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Lawrence, John
MOUBRAY'S TREATISE^c

ON

DOMESTIC AND ORNAMENTAL
POULTRY.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

TO THE

HISTORY, BREEDING, REARING, FEEDING, FATTENING, AND
GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF FOWLS AND PIGEONS.

- *New Edition, Revised and greatly Enlarged,*

BY L. A. MEALL.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE DISEASES OF POULTRY,

WITH PHYSIOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIMENTS,

BY F. R. HORNER, ESQ., M. D.

WITH COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS.

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greatly predominating, though smaller in size of body; as hybrids, however, they are rapidly being absorbed in the original Horseman, and although often presenting pleasing mixtures of feathering from the cross, their exclusion (in common with all other mongrels) from the Exhibitions is to be desired by all true Pigeon Fanciers.

TUMBLERS.—This variety is among the smallest and prettiest of the *columbæ*. The name is derived from the singular faculty it possesses, of “tumbling” when flying upwards, or rather of throwing a series of somersets forwards and backwards head over tail, and *vice versa*, especially when immediately mounting in flight or descending to the earth: it is however not alone for this peculiarity that the Tumbler is admired,—its singularly pretty shape and contour, neat and trim appearance, and the diversity and variegated nature of its plumage, have won for it a numerous circle of admiring fanciers. The Tumbler can have altered but very little since the publication of the *Treatise* more than a century ago, when it was correctly described according to the standard even of the present day: it is small and very compact in form; strong in the body; full in the breast—almost globular, and tapering gradually along the sides towards the tail, which is narrow; neck not long, but rather slender; head much rounded, with a remarkably full and round forehead projecting forwards; bill very short, thick,

and what is termed "spindle" shaped; eyes most admired when the *irides* are of pearl-like whiteness; the legs and feet of singular (almost ridiculously) short proportions. The wing is remarkably rounded or bowed in the outline from the shoulder along the outer flight feather to the tip.

22. *Common* or *English*.—It seems to us that this cannot but be regarded as the primitive stock, whence the different sub-varieties which follow in course have from time to time been drafted off and established. They are generally coarser and larger in all points than the high-bred sorts,—being more particularly stouter in the body and longer in the bill: and it is worthy of note that the peculiar and amusing faculty of *tumbling* in flight is present in a much greater degree in the common kinds,—from which it may be inferred that the breeding of the Tumbler to the standard "points" is not accomplished altogether without the sacrifice of more pleasing and natural properties. In plumage they are usually of a whole colour, namely, all white or cream colour, light reddish-brown or cinnamon, and black, when they are vulgarly called "Kites:" but these shades are not unfrequently found splashed or "myrtled" (i. e. mottled) with white,—although the latter kind should perhaps be included under the following sub-variety. Mr. Morton Jones of the Crescent, Birmingham, has exhibited some speci-

mens of the Common Tumblers having tufts or crests of feathers at the back of the head, after the manner of the Turbit pigeons: but these he informs us, in a communication with which he kindly favoured the editor, have been obtained, by crossing the Tumbler to the Turbit; and thus, by frequently pairing their young over to the Tumbler, birds have been produced which, whilst retaining the faculty of tumbling in flight, have the crest in addition. Old writers mention a "a pretty little blue Tumbler with black bars" across the wings.

23. *Mottled*.—This sub-variety is, generally speaking, more *carefully* bred than are the Kites; and therefore more nearly approach the *beau ideal* of the Fancy, whose principal aim appears to be to produce the "*shortest-faced*" bird possible, that is to say, a Tumbler with the largest or most projecting forehead, and the smallest perceptible appearance of a bill,—a property which is possessed in an extraordinary degree by the Almond or Ermine to be afterwards described. Of the mottled, also, there were formerly every variety of feather, but from greater attention being paid to them, the chance variations of feather are less frequent, and they are now bred with more uniform and regular markings. The *White* mottled, so-called, (but which should rather be described as a *Pied* Tumbler,) is very seldom met with, and by the unobservant has been confounded with the true Black Mottled, from which, however, it

widely differs ; its ground colour being white, with *black* flight and tail feathers, and others of similar colour scattered over the back and body in small patches : whereas the plumage correctly termed “mottled,” is of a coloured ground (no matter what shade) mottled with a few *white* spangled feathers upon the shoulder of the wing, forming at that point a sort of mottled rosette, or as it is called by the Fancy—a “rose pinion,” that being considered the most elegant : this white mottling is most admired when confined to the part indicated, although this is but seldom attained : and many contend that the true mottled Tumbler should also have a few white spangles upon the upper part of the back, as a relief to the uniform colouring of the rest of the body ; a bird so mottled is said to have a “handkerchief back.”—The *Yellow Mottled* is of a dull yellowish buff plumage, mottled in the way already stated.—The *Red* and the *Black Mottled*—the former with ground plumage of a dull reddish cinnamon colour, and the latter of a sable hue, the more intense the better—have their respective admirers.

24. *Almond* or *Ermine*.—At once the most delicate and beautiful of the Tumblers, this pretty little creature in a superior degree unites in its miniature compass all the points and properties most sought after and admired by the Tumbler Fancy,—indeed, it seems (if we may so express it) to be a sort of joint-stock production from the

preceding sub-varieties, the best birds of which have contributed that in which they excelled, (whether in form or feather,) in order to embody in one the highest attainable perfection of Tumbler breeding. But it is not alone for the elegance of its form, or the striking beauty of its plumage, that the Almond may be said to have taken the highest rank in the group,—it is the great scarcity of really good specimens, arising from the extraordinary difficulty experienced in breeding them at all conformable to the established standard, which has caused them to come to be regarded by the Fancy as almost the only variety exclusively worth their attention and pursuit; as such they are prized in a measure corresponding with their rarity. Their name is thought by some to be given them from the *ermine*-like mixture of white, yellow, and black, present upon the tri-coloured spangled feathering: although an opinion has long existed that the second name is its proper designation, as describing the peculiar *almond*-like shade of the ground-colour of the plumage so much sought after,—and we are inclined to believe that the latter is decidedly the more correct appellation. In describing the Almond Tumbler, its standard excellencies will be better pointed out and more readily understood, if expressed in the same systematic manner as was adopted in regard to the Pouter and Carrier.

a. Size and Shape.—This property appears na-

turally to stand first in order, although many regard the succeeding one as of more importance in the Almond. In size it should certainly be one of the smallest of its kind—too diminutive it can scarcely be, according to the prevailing fancy: the body should be round and compact; back very short; neck slender but not long, and carried well curved inwards, exposing prominently a fine ample breast: the shorter the bird stands upon the legs, the neater and smaller the feet or toes, and the shorter the wing-flights and tail feathers are, the more the bird is esteemed. It is more particularly in the points comprised in this property that the *breeding* of an Almond may be detected.

- b. Head.—This should be as broad as it is long, and as high as it is either,—in point of fact, it ought to be as nearly as possible round like a ball: an elongated head tapering thin in front towards the bill, is despised as being “mousey” shaped. The front of the head (or forehead) should project or hang over the commencement of the bill in a way hardly describable, but which when accompanied by a short bill and full puffy “chaps” (or cheeks) on either side, gives the bird what is termed a “short-face,”—a property much admired and ardently sought after and cultivated by the Fancy.

- c.* Bill.—In shape resembling that of the Goldfinch, it should still be very straight, fine, and pointed; it cannot well be too short,—if possible, not more than half an inch measured from the outer rim of the iris of the eye to the point, or as we should rather describe it, three-eighths of an inch in the gape, although the former is the mode of measuring adopted by Fanciers: when not more than five-eighths of an inch long from the eye, it would be allowed to be first-rate, but if it exceeds three-quarters of an inch, no matter how good the other points were, the specimen would be rejected. The “wattle,” or skin across the base of the upper bill, must be thin and small in quantity, and resembling a stout thread drawn over, quite clear, and not covered or overgrown by the short feathers of the forehead: this little point, even, adds much to the beauty of the bird in the estimation of the true Fancier; giving what is termed a good “stop” to the bird’s forehead.
- d.* Eye.—The eye should be very full, prominent, and bright, the iris being of silvery or pearl-like whiteness; it must not be surrounded by any margin of naked skin, but the outer rim should be thin, clear, and round, being encircled quite up to the edge by the short close feathers of the head. The best position for the eye is exactly in the

centre of the round head ; but if seated a trifling degree *below* and very slightly more *backward* than the central point of the head, it is more admired.

- e. Feather.—We now come to a property which, though an important consideration with the Fancier, is too often sought to be obtained to the neglect or absolute sacrifice of the preceding and principal points : not that we in any way undervalue the increased beauty of a bird, which in addition to them, possesses also the beautiful feathering which, as an *adjunct* of beauty, it should certainly be the aim of all amateurs to attain in the highest perfection. The ground or body colour should be of a rich yellowish buff hue, deep, bright, and clear, somewhat similar in shade to the plumage of the Golden Sebright Bantam : some have described the colour to be of a “rich Almond” shade, and have hence accounted for the application of the popular designation of “Almond” Tumbler. The most knowing members of the Fancy contend that the ground-colour ought to be a “rich bright yellow ;” but this it is conceded is scarcely (if ever) attainable, properly intermixed with the other colours required ; and it therefore seems to us absurd and useless any longer to retain a standard which it is not practicable to reach in breeding. Dif-

ficult as it is to obtain a pure ground-colour, it is still more so to procure a bird possessing this plumage delicately but distinctly pencilled or broken with a deep black and clear white: this peculiar marking it is indispensable should be present (to constitute a good specimen) on each of the nine first flight feathers of the wings, and also in the tail; but a *perfect* Almond, according to the highest standard, would also have the back, breast, and under-parts variegated in a similar way; whilst the hackle feathers of the neck should have the black ermine-like patches or spangles especially well developed, and of a glossy lustrous shade,—indeed there are some Fanciers who assert that they have succeeded in producing birds with nearly every feather of their plumage broken with the three standard colours.

It may be well to remark, that however good the bird may be, it does not generally attain to the full brilliancy or beauty of feather until the third moult,—up to which period also the colours of the plumage sometimes change considerably: occasionally too they will run from good mixed colours into indifferent “splashed,” mottled, and even whole-coloured birds. So entirely do the Almond Tumblers appear to be the produce or result of the highest and most delicate and careful

breeding, that even first-rate specimens cannot be depended upon to produce correctly feathered progeny. The Hen is of somewhat smaller and more delicate proportions than the male; but in plumage she is much inferior, the colours being less bright, and the beautiful markings (so highly prized) not so well defined.

25. *Beard*.—These should possess all the points of Tumblers, differing only in the plumage, which is usually of one entire colour excepting the flight feathers of the wing, the tail, and rump, which must be of a clear white. They are distinguished by a small regular patch of white feathers (which we may not inaptly call an “imperial”) extending below the lower bill, and upon the throat, forming a pretty contrast with the rest of the plumage: this *beard*, however, must not be confounded with the ruff-like appendage, so called, seen upon the Poland fowl,—that of the Beard Tumbler Pigeon does not consist of any external appendage of feathers, but is simply formed by the *colour* of the throat feathers being different to the body, which are of various whole colours, as yellowish-buff, red or cinnamon (light and dark), slaty blue, and black. At the last Metropolitan Exhibition, Mr. A. Ball, of Nazing, Essex, entered some “Silver” Beards, which we presume were of white or grey plumage,—if so we fancy that the chief beauty of the Beard must be lost as regards feather. There are a great many coarse

long-faced Beards often seen, with bills running an inch and a half (nearly) from the outer edge of the eye; these are capital flyers, but find no favour with Fanciers: good specimens of short-faced Beards are scarce.

26. *Bald-pate*.—Like the preceding the general ground plumage of this Tumbler is invariably of one whole colour, with pure white flights, tail, and hinder parts. It receives its name from the feathers of the head and throat being entirely white, thus giving the bird the appearance of a *bald head*. The light red or cinnamon with darker shaded necks are generally most esteemed as show birds, but the blues are reputed to be the best and highest flyers: all, however, are uncommon and prized. They are hardy and strong in flight.

27. *Helmet*.—This sub-variety (now very rarely met with) answers nearly to the description of the Baldpate Tumbler, except that the arrangement of the colours of the plumage is *completely reversed*: thus the ground colour of the Helmet is *white*, and the flight feathers, tail, and rump, of some *whole colour*, as yellow, red, &c.: the feathers on the head, also, are of a corresponding colour to the flights, tail, &c.,—the head appearing as if it were covered with a coloured cap or *helmet*,—and hence its name. Our readers will at once observe that the Helmet has *coloured* plumage precisely on those parts which are *white* in the Baldpate, and *vice versâ*.

28. *Smiter*.—This sub-variety, if it ever existed as distinct, has now entirely disappeared; but we strongly suspect that it never soared beyond being a coarse, large, ill-bred, mongrel Dutch Tumbler, mixed perhaps with the Runt family. The only account we have of it is in the *Pigeon Fancier*, by D. Girtin, 1802,—in which it is described as being “in shape, make, and diversity of plumage, nearly like the Tumbler,—size excepted, it being a much larger bird: when it flies it has a peculiar and tremulous motion of the wings, and commonly rises in a circular manner and though it does not tumble, it has a particular way of falling and flapping its wings.” It is from this habit of *smiting* its wings together that the vulgar appellation of “Smiter” has been given to it. It is supposed to be the same pigeon as the Dutch call *Draiers* or *Dragers*.

29. *Skinnum*.—This is unquestionably a cross-bred bird, descended from a Tumbler and a Dragon or bad Horseman—its sharp flattened head, long bill, and wattled eye, at once indicating the presence of Carrier blood. It is perhaps owing to the loose *skinny* eyes and bill (so totally opposite to the Tumbler points) that they are vulgarly called “Skinnums.”

III. *Columbæ Cristatæ*.

CRESTED, or TUFTED.—It is singular that the