

MANAGEMENT OF PIGEONS.

—
The Loft.—
GEORGE W. PRITTI, IN FANCIER'S
JOURNAL.

I do not agree with those who consider that any unused room, garret or stable will answer for this purpose. You cannot be too particular either in locating or building your loft. Swift observes when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, "that let the crowd be as great as it will below, there is always room enough overhead." Apply this anecdote in selecting a place for your birds. In the cities we are cramped for space, but there is "always room overhead." Build your loft on the roof of your house, and by all means let it front the south. I consider this of the greatest importance. Your birds need all the sun and fresh air they can get, this is necessary to keep them in proper condition. A sick bird ought never to be seen in any well managed loft.

Get a first-class carpenter to do your building, and see that he puts everything together in a workman-like manner. Use tongue and groove or match boards for the lining and purchase the best, these are free from knots. This will cost considerable, but a loft so constructed will always be a source of pleasure, which is worth more than the extra money expended!

If you have the space for an area in front of your loft, so much the better, but by all means have it under roof and the sides permanently enclosed. At the end fronting the south you should have sliding glass doors or windows, these should be closed when it storms and when the nights are cold and damp.

I believe that open areas have been the cause of more disease and death among birds kept in confinement than has ever been dreamed of in the philosophy of most of our fanciers.

Our climate is certainly a trying one, especially so for eight months of the year. Birds in confinement have not the opportunity for vigorous exercise, which is necessary to enable them to withstand our many sudden changes, and since they cannot make known their wants we should do our best to give them every care and attention.

The size of your loft will, of course, depend on the space at command as well as the number of birds you intend to keep. Contrive to have a separate

apartment in which to place your young pigeons as soon as they are able to care for themselves, this will prevent overcrowding and all the pestilential ill^s which are the result. You should also have an additional space for any odd birds not mated, as such birds are apt to do much damage fighting and molesting those with eggs or young.

For nests, erect shelves fourteen inches wide and twelve inches high, divide these into apartments of three feet eight inches in length. At each end of this space you will erect partitions measuring one foot square in the clear for your nesting places. If you use half inch boards, you will then have a space between each next box measuring eighteen inches in length by fourteen inches in breadth. The advantages derived from this arrangement are many. They make good mating cages by simply placing a wire screen over the central space, besides being roomy enough to allow all the billing and cooing in which pigeons are prone to indulge without any interference from other parties, thus insuring more fertile eggs than would otherwise be the case where such accommodations are lacking. More perfect seclusion can still be given your birds if you will have placed over these boxes or shelves (which should not number over three in height) your perches. These should be about six inches long, two and a half broad, inserted in a narrow board two and a half or three inches wide. These perches should be about ten inches apart to prevent fighting, and beneath each row you require a wide board placed at an angle of forty-five degrees, to catch the droppings, thus preventing their soiling the plumage of the birds beneath, beside making it more convenient for cleaning.

These perches can be placed in rows, one above the other. The distance which separates them will, of course, depend upon the height of your ceiling. My loft measures eight feet high in the clear. I should advise you not to go beyond this distance, in fact, six inches less would be an advantage, as I find some difficulty in catching my birds in the presence of strangers on account of the height of my loft. Whatever the size or shape of your loft may be, the reader may rest assured that it will be impossible for him to find a better arrangement than the one I have endeavored to describe. It is the result of much time and study, and will save the

fancier who may adopt in a great deal of trouble and anxiety.

Now, don't spoil such a loft by whitewashing these smoothly planed, nice fitting boards. Not one particle of lime shall ever cover the lining of my loft, no, not one particle or drop as big as the half of a pea with which I feed my pets. I enjoy looking at my pets, and I want them to appear beautiful to me, and therefore would never place a bird against a whitewashed background, as this would at once destroy the pictorial effect for my eye. The boards of my loft are covered with Berry Bros. light hard oil finish. It brings out the grain of the wood beautifully, dries hard in the course of a single night, and is sure death to any vermin in case you should ever allow them to get into your loft. You can dilute it as you see fit with spirits of turpentine, thus giving a glossy on dead finish, as may suit your fancy. I much prefer a glossy surface, as the white powder from the birds can be very easily removed with a wet sponge, when your loft will look almost as span and new as when first erected.

Against such a background the white plumage of my birds has a luminous glow and every graceful attitude is distinctly outlined.

Use coarse, yellow pine sawdust for your nest pans and boxes if you can get it; if not white pine will have to answer, but don't believe one word about this material being a sure preventive against vermin or you will find yourself deceived. Nothing but the most scrupulous cleanliness will prevent these pests coming in great swarms during the warm months. Every animal and plant has its parasite, and if these are allowed to accumulate the result will be most disastrous to either.

"The larger fleas have smaller fleas,
To worry and to bite them.
The smaller fleas have lesser fleas,
And so *ad infinitum*."

Almost every treatise on pigeons advises cleanliness in the loft, but how few there are who pay the least attention to this? I know fanciers who only clean out their lofts about twice a year, and such a cleaning as they get at these times would be a disgrace to a well-kept pig sty. I believe the *effete* matter which passes from any animal to be the greatest disease producing substance for that particular creature it is possible to find.

Grazing cattle are always in better health than those compelled to inhale the poisonous atmosphere of the stable.

I have read of field mice being destroyed in great numbers when the ground has been saturated with the malodorous portion of their excrement, but who ever heard of an infectious disease among the birds of the air? and why, simply because they do not come in contact with the injurious waste of their bodies as birds in confinement do when not properly cared for.

I could easily multiply instances of this kind were it necessary to do so, but I think I have said enough to convince the most skeptical of the great importance of thorough cleanliness in the management of our pigeons.