



THE DOMESTIC PIGEON.

BY E. V. HUBBELL, OTTAWA.

The Pigeon, from its great fecundity, we have, to some extent, reclaimed from a state of nature, and taught to live in habits of dependence, and the more we cultivate it, the greater its fecundity, for we are all aware that wild pigeons are not so prolific as the tame ones. This, I think, depends upon the quantity of the food and allowing a proper share of freedom. The tame pigeon, of which there are over one hundred known varieties, derive their origin from the *Biset*, or wild Blue Rock Pigeon, inhabiting all the warm and temperate regions of the globe, and as a general rule are inoffensive and harmless in their nature, living on berries, grain, and seeds, seldom eating insects or animal food. They are monogamists, each living and adhering to a single mate, but we very often see an exception to this, the attachment between them being very slight. The female lays two eggs, and the remarkable part of it is, that they nearly always produce male and female, seldom resembling their parents in exact points. Climate is apt to make a difference in the outward appearances of pigeons, for those living within the tropics have much brighter plumage than those that live in the temperate zone, which have a grayish or bluish tint of feather. Perhaps a few of the readers of the REVIEW would like to know what the Blue Rock Pigeon is like, I will endeavour to give a description, gathered from the best authority I can obtain. The home of this bird in its wild or natural state, is among the rocky and precipitous cliffs, particularly those of the sea-coast perforated by crevices, and places hollowed out by the action of the waves. They

abound in swarms in most of the rocky islands of Africa, Asia, and in the Mediterranean. The plumage of this bird in its natural state is as follows:—Head, throat, lower part of breast, and abdomen of a bluish gray; bill, blackish-brown; nostril membrane, red, sprinkled as it were, with a white powder; the irids, pale reddish-orange; sides of neck and upper part of breast, dark lavender purple, glossed with shades of green and purplish-red. The greater coverts and secondaries are barred with black, and form two broad and distinct bars across the closed wings. Lower part of back is white, tail of a deep gray, with a broad black bar at the end; the wings when closed reach within half an inch of the end of the tail. Legs and feet are of a pale purplish-red, and from this bird all our beautiful fancy pigeons, by man's ingenuity, are derived. But to return to our former subject. For the laying of each egg it is necessary to have a particular congress with the male, and the egg is usually deposited in the afternoon. When both are laid, the female, in fifteen days, not including the three days she is employed in laying, sets on her eggs, relieved at regular intervals by the male, from three or four o'clock in the afternoon until ten the next morning is the female's turn, she is then relieved by the male, who takes his place from ten to three, or thereabouts, while his mate feeds, and if either one does not return at the expected time the other follows and drives it to nest.

To be Continued.

RAMBLING THOUGHTS OF A PIGEON FANCIER.

BY MR. W. H. CLUTTERBUCK.

The following paper was read before the members of the Birmingham Columbarian Society:—

I think there needs some explanation why I have chosen this subject for my paper. You will doubtless wonder why

I have not elected to read a paper on some breed of their management. This I consider not in my way. Not that I know nothing of pigeons or pigeon-breeding, for I have kept pigeons, and associated with pigeon keepers, ever since I first knew how to drive a nail into a soap box. But I have long come to regard the matter of breeding not as putting two birds together, but as a scientific study. I shall therefore take the liberty of leaving the higher branches of our pastime in the hands of more able men than myself, while I try to interest you with a few rambling thoughts which I have gathered from my own observation. I have many times when seated in this room asked myself this question, What can there be in pigeons or pigeon fancying that can bring together, night after night, an assembly of highly respectable and intelligent-looking men like I see around me to talk about a pigeon. There must be some charm or fascination about them not known to ordinary mortals. Where is it, what is it? "They are only pigeons after all," says one, "and you can buy them for a mere trifle a couple at any poulterer's."

"Ah, says another, "they would look well with a mutton chop under a bit of crust." "I like to see them flying about a farmyard," is a common remark of many people, not that they care a straw about them, only that pigeons happen to be one of the class of birds that have long been accustomed to dwell near the abode of man, and they certainly add greatly to the charm of a rural scene, and especially when the observer is in that pleasant frame of mind to give them a passing notice, which is as much as can be expected from the people which are not at all interested in such things. I well remember once bringing up a pair to show a friend, which I placed upon the table in a cage. After describing at some length their beautiful properties and feather-marking, the cock betook himself to one corner of the cage and began to call