

## PIGEON DEPARTMENT.

### Pigeons in Summer.

Pigeons if well housed and shaded from the mid-day sun rejoice in heat, and my own have always reared a more numerous progeny in hot than in cold and damp summers. Indeed, I remember that in the deplorable season of 1879 I almost entirely failed to rear any. In spite, however, of this fact there are precautions to be taken in summer—Plenty of fresh air is absolutely necessary to keep pigeons in health. Those who keep them in pole houses and boxes against a wall give them air enough, and too much; but the more careful who house them in substantial buildings with wired area in front must take care to have proper ventilation in said building—not draughts, but shutters, sliding or to let down on hinges, to admit air in warm weather, and during great heat the doors should be left open all night. Of course we presuppose the outer area is strong and the wire quite vermin-proof. Some people keep pigeons permanently in sheds, well roofed, with back and ends enclosed, and the front of wire. Many kinds become very hardy, and thrive well in such quarters, but I should never construct such abodes, for in winter young birds must often succumb to cold in them, and during snow they are miserable. Another thing to be remembered and guarded against is that some colors of plumage, especially red and yellow, are injured by the sun; the richer and sounder the color, the less it is affected, still, even the best birds do suffer in beauty, and so temporarily in exhibition value, from exposure. This does not much matter if they are not required for show till they have moulted, but directly the moult begins valuable specimens should be kept out of burning sun; otherwise the tips of the new colored feathers are almost bleached, and the colored parts as a whole appear mottled and broken instead of smooth and flat.

As in the poultry yard so in the pigeon loft, special care must in summer be given to all sanitary arrangements. The floor of the house should be kept thickly covered with sand, gravel, or dried earth, and this must be frequently raked over. If, however, pigeons are kept in a boarded loft, sawdust will be found the cleanest and best coating for the floor, but then gravel or grit must be given in pans. The plainer and less complicated the nest boxes the better. In the crevices of even the plainest, vermin will sometimes lurk. If they are anywhere about they will show themselves on the newly hatched nestlings, and they must at once be exterminated or they will prove fatal to the health of young birds, and sometimes become such a plague as to drive the old ones to desert

their offspring. The commonest of these pests are mites, black at first, and then crimson from being gorged with the blood of the unfortunate pigeons. They dislike paraffine. A drop of it should here and there be dabbed on the young birds, and it may be freely rubbed with a brush into all the joints of the nest boxes. At the age of from two to three months, young pigeons go through a partial moult, and suffer from a partial distemper. They then mope, and if the weather is at all cold, often shiver. Old birds and old cocks frequently persecute and drive them from their food, and a little care must be bestowed on them. The coarser and commoner specimens soon get over it and scarcely show it at all, but the smaller and more delicate birds may be watched and petted or many will die. If we merely wished to perpetuate the race through the most robust and largest birds, as in the case of many kinds of fowls, nature would make her own selection and rid herself of all weakly and delicate pigeons, but in the case of most of our toy breeds these smaller or more refined birds are precisely those which we wish to rear for their beauty and elegance. As soon as a young pigeon is seen to droop our first care is to bring it into a warm place; I do not mean a hot room, but a place protected from draughts by day and from damp by night. A few exhibition pens in an unused room are a capital pigeon hospital. Each must be cleanly sanded and have a drinking vessel hung up in it. Here give the birds whatever food they seem to like best; a little hemp will generally tempt the appetite of the most sickly. With no other treatment than this rest from the bustle of the pigeon house and shelter from extremes of heat and cold we have cured many a drooping bird, and returned it fat and happy in a week or fortnight. Pigeons thus cosseted become very tame; my own often learn where the room with the pen is, fly at the widdow in after days, and if a pen is open, pen themselves. I have traced the success of some exhibition birds partially to this source. They are accustomed to a pen and like it, and so always show themselves to the best advantage in one.

There is not a more serious bane of the pigeon loft than this common distemper which in highly bred birds generally proves fatal if once it develops itself—I mean canker in the mouth or throat. How far it is a cause of illness and death, or how far an effect of some internal malady of which we are ignorant, I have never been able entirely to make up my mind. I do not for a moment pretend to any scientific knowledge of surgery or pathology. I have carefully observed this and other diseases in pigeons, and give the results of my observations and treatment only for what they are worth. Canker may appear in pigeons of any age. In adults it is almost always curable; in