BOOK REVIEW—

Reviewed by R. A. Spieler
First published in 1941, this comprehensive treatise on the pigeon is now in its third revision. Its author is a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School and since 1923 has headed the Palmetto Pigeon Plant, commercial squab raisers of Sumter, S. C. During World War I he was a lieutenant in the Pigeon Section of the U. S. Army Signal Corps. He has served as president of two national associations and is well known among pigeon fanciers as an editor and author.

Mr. Levi has produced an admirable and encyclopedic treatment of his subject. This large volume is primarily intended for the pigeon fancier or breeder, and indeed it will occupy the most prominent place in his working library. But its usefulness is by no means restricted to that group. Practicing attorneys will find a helpful summary of legal principles and decisions relating to pigeons. (It is brought out in this section that pigeons restrained in lofts are not a nuisance under the common law.) The scientific chapters were written with the advice and aid of qualified specialists. These sections provide a handy reference for the elementary student of biology.

The relationship of pigeon and man is the subject of the first chapter, with emphasis on the role of pigeons in history, warfare, and religion. One learns that pigeons are considered sacred objects in some Moslem countries, a startling notion to American city dwellers, many of whom harbor homicidal tendencies toward the unwanted columbarian residents of their eaves and rooftops. A more acceptable idea for adoption here might be the oriental custom of attaching bells and flutes to the birds, which thus produce melodious sounds in flight.

Over two hundred pages are devoted to descriptions and photographs of the various breeds. Some of these varieties present a bizarre appearance indeed, but all have been derived by selective breeding from one (or a few) wild species.

The chapters on anatomy, physiology, and genetics are intended for "the practical pigeon man", but the latter must find some of the material rather hard going. The introduction to the genetics section does not provide a sufficient explanation of the basic mechanisms of heredity. The nonscientist probably will have to turn to other books for an understanding of these principles, knowledge of which is so essential to any animal breeder. An amusing item is the photograph of the featherless strain (a heritable variation). "The birds resented sweaters knitted for them, so they had to be kept in a warm room."

Physically the book is attractive, well bound, and printed on good quality paper. There are more than nine hundred photographs, most of them ranging from adequate to excellent. An index, a glossary, and a sizable bibliography are provided.

Pigeon fanciers will be grateful to Mr. Levi for his labor and skill in compiling this volume. Other hobbyists may well wish for such a complete guide to their own fields.

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