

forth. In fact, it is quite possible that the blue barred and the checkered types rose more or less simultaneously. Certain it is today that checkered domestic pigeons mated together may produce a blue barred (510). Regardless of whether *C. livia*, *C. affinis*, or some other type of color pattern was the most primitive type of domestic pigeon, this we do know: that the domestic pigeon accompanied civilization, and that the Eastern countries cradled its domestication. There is no record of fancy domestic pigeons indigenous to the soil of Germany, France, Great Britain, or of America. Most breeds of domestic pigeons of these countries can be traced back to importations from countries of ancient civilizations—Persia, India, and Asia Minor. The present-day Occidental breeds are not creations from wild species but from races previously introduced from the East.

An endeavor to trace the origin and the history of the various breeds of pigeons is fraught with difficulties, some almost insurmountable. The reasons for this are plainly seen.

In the first place, historic literature is sadly wanting. While it is true, as hitherto shown, that there are many references to pigeons or doves in general, both in historic and prehistoric times, it is only in the last three hundred years that the different domestic breeds of pigeons have been discussed and, prior to the nineteenth century, only superficially. Secondly, we are woefully ignorant of the pigeons of India and Persia, countries in which they were perhaps originally domesticated. This utter lack of accurate ancient data creates a dim pall through which only an occasional ray of peristeronic light can filter and leaves one to guess and surmise.

The very genetic nature of the pigeon intensifies the problem. The ease with which two breeds cross and breed characteristics disappear in two or three outcrosses heaps Pelion on Ossa. Many present-day breeds, in fact most of them, if not all, were at one time hybrids of some domestic races of pigeons, and the early creators were stirred by no urge to make public or place on record their breeding processes, and this obtains in most instances right up to today.

Again, races of pigeons, when neglected, tend to deteriorate and return to the normal, *i. e.*, the common "dove-house pigeon". "Styles" in pigeons change; and, when interest is lost in any race and its followers cease to breed it with careful selection, the breed characteristics may retrograde in only a few generations, if in fact they do not disappear. Free matings to other breeds hasten along the degenerating process.

A study of the literature of the past two centuries demonstrates that the "turn-over" in breeds is a rapid one, and that many breeds existing two hundred years ago have now entirely disappeared. The converse of this is also true, that there exist today many domestic races not dreamt of in 1735 when Moore wrote his *Columbarium*. In fact, the most popular breeds now extant are creations since that time and of the last one hundred years.

### Extinct Breeds

(48) Francis Willughby in his *Ornithologia* (1676, p. 121) describes only seventeen breeds of domestic pigeons. They are:

Runts	Tumblers
Croppers	Helmets
Broad-tailed Shakers	Light Horsemen
Narrow-tailed Shakers	Bastard Bills
Carriers	Turners
Jacobins	Finnikins
Turbits	Mawmets
Barbary Pigeons	Spots
	Smiters

Of these seventeen breeds, six have disappeared or been absorbed into subsequent breeds, *viz.*: Narrow-tailed Shakers; Smiters, Finn timers, and Turners (now the Ring-beater (194)); Light Horsemen; and Bastard Bills. Willughby's work is an attempt at a complete ornithological study of all birds, and the original edition contains seventy-seven full-size pages of illustrations. Willughby was interested in birds in general and not pigeons in particular; but, since he was a careful student, it is safe to assume that he tried to include all domestic breeds of pigeons known at that period.

Somewhat later, Moore (1735) wrote the first book in English exclusively on pigeons, and many breeds described by Moore have now become either entirely extinct or have been absorbed into subsequent races. These breeds are:

**Runts**—Moore describes (Eaton's reprint, 1858, p. 88) the Leghorn Runt, "a stately, large pigeon, seven inches or better in the legs," etc.; the Spanish Runt (p. 90), "the largest bodied of all pigeons"; and the Friesland Runt, "its feathers all reverted," all three of which breeds have now entirely disappeared or been absorbed (195).

**Laughers**—This is a breed said to have been imported from Jerusalem, the cock of which "has a hoarse coo, not unlike the gurgling of a bottle of water \* \* \* and then makes a noise which very much imitates a soft laughter." (217.)

**Ruffs**—This is an ancient variety of the present-day Jacobin (122).

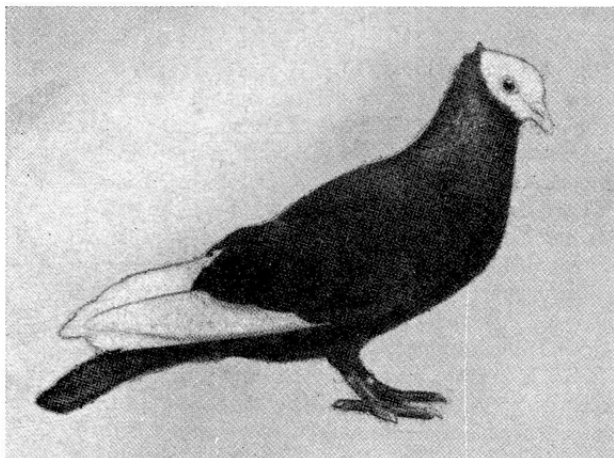
**Finnikins and Turners**—These breeds were named for their mannerisms. As Moore describes it, the bird "turns around three or four times, flapping its wings, then reverses and turns as many the other way."

The Finn timer was Runt-like in shape, with a tuft of feathers at the back of the head which was "in shape snake-headed." The Turner differed from the Finn timer in that it was not snake-headed, lacked the head tuft or crest, and turned only one way. These breeds were rather similar to the Smiler, and were known in France as *Pigeon tournant* and in Germany as the *Ringschläger* (Ring-beater, (194)).

**Horsemen, Pouting Horsemen, and Skinnums**—These three breeds were varieties of the Carrier (74).

In addition to the breeds above referred to, German and French literature mention many other breeds known a couple of centuries ago which have entirely disappeared. Space will not permit, nor is it necessary, to endeavor to enumerate all of them, but a few of the outstanding examples will bear noting:

**Camus**—This is a free-flying bird somewhat Barb-like in appearance, described by Belgian and French writers (105).



A RINGBEATER

Reproduced from the German periodical, "Geflügel-Börse," Leipzig.

desire is again springing up in the larger utility plants of this country to cross for the improvement of utility stock. Such crosses are now being made in some of the larger plants and are apparently meeting with the favor of the experimenters.

#### Ringbeaters (Ger.: *Ringschläger*; Fr.: *Pigeons tournans*)

(194) **Origin**—The origin of the Ringbeater is uncertain. Aldrovandi (1603) and Willughby (1676) describe pigeons with peculiar mannerisms of flight. Older English works (*e. g.*, Moore, Girtton, etc.) describe the Smiter, the Turner, and the Finnikin (217). These breeds were apparently, in air performance, similar to the Ringbeater or ancestral to it. By Brent's time (1859) these earlier forms were extinct in England, for Brent says that he had only seen one pair of them and they were at a dealer's in Coblenz. By Lyell's time (1887), they were entirely extinct in England.

In France, Boitard and Corbie (1824) describe *Pigeons tournans* which are apparently the same or a closely allied breed. Fontaine (1922) describes the Rhine Ringbeater (*Ringslager du Rhin*) and the Belgian (*Ringslager belge*). He also describes another Belgian turner, the *Speelderke*.

The first edition of Neumeister (1837) does not mention it, but the second edition (1869) does. Lavalley and Lietze (1905) describe the Ringbeater under the Tumblers. In Germany, they say, it is also known as "Turner" or "Clapper-Tumbler" (*Klatschtümmler*). They say that the Ringbeater originated in the province of Utrecht, Holland. Spruijt (1935) describes these three varieties (the German, the Belgian, and the *Speelderke*) as existing on the continent, and portrays them with excellent photographs.

**Description**—The German Ringbeater in general type resembles the field pigeon, and is clean-legged and peak-crested. It is bred in black, blue, red, and yellow with white head and flights. The head is quite Monk-like (153) in appearance. The Belgian Ringbeater is somewhat

larger than the German, and lacks the white head. It has a fairly well defined white neck marking which is somewhat similar to that of the Cauchois (144). The *Speelderke* is marked somewhat similarly to the Belgian variety.

These three varieties are characterized by their peculiar flight. The cock, when courting the hen, is said to fly around her several times with a loud clapping of the wings. The constant clapping of the wings causes the flights to fray so that by the autumn there is little left of them but the quills.

**U. S. A. Development**—This breed is entirely unknown in this country, and no record has been found of its occurrence here at any time. This is surprising, for the breed appears to be an interesting one.

#### Runts (Ger.: *Römer*; Fr.: *Pigeons romains*)

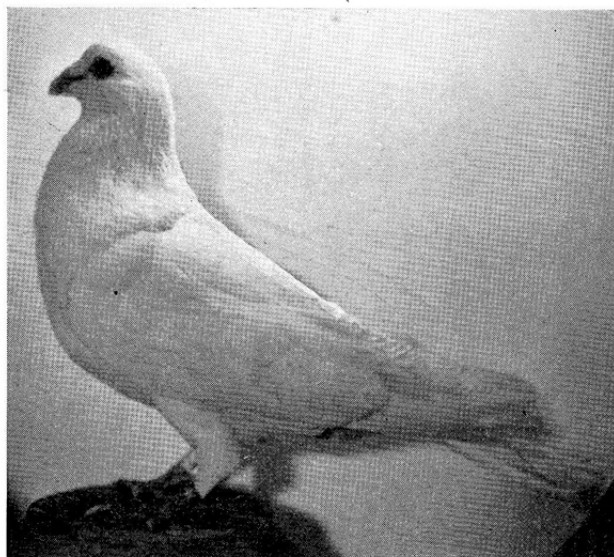
(195) **Origin**—The Runt is one of the oldest known breeds (of pigeons). It is described in the earliest literature on pigeons. Pliny (23-79 A. D., *Natural History*, Book 10, Chapter LII-LIII) says:

"Countries, even, have gained renown for their pigeons; it is thought that those of Campania attain the largest size."

From this statement, some writers believe that these pigeons of Campania were the progenitors of the present-day Runt. Dixon (1851, p. 94) says:

"The notices of them in Pliny, and other nearly contemporary writers are but modern records; for Dr. Buckland enumerates the bones of the Pigeon among the remains in the cave at Kirkdale, and figures a bone which he says approaches closely to the Spanish Runt, which is one of the largest of the pigeon tribe."

In France it was cultivated at an early date. There it was known by the name *Le Romain* or "Roman Pigeon". Elton (1919) says that he was informed by certain French breeders that the name *Le Romain* or *Pigeon romain* is not properly translated to mean "Roman pigeon" but "Primary pigeon" and that the misunderstanding-



—Photo by Brinkman.

#### GOLIATH

White Runt cock, NPA-82-1938

One of the largest Runts ever produced in this country. At a year and a half of age, he weighed 3 pounds, 8 ounces; in February, 1940, 3 pounds, 14 ounces, thought to be the heaviest recorded pigeon weight. Exhibited N. P. A. Show, Philadelphia, 1940, by H. Eric Buri, Birmingham, N. J.