The
Australasian Racing Pigeon.

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MELBOURNE fanciers have our sympathy inasmuch as their 500 mile race, the event of the year for every ambitious fancier, has turned out a disaster. Out of 700 good birds sent to race from Hammond, S.A., 540 miles, only 18 homed in race time—two on the first day, twelve on the second day, and the rest on the third day, when the race closed. What has become of the rest of the brave band of little warriors? If two could cover the journey of 540 miles in one day, it is only feasible to think a big proportion of the other birds would regain their lofts on the next day. The weather on the day is described as being showery, with a strong head wind. This shows what game birds the two that did the journey on the day must be, and what grand condition they must have been in. We congratulate the fortunate owners who got birds home in race time; they should prove worth looking after, as they must be possessed of a greater than usual amount of pluck and individuality.

Sydney fanciers have also been in receipt of some hard knocks, and numbers of good birds have gone down. The 3rd November will long be remembered as a day of disaster on both the Western and Southern lines. The Cootamundra birds were very much cut up; very few homed on the day; about twenty in all Clubs. In the Western Combine things were even worse, as only four clocks came in on the day. Their birds were flying from Orange, and no doubt found the mountains too hazy to cross, only the gamest having the courage to face the storms, and battle through.

Misfortune seems to have dogged the Western Combine, as the Wellington and Nevertire races also proved very hard ones, so much so that it was decided to close the season with the Coonamble race on 24th ult. This is unfortunate, and points to the wisdom of combining the Sydney Clubs into one big Federation to fly one line, or, if it be deemed wise, to organise a series of races on each line, but on different dates, so as to avoid any clashing.

We must express our views as being adverse to the system of attempting to control liberation of our birds from the home end. We give our Federation officials every credit for using their best judgment for the safety of our birds, but we send a capable man with them, and with him, in our opinion, should rest the final decision as to whether the birds should be held up or not. A forecast of the weather and a report from all along the line should be sent for his guidance, but the man on the spot is best judge as to what chance the birds have of getting through. We contend that, given a good start and a sky showing patches of blue, such as we had on 24th ult., the birds will home in good time. We are all endeavoring to breed birds that will overcome or fly round difficulties, and the only way to find out if they can do so is to try them, not hold them for a tail wind. Give them a good start—that is the main thing—and our birds will prove, as they have done in the past—that it will take more than a shower of rain to stop them.

All fancier friends will join with us in expressing heartfelt sympathy to Mr. F. Kurtz on the loss of his little granddaughter. She passed away after a very painful illness on the 23rd November.

Also to the widow and family of the late Geo. Sampson, of the Newtown Club, who died recently after a long illness. He was always a trier, and game to the last.

Mr. B. Pengelly, of the Sydney No. 1 Club, had the misfortune to lose his father, "the dear old dad." What a blank it must mean. It is not until we begin to advance in years ourselves that we really learn to understand and value what he means to and does for us.

A number of communications have reached us signed with only a pen name, and we cannot undertake to answer or deal with any correspondence if the writer will not sign his name to it, not necessarily for publication. He can adopt a pen name for that, but should send a covering note bearing his name and address. Of course, even then we use our own discretion whether to publish or not.

Will any subscriber whose paper does not come to hand very soon after his fellow club members get theirs please notify the management? We have heard of quite a number of papers being mislaid in the post, and in one case the first paper sent was returned to us marked, "Not known at the address," after we had sent a second copy to the same address and it had been delivered.

THEORIES AND QUERIES.

What becomes of all the lost pigeons? For example, Sydney fanciers, on November 3rd, flying from Cootamundra on the south and Orange on the west, met with what may be described as two of the worst smashes likely to be experienced. There must have been between 2000 and 3000 pigeons liberated at the two points that day, and somewhere about twenty homed on the day, about half the number sent eventually reaching home during the next few days. Now what beats me is where the balance got to? Did the southern birds reach the coast well south of Sydney, and in trying to fly round the storm go right out to sea and drown there when overtaken by darkness and fatigue, or are they still wandering in the back country? This theory would not fit in for the western line birds, and in their case I think they must have stopped on the west of the mountains until the weather mended.

I fancy that a good pigeon, when it gets hopelessly lost, flies itself right out before giving in. It then falls an easy prey to the first enemy that may come along. Some may be lucky enough to strike a homestead, where they receive food and water, and after a spell, their liberty to have another try for home.

There is another feature of the lost bird problem, and that is: What becomes of the squeakers lost annually off the roof Judging from the reports one hears, the number of young birds lost must run into hundreds each year. What becomes of them? Nobody ever seems to catch them. Of course, so many people keep pigeons who are not homer fanciers, and whose birds have constant liberty all and every day, that it must be a big temptation to a weary and bewildered squeaker to join in with one of these mobs, and once he enters such a loft his fate is sealed, especially if the owner be a school boy.

The first step to stop this illicit traffic is to absolutely prohibit the racing of unrung birds. The argument comes up annually, and we are always told that by prohibiting unrung pigeons we are preventing the young fanciers from coming in. But if the young flyer is the man who has been catching our lost squeakers and cutting the rings off, is it not better to let him know from the jump how serious the offience is regarded.

Then again, how many fanciers, when they do have a young bird enter their loft, with the best intention in the world, shut the youngster up and keep him locked up until claimed. To my mind this is a very serious mistake. If the squeaker is distressed by all means shut him up and give him a feed and a drink, but if you really want him to get home again, get up early next morning and give him his liberty by himself, and the chances are that he will work back to his owner's loft.

I have often noticed when I have had a squeaker flying mad and appar-