

Dixon, E.S. (1851). *The dovecote and the aviary: being sketches of the natural history of pigeons and other domestic birds in a captive state with hints for their management*. London: W.S. Orr & co.

has indeed something of a military air, and requires but a few finishing touches from a drilling-master to make his demeanour perfect in formality and politeness. We have seen gentlemen belonging to Her Majesty's army, whose back-thrown head, super-erect carriage, taper waist, and well-padded breast, brought them very much to the model of a gigantic Cropper, and whose countenances betrayed no dissatisfaction with their own personal appearance; and a style of beauty which contents a man, may surely be allowed to please a bird. The feathered legs and the sweeping tail may be supposed to complete the likeness, by representing spurs and dangling and trailing what-nots.

The flight also of the Cropper is stately and dignified in its way. The inflated crop is not generally collapsed by the exertion, but is seen to move slowly forward through the air, like a large permanent soap-bubble, with a body and wings attached to it. The bird is fond of clapping his wings loudly at first starting to take his few lazy rounds in the air; for he is too much of a fine gentleman to condescend to violent exertion. Other Pigeons will indulge in the same action in a less degree, but Croppers are the *claqueurs* par excellence; and hence we believe the *Smiters* of Willughby to be only a synonym of the present kind. He says, "I take these to be those, which the fore-mentioned *Hollander* told *Aldrovandus*, that his countrymen called *Draaiers*. These do not only shake their wings as they fly: but also flying round about in a ring, especially over their females, clap them so strongly, that they make a greater sound than two battledores or other boards struck one against another. Whence it comes to pass, that their

quill-feathers are almost always broken and shattered; and sometimes so bad, that they cannot fly."

Smiters and Croppers, or something very like them, must have been known and kept so long back even as Pliny's time. "Nosse credas suos colores, varietatemque dispositam: quin etiam ex volatu quæritur plaudere in cœlo, varièque sulcare. Quâ in ostentatione, ut vinctæ, præbentur accipitri, implicatis strepitu pennis, qui non nisi ipsis alarum humeris eliditur." "You would think they were conscious of their own colours, and the variety with which they are disposed: nay, they even attempt to make their flight a means of clapping in the air, and tracing various courses in it. By which ostentation they are betrayed to the power of the Hawk, as if bound, their feathers being entangled in the action of making the noise, which is produced only by the actual shoulders of their wings."*

Powters are of various colours; the most usual are blue, buff (*vulgò* cloth), splashed in various mixtures, and white. Pure white Powters are really handsome, and look very like white Owls in their sober circlings around the Pigeon-house. Apropos of the blue and the cloth-coloured birds, a friend asks, "Have you ever observed that if you pair a chestnut with a blue Pigeon, the cock being, say the chestnut, the chances are that the *young* cock is *blue*, and the hen chestnut, and *their* offspring will come *vice versâ* round again?"—*H. H.* This is a curious alternation.

Powters have deservedly a bad character as nurses, and it is usual to put the eggs of valuable birds under other Pigeons to hatch and rear; but otherwise they are

* Lib. x. 52.