

THE FATHER OF HOMING IN QUEENSLAND.

On the 13th instant in Tasmania, in his 77th year, Mr. Archibald McDowell, formerly Surveyor-General of Queensland, passed over to the great silent majority. In addition to his being an allround sportsman, Mr. McDowell was the father of homing in the Northern State. He formed, or was chiefly responsible for the formation of, the Queensland Homing Society, imported some of the best birds obtainable in England, and was himself a keen flyer. It would be safe to say that, during the last twenty odd years, birds possessing strains from the McDowell loft have competed in all the long distance races. In the last Longreach to Brisbane fly (716 miles) the third bird was directly descended from one imported by the late Mr. McDowell.

A SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMPION.

Q.M.S., Hiddlestone, has received the following particulars from Mr. Thos. Lancelles, of Capetown, South Africa, of his famous "Kia Ora," flown in races as Squeaker: 60, 100, 160 three times, and 260 miles; as Yearling: 60, 100, 160, 260, 320, 410, 566 and 800 miles; as 2-year-old: 160 miles; as 3-year-old: 60, 100, 160, 320, 566, 700; as 4-year-old: 410 and 700; as 5-year-old: 320 and 566; as 6-year-old: 700; as 7-year-old: 30, 30 and 1201 miles.

I will send you copy of his genuine framed printed performances, totalling over 13,000 miles (training included), and he took 2nd, 1st and 1st in 700 miles, and on the last occasion homed at 4.30, a record, second day, in bad weather, beating the next by three clear days. I knew it to be a hard race as I won the 566 mile race that morning at only 9.15 a.m. In spite of all this he was quite fresh. I there and then decided to send him as far as the railway could carry him and joined the Kimberley Club, 520 miles from here; they laughed at me thinking me a crank as they have since told me; but I knew my pigeon too well. He only used to wake up at 700 miles. However, I sent him up to Kimberley Club timed to a day, and he was like a mirror. Eyes alert and as hard as nails; he was rung, wing marked, basket sealed and wire netting put all round the basket, and sent to the Zambesi; and the day after liberation there was nothing but hallstorms. It is 700 miles to Kimberley. Mr. Estment timed in seven days after 1st, and "Kia Ora" next 2nd in race with 520 miles further to fly, in 13 days, 1 hour and 20 minutes (out of 20 birds selected at 15s. each entrance fee). He may have been home the previous evening as I was not at home, but the next morning I noticed a pigeon only able to do one circle to the pack's three, called them down to find my good pigeon almost exhausted and his wings worked out. As time went on, his wings proved useless and he never ventured out for a fly round. Here, therefore is proof conclusive that 1200 miles is the maximum of a Racer's vitality. He

had a big heart and 700 miles never fatigued him, but 1201 miles when perfectly fit, in fact in the best condition of all conditions, well and strong, and after accomplishing the journey loses the use of his wings, makes me think I have found how far our pigeons can only go. Much like a car with a good body and played-out wheels.

JOTTINGS.

Many fanciers, as pointed out, have very serious losses during the first forty or fifty miles, in the old bird training season. They blame the weather, the station masters, the liberator, or anything or anybody except the right person.

The person usually to blame is number one.

It may be cruel to be kind, but in the case of racing pigeons in the early months of the year, it is kind to be cruel.

I am a partisan to hopper feeding during the breeding season and racing season. I am often told it is wrong.

It may be, but it has given me the best results, and I shall stick to it.

But in the off season I believe in keeping the birds hungry, and I have never yet found a bird that could not stand the hunger treatment in this part of the year any good as a racer.

A good moult is important. With this all practical pigeon men agree. But, after the moult, you can take liberties as to feeding, and it is safer to underfeed than to overfeed from February until the time you mate your birds.

The training basket and the race point is the best test of a pigeon. But even speed and endurance do not always indicate that a bird is good enough to use as a breeder, or will leave descendants that will maintain the individual pigeon's reputation.

The survival of the fittest on the road will find out the fastest birds, and the birds to pool, but the mating together of the two fastest birds that have accomplished the greatest performances, may not give anything like the same results that will be obtained by mating birds together that show a similarity of type, form and temperament.

The late Mr. Tegetmeier was greatly opposed to the idea that the homing of our pigeons was instinctive, that is to say, to be classified on the same par as the instinctive migration of swallows or other migrating birds. He contended that if instinctive, all must be actuated by the same instinct, all would take the same line, and all would possess this instinct in the same marked degree, whereas it could be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that some pigeons possessed the homing faculty, and the power to return to their homes, and the determination to return there in a much more marked degree than others.

IN LIGHTER VEIN.

By Silent Sufferer.

P. John puts the case very nicely from the mere man's point of view, but he seems to have entirely overlooked the fact that the "hand that rocks the cradle rules the pigeon fief," and I am looking forward with great interest for his advertisement in the next issue of this latest development in pigeon madness.

P. John is fortunate in that he was trapped before ever he became a trapper, for had Mrs. P. John been kept twenty minutes waiting at the corner on a lovely Melbourne north wind day, the whole course of his life might have been changed. Why, I have even known a man, ordinarily of a mild and kindly disposition, tear his hair and mutter things under his breath, on returning from a week-end pigeon business trip and finding a cosy fire kindled with the wood reserved for nest-boxes.

Imagine the feeling of the bride, on returning from the honeymoon and being sweetly asked to hold a candle in the wind while her lord and master bulds him a pigeon loft.

Re "Foolish Questions," I know from bitter experience it is foolish to put any sane request to a pigeon fiend on race days. Why, I and my family are expected to go about on tiptoe, and with bated breath, lest we should frighten the precious birds. Yet when these same birds are doing their training exercise the washing can be on the line, and all the boys playing in the street can be playing trench-raids, but bless my heart, they won't keep on the wing. I have known a "fancier" to dump the baby on the ground, and the baby just washed and dressed, too, while he timed in a sure winner, also to rave and stamp and tear the washing off the line, although he must have known the wretched birds could not possibly be home for an hour or more.

Imagine what it feels like, after arranging to spend the week-end at mother's, to be told that the birds are held up, and may be liberated at any time the next day, but as no word can be got through, this probably means the whole day waiting. Talk about grounds for divorce! The one advantage of having a pigeon fancier husband is that he never strays far from his birds, and can usually be found gazing lovingly at some future Derby winner, counting its feathers maybe, or holding forth to a brother madman on the beauties of his particular strain, and his wonderful management.

If any trusting maiden contemplating matrimony with a pigeon fancier will consult me, I will guarantee some good advice on management and training. After all, chasing pigeons is better than chasing horses, women, and wine, and he does stop at home sometimes—when waiting for race birds.