

Notes on Homing Birds.

It is a well known fact that birds tossed in Belgium or France, in attempting to get back to England, are nearly all lost, whereas when tossed in England to return to either of those countries rarely miss reaching their home. The distance across the channel from Dover to Calais is 25 miles, from Folkestone to Boulogne, 28 miles. From this it appears that the English coast must be subject to a denser atmosphere or fog, or how else can it be accounted for, the English amateur having the same breed and strain as the Belgians. Birds tossed in England are known to return to Antwerp, twice the distance, across the sea.

I should like, for experiment sake, to see some Canadian amateur of homing birds attempt, in one stage, a toss from the Canadian side of Lake Ontario, say Toronto from St. Catharines, or north west corner of the State of New York; the distance across the lake is thirty five miles. In summer the atmosphere is generally very clear. English amateurs, in order to get their birds across the Straits of Dover, generally give them two tosses, or sometimes only one, half way over before they are tossed on the French coast.

With regard to starting birds singly for a race, it is to be hoped that this system will not find advocates in this country. Birds do not compete under equal advantages, as after the first bird is let off the weather may change quite averse between the time of the first and the last few. As to birds "following my leader" it is all bosh. I have seen birds let off *en masse* it is true, and invariably go off in one body, which gives one an impression that they keep together for an indefinite time, but this they do not do, but separate, one flying one way and another the other. In watching the arrival of birds to their home they may be seen coming from different directions, often quite contrary to that in which they were let off. If a lot of birds belonging to the same amateur are let out together, most probably, knowing each other, they will return together, but letting out a lot of birds belonging to same individual is a bad plan, and sure to end in the loss of some of them, as I have known to my loss, but that was previous to my being initiated in training, and the distance was only thirty miles; they confuse and mislead each other. It is my belief that if a bird cannot find its way on its own account it will not follow another. I would rather make a bet on a bird tossed singly than when let off with a lot, there being no other bird in company to attract its attention.

Two years ago a friend of mine, who lives two hundred miles from me, sent me three of his birds and one of a neighbor's; one of my friend's being a young one I gave him, and had not moulted its

flight feathers. From unfavorable weather, I kept them two days. Out of these four birds only two reached home, one being an old bird of my friend's and the young one I gave him; the old bird reached home mid-day, and the young one late in the evening; nothing was ever heard of the others. The toss previous to my letting them off was thirty miles distant. I liberated them before 9 a.m., a hazy morning. They went straight away together, without taking even half a turn round, and out of sight in a moment.

I. B. K.

Toronto, Jan'y. 10th.

From *L'Epervier*, of Brussels, it appears that the Belgian Commission of Fetes for 1880, while appropriating funds to nautical, hippic, and other societies, has refused to organize any competition for carrier pigeons. This, in a country where the fancy receives as much popular attention as in Belgium, where the colombophile societies number over two thousand, seems rather unfair, and in this light most of the Belgian papers appear to view it. A petition also, to the government to that effect has been widely circulated for signature.

When we consider the attention a flight of pigeons, liberated from the Crystal Palace, excited in England, it seems strange that there could be two opinions on the subject in Belgium, where pigeon flying is so popular. Probably the true explanation is that advanced by *L'Opinion*, of Antwerp, namely, that pigeon flying is mainly the sport of the citizens and middle classes, and not, like horse racing and other things for which large appropriations have been made, sufficiently fashionable among the upper classes to influence the members of the commission, in whose opinion the *world* means *their* world, and not the public at large. If any such unworthy motives have influenced the Commission, surely, on proper representation, the government ought to reconsider the matters. Fortunately whatever obstacles pigeon flyers may have to contend with here, they are at least free from the influence suggested in foregoing paragraphs.

The "International Standard of Excellence and Scale of Points," for judging pigeons correctly, is now out. Two dollars per copy, post paid.

An exhibition of Homing Pigeons only, will be held in Philadelphia, on Wednesday, January 21st, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., under the auspices of the Red Star Club of that city.

Judge Joel Willard, a gentleman well known to homing pigeon fanciers, died at his home in Utica, N. Y., on January 12th.