

## THE ART AND PASTIME OF PIGEON RACING.

(By the Editor.)

This series will be continued monthly, and are written specially for the beginner.

### No. 2.

#### Picking the Racers.

Moulting is now practically over, and the time has arrived to go through the lofts and pick out the probable winners. P. John tells us that true fanciers get an instinct for picking out good ones, and to him the explanation is, that they can more or less divine the birds that have winning capacity, and he truly says, "Lots of birds have the brains to win, if only they had the body." Unfortunately we have not all got the instinct for picking them, nevertheless there are certain characteristics of every good pigeon that we are going to enumerate. Of course all your hopefuls will have been well handled during development from squeakerhood, and it should be easy to count out birds with slight discrepancies, bad feather properties, and those badly balanced. Having done this, we now come to the real tug of war. To the young fancier we give the following advice as to judging a likely racer: Take the bird preferably in the right hand as usually done by expert fanciers. First handle the bird's keel with the thumb and first finger of left hand. Keel should be straight and firm, and not too deep, at the same time not too shallow, as the breast must be large enough to carry the powerful pectoral muscles necessary for propelling the wings; keel fairly long and in proper proportion to depth of body. A hollow curved keeled bird must be discarded, and you will never find a good racer with a keel tapering inwards from breast to rump. There must be plenty of width between end of keel and back. In short, the bird must have a good barrel, and this is usually the weakest part of a racer. The breast and keel must be well clothed with good thick feather. Keel should not show bareness along its base. Now examine the vent bones, which should meet close together at the end of keel and last ribs. Examine the powerful propelling wings, one of the glories of our pets. Shoulders must be broad, giving an idea of strength, the butts nicely rounded, showing plenty of muscle; observe the difference here between the show homer and our ideal racer. Length of wings must be proportionate to length of body. A long cased pigeon will of necessity carry longer flights than the more compact bird. A big bird with small wings can be counted out, also the big winged pigeon with the narrow-gutted body, which denotes lack of power so necessary in sustaining the bird on long journeys. Examine the quills for fret marks or blood feathers. The former are usually caused by a bird having had a bad time or gruelling in some smash, which has exhausted the bird's vitality. As regards blood feathers, a bird possessing such defect should be passed out. It will never

make a long distance racer. Youngsters which have had to be helped out of shell usually show this defect.

The back should be broad and strong looking, fairly level, but gradually tapering from shoulders to tip of tail. Observe the bird when feeding. I like to examine a bird from above. The neck must not be long, but fairly short and thick, giving a rounded symmetrical appearance. The long swan-like necked pigeon is not usually a racer, and should be eschewed, likewise the long-legged pigeon. Both these defects usually go together. Lastly we come to the head, which should be fairly broad and thick. I like the full frontal skull so noticeable in all famous racers. Such a skull is the proper setting for the brilliant eyes, red preferred (a very debatable point), which should stand out full and bold, scintillating with intelligence. There must be no flesh-colored ring under the eyelids.

Brother fancier, should you possess a bird with the foregoing good points, with a plumage that shows out resplendent and glossy, also possessing that dominating pigeon personality denoting sovereignty and power.

#### Put Your Little Bet On It.

And now for some of the other signs that denote a bird's fitness or best condition for racing, by "The Tyke," taken from "Feathered Racer."

"The wattles should be white as if covered with French chalk. Look for the bloom on the long flight, and watch the birds as they are about in the loft. If they are in good form they will show it in every movement. Watch them when they are flying around for exercise. If they are in good form they will fly with a dash

If after flying round say 30 to 40 minutes, you may notice that some seem fagged or panting. These birds are too fat, give them more work. A good plan is to watch the droppings on the floor. If your birds are right inside, these should be round like a marble, dark green, and tipped with white. If they are sloppy yellow or light green, you will know that something is amiss with them."

In conclusion let me plead for that extra half-hour to be daily spent in your lofts, in reflective mood, watching the birds **critically**, noticing the different peculiarities of each bird, and thus balancing the virtues with the defects. This enables you to judicially marshal your pigeon facts, and thus come to a decision re your probable Derby winner.

(To be continued.)

#### GRITTY GRIT.

(By "Highflyer.")

Flying has again started in real earnest, and numbers of empty perches are the rule in a fair number of lofts. On a recent Sunday it was noticeable the number of birds which were flying aimlessly in several directions.

The sale of E. E. Jackson's birds at Manchester and London established a record; 171 birds at Manchester realised £1464. At the London sale 140

birds realised £1296, total £2760, the average price being £8 17s 6d per bird. Mr. and Mrs. Pincher were knocked down to Mr. H. Rimmer, of Southport, for £80 the pair. Mr. J. A. Rhodes paid £101 for 5 birds, and Mr. Mash paid a similar amount for 7 birds. The sale, according to English pigeon papers, easily establishes another record.

The dispersal of the above stud should be the means of greatly strengthening several already good lofts of birds in England. R. V. Moore, of California, who was in England at the time, does not seem to have been present at the sales. Maybe his previous purchases had been sufficient for him to take over the pond.

The Editor is in serious trouble with regard to A.R.P. rings, orders arriving with every mail almost, and doubtless will still be pouring in. Even "Highflyer" has so far not had a single ring. All bought up. The additional order which was cabled for are now practically all sold but a small quantity, so get in quick and secure your quota. Remember, he who hesitates is lost, and will be left when the time comes to slip the band over the youngster's foot, and so make it a money-earning medium for all time.

One thing is assured in connection with the A.R.P. ring. It will be an impossibility for anyone to race a bird rung with an A.R.P. ring without he is the rightful owner of the bird, and any fancier either buying or selling an A.R.P. rung bird should advise this office as soon as possible to enable our records to be made and kept up to date. By so doing it will save a lot of correspondence should a bird win a race and the transfer not be notified.

Had the pleasure of meeting Cartwright Bros. recently, and was glad to note that W. Cartwright had quite recovered from his recent illness. Likewise our old friend, W. Addis, who has not been well of late, is moving around again. He states he hopes to be able to fly this season from his new home, where, I understand, his position is somewhat improved. I hear he is laying in a large stock of Abbott's nest bowls in readiness for the breeding season.

The social held in the Glebe Town Hall, I am informed, was a most pronounced success, and I am sure everyone will be pleased to learn that the fancier whom the social was in aid of has been benefited in a marked way. We sincerely hope he will soon regain his usual health.

The Belmore Flying Club held a sale of birds in aid of one of their members, Mr. W. Low, who has had a very severe illness, and has been discharged from hospital as incurable. Our sympathy goes out to Mr. Low in his misfortune. It was lack of petrol which prevented both the Editor and "Highflyer" from being present.

The Leichhardt and Western Suburbs have had tosses from Bowral and Mittagong, and very fast times were recorded, and returns were also good, a re-