

ently afraid of his own shadow, that if I have got up very early next morning and let a few birds out in the roof, the erring one will come down and join them and be none the worse for the experience of a night out.

TRIER.

ADVERTISERS' NOTES.

Mr. W. Staggard's name as a breeder and racer of homing pigeons is too well known throughout Australasia to need any introduction from me. He is one of Melbourne's oldest and most consistent racers of our feathered pets. I have known him for about 15 years, and have flown many pigeons bred by him, and only so recently as November 3rd managed to win a very hard race with a son of a pigeon obtained from Mr. Staggard some years ago. One of his most recent introductions is the Harrison Grooter blood, and this again is a strain I have tried with success, and which I am sure will blend well with the good blood already housed in the Barrington lofts. Would-be purchasers should drop Mr. Staggard a line. They can be sure of a straight deal if they leave selection to him.

Mr. Harold Taylor, of St. Peters, S.A., is another name well known in homing circles in Australia, and anyone in want of a clinking good long distance cross cannot go wrong with a couple of birds from this loft. We know the old Logan blood for a grand, solid, hard working strain, just the thing to put stamina into one's birds. And as to the Jurions, they need no puff. In addition to the birds imported direct, Mr. Taylor recently bought the Neil Brown pair of Jurions from Mr. Ferrer, of Sydney. This pair had a great reputation in Sydney as breeders of champion stock, and now I am sure they are in the right hands to increase their reputation.

Messrs. Ashton-Hansen and Kurtz draw the attention of our readers to the fact that they are to have one more chance this season of obtaining a cross of the famous Vassart blood. This strain is new to Australia, but has brought a great reputation with it, and I am sure will, in capable hands, even improve that reputation here. Besides the Vassarts, these fanciers have the W. E. Lowe Grooters and other good strains to pick from. It is an opportunity to get on to something good. Don't hesitate.

Mr. C. W. Bushell's business was hit so hard by the late strike that he had to take himself off to the country in search of better things, and is likely to be away for some time. His eldest boy is growing up, and feels the call of King and Country, and most likely will go into camp very soon, so Mr. Bushell finds himself placed very awkwardly, and, acting on my advice, has decided to advertise all his imported birds in this issue, hoping by this means to be able to do away with all prisoners, leaving only the birds flying out for the second boy, who is only a lad, to look after. The quality is right and prices not too high. Drop me a line.

ODDMENTS.

By "P. John."

These little birds have got sense all right, believe me. When you watch them around the loft, don't you sometimes wonder at the reason which they show in their actions? Sometimes they're almost human. Once I heard a gentleman emphatically assert that the Grooters could talk. Maybe! Perhaps Ernest Grooter, Vanderhaegen, Bryant, Lowe, or some of the other specialists, have placed their observations on record in regard to this peculiarity. The homing pigeon traces back, of course, to the common rock dove, and perhaps a touch of the common talking joey inadvertently got into the Grooter. Do you know?

Anyhow, the family life going on in the loft is very interesting to watch, provided one hasn't got too many of the feathered bipeds to keep close track of what's doing. Did you ever see a pair holding a consultation over a couple of stale eggs? It's very funny.

When the eggs are well over their time, and no signs of hatching, it seems as if they can't be abandoned without the consent of both parties. Then the would-be father and mother put their heads together and come to a decision as to what's to be done.

Both in the nest box, rolling the eggs over with their beaks, the old man seems to say, "Well, my dear, I don't want to disappoint you, but I think these eggs are certainly blue ducks, and there'll be no baby bonus for you this week." The good lady thereupon sheds one swift tear, replied, "I'm afraid you're right, as you always are (?)," and they both turn their thoughts to other and happier channels.

Talk about the Nature Study articles in the magazines, what some of us have (and have not) observed in the pigeon fancy should, if paid for at the same rates, keep us in affluence for the rest of our lives; but I'm fairly certain that if we only told a part of the truth we should be written down as ungodly exaggerators, prevaricators, and perverters.

When you see a hen reposing on the roof of the loft at about 4.30 p.m., quickly arise and waddle inside; you can almost see her think to herself, "Good gracious, I clean forgot John sitting on those squeakers all this time," and has it not reminded you of a lady coming out of, say, a picture show, suddenly remembering her poor husband at home minding the children, and that she omitted to leave a bottle for the baby.

John is naturally very pleased to see her back again, and, with a little crow of satisfaction, hops off and proceeds to chase some giddy young thing round the loft. I refer to the birds, of course. Still, as I said before, they are very human.

Getting to more serious subjects, the question of whether or not to send yearlings to the longest race will probably have been well to the fore this last week or two, and advocates of both sides have many substantial arguments to put forward. To all intents and purposes, a racer is grown-up at one year, and is capable of breeding strong, healthy youngsters. At the same time,

taking into consideration the average life, one year seems very young to put the bird to probably the hardest task it will ever be asked to face.

Granted many fanciers, and successful fanciers at that, make it a practice to fly all yearlings right through, yet this does not altogether prove that their opinion is that a yearling is as good as a two or three-year-old for a really long race. Anyone can see the difference in a bird at two years from what it was at one, and how it has settled into its shape and solidified, so to speak. Provided it has not been flown out when younger, or had a setback in the meantime, its stamina must have improved, and physique and stamina are necessarily what we aim at for the crucial test.

Of course, it is a great temptation to send a yearling on, in the hope that it may upset the pot, or at least get home and earn for itself a place in the loft. This appeals especially to the man flying only a few birds, who will always feel inclined to put in some yearlings in order to make up a decent sized team.

Again, it must be remembered how few are the really good pigeons we get in comparison with the numbers bred, and, much as one might like to do so, it would not always be policy to stop all the one-year-olds off at 200 or 300 miles, when doubtful as to whether or not they were anything better than mediocre. A year is a good while to keep a bird for another try, apart from the room it takes up and the food it gets away with. As a general rule, it may be argued that if a bird has shown you one real good fly as a yearling, over a fair distance, it is worth a place until the next year—unless you can well afford to take a chance and lose it.

The fact must also be borne in mind that, if it happens to be a bad day for the long race, you may get the bird through, but its career as a racer will be over, and possibly it will be ruined for stock purposes. Most people know the ill-effects of racing two and three-year-old horses too severely, and the same things must apply to homers. The great strain logically must be borne better by the matured birds on the whole, although there always will be notable exceptions to point to, such as Excelsior and others. Despite these exceptions, which go to prove the rule, English fanciers seem to fly their birds later in life—the birds, I mean—than we do, and to get more out of each individual bird. To do this, and have the birds racing well at four and five years old, it is absolutely essential that they should not have been over-raced when young.

Possibly one reason for our flying yearlings further is that they may mature more quickly, and be farther forward on account of the more genial climate, and in this connection the views of men who have had the pleasure of flying both in England and Australia would be of much interest.

To be consistent, if you have a couple of older birds which you honestly think will beat the young 'uns, keep the yearlings back. But we aren't always consistent, are we? And I must own up to having sent three yearlings to the long race myself this year.