

thoroughly post themselves on the rules and regulations and abide by them. The weather was clear and fine, with slight wind from N. E.

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Judging Homers.

I suppose nearly every fancier of homing pigeons has some theory for judging them, be it the usually accepted one as taught by the books or with certain modifications of or additions to the same.

My experience of about six years has brought me to the conclusion that this description availeth but little in giving us this most important requisite to the successful breeder. If, with a few remarks, I can hasten this sage conclusion to the minds of some even less experienced fanciers, I think they will be saved perhaps deep disappointment in the near future.

I believe the generally accepted description of the standard homer is something like the following: "Large, bright intelligent eyes; broad, high and well rounded head; very broad flight feathers, deep chest and heavy shoulders." To these we find added "wings well up the back," "feathers clinging close to the body." Some even test the strength by extending the wing and noting if it is rapidly and powerfully drawn back, and say that dark colors are better, and so on. As I said before, each one has his theory.

Now, "exception makes the rule," they say. I'm sure the rule begat many exceptions. At least, my humble understanding of the application of these qualifications has made the exceptions by far the most numerous; *i. e.*, there are scores of worthless birds that seem to possess all that the description calls for, and very many of the good ones lack the requirements to the judging standard, and by many points. Undoubtedly there can be no objection to a bird possessing most of the conceded requisites. In fact, they describe our admiration exactly. We value the birds by the way they fly home; but, after all, we like them all the better if they are handsome as well as good. Be our description inadequate for judging their abilities, unquestionably there is a knowledge that comes from familiarity with them that is unguided by theory and incapable of being described. As we judge our fellow-men—instinctively, as it were—this man is honest, open, upright; we feel it in his presence, his actions. A dog—that fellow looks wicked; keep clear of him. This horse—why we can see he is gentle. I believe we can judge homers somewhat in this way, and some fanciers can do so much better than others, and yet as soon as they describe how they do it, put it in expression, we find it

means more than is desirable, and will lead the tyro, the novice astray.

We all agree that our pets must possess two endowments in a high degree: the knowledge to direct and the power to carry out such directions; in other words they must possess the brain to guide them home and the strength or endurance to get there. Call this possession of the brain, instinct, or what we will, this knowledge is contained in the head. Hence the description—"high, round, broad head," etc. Why "high, round and broad, instead of low and long," provided the brains are there? Well, we don't know. Our neighbor says so, and the books say so, and they must be right. I thought this head business worth looking into, so, when I lost a very good bird some months since, I sent him to a phrenologist, and in due time we had a small addition to a host of skulls, from the human down. Don't know as I can judge a homer any better than before; but this much I learned, that this little skull was shaped very much like the back of the human skull, and, unlike most animals and birds, was connected with the body at its base. I say like the back part of the human skull, for the brain of the homer is entirely in the back portion of the head. Draw a line vertically through the eye, and we get the forward boundry of the brain; so we need look no more for a full forehead, excepting that it may please our fancy, for there is bone only.

I said the brain was connected with the body at the base of the skull, as is man's. Now it is a fact that the most intelligent creatures are so connected; and the least so, be they birds or animals, are connected at the back. Imagine a horizontal line backward through the eye, and we get the point of connection in the lower species. Take an alligator, for instance, with its huge head, that would seem large enough to hold a half bushel of brain, and we find an auger hole, as it were, running towards the nose and dwindling to a point. That is the brain capacity—enough to say eat and sleep. Now, as we advance upward in the scale of intelligence of the species, so does the spot of connection near the base of the skull.

This is nothing to the point, perhaps, as to judging homers with themselves, but they are facts that may as well be known, and will prove interesting, undoubtedly, to many. Comparing the homer's skull to that of the common pigeon, we find in the same sized bird at least one quarter more brain room and the excess seems to be located more especially in the back portion. Whether we are to look here for the homing faculty, remains to be proven; but I think something may have been gained by the examination.

Of the physical development, as described in our standard, I would suggest that we look more