

where to the merits of Homers, has made fanciers here also, and at this moment we have hundreds of amateurs who are busily training their birds in the high hope that they will yet be able to compete with the best trained anywhere.

"But, you ask, "how or by what marks are good birds to be known? Have they any distinguishing features?" They have. Though there are thousands of pigeons that get the name of Homers almost useless for flying purposes, still there are a few points which, if observed when selecting, will invariably find good birds. As these points have been brought out well by a writer in "*The Pet Stock, Pigeon and Poultry Bulletin*, we shall quote what he says:

"First, the birds should *appear* large, without actually being so; they should be thoroughly clothed with broad feathers, which, however, should fit them tight, firm, and compact as a skin; the eye should be large, prominent, and of blood red color, for, I am convinced that the deeper and richer the eye, the stronger and more powerful is the vision, though, perhaps, not so lasting, or so free from disease (especially cataract) as the white or red pearl eye. The amount and depth of color of the eye, therefore, I would urge as an excellent point, and I dare say it may have been observed that invariably, when one eye is attacked with temporary cold or chronic disease, that a certain perceptible pallor of the irides follows, as a consequence; and this gradual decline or diminution of depth and brilliancy of color of the disordered optic, is invariably accompanied by a gradual but certain *increase of richness and brilliancy of the irides of the healthy organ*. Thus it seems to be only a reasonable hypothesis, that the strength and power may as a rule, be fairly judged by the richness, depth, clearness and brilliancy of the color therein. I have known innumerable instances wherein the total destruction of *one eye* has been immediately followed by a greater depth of richness becoming apparent in the other organ; this may be a matter open to question, but I do not hesitate to give my opinion, and to combat the subject, if necessary.

"However, look well to the eye, for "faculty" or natural "instinct" may do much for the "Homer;" but the sight (that brilliant and powerful telescopic organ of vision), depend upon it, is the main, the almost *sole* guide by which the pigeon makes discovery of his home.

"'Tis the natural instinct of Pigeons to have a desire or fixed inclination for a certain locality (home), where'er that place may be, and to yearn, as it were, for that habitation—their city of refuge. 'Tis then their nature, a part of their constitution, to made strenuous and determined efforts to reach there, from what ever quarter they may be liberat-

ed; but be assured that the inward "instinct," that supposed incomprehensible "faculty," is completely useless without these primary means of observation, and of this positive conclusion I think I could adduce sufficient proof, if it were necessary, to consider the subject fully and fairly in these notes. Well, then, the eye is preferable of a deep, rich red color, surrounded with a fleshy circle, of moderate size, which, in young birds, is rather of a dark shade, but which, at maturity, assumes a pasty white appearance. The eye excrescence must not overhang, nor be too full in front, or it is somewhat of an impediment to the bird's vision.

"The entire head should be large, and well arched from back to front, and across from eye to eye; the occiput, or hind part of the cranium, should be prominent, and from this point to the forehead, or back part of nostril wart, should be long; the nostrils large and expansive; the back thick and strong, but not actually long, although, at a general survey, it may *appear* so; the under mandible, in strong, matured birds, is also slightly marked; the jaw should be strong and powerful; the entire head presenting, on the whole, an elongated appearance, without gaps or hollows observable, as is seen too oft in the fore part of many birds. At this point, more particularly, there should be a distinct fullness, which gives to the general view, a little of the down-faced look; and this point shows the complete unity of form of the two most important elements in the composition of the Homing Pigeon, viz.: the coarse, rough British Dragoon, and the big, bold, frilled Belgian, owl specimens, last of which have unmistakably proved upon their individual merits to have been capital aerial travelers.

"The long-faced, strong "beard" is a very good homer up to, say fifty miles; and they, too, have been crossed in with others at times, with, perhaps, some advantage to high and light flying, but certainly not to beautify. The spiky beak, the beard, and the white flights are often seen in the issue of noted birds, and these are deemed of quite equal value to members of the flying circle, as the most attractive color or marked specimen.

"The greatest point, however, for first consideration, is the quality, stamina, endurance, physical power, and reliable pedigree of the stock, upon which one is about to practice, and from which so much pleasure can be derived, if only a fair and reasonable, regular systematic course of training be enforced upon the birds. My advice, then, to those who care not for beauty in any of her various shapes or colors, but who believe that "beauty is as beauty does," and go in for "homers," appreciating them simply and solely for the extraordinary capacity for aerial work, is to *begin well, at once*, for no manner of care or training can develop the high order of instinct out of a "dummy," or mere