon a line drawn from the corners of the beak through the centre of the eyes; eyes pearl; feet clean and red; colors, black, blue, red and yellow. The upper part of the beak partakes of the color next it on the head being, of course, darker than the lower half.

When the young nun or snell had no color except the tail and a spot on the head at the insertion of the beak, the bird was called a spot. So when we hear a spot spoken of, we can imagine to ourselves a washed out nun; perfectly white except the spot at the base of the beak. There is a spot connected with the priest in an analogous manner. The philosopher may object to this mode of reasoning, and claim that the spot was the original; a descendant becoming impure by the addition of more color to the head and tail feathers, becomes a helmet; still more color, showing in head, wings and tail, the bird becomes a nun. Suppose the reasoning from this end of the problem be true, it proves but the independence of these strains which are dignified with the names of varieties.

The priest is about the size of the common pigeon, and the plain heads are not unlike it in shape. Is a solid or whole colored bird with the exception of the head, which is white from a line passing through the centre along the minor or lower part of the hood, which must be free from foul feathers. The upper part of the beak is white; the lower, dark. The eye is mixed, but sometimes the upper half is pearl, the lower dark, thus partaking of the colors of the head and neck; the hood must be in proportion to the size of the head, and in ordinary colors be perfectly cup shaped. The feet are closely covered with short feathers in which no whites are allowed, not even on the toes. Plain priests are those where the colors are solid; that is, without wing or tail bars. Barred priests have dark bars across wings and tail. In white barred priests the bar is white instead of dark. Of all, the red and the yellow with white bars is the rarest; solids ranking next. Sometimes the priests degenerates, losing all the white of the head except a spot at the base of the beak. It is then known as a white spot.

P. H. Jones, of the Peristeronic Society, describes his ideal Magpie as follows: "A small bodied bird, with slim gracefully formed neck and neat snaky head, of the model of the rock pigeon, or approaching the dove shape, at any rate nothing approaching the tumbler head, and no coarseness; beak straight and comparatively thin, with wattles small and of fine texture; eyes pearl or white-eyed, and eye cere neat and fine—a little