

exceeds in number all the other colors together. Although it is comparatively easy to breed this color good, yet many nuns are to be found very off-colored in their black. These however have their value in breeding, for it will be found in breeding every variety of pigeon, that two birds, each of the best possible shade of color, do not generally throw such good color as one of very good, and another—not of bad color, but slightly off-color. I could not understand for long, why this should be so, but it is no doubt the fact that nature having reached a certain pitch in artificial forms of life is inclined to reaction. The very best specimens of all fancy stock are often failures when mated with others equally good; while with those slightly superior to themselves, but well come, they perpetuate their highest qualities.

The black nun, however good in color, must not carry a light beak like other black headed pigeons such as barbs, which are preferred light beaked; but the beak should be as black as possible, and I may say it never is white-beaked as far as I have noticed. The head, as far back as the shell, which should stand up purely white, must be black. As the shell feathers grow with a forward inclination, and those of the crown of the head backward, the latter where they meet the shell feathers take an upward turn and form the support of the shell. If all the backward growing feathers of the crown are black, the shell will have a black lining, which being upwished for causes the dodging exhibitor to cut or pluck them, and so show a clear white shell.

When the young nun is about twelve days old the head feathers will, in a good one, be black only a little way behind the middle of the crown, and those feathers which adjoin the rising shell will be white. By the time the feathers are full grown the black will then reach the shell, but not rise against it. The black head of the nun runs round the corners of the shell, so that when the bird is viewed from behind two black pointed patches are seen, and the color runs down the sides of the neck to the breast with a wide sweep, forming the bib, which the bigger and more evenly cut it is, the higher the bird is valued.

The flight feathers, that is, the ten primaries, should be black. Moore writes of only six colored flights in the nun, but nothing under ten a side can be reckoned a standard bird now. Eight a side certainly looks a full flight when the wing is closed but not when the bird is flying; however, eight a side with quite clean butts of the wings, is preferable to more black flights with spurious wing and adjacent feathers colored, a very common fault with all nuns, especi-

ally those full flighted. Here again is plucking resorted to, but an examination of the open wing will enable the searcher to detect it, if at all extensive. The twelve tail feathers with the upper and under coverts must also be black and cut sharply across. Of course, there should be no black feathers over the rest of the body, nor white ones among the black markings, but a prevailing foul marking is at the knees or hocks where the thigh feathers finish off. The feet and legs of the black nun when in the nest are either quite black or heavily patched with black, but this generally wears away afterwards, though some birds retain it partly, especially those of a very rich color. They look much better, however, with bright vermilion colored legs and feet. The toe-nails should be quite black, and many a good bird has a small fault in having some of them light.

Probably on account of the less contrast in color, red and yellow headed nuns have not been so much considered by breeders as blacks, at least they do not exist in such perfection, being, as a rule deficient both in shell and quality of color; and it so happens that the marking of the nun encroaches on those parts of the bird which present the very greatest difficulty to the breeder of red and yellow pigeons—the tail and flights. Could red and yellow nuns be produced of such rich and lustrous colors as some kinds of pigeons display, I would consider them as very much finer examples of man's ingenuity than blacks, while at the same time they would lack the contrast, though the red would not be much behind even there. Red and yellow nuns have light beaks and toe nails.—J. C. LYELL.

Shooting Homing Pigeons.

No one but those who have trained the homing pigeon know the trouble, annoyances, expenses, risks and real hard labor there is in connection with it. One great trouble in training homing pigeons is, you have to depend so much on others to assist you in training your birds. Say you live on a line of railway, and make arrangements with station masters or some other of the railway employees to liberate your birds at the different stages along the line; you start at say five miles, increasing by stages to ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, seventy-five to one hundred miles; your agents at your first one, two or three stations may be real clever fellows, and take an interest in you and your birds, and do all in their power to assist you, and use all possible judgement and care in liberating the birds when the weather is suitable, and caring well for them in case of having to keep them a few days over a spell of bad weather; your birds do nicely, and perhaps nearly all you are training do