HOMING PIGEONS.

PROGRESS MADE IN BREEDING AND TRAINING THESE BIRDS.

The Great Service They Rendered During the Siege of Paris—The Prices Paid For Them In England Range From $5 to $300.

Carrier pigeons must not be confused with homing pigeons. The former is a fancy pigeon, especially prized for the largeness of its eye and wattles, but quite useless as a messenger. Both are cousins of the dragon, but the fancier, in the case of the carrier, has bred purely for points, color, shape, etc., while the homing pigeon fancier cares nothing for these things. With him it has been "handsome is as handsome does," and stamina with intelligence has been his aim.

The homing instinct goes back to the fountain head of all the varieties, the blue rock itself. The bird, in fact, has been made and is the product purely of that game of extermination known as "the survival of the fittest." The one thing which gave the fillip to the sport was undoubtedly the siege of Paris. The French fought and lost one great battle after another till they were driven within the iron walls of Paris. Then it was that the city, entirely surrounded by the allied forces, found herself cut off from all communication with the outer world. A few patriotic fanciers offered their birds to the government, and so was organized the pigeon post, by which means the government was kept alive to the doings of the besiegers, and the besieged could receive communications from their friends outside. The modus operandi was this: A balloon left Paris, taking with it a pannier of pigeons, and, once clear of the Prussian outposts, the balloonist made his way for some recognized center.

The messages to be sent to Paris were then, by means of photography, reduced so that a page of The Times could appear on a small piece of paper or film two inches by an inch or so. In this way a single pigeon was the bearer of upward of 300 messages, the aggregate cost of which to the senders was considerably over £100. The first three pigeons carried in this way over 1,000 dispatches. Upward of 115,000 official and private messages were brought into Paris by the pigeons, and the records of the pigeon and balloon service of the siege of Paris certainly read more like a romance of the Jules Verne type than simple historical facts. The services rendered during the memorable siege set all the world a-wondering, with the result that nearly all the governments of Europe (our own being the great exception) at once established military lofts, which have been extended on every hand and are being perfected.

While the governments thus recognized the value of the homing pigeon for military purposes a few stalwart fanciers in this country discovered a new medium of sport, with the result that J. W. Logan, M. P., and other recognized "fathers of the fancy" imported the best birds that Belgium had to offer, and it is from these birds and those imported since that the racing pigeon in this country has been produced. I have little hesitation in saying that upward of £20,000 per annum has been spent during the last 25 years in purchasing the best birds, and that at prices from, say, 20 shillings for a squeaker up to £60 for a proved racer or stud bird. The first public long distance races in this country seem to have been organized about 1870, and from that day to the present the homing pigeon has been gradually clearing its character of being a public house plaything, fit only for mile to three mile sweeps, until now towns innumerable and villages throughout the country have their flying clubs, with a programme of races starting generally at about 70 and extending in many instances up to 500 miles. Wherever, too, the Britisher has gone, there also has he taken his terrier and homing pigeon, and we now hear of the bird as a recognized institution in America, India, South Africa and Australia. So rapidly has the sport extended in the last few years that it would seem the next 50 may see the racing of homing pigeons recognized as the world's great sport.

The great ambition of the northern fancier is to fly 500 miles in the day. This, up to the present, has not been accomplished, although birds have been home well before breakfast the morning after liberation, having flown upward of 550 miles. The performance can, however, readily be done on a favorable day, and many fanciers in and about London accomplished the route from Thurso, N. B., the winning bird flying 501 miles, with an average velocity of 1,454 yards per minute for the entire distance. These 500 mile performances in the day are quite common in Belgium, and the distance has also been covered in America.

You may search the whole annals of athletic performances or feats of strength, and, as far as it is possible to contrast two distinct things, the homing pigeon will go one better than the best of them. Take this as an everyday example: Birds are liberated at, say, Ventnor, to fly 200 miles into the north of England, and the wind is blowing at the rate of upward of a mile a minute dead against them, and yet dozens of the birds will be in their lofts under 400 minutes. The day may be cold, and a sleet storm or two may have to be encountered, but the result will be the same. If the day is such that the birds cannot see their way, but have to feel it, and the wind bloweth from the quarter that is neither good for man nor beast, then comes "the winter of our discontent;" we shall find the winning bird's velocity reduced to about 700 yards per minute and have a bare 5 per cent of the liberated birds home the same day. These are the races to be won, and these are "the good 'uns to breed from" and to perpetuate the wonderful pluck and stamina of the homing pigeon.—Badminton Magazine.

A QUEER ADJUTANT.

AN ARMY INCIDENT RELATED BY A RETIRED OFFICER.

The Peculiar Conduct of an Adjutant at a Montana Post While the Commanding Colonel Was Absent—How the Mystery Was Solved Two Years Later.

"It has never been in the newspapers," remarked the retired army officer, referring to something he had been saying as the reporter joined the group.

"It must have happened 1,000 miles from a printing press or a postoffice then," ventured the reporter, who has an idea that everything worth knowing is to be found in the newspapers.

"I was just on the point of telling a story," said the officer, "of a peculiar happening which occurred some twenty odd years ago in Montana. To make it a bit clearer, I may say for the benefit of those not posted on military matters that the country is divided for military purposes into departments and districts, having a major general, let us say, in command of a department and some subordinate in command of the district. In the department are several districts, and in the district are several posts, the post commanders being of still lower rank. In this instance a colonel had been given the district of Montana, and, as was customary, he had appointed the adjutant of his regiment, a West Pointer, by the way, as his acting assistant adjutant general, whose chief duty it was to promulgate the orders of his chief, said orders always being signed, Colonel Blank, district commander; Lieutenant Blank, acting assistant adjutant general, and it was obligatory, of course, upon any one in the jurisdiction of Colonel Blank to obey these orders without question.

"As time moved on under the new commander and his A. A. A. G. we began to notice that the adjutant had queer spells and acted strangely, but it was not quite enough to cause alarm, and we gave it no great amount of thought until one day he left the post with a detail of men, a four mule team hauling their stuff and driving along with them a lot of government horses and mules. The colonel commanding had left the day before for St. Paul to attend a court martial, and the officer in command during his absence had nothing to say, because the adjutant showed him the orders of the district commander to the effect that he take such a detail and the stock and go on an expedition to the south to deliver them at another post. That's all any of us at the post knew, and, whatever we may have thought of it, it was none of our business to question orders which were as plain and regular as apparently were those the adjutant was acting on.

"Nearly three weeks after the adjutant's departure the detail of men and their four mule team returned to the post in command of the sergeant, who reported that he had been ordered by the adjutant to return to the post with the men and team and he would report later. This was the extent of the official report, but some of us concluded we would make some further inquiry, which developed the rather startling fact that the adjutant had proceeded south for two weeks at a very leisurely pace, selling as he went along to any one who would purchase at any price he could get the horses and mules he had with him in his train, and he had kept going as long as his stock lasted. As soon as the supply was exhausted the detail was ordered back to the post.

"On this information the colonel, on his return a few days later, made an investigation of the adjutant's books and papers and of those officers who had furnished him with all he took away with him, and it was discovered that every man who had anything in charge that the adjutant wanted to complete his expedition could show a proper order for the same duly signed by the district commander and by the acting assistant adjutant general. Everything was done regularly, and of course every subordinate who had received any orders from the adjutant had hastened to obey, until all he needed had been turned over to him and the whole had been duly authenticated. Nor was it forgery exactly, for the adjutant was very nearly acting within his powers as far as signing his chief's name was concerned, anyhow.

"Then the colonel and everybody else made an effort to find the adjutant, who had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him. Nothing came of it, however, and his army and home friends had given the case up in despair, when one day at a post in Arizona, nearly two years afterward, the lieutenant who had just arrived at the post met an enlisted man somewhere about the place who seemed like some one he knew. He watched the man for a few minutes and then went after him. He at once called the soldier by the name of the adjutant, who had been his classmate at the academy, and the adjutant responded, but could only vaguely explain why he had disappeared and, stranger still, why he had gone back into the army as a private soldier. Of course the lieutenant at once had an investigation set on foot, which resulted in a private hearing, which further resulted in the squelching of the case on the ground of mental aberration and the return of the demented man to his home.

"At last accounts, which was two years ago, he was still living, and though not to say crazy, was beyond any question very decidedly off, so that it is probably just as well that a verdict of insanity was returned and Uncle Sam shouldered the loss of his horses and mules in silence."—Washington Star.

Comforting.

The Bride—Why, George! Why did you give the minister so much?

The Bridegroom—Policy, you know, Carrie. May want to employ him again in the same way some day.—Boston Transcript.

MUSIC FOR THE EMPEROR.

A Pathetic Bit of History Concerning Frederick William of Germany.

A charming and pathetic bit of history concerning the Emperor Frederick William of Germany, who died in 1888, was once written by Mr. R. von Hagen, and entitled "The First and Last Adagio." In substance the story ran as follows:

In 1844 the future emperor of Germany was a lad of 13. One day as Reichardt, his music master, was about to leave him at the close of a lesson, the young prince asked him to wait a moment.

"Herr Reichardt," said he, "my father's birthday, the 22d of March, will soon be here, and Dr. Curtius thinks it would be very nice if I were to learn a new piece as a surprise for him on that day. Will you kindly choose something that you think might do? Only, mind, it must be very difficult, so that papa shall see I have taken great pains, as that will please him more than anything else. What he likes best is one of those soft, slow pieces with a great deal of expression in it."

Herr Reichardt turned over his music, and by and by paused a moment as if considering whether a certain piece would answer the purpose.

"Have you found me something?" asked the prince.

"I am afraid your royal highness is hardly far enough advanced," replied Reichardt, "This is so very difficult. It is the adagio from Schumann's sonata in F sharp minor, but it won't do, I fear. There is so little time in which to learn it."

"Ah, but Herr Reichardt," broke in the prince, "I will work so hard! Do please let me have it. It must do—it shall do."

By dint of great trouble and perseverance the task was finally accomplished, and on the 22d of March the young prince played Schumann's grand movement quite correctly and with much feeling, to his father's great surprise and pleasure.

As a reward for his industry Prince Frederick William received a turning lathe fitted up with every necessary implement, and great was his excitement and delight.

Forty-four years later the beloved Emperor Frederick lay dying in the castle of Friedrichskron. During the last few days of his life he was unable to speak, but his family and those around him interpreted his signs, so that he was almost entirely spared the trouble of writing.

Four days before he died, when the empress inquired if there were anything he wished, he waited a moment and then, with both hands, imitated the movement of a pianist.

"Will it not be too much for you?" asked the empress. The emperor shook his head and then wrote on his tablet: "I should so like to hear some music. Could not Rufer, Victoria's master, come and play something?"

A message was sent, and the composer of "Merlin" came at once and seated himself at the piano in the room next to the emperor's, the folding doors having been opened. He played piece after piece, to the emperor's evident pleasure, till at last the empress said to the invalid gently:

"Are you sure this does not tire you? I am so afraid the excitement may do you harm."

The emperor smiled and wrote on his tablet: "Just one more. I should like an adagio from one of the sonatas. That shall really be the very last."

The musician received the message and again began to play. The sick man beckoned to the empress and wrote these words with feverish haste: "Forty-four years ago I learned this very adagio and played it to my father on his birthday, of course not so well as he plays it. It is out of the sonata in F sharp minor. Very beautiful! Please thank Rufer. This is the last. Now I will go to sleep."

It was indeed the last earthly music to which he ever listened—a tender farewell from the art he loved most dearly.—Youth's Companion.

A Singing Squirrel.

It was several years ago that, while gunning one day in the woods near Dover, N. H., my attention was drawn to what seemed the singing of a bird somewhere among the branches at a little distance away. The note was so peculiar that I turned my steps toward the sound to see what species of bird was making it. It was some time before I could trace the note to its source. Then I found out that it came from a red squirrel sitting upright on a bough, singing away as if in love with his own melody. At sight of me he stopped, but as I remained perfectly still he presently piped up again.

As to the quality of his melody, I should compare it to the single note of a canary unusually prolonged, with no variations except in rising or falling and increase or decrease of volume. It may have been a call to a mate. It certainly had nothing in it of the scolding character associated with the chittering of the northern red squirrel. There was no movement of the throat that I could discover in the production of the sound. From time to time he would stop his singing, and presently, after three or four minutes, would start up again, always in the beginning with a low note which increased in volume until shortly before the next pause. I remained on the spot a half hour listening, and went away leaving the squirrel singing away with as vigorous a note as ever.—New York Sun.

At Waterloo.

It was just previous to the battle of Waterloo. The Duke of Wellington was eating. Before he finished his repast he remarked: "I enjoyed that meat, especially the Bonaparte, and now of Corsican go some pastry. Bring me a Napoleon."

After the battle was over he said of the opposing general, "Waterlooser he was."—Twinkles.

MINING BY STEAMBOAT.

An Ingenious Method of Extracting Gold From a River's Bed.

A most valuable and interesting enterprise in the shape of a gold boat is now in progess on the Snake river, about four miles below Montgomerys Ferry, on the road from Minidoka to Albion, which is likely to open up a new field of operation. This boat belongs to Louis Sweetser and George Burroughs of the cattle firm of Sweetser & Burroughs. It has been constructed by and is under the personal supervision of George Burroughs. This boat and its machinery are the product of the genius and experience of Mr. Burroughs.

The boat is 105 feet long and 20 feet wide, the extreme length from the nose of the suction to the end of the tailings elevator being 150 feet. The gravel is lifted by a rotary pump, driven by a 75 horsepower engine, the action pipe being 30 feet long and 12 inches in diameter. There are two other engines, one of which is used to move the boat and the other to drive a scraper and elevator, by which the coarse material is delivered at a point some distance back of the boat. Power is furnished by two 50 horsepower boilers. The boat is worked backward and forward across the river, the nose of the suction being kept against the bank of gravel and the boat working up stream. Everything is taken up. The material is mostly ordinary gravel, but occasionally bowlders come through, some of which weigh 50 pounds.

The material thus mined from the bottom of the river is delivered into a sluice on board the boat. The upper end of the sluice is about six feet above the floor of the boat, and the pitch is very steep. The sluice is 80 feet in length and 4 feet wide. The gravel is sent over grizzlies, all the coarse material being carried to the end of the sluice, where it is rammed out by a series of steel scrapers running on an endless chain and delivered upon a belt that carries it in back of the boat and drops it again into the river.

The sand carrying the gold drops upon burlap tables. Of these there are eight on each side. They are 15 feet long and 3 feet wide, standing at right angles to the sluice and reaching some distance over the sides of the boat. The black sand and gold gather on and under the burlap. When the tables are cleaned up, the concentrates are rocked over copper plates, the gold being amalgamated.

The pump delivers 200 yards of gravel an hour. The boat has been built over three times. It has been a success from the start, and during the past year it has been greatly enlarged. It would cost from $15,000 to $20,000 to duplicate the plant. The operating expenses are in the neighborhood of $20 a day. At present the boat runs only during the day, but with a force of seven men it could be kept in operation throughout the 24 hours. Thirteen men are now engaged in gathering fuel. Some are hauling cedar, while others are cutting and baling sagebrush. The latter makes the better fire, but it costs a little more than the cedar.

Mr. Burroughs says there is no other method than the burlap by which the gold can be saved successfully. He has been operating on the river since the spring of 1894 and has the credit of being the only person to make a success of any extensive plant for saving the flour gold that is found in such abundance along the great river for hundreds of miles. His views, therefore, are entitled to the greatest weight. The gravel he is working is worth at best only 10 cents a yard, and he is greatly interested in the other sections of the river, where the value is said to run to $1 a yard and above.—Boise Statesman.

How He Found the Congressman.

A Chicago man, by the way, came down here two weeks or so ago to signify to the powers that be his patriotic willingness to accept the burden of a public office. He fell in with another man on the train who also was on his way to Washington, and the two struck up a smoking room acquaintance. The Chicago man was armed with a letter to Congressman Belknap of Illinois from Biff Hall, an important letter which he was anxious to present. As soon as he arrived in Washington he went to the capitol. Congressman Belknap was absent. He went again. The congressman was busy. He went several times, but failed to see the congressman, though several times he met and bowed to his acquaintance of the smoking room. Finally the two shook hands.

"Who are you looking for?" asked the stranger.

"Why, I want to see Representative Belknap," said the Chicago man. "I've got a letter from Biff Hall."

"From Biff Hall!" exclaimed the stranger. "Why didn't you say so? I'm Belknap."

"The deuce you are!" said the Chicago man, and they adjourned to the basement to make up for lost time.—Washington Post.

There Were Ducks.

"One morning not long ago," says the Philadelphia Record, "when the servants of the Cleveland household came down stairs for their day's work their astonished gaze rested upon ducks by the score. There were ducks before the porch and ducks upon the window-sills. Whole flocks of ducks nodded from the branches of the trees surrounding the house, and still others squatted upon the lawn before the front of the dwelling. Little streamers of ribbons and flags fluttered gayly in the morning breeze. The opening of windows and doors had no disturbing effect upon the flock of birds, and a moment's investigation showed that they were all decoy ducks, with which some industrious young men had decorated the ex-president's premises during the night. The men about the place had a half day's work in collecting the decoys from about the house and from off the trees."

AN UNHAPPY DUCHESS.

Cecily of York and the Ravages of the War of the Roses.

The wars of the roses wiped out most of the nobility of England, though the plain people suffered little, and many well born mothers mourned husbands and sons slain in the wars. But few, if any of them, had such a succession of sorrows as one who might have seemed born only to enjoy the days of her life—Cecily, wife of Richard Plantagenet, duke of York, and leader of the White Rose.

Cecily Nevil was granddaughter of "Old John of Gaunt, time honored Lancaster," and so great-granddaughter of King Edward III; her father was Ralph Nevil, earl of Westmorland, her mother Joan Beaufort, the Duke of Lancaster's daughter. Cecily Nevil married Richard Plantagenet when she was about 20 years old, in 1440, and they had four sons and two daughters, Edward, Edmund, George, Richard, Anne and Margaret. For 15 years no especial sorrows reached her; her sons were strong, her husband was the principal subject in the kingdom.

But in 1455 the wars of the roses began with the bloody battle at St. Albans, on May 23, and the Earl of Stafford, the nephew of Duchess Cecily, was killed there. At Northampton, on July 10, 1460, her brother-in-law, Stafford, duke of Buckingham, was killed and the terrible fight at Wakefield on Dec. 30, 1460, robbed her at once of two nephews, a brother, a son and a husband. In the battle fell Sir Thomas Nevil and Sir Edmund Bourchier, nephews, and her husband, Richard. Immediately after the battle her brother Ralph, earl of Salisbury, was executed, and her son Edmund, earl of Rutland, only 12 years old, was murdered by John, Lord Clifford, in cold blood, in revenge for the death of his father in battle.

When sorrows came to Duchess Cecily, they did not come alone. Another nephew, Sir John Nevil, fell at Towton, March 29, 1461. Then came a breathing spell, but in 1469 Sir Henry Nevil was executed, and at Barnet, April 14, 1471, fell still other nephews—John Nevil, marquis of Montague, and Richard Nevil, earl of Warwick, famous as "the king maker." On May 4, 1471, the battle of Tewkesbury was fought, and immediately afterward Edward, prince of Wales, who, though a Lancastrian, had married the duchess' niece, the "king maker's" daughter Anne, was murdered by her sons, the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester. They kept the killing in the family, but it was killing just the same.

Two years later, so that the duchess should not get unaccustomed to grief, her son-in-law, Thomas Holland, duke of Exeter, who had had to beg his bread in exile, was found dead on the seashore at Dover, and in 1478 her son, the Duke of Clarence, was drowned in a butt of Malmsey, his wife Cecily having been poisoned previously. Her son-in-law, Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, had been killed in battle in 1477. Then there was a little respite for the poor duchess. In 1483 died her son, Edward IV, only 41 years old, the first one of her descendants to die a natural death since 1455—28 years. In the same year her two grandsons, Edward V and Richard, duke of York, were murdered by their uncle and her son, Richard, duke of Gloucester, who became king as Richard III, and in his turn was killed at Bosworth field on Aug. 22, 1485, when only 35 years old. Her son-in-law, Sir Thomas St. Leger, was executed in 1483, and a grandnephew, a second Henry Stafford, duke of Buckingham, was executed in 1487.

Except for a few small deaths, such as two husbands of a niece, Catharine Nevil, and a grandson, John, earl of Lincoln, and a grandson, Edward, prince of Wales, the duchess lost no more relatives and died peacefully in 1495. All of these four but the Prince of Wales died by violence. Of her children, Margaret, duchess of Burgundy, was the only one who survived her. During the 40 years, 1455-95, she had seen 25 of her relatives die by violence and 3 by disease.

But she herself did not rest even after death. When Henry VIII destroyed the monasteries, the Collegiate church of Fotheringay was razed to the ground, and the bodies of Richard Plantagenet and Cecily Nevil, duke and duchess of York, were exposed to view in their graves. They lay so for several years, until Elizabeth, their great-great-granddaughter, queen of England in her own right, caused them to be reinterred, with the solemnities befitting the funeral of two such distinguished persons.

So Cecily Nevil, mother of two kings and grandmother of one king, having died, at last found rest.—New York Sun.

Lord Stanley's Escape.

The Ladies' Pictorial says: "Lord Stanley has a good deal of reason just now to congratulate himself on a circumstance of which he was humorously reminded in the house of commons last week—namely, that he has narrowly escaped being crown prince of Greece at the present moment. It is a fact that some years ago the crown of Greece was offered to and declined by the Earl of Derby. Had he accepted it Lord Stanley might now have been face to face with the Turks and the concert of Europe instead of presiding over the kitchen committee of the house of commons."

A Poet's Explanation.

Question—Why do women always write love poems in the masculine gender?

Answer—Because we know women too well to write in the feminine gender.—Lillie Barr Munro in New York Sun.

The Caller.

"Mary, has any one called while I was out?"

"Yes, ma'am; Mr. Biggs was here."

"Mr. Biggs? I don't recall the name."

"No, ma'am; he called to see me, ma'am."—Strand Magazine.

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