

sional show men. Personally, I have the greatest contempt for these grumblers. They belong to the vast army of "impossibles," who want both to eat their cake and have it. They lay themselves out for success in some one particular department of racing— young bird, short-distance old bird, as the case may be—and think themselves mighty clever when they manage to take down in these departments men who have not attempted to specialise in their particular branch of the sport, but who, none-the-less, have to pay entries for their birds to qualify them for flown classes. When, however, they have to play second fiddle in the show pen to these latter men who have chosen showing as their particular metier, they grumble and say they are not given fair play. They object, that is in showing, to their own methods in racing. Truly a sporting standpoint. In this connection I read a few weeks ago in the columns of the "R.P." an account of a meeting, at which the grants to shows from the Homing Union were under consideration, and I noticed that it was suggested by some of the persons present that shows only appealed to a small minority of fanciers, and that request should therefore be made to the Union that the money earmarked for showing should be devoted to lectures and social evenings.

Now, lectures and social evenings don't appeal to everyone, but I will go farther than that and say that for every man who could attend a lecture—that is, if he cared to do so—there are a score of men who would enter a bird at a show in the hope of keeping alive an interest in their hobby at the present time. Lectures and social evenings, at particular fixed centres, are only available to men with time to spare, and money to spend on railway fares, and who live within a comparative circumscribed radius around the particular centre involved, whilst scores of working-men fanciers would risk a shilling entry fee at a show and derive pleasure and interest from preparing their pigeon for the ordeal. Usually, too, the men who patronise lectures and socials are men who can well afford to pay for their own amusements, and who should be ashamed to ask the Union for a subsidy.

To return, however, to the conditioning of birds for the show pen, the first principle which a man must learn—and many men never seem to learn it—is that condition, so-called, is a state, or an appearance, which can only be grafted upon health. A bird may be in good ordinary health and still its organs and muscles may not be keyed up to that pitch of perfection denoted by the term condition, but on the contrary, if a bird is in what we term good condition, it must of necessity be in good health, for the former is impossible except as a concomitant of the latter.

Health, then, in a bird is the keynote to condition, and this, again, to success in the pen, and all the methods so frequently advocated in the "Racing Pigeon" for the successful management of a loft of racers must be brought into

play by a man who hopes to win at our shows.

I do not intend to reiterate these methods in extenso. They are summed up under such headings as good food, fresh water, cleanliness, ventilation (pure air), exercise, and regularity at all times, in all things.

If a bird has a normally strong constitution due attention to the foregoing will ensure that that bird will be found in good health, and with such a foundation condition is always attainable. It is merely superlative health, if one may use such an expression.

Now, showing condition is not quite the same thing as racing condition. This fact no doubt will constitute a grievance in the ranks of the non-show men, but there is no reason why this should be the case. Some birds race best when rather finely drawn, and this applies especially perhaps to the shorter events, but a bird is never at its best for showing unless it carries a fair amount of flesh. Thin birds feel "angular," and birds with corners and projections about them don't "come into the hand," and convey the notion of "balance," as do birds with a fair amount of flesh. This is beyond question, the majority of judges invariably favouring birds on the big side. Of course, they must handle sound and firm, and not be simply fat and flabby, but they must be decidedly big in condition. Then, too, a successful show bird must possess plenty of bloom, and this, whilst dependent largely on condition, is more easily obtained if a bird is full in flesh.

To gain success in the show pen then, birds must, in the first place, be in good health, and we have seen the methods of management by which this may be obtained. Another point to be borne in mind is that they must be in good feather, for birds half naked in moult or with soiled and greasy plumage, are no use for showing.

Finally, they must be full in flesh, with plenty of bloom on the feathers, and with the snow-white wattles so characteristic of condition. How are these desiderata to be achieved?

In regard to feather, birds wanted for the early shows must be so managed as to moult rather earlier than is desirable for racing purposes, and the best method of doing this is to give up all breeding operations early in the season (possibly when the long-distance races are being flown), and to separate the sexes. Each of these points are of importance, for whilst the throwing of the flights, as is well known, is invariably interrupted by the rearing of youngsters, the separation of the sexes admits of more liberal feeding without the birds wishing to renew their marital duties.

PIGEON HOMING IN INVERELL.

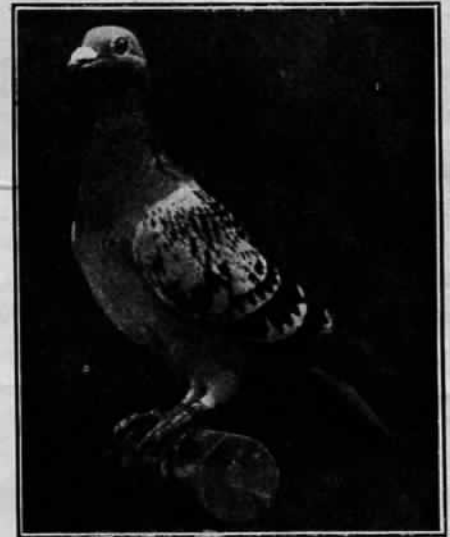
Story of a Lost Bird.

Last October a basketful of homers was sent from Newcastle to Inverell to Mr. E. C. Bartle for disposal amongst the local fanciers who intend

ed forming a racing club here. One bird in particular was sold to Mr. H. H. Ratliff, who kept the bird a prisoner ever since until a few days ago, when the pigeon escaped, and to all appearances was lost. Yesterday Mr. Bartle received word from Newcastle that the bird had returned to its old home, negotiating the 300 miles of strange country safely, and after six months of captivity. This stamps the bird as being of splendid blood, and it should prove a good stock bird. The pigeon is being returned to Inverell.

By Pigeon Post.

The watch showed 9.50 a.m. to the tick yesterday when a letter was handed to our editor which had been carried by a pigeon. The letter was "posted" from Inverkip on Monday at 9 a.m., a distance of 30 miles from Inverell, and the bird arrived with the letter about 30 minutes later, cutting out the distance at the rate of a mile



A WEST AUSTRALIAN CHAMPION.

Blue Ch. Hen, Ring No. 196.

Winner of 555 Miles Race, 1917—Vel. 870 yds. Association and Club.

Her sister flown 657 miles, 1916.

Owner: S. DOWER.

a minute. Upon arriving at his home the bird was duly trapped, and the letter conveyed the remainder of the journey per foot messenger. In the letter Mr. E. C. Bartle, the writer and owner of the homing pigeon, says:— "As promised, I am sending you the letter by pigeon post, 30 miles out. We had about half an inch of steady rain Sunday; first for months; and, of course, was badly needed. In the ordinary course of events this letter would have been carried to Gum Flat, about 15 miles, to be posted, and you would not get it for two or three days, whereas with the pigeon you should have it inside of an hour, allowing for the time the bird flies home to Belgravia, caught, and letter cut off and carried down to you. Kindly make a note of the time you receive it. It is