

Pigeons' Part in Winning War

By E.B. Reid



Uncanny Instinct of Homers Saved Lives of Many Soldiers During Struggle Just Ended

THE records of this war are replete with stories of the courageous work performed by carrier pigeons while saving the lives of our soldiers, but no incident better illustrates what they have accomplished than their activities in the battle of Bethancourt and Dead Man's hill. An entire French regiment was cut off from their comrades, completely surrounded for four days, and with no method of communicating word of their plight to the general in command. That fourth night one of the men scouting in No Man's Land stumbled over a dead comrade on whose back was strapped a basket carrying two little pigeons that during the four-day battle had been safeguarded by the body of their caretaker. Tenderly the scout brought the basket and birds back to the colonel on the hill. Early the next morning messages were written, affixed to the legs of the birds, which, exhausted and dust-soiled, but imbued with indomitable spirit and pluck, were liberated—wafted into the air by the prayers and wishes of those thousands of men and the happiness of other thousands in their families, at home. Shortly afterward both birds fluttered wearily into their loft back at headquarters; and in a sortie ordered by the general the enemy was driven back and the regiment saved.

One of the officers of that regiment is now in Washington, and he has promised himself that now the war is over he will have a loft of the best birds he can get, and the best care and attention that is possible will be but a slight part of his measure of appreciation and gratitude to the little feathered messengers to whom he and his comrades owe their lives.

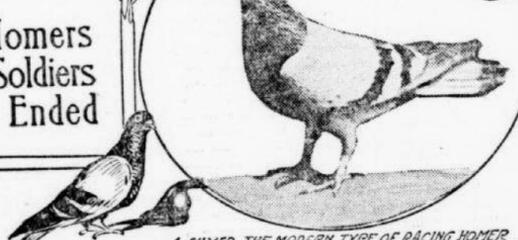
These little birds have been used in almost every conceivable way to get word back to the reserves or to headquarters when all other means of communication failed.

Carrier pigeons are not only used by the infantry and the navy, but are used frequently by the air service. At the Dunkirk hydroplane station they have an enviable record. There has not been a single accident to a plane, nor the loss of a plane in combat, where word of the occurrence was not brought back by the pigeons which are a part of the equipment of the planes. Instances of the value of the messengers could be multiplied without number, but it is more interesting to recount how these birds are bred, reared and housed under war conditions.

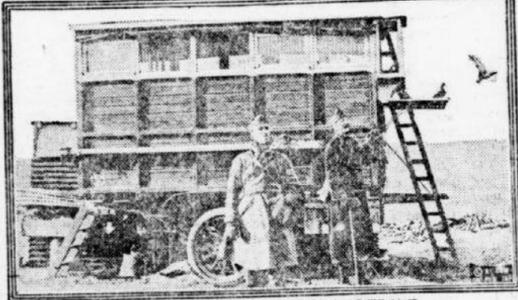
The pigeon's ability to do all of these wonderful tasks lies in its faculty of orientation, that is, its power to know as soon as it is released in what direction its home loft is and to fly directly to it. The perfection to which orientation is developed in the highly bred and trained homer was recently demonstrated at a pigeon fly conducted by the pigeon section of the signal corps, when 3,100 homing pigeons were released in Washington for a fly to New York city, 224 miles. To a single bird, these pigeons ran out of their coops and arose in the air with the speed of an express train, and after taking a half circle to get their bearings were off for New York. Every one of the pigeons was reported to have arrived promptly and the first arrival made the trip in 5 hours and 40 minutes. Surely it did not stop to read many sign posts on the way.

Just how the homing pigeon developed this power of orientation is a moot question, but it is certain that it has been cultivated through centuries until now it is almost uncanny. What guides the pigeon back to the loft where it first "took to the air" is a quality called by many names, and you will find that each person knows that he has the answer to the riddle. Some call it innate love of home; others attribute it to faculty, atmospheric conditions, sight, or memory. Personally, I cannot call it anything more or less than instinct, highly developed. We find it in lesser degree in horses, dogs and cats, and in other birds it seems to be developed a little less markedly, but with sufficient accuracy so that they migrate annually thousands of miles without the aid of any other compass than their instinct.

When we remember the potent power of selection and think of the years and generations of careful breeding and selection which the homing pigeon has undergone it is not so wonderful that they have developed the homing instinct to a high degree. I have seen their cousins, the fan-tailed pigeons, bred to such a degree of fineness that they weighed only a few ounces apiece and were



A SILVER, THE MODERN TYPE OF RACING HOMER



WATCHING FOR A MESSAGE FROM THE FRONT

so nervous that they could not stand still—they were like the hair-spring of a watch, constantly preening and ducking and on the move. In very early times homing pigeons were in vogue in Egypt, Greece and among the Romans. Racing pigeons has been a royal and national sport in Belgium, France, Italy, Turkey, Egypt and England for hundreds of years. It was introduced into this country in the seventies and has enjoyed a fair and steady growth until now there are three national homing pigeon associations with a membership of more than 2,000 breeders.

Much time is spent in teaching the pigeon all of the tricks which count when the bird is actually racing in competition with other pigeons. It is taught to enter the loft immediately upon its return, for a bird that does not enter so that the message it carries can be taken from it is of very little value as a messenger. Nothing is more exasperating to the fancier or racer than to have the pigeon return and cool its anatomy and view the scenery for a half hour before entering the loft. It is nearly sufficient cause to make the trainer of pigeons lose his faith in pigeon nature; besides it gives the neighbors men playing with remarks about the fullgrown men playing with can-birds. Once the bird is inside the loft it cannot emerge, since each loft is equipped with a trap through which the bird can enter at any time but cannot go out unless the trap is set for exit.

The ordinary barn variety of pigeon or those bred for the production of squabs for market and the racing homing pigeon should not be confused. They are as distinct and have as many points of difference as have the big draft horse and the high-strung, nervous racing horse. The ordinary pigeon has very little homing ability, whereas the homing pigeon is kept and bred exclusively for that faculty. They are also bred for speed, and every muscle which is used in flight is developed almost at the expense of the other muscles of its body. In races the actual speed recorded is almost beyond belief. Speeds of 1,850 to 1,900 yards per minute, or 90 miles per hour, have been made for short distances, and it is not extraordinary for a bird to cover in excess of 500 miles in a single day. The record for 1,000 miles is 1 day, 11 hours, 24 minutes and 11 seconds, and was made by a bird named Bullet, and the longest successful race was 1,680 miles from Denver, Colo., to Springfield, Mass. (time 22 days, 3 hours, 22 minutes), although instances are recorded where birds sent from New York to the Pacific coast as breeders, have, on liberation or escape, returned from California, over the mountains and plains to their old homes in New York.

At various times in this country the army and navy have decided to use carrier pigeons in their work, but with indifferent success until the recent war. The old reports are rather amusing when considered in the light of present-day knowledge of what can be done with the birds when handled properly. Pigeons were used in the navy more than 20 years ago, but failed through lack of proper care. At the time of the Mexican border trouble pigeons were again tried, but with little success for the same reason and through lack of time for acclimatization.

Homing pigeons were first put on a business-like basis in the army in March, 1917, in the eastern department. In November of that year the pigeon section of the land division of the signal corps was organized, and since then rapid progress has been made in this country and

abroad. Hundreds of lofts have been built and equipped in this country, and in the early days many pigeons were shipped overseas. Men have been selected and trained in the science of pigeon breeding, rearing and flying. Many of these have already found service overseas in the care of lofts and the birds of our armies. It has been necessary to train a large number of people in this work, as it was practically new to each person who took it up. The training of officers and men in the use and care of the birds at the front and in the forwarding of messages all took time. Unfortunately the pigeons could only fly and could not talk, necessitating the writing of the messages. Some wag has proposed to improve the pigeon by crossing it with a parrot, thus eliminating the necessity of writing the messages.

However, the pigeon might have something to say about the matter.

One of the most difficult parts of the work of introducing pigeons into the army service was to get them reliable. That they are reliable is proved by their experience overseas, where the birds are retained in forward positions while any other method, wireless, wigwag or run-graph, induction buzzers, and only when everything else is available, and only when everything else fails, and only the birds remain, then through barrage, gas, and every other of the diabolical inventions of war, more than 97 per cent of the messages entrusted to our pigeons are safely and speedily delivered by them to headquarters. These messengers are carried to the front in especially constructed wicker baskets which can be carried handily by the soldier entrusted with their care. Back of the lines the pigeons are kept in either of two kinds of lofts or home, stationary or movable, but the essential feature of each is the same. Every effort is made to make each bird comfortable, happy and attached to its home. This is done most effectively by the method of feeding, as the approach to the bird's affection is through its stomach, the same as with genus homo. Each loft is equipped with a trap through which the birds are taught to enter and leave without fear. Each time the bird enters the trap an alarm is automatically rung, notifying the attendant of the return of the bird, that the message may be immediately obtained and forwarded to headquarters.

Before the late war if you had told a pigeon fancier that you could move his pigeon loft as far as 50 miles and that the pigeons would return to it so swiftly and accurately he would probably have laughed at you and said something about your being a novice in the pigeon racing and breeding game. The movable loft is one of the advances in pigeon lore that the war has brought out. This is a very important development, as it is highly desirable that the lofts always be near to military headquarters and available for instant removal with headquarters as conditions may require. These movable lofts are very well constructed and are interesting homes for these itinerant messengers. They are outfitted with nesting boxes, observation traps, storage space for feed, water, and accommodations for one or two attendants who are constantly on duty. In fact, they remind one of the circus wagons that travel with the smaller circuses about the country.

Another innovation developed was the "owl express." There were pigeons at the front that developed the faculty for seeing at night and these were called veritable human night owls. In fact, they came home much more steadily and accurately than some of their civilian brethren, who were wont to be habitual riders of the "owl express."

The sport of racing and breeding pigeons is due to receive an impetus as a civilian sport now that the war is ended, and the progress made under war conditions should not be allowed to lapse. Thousands of soldiers will have become familiar with the birds and will have a warm regard for them. There will be many who will share the feeling of the officer who was mentioned in the first part of this article as having been saved by the pigeons in the battle of Bethancourt and Dead Man's hill.

LABOR ITEMS OF INTEREST

Week's Most Important Happenings in This Country and Elsewhere.

WOULD KEEP LABOR BOARDS

Association of Machinists Makes Plea for Their Retention—Recent Wage Increases Granted—English Cotton Operatives Are Back at Work.

District 44, International Association of Machinists, took a decided position on several important questions at its six-day convention at New York.

The convention went on record as favoring, among other things, the McKellar-Keating retirement bill and the retention by the government of all labor boards having to do with the adjudication of labor disputes, particularly the national war labor board.

Congress was urged in a resolution to continue the housing plan determined upon and started by the housing bureau of the department of labor before the signing of the armistice.

A closed shop, with a 48-hour working week and wage increases totaling \$5 a week, and granted to employees of the Gem Metal products corporation of Brooklyn, N. Y., is an award by the war labor board. The closed-shop principle is applied because the plant was operating under a closed-shop agreement prior to the entry of America into the war. A wage scale of \$5.75 and the basic eight-hour day were granted to molders of Elizabeth City, N. J.

The striking English cotton operatives held a mass meeting and decided to return to work at once. The operatives accepted the terms of an agreement by which they will receive an increase of about 30 per cent in wages.

Two thousand new workmen's homes are to be built in Portland, Ore.

Four factories in Denmark now are manufacturing binding twine from paper.

To release men for other work, Hog Island ship yards now employ women chauffeurs.

Women engaged in munition work throughout the countries at war number 1,302,000.

The world's richest iron mine, in Lapland, has been equipped with electrical machinery.

Women are now eligible to membership in the Canadian Railway Mail Clerks' association.

A Sheffield (England) hairdresser who volunteered for munition work in one week of 53 hours earned over \$85.

A chimney sweep told the Seven Oaks (England) tribunal that his average earnings were \$30 a week, and he made a little profit on soot.

Modern methods of mining and smelting have made it profitable to reopen a nickel mine in Norway that was abandoned half a century ago.

More than one-half the national forests in the Oregon-Washington district have made use of the services of women as lookouts, patrols and in nursery work.

Ten thousand girl servants at Stuttgart, the capital of Wurttemberg, were mobilized recently to help unload railroad freight cars. Each has to give one day or two half-days a week to this work. They are paid men's wages.

Half fare street car tickets for working people during certain hours of the day must be issued by the Dubuque Electric company. Judge Reed ruled in federal court. The company, a Delaware corporation, attempted to abolish the half fare.

After three hours' debate the Youngstown (O.) railway union ratified a new wage agreement with the Mahoning-Shenango Light and Power company. The men will receive from 43 to 48 cents an hour. During the ratification meeting all cars were motionless but the strike was called off and schedule resumed.

Representatives of the French General Federation of Labor presented to President Wilson when he landed at Brest an address declaring that the workers of France welcomed him joyfully. The address said that the history of the world, "shedding light in a night of blood."

The Toronto (Canada) police were called out on strike following an all-night meeting. They demand the reinstatement of union officials, all but one of whom were dismissed, and recognition of their union. Mayor Church objected to the dismissal of the officials without avail. A mass meeting followed, at which the men voted to go on strike.

The striking motormen and conductors of the Cleveland Railway company voted to accept the proposition of President Stanley of the company that he would dismiss 150 woman conductors by March 1. The men resumed work. The women have been employed since September 1.

The largest single call for labor received at the headquarters of the United States employment service at New York since the armistice was signed came from the Pennsylvania Railroad company, which asked for 8,500 men. More than half of the total are wanted for skilled work.

Members of the Montreal Police and Firemen's union issued an ultimatum to the city that their strike would be resumed unless three officials, whom they object to, were dismissed. They left the force.

Six hundred ship workers at the south plant of the Baltimore Drydocks and Shipbuilding company quit work because, they say, their wages have been reduced. The men who left the yards are mostly machinists, riveters and bolters, and though the work in the yards is still progressing, the construction of ships on the ways is seriously hampered.

TRADE UNIONISM IN SWEDEN

Increase of Membership During the Last Five Years Has Been Remarkable, Says Report.

In an article in the Socialdemokraten a review is made of the increase of membership in the different trade unions during the last five years, and attention is drawn to the great importance of this fact. When the Amalgamated Trade Union was established in 1898, the journal states, all the members of the party were proud to know that the membership in the trade unions reached 50,000. Twelve years later the number exceeded 100,000, and at the international conference in 1910 the national organization was admitted as one of the strongest organizations in the world, compared with the size of the country. At the present time the membership of the national union has doubled. More than four-fifths of all the organized workers belong to the union, which will soon be able to boast of containing every wage-earner in Sweden.

GENERAL LABOR NEWS

Canada has over 5,000 female bank clerks.

Public school teachers in New York are agitating for higher salaries.

Forty-six women draftsmen are now employed by the Pennsylvania railroad.

Four large steel plants to cost \$15,000,000, are to be established in Duluth.

Wives of men in military service are now admitted in the Kansas City post office.

Blyth (England) Soldiers and Sailors' Federation has refused to join the labor party.

It is proposed to increase the wages of the Glasgow (Scotland) police \$1.25 a week.

Derry (Ireland) workers resumed work pending the reopening of the wage question.

Over 1,000 girls are employed in the big seaplane factory at the League Island navy yard.

The war labor board is to make an investigation into traction problems in New York city.

Repair work absorbs about 40 per cent of the labor and machinery of British shipyards.

The Augusta (Ga.) Builders' association has recognized trade unionism for the first time in its history.

A large number of Irish carpenters over military age have gone to England to work on government buildings.

The Scottish institute of accountants has decided to admit women to membership on the same terms as men.

The Massachusetts minimum wage commission has established a minimum rate for women employed in retail millinery workshops.

Aerodrome contractors from Great Britain are at present in Dublin for the purpose of employing men for their work in England.

A new find of coal seams in the Irish Midlands promises to give an abundant yield and relieve the coal situation in Ireland.

Unskilled workers employed in the Illinois Central railway shops at Waterloo, Iowa, are being organized into a federal labor union.

Secretary Daniels asked congress to make permanent the double-pay given the enlisted men of the navy at the beginning of the war as a temporary measure.

Liebknecht's appeal for a general strike is meeting with more response with many strikes in big factories. Liebknecht himself, entering buildings backed by force, has persuaded workers to quit. The coal mine strike at Essen has taken a serious turn, the miners trying to enforce their demand by threats to destroy the mines on Monday.

Every employee of Morris & Co., packers, was given a Christmas bonus of 10 per cent of the amount of their salary for the six months period ending November. The total amount distributed aggregates several hundred thousand dollars. H. A. Timmins, secretary and assistant treasurer, said. The bonus brought a smile from the office boy up.

The National Alliance of Employers and Employed, whose object it is to bring British employers and workers together in harmonious co-operation, recently held successful meetings in the Midlands of delegates from trades and labor councils. As the result of activities of the alliance, a joint committee of employers and employed has been formed at Liverpool.

The house bill providing for the payment by the government of the railroad fare of war workers returning to their homes was passed by the senate and now goes to conference. The measure applies only to workers receiving not more than \$1,400 annually, and to encourage reduction by the number of government employees as quickly as possible the senate amended the bill so that it will apply to workers whose services will terminate by next January 15 instead of March 31, as provided in the house draft.

The board of directors of the Canadian railway has ordered the Great Northwestern Telegraph company to include chiefs and linemen in its new schedule, thus avoiding a strike.

The strike of policemen, firemen and other city employees of Montreal was settled and the men returned to work. The strikers agreed to arbitrate after the city council had voted to accede to their demand for the dismissal of the director of public safety, his assistant and the chief of detectives. While the strike lasted only 23 hours, gangs of hoodlums caused damage estimated at more than \$250,000.

The strike in Berlin has reached serious proportions, according to a dispatch received at London from Amsterdam. Only two newspapers are being published and these are small leaflets. It is said that 250,000 workmen are out.

Demanding an increase in wages— from 87½ to \$1.25 an hour—union plumbers and steamfitters, employed at government nitrate plant No. 2, at Mussel Shoals, walked out on strike. There were 445 strikers, and it is said that they will be joined by the carpenters, electricians, iron workers, and sheet metal workers.

HOME TOWN HELPS

CO-OPERATE TO FIGHT FIRE

Officials and Citizens Should Work Together to Reduce Waste Largely Caused by Carelessness.

Self-interest should prompt every property owner and tenant to co-operate with the officials of the fire department and of the fire-prevention bureau. Chief Loucks and Jacob H. Hill, director of the fire-prevention bureau, have instituted a system to "fight fires before they begin." Semimonthly inspections are made in every part of the city and property owners are warned to clean up rubbish and to take precautions against fire, where such appear to be needed.

The comparative figures on fire waste in the United States and in European countries have been presented to American newspaper readers many times. The per capita loss in this country is ten to twenty times as great as in some parts of the Old World. Much of that, to be sure, is due to the difference in materials and methods of constructing buildings. But a very large percentage may be charged to our American carelessness. A large proportion of our fire waste is preventable and the Indianapolis officials are working to eliminate that element.

Fire waste is a burden to everybody and all should be active in helping to reduce it. The insurance rates of the city or a nation are based on the losses the companies pay. The smaller the risk the lower the rates will be. The companies receive from policyholders the money that is paid out on fire losses. The way in which to get lower insurance rates is to keep down losses. We are all interested in that and each should do his or her part to make the inspection system of the city thoroughly effective. — Indianapolis Star.

HAVE MORE THAN CASH VALUE

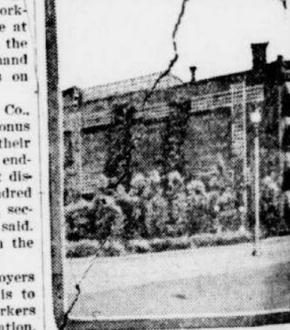
General Cultivation of Back-Yard Gardens Means Improvement in the Health of a Community.

It may seem a bit previous to mention this year, but don't neglect your garden this year. See if you can't prove peace better than war, even in the back yard.

War gardens were worth several hundred million dollars to their makers last year, in cash saved alone. They were worth yet more to the nation, for the food thus raised at home released railroad equipment for other uses. They were worth most of all in health, education, better habits and saner grasp of life.

All these items will be worth just as much this year as last. Food prices are sure to remain high for a considerable time. Railroad equipment will be scanty enough if we release every possible bit of it for service to the industries which must have it. And of course there is no need to enlarge upon the perennial benefits of healthful work, or the superior taste of home-grown vegetables.

EFFECTIVE "CAMOUFLAGE"



An Unightly Wall Adjoining Church Property, Beautified by a Trellis, Vines and Shrubs. — Popular Mechanics Magazine.

Destruction of Rats in Cities.
The routing of rats from cities has become both an economic and a sanitary necessity. Facing the possibility of an epidemic of bubonic or pneumonic plague and the enormous expenditures necessitated by such an outbreak, it is the part of wisdom for any city to protect itself from the calamity. It is not for the individual householder or citizen to decide whether he will interest himself in the subject. It is a matter for municipal legislation, and it is the duty of the citizen to support the ordinance and to co-operate with the authorities to the best of his ability in order that the city may be a clean and safe place in which to live.

Fire Prevention.

Fire prevention is the next form of public thrift this country must develop. Our returning soldiers can bring back word that in the last pre-war year 1913, our per capita fire loss was more than four times that of France and more than six times that of England. — Boston Herald.

Where Humans Lag.

According to an Italian scientist's figures, a square mile of the earth's surface in six hours of sunshine receives heat equivalent to the combustion of more than 2,000 tons of coal. And we scientific barbarians can't yet harness 1-1/2 per cent of it. Some day we may learn how.

A One-Pun Note.

The Bohemians always were a head people. They had a royal Otto car in the thirteenth century. — Toronto Globe.

Carrying-on Alone

She went downtown for the peace celebration—a slender young woman, whose husband had been killed in one of the regiments sent to France. Some one, who knew her, expressed surprise at her being willing to take part in this celebration.

"When Billy went away he was quite a soldier," she told her friend. "He not only wore a uniform, but he had taken up what he termed military speech. The last thing he told me was: 'While I'm gone I want you to go on with a smile

on your face. I can carry-on better if I know you'll do that."

"So I promised him I would, and he reminded me in every letter of my promise. 'Carry-on with a smile,' he ended every letter—even the last one. So I'm still carrying-on, even if he doesn't come back. My promise still holds."—Indianapolis News.

LOADS BOX CARS.

A prominent iron and steel manufacturer in the East is using the industrial truck for loading box cars with the smaller product of his plant. These parts are loaded directly onto a truck with an overhead crane, run up a 25 per cent grade onto the loading platform alongside the box cars and then into the box car. The loading position of this truck is directly at the bottom of the 25 per cent grade and the truck must climb this grade from a standing start. As high as two tons have been handled in a single load in this fashion. One of the serious problems that has confronted this manufacturer is the handling of flasks and storage material on filled ground; to overcome this is a portable board track with flat planks as rails was made and no difficulty encountered in running at full speed over this track—a distance of 150 feet.