

PIGEON DEPARTMENT.

Performing Pigeons at Hengler's Circus.

I have always felt a very considerable interest in the performance of tamed or domesticated animals, feeling confident that a study of the means adopted to perfect their education, and of the manifestations of intelligence exhibited by them, which manifestations are open to repeated and accurate observations, are of much more importance in estimating their mental character than the ridiculous anecdotes quoted so often, without the slightest evidence of their authenticity, by even the latest writer on animal intelligence. Consequently I found myself sitting amidst a crowd of holiday children and their guardians at Hengler's circus in Argyle street, waiting anxiously to witness the performance of M. Felix Cariot's feats on horseback, introducing the novel effect of a flight of pigeons. After performing some dexterous juggling feats whilst the horse on which he was standing was careering around the circus, M. Cariot took a covered basket from the hand of an attendant and, resuming his wild career, he removed the cloth with which the basket was covered, when four white pigeons escaped, and flew round and round over the heads of the audience, immediately below the lighted gaseliers which depended from the roof. After permitting them to make several circuits of the building, M. Cariot, whilst in rapid motion upon his horse, elevated a slender rod, holding it horizontally above his head. At the same time he rang a small bell, when the birds immediately flew after and overtook him, all four alighting on the rod, which served them as a perch. After carrying them round the ring two or three times he shook them off, when they resumed their flight; and, opening a second basket, liberated two black pigeons, with white wings. These joined the former, producing a striking contrast of color in the flock, which, immediately on the bell being sounded, flew to the perch, and alighted on it as before. By the kindness of Mr. Hengler and M. Cariot I had an opportunity of examining the pigeons after the performance. Some of the white birds had pearl-colored or white eyes, like the Belgian pigeons known as Cumulets. Those with black heads, bodies and tails, with white wings, were obviously of German extraction, and had been selected on account of the disposition of their colors, which was most effective in flight. The training had evidently been accomplished by the operation of kindness, the birds coming to the signal of the bell in obedience to a habit which had obviously been implanted in them by making the ringing the signal of the supply of food. It was interesting to see the natural timidity of the birds,

and their disinclination to fly after sundown, so overcome that they performed as well in the crowded and gas lighted circus as they would have done in daylight.

The exhibition was one of a very pleasing character, and well calculated to demonstrate to the youngsters the advantage of kindness in training animals. Amongst my own birds I have had pouters nearly as familiar, without any special effort having been made to tame them. One white pigmy pouter, formerly in my possession, was accustomed to fly some distance from the house at the call of a member of my family, perching on his shoulder and taking hempseed out of his fingers. Even my homing birds, that are not reared so as to be familiar, will come down and eat out of a pan of mixed mortar rubbish and salt whilst it is held in the hand.

The intelligence of some of the small birds is of a very high order, their perceptive faculties being particularly acute; and there is no doubt it may be increased to a very great extent by cultivation and breeding from the best specimens. Thus, the homing faculty of the Belgian voyageur has been marvellously developed since the introduction of railways, by which they are now conveyed, instead of being carried, as formerly, in paniers on the backs of *colporteurs*; and flights of 300 or 400 miles are successfully performed in one day with a certainty and velocity that were alike unknown some fifty years since. This has solely been accomplished by breeding from selected specimens, the loss of the worst birds in the contests being an artificial mode of improving the species, by a parody on the process of natural selection, and a good example of what Herbert Spencer terms the survival of the fittest in the struggle for life.—W. B. TEGGMEYER, in *London Field*.

Pigeons.

Continued.

FEEDING.

Providing a proper variety of food is one of the most necessary points, if not the *most* necessary point, in the breeding of pigeons. All grain, &c., should be of the very best quality. It is cheaper in the end to feed the best food.

I advise a different diet for summer and winter. The reason of this is obvious: In the summer when the birds are feeding their young, a soft food is required, such as wheat, peas, small maize, &c., while in winter they are done breeding and must have more solid and heating food, and food that will last some time in the crop, and digests slowly. Food of this nature is a great support to birds during the long, cold winter nights. Sound tick beans, old peas, and a small quantity of barley, are