

OUR STORY COMPETITION.

At last we are able to give the results of our story competition, and we have at the same time to thank the competitors for their patience in waiting so long. But then, such a moving as the *Witness* office has had, does not come every year, you know.

There were not so many competitors as usually take part in our *Messenger* competitions, but the quality of the stories sent in was much higher in every way. Stories came from every section of Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast and from the other side of the line as well.

The deciding as to which were on the whole the best has been no easy matter, and many of the stories not winning prizes are very little behind those that do. The story which has finally been judged worthy of the

FIRST PRIZE

is 'How They Spent Christmas,' by Miss Mabel Knowlton, Philadelphia, Pa. The

SECOND PRIZE

has been awarded for the story 'Little Ned's Faith,' by Miss Jane A. Stephen, Hanover, Ont.

SPECIAL MENTION.

The stories sent in by the following are worthy of special mention:—Niga Erio, Helen Lyle, Madge Zeta, Lucilla Serril, Gil Blas.

HONOR ROLL.

The following honor roll is a most creditable one.

Elizabeth Elliot, Effie May, Maggie A. Johnstone, Sheila, Olivia Washington, Trix, Truth, Amaranth, C.H.S., Annette, Beginner, Jessie Allan, Essie Bell, Nen, Ninian, Marie Belmont, Mazoppa, Walter Scott, Oriola, Elaine, Lillian, M.M., Dickie, Viva Radcliffe, Gypsy Bell, Hal Glen, Prairie Lily, Blossom.

STILL ANOTHER LIST

must be given. The stories sent in under these non-de-plumes showed, as a rule, clear and neat penmanship and strict attention to the rules laid down at the beginning of the competition.

Ivy, Myrtle, Haliburton, Nellie S., Maud L. Tupper, Ula, Velma, Christopher Verdant, A Scribbler, Young Canada, Loyal Canada, Disipulus, Joannie, C. J. Howard, Lou, Bluebell, Little Angel, Katie, Mamie Llewellyn, Faraway Moses, Crayo, Sunflower, Lady Gay, Annie Clarke, Annie Dixon, Acorn, Bumble Beigh, Onward, Cowslip, Myrtle, Ella Carnochan, Ithiel, Gypsy Nell, Wee Winkie, Douglas, Lily, Violet, Zoe, Flo, Nydia, Pansy B., Pussom, Blue Belle, D. C. Finlayson, Rosebud, Myrtle, Clarina, Mabel Gordon, Rosebud, Daisy Snowflake, Daisy Dean, Elsie Verne, Retta, Snowdrop, Annie Allan, Fatima Fanshaw.

'THE AERIAL MESSENGER COMPANY, LIMITED.'

Amateur owners and breeders of carrier pigeons are numbered by the thousands in this country. Nearly every city has a club or association devoted to the breeding and flying of these interesting birds. It is the opinion of good judges that, after a few generations, birds bred and flown in the United States become stronger and more sagacious than the European stock from which they are descended. Some of the best records, both for distance flown and for time, have been made by the pigeons of American fanciers.

The use of a carrier-pigeon post during the siege of Paris is a familiar fact. Newspapers, letters and despatches were reduced to diminutive size by photography, and entrusted to carrier birds which had been brought out of Paris in balloons, and were thus carried back into the beleaguered city over the heads of the German army. During several months the pigeon-post was the only means by which the besieged city received news from the outside world.

But in spite of the telegraph, the telephone and the regular post, the services of pigeons are still often put to practical use in Europe. This is particularly the case in Belgium and the north of France, where they are most extensively bred. They are often employed successfully in carrying reports of speeches and other news from

distant points to the Paris and Brussels newspapers.

American pigeon-fanciers have not devoted much attention to the practical side of their favorite diversion. Pigeon-flying here is regarded merely as a sport, and its principal object is the making of 'records.' There exists, however, near New York city a flock of these birds which demonstrates how easily they can be employed for a useful purpose.

About forty miles from New York, amid the hills of Somerset county, New Jersey, a New York banker has a country estate, to which he has given the name of Chetola.

It is several miles distant from the nearest railway and telegraph station. The proprietor has found a prompt means of communicating with his place of business in the employment of trained pigeons; and the 'Aerial Messenger Company, Limited,' as the Chetola flock is called by its owner, has attained a high state of efficiency in its work.

About twenty-five birds are engaged in the service. They are the descendants of several pairs of Antwerp carriers imported by the owner. In appearance they are quite handsome, being longer in the body than the ordinary pigeon, with slim necks, bright, intelligent eyes, and large wings, supplied with the abundance of muscular power necessary to sustain them in long and rapid journeys.

The general color of the birds is a slate-grey, with markings on the wings and body of a darker hue, melting on the neck and back into rainbow shades—the poetical, lively iris of the 'burnish'd dove.'

Their residence is a roomy loft over one of the farm buildings. Here they are provided with all the luxuries a pigeon can desire, including feeding-places constantly supplied with provender, and a continuous flow of water for drinking and bathing. Exceedingly fastidious birds, scrupulously neat as to their plumage, their dwelling-place must be kept in a condition of order and cleanliness.

The practical working of this Aerial Messenger service is simple. The birds are accustomed to being handled, and are not dismayed when some of their number are taken from the loft, placed in a wicker hamper, and carried by the railway to New York.

Indeed, as some of them are always kept on hand at their owner's city office, they are habituated to this experience, and remain with apparent contentment in temporary seclusion.

While thus waiting for duty, their food and water are restricted to a minimum. When a message is to be entrusted to them, it is written out on a piece of very thin paper about three inches square. This is folded lengthwise into narrow compass, and one of the birds being taken from the hamper, the strip of paper is firmly attached to one of its tail feathers by means of a piece of fine wire.

A vigorous pull is always given to the feather to make sure that it is not loose. Then a window is opened, and the bird let loose.

Instantly gaining its wings, it rises above the lofty buildings of the city, and without hesitation, strikes out in the direction of its home in New Jersey.

In from forty minutes to an hour the little messenger from Wall street alights at its cote in the country. The entrance has a light swinging door, which the bird easily pushes aside. In its desire for food and a bath after its long flight, it usually wastes no time in entering.

The door has an electrical attachment which signals the appearance of a bird by ringing a bell in the mansion. Some one at once goes to the pigeon loft, captures the newly arrived messenger, and relieves it of the note it carried.

In this way the master of the establishment can be kept by his partners and clerks fully informed of what is going on in the city.

Each bird in the service bears on its leg a light brass ring, upon which its number is inscribed. A careful record is kept of each trip a bird makes, and of the time it requires. Most of the flock have made the journey many times.

This precision was not attained without care and attention. Some birds, especially young and untried ones, never reappeared at their home after being despatched. They may fall victims to hawks or to un-

discriminating gunners. Sometimes they are enticed from their duty by the prospect of food on the way, or join flocks of ordinary pigeons which they encounter.

Carrier doves, like men, include some stupid and lazy individuals. Those who succumb to danger or temptation are caught or shot. The lazy birds, when freed, prefer to sun themselves on a roof rather than proceed with their message. Or on arriving at their home they roost for a time on a tree before entering their hospitable loft.

But by weeding out the weak or incompetent, by training the young birds to duty by flying them on gradually increasing distances, and above all by making their home attractive to them, this corps of feathered messengers has been brought to a state of assured efficiency. The 'old stagers' have learned to avoid peril, to disdain allurements, and to attend strictly to business.

The result is that even a delay on their part is somewhat rare. Their master is very proud of a recent performance of his flock. During a tedious illness and convalescence of over three months, his pigeons brought him day by day hourly bulletins from the city without mishap or even detention.

Several members of the Chetola flock have records for a thousand miles or more. This is not the purpose for which they are maintained; but on one occasion a pair of them combined an important business service with a long distance flight.

Their master left New York in summer to spend some days at a fishing station on the New England coast, three hundred miles away from New York. He took with him a hamper containing a few birds, intending to test them on a long distance journey. The place at which he was staying was an isolated spot, far from a telegraph office, and was reached only by a steambot on alternate days. One morning, after the steambot had come and gone, he found that it had brought him a message from New York in regard to an important matter of business. An immediate answer was required, as the subject involved a considerable amount of money.

There was no way of sending a message for several days. He resolved to make use of his birds. He wrote the necessary instructions to his representatives in duplicate. The messages were attached to two of the birds, which were liberated at about two o'clock in the afternoon.

The next morning at seven o'clock the gallant carriers, having flown three hundred miles over an unfamiliar country, rang the bell that communicated with their loft in New Jersey. The messages were secured, and sent to New York at once; and the next mail brought the owner of the birds the information that his orders had been successfully carried out.

On this occasion alone, he says, the performance of the two birds repaid him a hundred fold for all the trouble or expense his faithful little feathered employees had ever cost him.—Henry Edward Wallace, in *Youth's Companion*.

HINDU FABLE ON SUPERIORITY.

An elephant named Grand Tusk, and an ape named Nimble, were friends. Grand Tusk said, 'See, how big and powerful I am!' Nimble replied: 'Behold, how agile and lively and entertaining I am!'

Each was eager to know which was really superior to the other and which quality was most esteemed by the wise, and so they went to Dark Sage, an owl that lived in an old tower, to have their claims discussed and settled. He said to them: 'Cross yonder river and bring me some mangoes from the great tree beyond.'

Off they went, and on reaching the river Nimble held back, but Grand Tusk took him upon his back and swam across. When they came to the tree, it was lofty and thick, and Grand Tusk could neither touch the fruit with his trunk, nor break the tree down to gather the fruit. Up sprang Nimble and picked and dropped to the ground the mangoes. Grand Tusk then gathered the fruit in his capacious mouth, and the two friends crossed the stream as before and reported what they had done to their friend Dark Sage.

'Now,' said Dark Sage, 'Which is the better? Grand Tusk crossed the stream and Nimble gathered the fruit. Each was dependent on the other. Each one is best in his place.'—Ramaswami Raju.

"ONE, TWO, THREE!"

By H. C. Bunner, in *Scribner*.

It was an old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy who was half-past three;
And the way that they played together
Was beautiful to see.

She couldn't go running and jumping,
And the boy, no more could he,
For he was a thin little fellow,
With a thin, little, twisted knee.

They sat in the yellow sunlight,
Out under the maple-tree;
And the game that they played I'll tell you,
Just as it was told to me.

It was Hide-and-Go-Seek they were playing,
Though you'd never have known it to be—
With the old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy with a twisted knee.

The boy would bend his face down
On his one little sound right knee,
And he'd guess where she was hiding,
In guesses One, Two, Three!

"You are in the china-closet!"
He would cry, and laugh with glee—
It wasn't the china-closet;
But he still had Two and Three.

"You are up in Papa's big bedroom,
In the chest with the queer old key!"
And she said: "You are warm and warmer;
But you're not quite right," said she.

"It can't be the little cupboard
Where Mamma's things used to be—
So it must be the clothes-press, Gran'ma!"
And he found her, with his Three.

Then she covered her face with her fingers
They were wrinkled and white and wee,
And she guessed where the boy was hiding,
With a One and a Two and a Three.

And they never had stirred from their places,
Right under the maple-tree—
This old, old, old, old lady,
And the boy with the lame little knee—
This dear, dear, dear old lady,
And the boy who was half-past three.

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THE NORTHERN MESSENGER is printed and published every fortnight at No. 142 St. Peter street and from 672 to 682 Craig street, "Witness" Building, in the city of Montreal, by John Redpath Dougall, of Montreal.

All business communications should be addressed "John Dougall & Son," and all letters to the Editor should be addressed "Editor of the 'Northern Messenger'."