

BIRDS FOR NAVAL WARFARE,

Carrier Pigeons to be Used on British Vessels.

WELL-TRAINED BIRDS CAN BE MADE VERY USEFUL AT SEA OR ASHORE, AS VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS HAVE DEMONSTRATED BY EXPERIENCE.

News comes from England that the British Admiralty have at last awakened to the necessity for using homing pigeons as carriers of messages, and experiments on an extensive scale are about to be conducted. The Naval Intelligence Department of England is said to have some splendidly-trained birds with which trials will be made, the Scilly Islands having been selected as the homing station. It is also reported that the English fleet on the North Atlantic station is about to begin experiencing with these winged messengers, using Halifax as a base. The history of the employment of pigeons as messengers antedates the Christian era. It is recorded that the Romans made use of these birds during the reign of the first Caesar. In the year 1167 a pigeon service was established between Baghdad and all the important towns of Syria, and during the war of the crusaders there is mention of this employment.

In 1572 the birds first made their appearance in Europe, being used to communicate with a besieged town in Holland during a Spanish invasion. The pigeons are next heard of in Belgium, where they seem to have been extensively employed.

The carrier pigeons used at present throughout Europe as messengers are known to the English fanciers as "Homers," or "Homing Antwerps." The French, Italians, and Portuguese call them "Messenger Pigeons." The Germans apply the term "Brief Taube" to them, and the Belgians have for nearly a century called them "Pigeon Voyageurs." Nearly all the messenger pigeons now spread over Christendom are descendants of the "pigeon voyageurs" of Belgium.

The modern history of the messenger or homing pigeon service and the advancement and development of the breed for use in time of war begins with the Franco-Prussian war, at the time when the German Army arrived under the walls of Paris. Not long before the siege about eight hundred pigeons had been sent to Paris, from the different columbarian societies throughout the northern provinces. The birds were for some time the only means by which the invested capital could communicate with outer France.

The Germans very soon perceived the usefulness of this system of carrying information, and in 1872 they established military pigeon lofts at several towns, with headquarters at Berlin. The rest of Europe gradually took up the system. Russia established her first military loft at Moscow in 1874. Austria established hers at Komorn in 1875. The Italians experimented with pigeons at Ancona in 1876, and as a result of the experience then gained they were adopted for the military service in 1878.

England has no regularly organized pigeon service, but there are numerous lofts belonging to Government officials, and birds from these are to be used in the trials about to be commenced. Canada has within the past year inaugurated a system of messenger pigeon service throughout the Dominion, extending from Halifax to Windsor, and connecting all the principal seaports.

In the United States pigeons have been used as messengers for a long time. Before the laying of the Atlantic cable homing pigeons were employed to carry the news of the appearance of the transatlantic steamers to the telegraph station at Sandy Hook. The pilot boats have experimented with them at various times, and birds have often been let fly from steamers and yachts.

The United States Signal Service has established a loft at Key West, and it is understood that the results have, so far, been highly satisfactory to the department at Washington. A naval homing pigeon loft has also been established at Coaster's Island, Newport, for experimental purposes in carrying on communication between ships at sea and the mainland.

It is this employment of the birds that English Admiralty proposes to investigate, together with their use as messengers between ships separated from one another some distance.

Experiments in both directions have already been made by Germany, Italy, and notably by France. The first attempts to domesticate pigeons on board ship were made by the French on board their artillery ship the St. Louis. In order to accustom the birds to the noise made by the firing of the guns a cot containing a dozen young birds was placed on the bridge between four guns of large calibre that were fired about 100 times a day. The birds were much frightened a first, but soon got accustomed to the noise, and every morning afterward they were liberated, with the result that they always returned, whether the guns were being fired or not, and whether the ship was under way or at anchor. Many experiments with pigeons on board ship and on shore demonstrate that the bird perfectly adapts itself to life on board ship, recognizing its own ship among a fleet of many other vessels, and neither noise nor smoke can frighten it away.

Every outgoing French man-of-war is now provided with a number of pigeon voyagers, which are "tossed" at various distances, according to their stage of training. They return to their home lofts bearing cipher dispatches in small quills attached to their wings or tails.

The service of pigeons for naval purposes may be of great importance. Ships defending a coast could by this means send important information ashore, signal the approach of the enemy's fleet, and report his movements. On the high seas they could carry orders from the flagship to vessels beyond the reach of any ordinary signals. The experiments of the English should be carefully watched, and the lessons to be learned should stimulate our Government to the proper organization, training, and employment of these winged messengers.

The latest development in the messenger pigeon service has been the "there and back" flight. For a long time it was believed that pigeons would fly in one direction only, from the point where they were "tossed" straight to their homes, thus making it incumbent to keep up a large stock of birds if communication was to be maintained for any length of time. In the last few years numerous attempts have been made to teach the pigeons to fly to a place and to fly back. This "there and back"

flight has at last been successfully accomplished by several Italian birds. The route as at present established is from Rome to Civita Vecchia, forty miles away, and return, and the time taken for the round trip is a little over three hours. To get the birds to fly over this line required much careful and patient training. The pigeons live in Rome and are fed in Civita Vecchia. Starvation makes them fly, for so long as they can get food at Rome they refuse to leave.

So far, the "there and back" flight seems to be limited in distance to about forty miles. This is enough for fleet use at sea, and among vessels in squadron could be utilized with the greatest benefit.

DEATH IN A PRAIRIE FIRE.

George Johnson and His Son Lose Their Lives in North Dakota.

Particulars of a disastrous prairie fire in Emmons county, sixty miles south, have just reached Bismarck. The fire started at Winchester on the Missouri river, and burned over the country for fifty miles in a southeasterly direction. Owing to the extremely long prairie grass the fire could not be controlled. George W. Johnson and his son were burned to death while fighting fire. A large amount of grain, hay, barns, etc., were destroyed. The damage cannot be estimated.

From all over the state come reports of unusual heat for this season of the year, in some instances the mercury exceeding 100 degrees. Near the north state line many prairie fires are reported, but details as to losses are not known. Thus far no loss of life has been reported from fires. So intense has been the heat in some sections that work in the harvest fields during the day has been impossible. Many persons were prostrated, and farmers, taking advantage of the clear nights, have thrashed their grain by moonlight. Unless immediate relief comes the destruction of wheat by fire will be enormous. A prairie fire ravaged the country between White Lake and Plankinton, causing destruction of from \$10,000 to \$15,000. The fire started by section men burning a fire-break.

The terrible heat of the last few days has scorched every stubblefield and hay range in the state until the faintest spark is sufficient to start an almost unquenchable fire. Intense anxiety exists throughout the state at this time over the danger to crops and lives as well. In this county alone over \$1,000,000 worth of wheat lies exposed to fire, which may be lighted from the slightest cause. From Emmons county come the report of disastrous fires, but mails have been delayed from Williamsport and the exact amount of damage is not known. Williamsport was saved from destruction by a sudden change in the wind.

Near Lisbon thousands of acres of wheat have been destroyed. The next few days are regarded with positive fear of some extended disaster to life as well as property. Small fires, checked by prompt action of neighbors, have already ruined many farms in the Jim river valley. Reports of small fires are coming in hourly. The sun of the last few days has made the grass like tinder.

The African Bush Country.

To see this land typically one should out-span one's wagon on the top of a height on a summer's midday. Not a creature stirs anywhere, and the sun pours down its rays on the flaccid dust-covered leaves of the bushes. When the driver has gone to lie down behind the bushes, and the leader is gone to take the oxen to water, if you stand up alone on the chest at the front of the wagon and look out, you will see as far as your eye can reach over hills and dales, the silent, motionless, hot bush stretching. No a sound is to be heard, and the heat is so intense your hand blisters in the tent of the wagon where you have rested it; only from a clump of bush at your right a cicada sets up its keen shrill cry glorying in the heat and solitude of the bush. Not less characteristically do you see it, when as a little child you travel through it in the night. The ox wagon creeps slowly along the sandy road; the driver, walking beside it, calls at intervals to his tired oxen; we look out across the wagon chest and see as the wagon moves along how the dark outlines of the bushes on either side seem to move too; a great clump seems coming nearer and nearer like a vast animal; the shapes are magnified by the dark.

We creep closer down behind the wagon chest and look out across it. Against the dark night sky to our right, on the ridge of the hill, are the gaunt forms of aloes standing like a row of men keeping watch. We remember all the stories we have heard of Kafir wars and men shot and stabbed as they passed along hillsides, and of wild animals, and we creep down lower; then a will-o'-the-wisp comes out from some dried-up torrent bed, and far before us dances in and out among the clumps of bush, now in sight and now out again. You are glad when the people in the wagon begin to sing hymns, and more glad yet when a 9:30 the wagon stops, drawn up against a great clump of bush at the roadside. The tired oxen are taken from the yoke, and every one climbs out, and a fire is lighted, and you gather from far and wide stumps of dried elephant's food and euphorbia that you can drag with one hand, and bits of branch and dry twigs, and throw them on the fire; the flame leaps higher and higher, and all sit down beside the ruddy blaze. Away behind another bush the driver and leader have lighted their fire, and are talking to each other in Kafir as they boil the coffee and grill the meat. The blaze of your own fire leaps up, and illumines the great and dusty body of the wagon with its white sails, and glints on the horns of the tired oxen where they lie tied to their yokes, chewing the cud, and on the bush with its dark green leaves behind you, and you laugh and talk, and forget the stories of Kafir wars, and the great bush stretching about you.

It didn't Work Both Ways.

"Brown, do you know why you are like a donkey?"
"Like a donkey?" echoed Brown, opening wide his eyes. "No, I don't."
"I do. You give it up?"
"I do."
"Because your better half is stubbornness itself."
"That's not bad. Ha, ha! I'll give that to my wife when I get home."
"Mrs. Brown," he asked as he sat down to supper, "do you know why I am so much like a donkey?"
He waited a moment, expecting his wife to give it up. She looked at him somewhat commiseratingly as she answered—
"I suppose because you were born so."

MR. AND MRS. BOWSER.

Lots of Things Happen, but It's Always Mrs. Bowser's Fault.

"Mrs. Bowser," solemnly began Mr. Bowser as he came home to dinner the other evening, "what did I say to you when I left the house this morning?"

"You said it looked like rain," she answered.

"I said it would rain before night, and it has. I'm wet to the hide."

"That's too bad."

"Too bad! and whose fault is it? My mind was occupied with business affairs, and you knew it was, and yet you saw me walk off without an umbrella. Mrs. Bowser, I"

"Why, you took your umbrella along," she interrupted.

"Never!"

"Of course you did! Don't you remember dropping it at the gate? You walked right out of the office and left it there."

"I did, eh? Why don't you call me a first-class idiot and be done with it!"

"You must have done so, for you surely carried it away with you."

That's exactly what he did do, and he knew he did, but he squirmed out of it by offering to bet her a million dollars to a cent that the front door had been left wide open all the afternoon, and that a hall thief had carried off half the stuff downstairs.

One morning there was a smell of gas down cellar, and Mr. Bowser went down to see if he could discover a leak. He put on an old hat kept for "poking around," and when he left the house he wore it away. It was rusty and spotted and broken, and it was only when the boys downtown began to "shoot that hat," that he tumbled to it. Then he flew back home with his eyes hanging out and his face of a plumb color, and he was no sooner inside the door than he shouted:

"Look at it, Mrs. Bowser—look at that infernal old junk-shop which you deliberately saw me wear away on my head and never said a word about it!"

"Did you wear that hat down town?"

"Did I! Did I!" he shouted as he banged it on the floor and jumped on it.

"But I didn't see you go. I was upstairs when you went, Mr. Bowser. You are very absent minded."

"I am, eh! it's a wonder that I don't forget to come home isn't it! Mrs. Bowser, if there is another house in the United States as badly mismanaged as this I'd like to see it!"

"But can you blame me because you wore your old hat away!" she protested.

"That's it—that's it! Shoulder it off on me! The papers talk about the startling number of divorces. It's a wonder to me there are not five times as many!"

One day Mr. Bowser brought home a patent corkscrew, which some fakir had sold him, and Mrs. Bowser saw him drop it into a wall pocket. A week later, after wandering around the house for a half an hour one evening, he halted before her and said:

"I'll be hanged if I don't get some chains and padlocks and see if I can't have things left where I put them!"

"What is it now?"

"I brought home a can-opener a few days ago and left it on a bracket in the dining-room. It's gone, of course—probably given away to some big lazy tramp! It's a wonder we have a thing left in this house!"

"A can-opener?"

"Yes, a can-opener. If you never heard of a can-opener I'll hire some one to write you a history of it. It was invented to open cans."

"Why, we have two or three in the kitchen. Do you mean a can-opener?"

"I don't mean wind-mills or threshing-machines."

"You had it in a pink paper?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"It was the day the man fixed the gate?"

"It was."

"Well I saw you drop it in that wall-pocket, and it is a corkscrew and not a can-opener."

"It is, eh? Perhaps I don't know a hitching-post from the City Hall," he growled as he reached for the parcel and unrolled it. It was a corkscrew. It could only be used as a corkscrew. It was made and sold for a corkscrew.

"Didn't I tell you?" queried Mrs. Bowser.

"Tell me what! Told me it was a corkscrew, and it's a can-opener, just as I said it was!"

"It's a corkscrew!"

"It's a can-opener!"

And as long as Mr. Bowser draws the breath of life he will stick to it, because he said so in the first place.

Like other husbands Mr. Bowser is greatly worried over the safety of his wallet while around the house. He has an idea that Mrs. Bowser would give ten years of her life to get that wallet in her hands for about two minutes, and that she lies awake a good share of every night in the year wondering where he hid it when he went to bed.

He makes it a religious duty to conceal it ever night and to count over his funds the following morning. One morning, strange to say, as it may seem, he left the house without his wallet, which he had hidden about an hour before there had been a clatter on the front steps, the door flew open, and he rushed into the back parlour and stood before Mrs. Bowser.

"What is so upset that she could only faintly gasp:

"Mr. Bowser, is mother dead?"
"Mother dead?" he yelled, in reply, "what do I know about your mother! Mrs. Bowser, I've been robbed!"
"No!"
"And in my own house at that! Some time during the night some one got out of bed and stole my wallet!"
"Impossible! Was it in your coat?"
"Well, no—not exactly. For fear of burglars I"

"You what?" she asked, as he hesitated and looked confused.
He rushed upstairs, and she followed in time to see him pull the wallet from under the dresser.
"Then you were not robbed!" she tartly observed.
"N-no—not quite; not this time. But let this be a great moral lesson to you, Mrs. Bowser—never to meddle with my wallet! That's something no husband will put up with!"
"I never touched your old wallet!"
"And see that you never do! And don't talk, Mrs. Bowser. You have had a very narrow escape, and you ought to be thankful for it—very thankful. Some husbands would have raised a row; but I think you understand me, and I think the lesson will not be lost on you."

IN PERIL IN THE AIR.

What an Acrobat Thought During a Half Minute's Fall.

The fearless acrobat who made the daily ascensions at the Toronto Exhibition related to a reporter the following thrilling incident:—"It occurred two years ago at Terre Haute, Ind. I shall never forget my experience on that day. A number of outsiders held the ropes of the balloon while it was being inflated, and one of the men amused himself by tying a big knot in his guy. I did not realize the danger from that knot until it came near being the cause of my death. My ascent was unusually high on that day, and it was the means of saving my life.

I straddled the bar of my parachute and launched myself off. I felt the cord which held the parachute to the balloon snap, and a second later there was another 'tug' from above. I looked up, and there was that knot on the guy swung around six of the parachute cords, forming as neat a half hitch as you ever saw in your life and holding me to the balloon. You have noticed that there is a weight attached to the top of the balloon which turns the bag upside down as it is released of the weight of the aeronaut. The guy rope which was half hitched around the strings of my parachute was also fastened to the top of the balloon, and the latter turned up and began discharging the hot air instantly as I jumped. The air escaped as you see it every day here, gradually, and of course my parachute descended very gradually at first, and not inflating. Down I kept coming, the guy rope preventing the parachute from inflating, and I gave myself up as lost; I wound my legs around the ropes of the parachute trapeze and shut my teeth. The speed commenced to be fearfully accelerated, and I was sure that I had to die, but I was cool and retained my senses.

Soon the balloon had emptied itself and commenced flapping its huge tail in the air with awful swishes. The balloon weighed over 200 pounds and was also pulled down by the sixty-pound sand bag. It came down past me, and as the knotted guy rope slipped down the lines the parachute opened with such a fierce snap that it seemed as if the ropes which supported me would give away. The spreading of the parachute saved my life, for the 200-pound balloon kept on down and broke the six cords held captive by the guy rope as if they had been pack threads. It takes a long time to tell the story, but it all happened in half a minute. I was within 400 feet of the ground when the balloon tore away, but my fall was checked and I landed all right.

"Everybody thought I was a goner that day and a more excited crowd than had gathered around where I was to have fallen you never saw. There is no mistake about my being scared that day, but I folded my parachute and balloon as coolly as if anything had happened and went to bed for the remainder of the week.

Seamanship Still Needed.

Because sails have been replaced by steam it does not follow that the need for seamanship has disappeared. The art includes the whole management of a vessel in anchoring or getting up anchor, or in a storm, or in steering at a high rate of speed in difficult circumstances. No training in the engine room can give this knowledge or the habit of using it. The seaman is the man who directs the ship's course from her deck. The engineer is the man who below the waterline looks after the machine which supplies the motive power. The distinction is so natural that it has imposed itself on the merchant service, in which no attempt has been made—or, we may be sure, ever will be made—to combine the master and his mates with the engineer and his assistants.

Besides, there is the navigation to attend to, which in the old navy was commonly left to the sailing master. It is now not thought sufficient to run down the latitude and along the longitude; nor would a Captain who, in turning Cape Horn, came up on the wrong side of South America—which little mistake was made by Legge, and almost made by Anson, both excellent, practical seamen—be any longer thought to have done nothing extraordinary. Navigation has to be more accurate than this; delicate instruments not known to the old seamen must be handled and careful calculations made with which he who had the happiness to live in a world in which time was of no consequence dispensed with. What remains of seamanship and navigation by themselves amounts nearly to work enough for any man; but a naval officer has not only to direct his ship, he has to fight her. After all, he is first, and foremost a fighter, and only subordinately a navigator or seaman.

Where Milk is Bought in Solid Form.

In Siberia the milk freezes naturally during the severe frosts experienced in that country; but in France the freezing is done artificially. The Siberian winter lasts so long, and the cold is so intense, that milk is there bought in the solid form, the people buying it in chunks instead of quarts. For convenience it is sometimes allowed to freeze round a stick which is then used as a handle to carry it by, and the milkman leaves one chunk or two chunks, as the case may be, at the houses of his customer. An important industry in France has arisen for selling milk in solid form, it having been ascertained that milk can be kept perfectly fresh in a frozen condition for more than a month. The milk is frozen in cans by means of the ordinary ice-making machines, and afterwards despatched by road, rail, or steamer to its destination. The customer who purchases the solid milk has simply to thaw it for a minute or two over the fire when it is required for use. In a paper read before a recent meeting of the Agricultural Society of France, M. Guerin, of Grandville (Vosges) stated that in cooking, yield of cream, and every other respect, the frozen corresponded with quite new milk, and that on the fourth day the cream was still excellent in the frozen which was not the case with the new. Butter and cheese can be prepared from the frozen quite as well as from the new milk.

Her Little Lamb.

She took her son upon her knee,
And kissed his curls, and said: "I am
So glad my little boy loves me."
For mother loves her little lamb."
She took her son across her knee:
Alack! he'd caught him in the jam!
And eteem much convinced was he
That mother loved her little lamb.

Conversation is a traffic, and if you enter it without some stock of knowledge to balance the account perpetually betwixt you, the trade drops at once.—[Laurence Sterne.]

TIT-BITS.

To Bring Good Luck.

"No, I'm not superstitious," said a citizen in conversation, "but my wife is. She went out yesterday and forgot her parasol. So she came back and laid down her pocket book to get her parasol, then she went off and forgot her pocket-book. So back she came the second time and sat down."
"Aren't you going out?" I asked.
"Yes; but if I went out the second time without sitting down to break the spell I would have bad luck."
"She got up and went out, and I saw that she had sat down on a brand new silk hat that cost me six dollars and ruined it. That was not very good luck for me."

She Knew The Old Man.

Mr. Jones—"Business is so brisk and correspondance accumulates so that I fear I shall be obliged to employ an amanuensis."
Mrs. Jones—"Very well, my dear, get a amanuensis if you must; but I decidedly object to your having a womanuensis in the office."

A Model Witness.

"Now, sir, I hope we shall have no difficulty in getting you to speak up," said the lawyer, in a very loud, commanding voice.
"I hope not, sir," shouted the witness at the top of his lungs.
"How dare you speak to me in that way?" angrily asked the lawyer.
"Because I can't speak no louder, sir," said the hostler.
"Have you been drinking?"
"Yes, sir."
"I should infer so from your conduct. What have you been drinking?"
"Coffee," hoarsely vociferated the knight of the stable.
"Something stronger than coffee, sir, you've been drinking! Don't look at me like that, sir!" furiously. "Look at the jury, sir! Did you have something in your coffee, sir?"
"Yes, sir."
"What was it?"
"Sugar."
"Now, sir," turning to the witness, "look at me. What beside sugar did you take in your coffee this morning?"
The hostler collected his forces, drew a deep breath, and in a voice that could have been heard half a mile away, bellored out:
"A spune! A spune, an' no'ing else!"

Easily Explained.

Mrs. Armstrong (a stranger)—"Who is that stylish looking lady I saw in one of the front pews at service this morning?"
Mrs. Perkins—"Oh, that's Mrs. Clarkson."
Mrs. A.—"Indeed! I shouldn't suppose she could afford it. She had double rows of buttons—"
Mrs. P.—"Oh, you see, being the minister's wife, she takes charge of the collections."

Helping Him Out.

English Tourist (wild-eyed and frantic)—"Hi, there, guard! I've lost me box—me luggage! Cawn't find it anywhere?"
American Railway official—"Any trousseurs in it like the pair you have on? Yes? Then why don't you go into the baggage-room and listen?"

Willing to Follow Directions.

Photographer—"Raise the chin a little, please."
Victim—"Am I all right otherwise?"
"Yes."
"Just want the chin a little higher?"
"Yes, that's all."
"Anything to accommodate you."
Takes out his false teeth, closes his mouth and his chin comes up to his nose.]

It Wouldn't Suit Her.

Peddler—"Madam, I have some very fine mottoes for the house."
Woman—"What have you got?"
Peddler—"Here's a beautiful one: 'If you don't see what you want, ask for it.' How's that for the dining-room?"
Woman—"It's no good for me, young man. This is a boarding-house."

The Same Old Way.

Traveler—"And you say you have a hundred souvenir spoons! Didn't they cost you lots of money?"
Traveler—"Not at all. The waiter turns his back and I do the rest."

Bought and Paid For.

Mrs. Gaswell (newspaper in hand)—"This is horrible."
Gaswell—"What?"
"A man has sold his wife for fifteen dollars."
"The woman has one satisfaction at all events."
"What is that?"
"She isn't a loan female."

Limberlip Explains.

Mr. Snowdrop—"I understand, parson, that there is a member of your church in high standing who has served a term in State prison."
Parson Limberlip—"Dat's de trufe, sah! Deacon Bigamus ah dat pussion an' I must say dat if he ahv him self in de jug ter de same extents or respecterbleness w'at he do in de church, dat ins'titution done lose a shinin' light."

Mr. S.—"That's all very well, parson, but don't you think it rather reflects on the church government to have an ex-convict occupying a place of trust in its folds?"
Parson L.—"No, sah! Dat am, not erording ter de interlectuon kerpacerties dat I sees wid. De man dat got a diploma fom de penertensary, dat man he done know he bein' watch, an' yo' know yo' s'ole he bar watchin', an' be mighty ay fory have 'imself, but de sinner dat been foxy enough in he wickedness ter keep out de penertensary an' dafro ain't got no bran' on 'im, dat's de chap dat's de nos' liabl'r ter raise cane in de sinergos an' make yo' keep yo' eye skint twell yo' kain't res. Dat's de difference."

Nothing is more disgraceful than insincerity.—[Cicero.]