



The Show Homer.

## THE SHOW OR EXHIBITION HOMER.

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Written Expressly for THE FANCIER.

The Carrier is well known to pigeon fanciers as the king of pigeons, and although its admirers may be many, yet breeders of the variety cannot be said to be legion. The Oriental Frill varieties are indeed beautiful, both as regards form and feather, and lovers of these varieties are without doubt gradually increasing in numbers; but the variety of pigeon which is *la rage* in England at the present time is the Show Homer, and its enthusiasts may not only be counted by the hundreds, but by the thousands. Many years ago the Dragon was first favorite, afterwards the Antwerp had its turn, and now the Show Homer is having its innings. Although the variety is not so imposing in its body structure as the Carrier, nor yet so brilliant in plumage as the Oriental frilled varieties, there is, however, much to be admired in the general characteristics of the bird.

The Show Homer must not be confounded with the Homing pigeon, as they represent two distinct varieties, although to a very great extent akin to one another, the former being a descendant of the latter, it of course being understood that several other varieties have been used as crosses in order to bring the Show Homer to its present standard of perfection. The Show Homer of the present day represents a type of pigeon with beautifully even head of perfect sweep, neat wattle, small quantity of eye cere of fine texture, and the most symmetrical body of any known variety of pigeon. To prove what I state, if any of my readers are ever in the old country, and will visit any of the large shows, they will have the opportunity of seeing some of the most beautiful specimens of pigeons of this variety it has ever been their lot to see. The variety is of a very prepossessing appearance, and this no doubt accounts, to a very great extent, to its immense popularity. As much as two hundred and fifty dollars has lately been given for a single bird of this breed, but, of course, such prices are only obtainable for birds of extraordinary merit.

The breeding of Show Homers is now creating a great deal of attention among English fanciers, and not

only is much attention required, but a thorough, practical knowledge of systematic and judicious mating, and this necessitates a careful study of the principal points which make up such a combination of perfect qualities. The chief characteristic of the Show Homer is the head, which is of medium size and well filled up, that is, a gradual curve from the tip of the beak to the back of the head forming an unbroken curve. The part of the skull behind the wattle, and from the mouth to the eyes, is full, without any gaps or hollows, and the *tout ensemble* is free from any angular appearance. The eye-cere is very fine in texture, dark in color and small in quantity; in fact, the less the quantity the more meritorious is the bird. The favorite color of the eye is pearl or white, and it is astonishing to see the beautiful appearance the white eye gives compared with the dark-red or orange-colored eye. The beak is of medium length and thickness and close-fitting. The distance from the tip to the corner of the eye is about an inch and a-quarter. As regards the wattle, it is neat and close-fitting, being well within the prescribed curve of head and beak.

A well-proportioned body is essential in all varieties of pigeons, and especially in the Homer. The Show Homer is a variety which possesses wonderful development of chest; the shoulders, too, are well developed and give one the idea that there is plenty of strength hidden beneath the closely-folded feathers. The general appearance of the body is that it is short and thick-set; the wings are well carried and the flight feathers short and broad, well overlapping each other, which denote that they are capable of powerful locomotion. In some breeds a large tail is a necessary qualification, but it is just the opposite in a Homer. The tail is short, closely folded and carried in a good position, resembling one feather when viewed from the top. The legs are of medium length and well proportioned.

The standard colors are divided into four classes, as follows: Chequers, self-colors, piers and grizzles. These may be again subdivided into various shades and markings. The favorites are chequers and self-colors; chequers predominating to a very great extent, and I believe I am right in stating that the number of black and blue chequer Homers exceeds the

aggregate number of all other colors. Chequers, as the name signifies, are a dappled combination of two colors—one dark and the other light—on the back, wings and other portions of the body. The chequering radiates from the bars up to the top of the shoulder. The three principal self-colors are silver duns or mealies, blues and silvers. The designation "pied" signifies that some portion of the plumage is splashed with white; a bird of any of the previous mentioned colors marked in this way is classed under this heading. Grizzles are a sort of mixture of pepper-and-salt blend and not in any way splashed, the color being well known to breeders of the variety of pigeons named Dragons. The standard of perfection for the Show Homer is as follows:

Head and Beak—To form one unbroken curve from back of head to tip of beak.

Beak—Of medium length and substance, measuring from one and a quarter inch to one and three-eighths inch to the corner of the eye.

Eye—White; bright and well set, with a wild appearance.

Cere—Fine and hard, dark preferred.

Neck—Not too long, thick at base, tapering well to the throat, which should be well cleaned out.

Body—Of medium size, short and wedge-shaped; back broad, flat and straight; good depth of keel; chest broad; shoulders strong and well carried, with straight breast and vent bones well up.

Feather—Flights short and broad, well overlapping each other to the end.

Tail—Not too long, well drawn together and well carried.

Condition—Hard and firm.

Color—Sound throughout; in chequers clear and distinct.

Legs—Of medium length, clean, strong and well set.

Carriage—A bold, upstanding and workmanlike appearance.