

Chapter Two

Student Gurnay

Alexander Hansenne and his brother were devotees of the new sport in its early days. When these lads were in their early adult years, they were befriended by a successful local fancier, whose name was Dedoyard. This fancier gave Alexandre two eggs when the two lads were on their way to a dance. The eggs were forgotten in the coat pocket of young Hansenne, where we may guess that they received a bit of bouncing around.

The story goes that when Hansenne arrived at home and remembered the eggs, he had very little hope that they would still hatch. However, he put them under a foster pair, and the resulting young cock birds were to establish Hansenne as the greatest long distance racer of his time. Further, it is interesting to note that the bronze color of the two cocks remains a characteristic in the Hansennes and Gurnays of the present day. It was probably Hansenne, as well, who first blended Antwerp and Liege types.

Gurnay was perhaps a dozen years younger than Hansenne, and in his late teens and early twenties, he was regarded as one of the best runners in the area. By this time, Hansenne was a successful baker, with his loft over his bake shop and; approaching middle age, no longer did much running.

As previously indicated, Hansenne had to run with his

pigeon to the club after its arrival. By this time, an allowance had been given to each fancier, which varied according to how far he was from the club. Enter Gurnay, the fast runner, and a partnership which was to shake the pigeon world to its depths was formed.

Not only was the lad a fast runner, but he had an eye and the hands of a champion pigeon flyer. Hansenne must have felt that Heaven had smiled upon him, indeed. Especially since Hansenne had the same complaint which has plagued many others of us; our sons are not interested in our birds.

As for Gurnay, he had access to the best racing pigeons in the world. It was a partnership for the gods.

We are told that on an important race day, Hansenne told Gurnay that if they won that day, Gurnay was to have the winning bird as a prize. Gurnay ran to the club and then to his own loft with Vielle Bleue (the old blue female). She was to become one of the Gurnay foundation birds, and her descendents won over \$250,000.00 for the master.

The Hansenne pigeons were mostly bronze or dark check, although there were a few blues, one or two reds, and a few white flights. These were the colors in the Gurnay loft as well, but Gurnay hated white feathers, so most such birds were quickly culled. It wasn't until Georges Fabry and his son, Victor, got the Gurnay blood that white feathered birds in large numbers were allowed to survive.

One more point on colors. Many subsequent fanciers have insisted that Hansenne had no reds. Therefore, the reds in Gurnay's loft had to have come from Verhoye, a man with whom Gurnay traded some birds in later years.

This point was clarified by Dr. Anderson, the Scottish fancier, who wrote that there were, indeed, red specimens in the

Hansenne loft.

Hansenne's birds were true to the Liege, or Verviers type; short legged, short bodied, with bold heads, short necks, strong backs and tails, and having shallow keels. The feathering was fine and of much better quality than the Antwerp birds.

Eyes were varied. The Hansenne champion, Le Bossu (The Hunchback), had a violet eye, which we almost never see any longer. Chocolate eyes were common, as was the so called, "Belgian," or "national" eye, with the three colors of the Belgian flag: black, yellow, and red. These two latter ones predominate in today's Hansenne and Gurnay birds.

One of Hansenne's champions was a dark check with a patch of lighter feathers on his back. He was known as "Heart on the Back," or, "Coer Sur Le Dos." The trait very rarely occurs in modern times.

It should be said that modern day Gurnays still possess the traits which make them champions; they are fast maturing and have an overwhelming love of mate and nest, which makes the Gurnays still champions of widowhood in the right hands.

Of course, breeding itself is an art; mastered by few; poorly understood by many. Most of us fail miserably in our attempts to preserve our better flyers, and nobody, anywhere, has ever approached Renier Gurnay's success in this area.

We must give Alexandre Hansenne proper credit. As we look at a photo of Vielle Bleue, we better understand the heredity of later Gurnay champions.

While we are admiring genius, we must also give proper

credit to Mons. Dedoyard. While it is probable that Gurnay would have been the champion that he was in any case, it seems also true that without the help of Dedoyard and Hansenne, it would have been much more difficult.

What combination of traits makes a genius; an all time world champion like Renier Gurnay? Today, we would call him an entrepreneur. He was a natural salesman, who made a fortune selling men's clothing, but more than that, he could see opportunities to make money where the rest of us only see items of momentary interest.

Gurnay was also somewhat of a visionary. He built the first cinema in Verviers, at a time when his peers questioned his sanity.

Of course, he brought those same traits to pigeon racing: the drive to succeed; the keen eye; the ability to explore fine points which made him the icon; the man on top of the heap.

When Gurnay originally asked his father for permission to keep race birds, he was at first refused. Finally, his father relented and told the boy that he could have birds if his father won a lottery. The lottery was won, and all was well.

Chapter Three

The Emperor

How wonderful it would have been had Gurnay written an autobiography! Such a book would be the Bible of pigeon racing today, for, of course, he was its greatest practitioner.

Unfortunately, such a book does not exist, so we must make do with the few words which were written about him in the books and periodicals of the time, and subsequently. In addition, we do have two bits of correspondence, which he wrote in French and which were translated into English. Beyond these few bits, all of the many details must be omitted or guessed at, and the writer has the twin tasks of picturing the Master in good clarity; while striving for accuracy.

As Gurnay grew into a husband, father, and increasingly more wealthy business man, so did the sport of racing pigeons change and evolve.

In 1876, when Gurnay was only twelve, the Belgians developed the method of expressing speeds in yards per minute; the system we still use today. Early distances were very short: 53 miles and 31 miles are two examples which have survived, and, in most races, any bird of any age was eligible for the competition.

These two details are missing altogether from racing in the US, where the average first race is at least 100 miles, and

ld and young bird series are completely separate.

vidently the distance thing soon evolved, because we are
ld that Hansenne was the Belgian long distance champion
f his day.

rom the first Hansenne birds he acquired, Gurnay decided
o specialize in Hansennes. Those first two were a bronze
ock and the previously mentioned Vielle Bleue. Thereafter,
urnay got more Hansennes at every opportunity.

i 1903, Hansenne died, and his pigeons were disbursed.
he bulk of them went to a wealthy fancier named Hanssur.

urnay was consistent from the beginning in not wanting
nyone in Verviers to have any of "his," and, by projection,
ansenne's blood, so, when an opportunity arose, he paid
igh prices to retrieve the Hansenne birds from Hanssur.

urnay later crossed in birds from Verhoye, Bricoux,
avenith, and others, but these newcomers were culled
gorously, and only the very best specimens survived. If a
ross was found wanting, not only were the youngsters
ulled, but also the new subject and its Gurnay mate, for it
as felt that something of the cross remained in the genes.

le may suspect that Gurnay knew nothing of Mendel,
lthough Mendel was born in 1822 and thus was only 42
ears older than Gurnay. Further, Mendel was Austrian, so
ey lived their lives in reasonably close proximity. We must
so recall that Mendel did his work in a monastery, and,
lthough Gurnay traveled locally extensively, we have no
vidence that he strayed very far from home until after he
et Fred Shaw.

inally, there would have been a language barrier. While
endel wrote and spoke German, Gurnay's natural tongue

was a Belgian dialect of French. Perhaps he had some
familiarity with Dutch.

It was too bad for the Gurnay subjects which were
outcrossed; they were undoubtedly top specimens, who
might have been spared if news of Mendel's work had
reached Gurnay.

At any rate, for thirty years, from c. 1890 to c. 1920, Gurnay
was virtually unbeatable in the 250 loft organizations in
which he flew.

It was an era of "doublages," and Gurnay was just the super
competitor to take advantage of super birds and super
handling. We are told that the maximum bet on one pigeon
was about \$4000, and it is reported that Gurnay was fearless
in backing his selections.

In one season alone, he won \$25,000, and in seven
consecutive seasons, over \$100,000. During this period, he
flew only 25 pigeons! On another occasion, he won \$10,000
in eight days with six pigeons, and still another where he
entered four pigeons and won first, twelfth, and thirty eighth,
against 1,643 birds.

At one time, he had three birds in his loft which had each
won the Belgian Grand National by over thirty minutes faster
than their nearest rivals. They were called, "Little Blue Cock,"
"Bariole (pied)," and "Bronze Favourite."

In a National Vierzon race with 351 entries, he raced two
birds, which won first and second.

Because of these exploits and many more like them, Gurnay
was given the title, "The Emperor," by Georges Gits

Naturally, because of the fundamental beauty of the Gurnay

pigeons, he was basically unbeatable in shows, as well.

At a Grand Exposition de Liege, 816 competitors, he won first, second, third, and best in show. Another year: first and second against 312. At the Brussels International Show, he entered three birds and won first, second, and fourth.

It should surprise nobody that the Gurnays were the principle subjects in the development of the "Show Homer," by people such as George Greenshields of Scotland and Arthur Peck of the US.

The championship in Verviers was decided by the total number of prizes won in combined young and old birds. Gurnay won it 30 consecutive times, although he only flew young birds once or twice!

| Stations | Distance |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Montargis, France | 211 miles |
| Chateauroux, France | 323 miles |
| Limoges, France | 385 miles |
| Perigueux, France | 440 miles |
| Santander, Spain | 540 miles |
| St. Vincent, Spain | 560 miles |

Since transportation was so uncertain, it was common for the birds to spend a week traveling to the release point.

Renier Gurnay, The Person

Although intensely competitive and somewhat reserved, Gurnay was a warm and affectionate person within his family or with those he liked.

He and his devoted wife, M. Pauline, had a long and loving marriage, and she was probably a fairly typical "pigeon" wife, in that she supported his activities while not sharing the technical aspects.

She loved showy birds with white feathers, and we may imagine family disputes, since we recall that he hated any sort of white feathers.

Often there was a favorite of hers; usually called, "Joli de Madame," which translates to "joy (favorite) of the madame."

We can imagine their joy when a daughter was born to the devoted couple and the grief when this child died at about age twelve.

Renier also had a brother who flew pigeons, as well, but his activities were so eclipsed by the fame of his sibling that nothing is known about him.

Renier also had a group of buddies; sort of what we today might call, "the boys' poker club." However, their male bonding thing was hunting, and Renier had the funds to buy a hunting lodge in the Ardennes Forest.

There Gurnay presided over the activities as a genial host and probably showed a side which many others did not realize existed.

Once Gurnay befriended Fred Shaw, the latter was included in fraternal activities, as well.

It was Shaw who persuaded Gurnay to judge a pigeon show in Leeds, and while Gurnay was there, the market changed, and he lost a small fortune. He refused to return home until the show was properly judged. This incident gives us one more reason to admire our hero.

During World War I, the Germans chose to quarter some of their officers at the Gurnay home (it was the most palatial in the town). After the Germans left, Gurnay was accused of collaborating with the enemy, and a mob stormed the Gurnay home. A piano was thrown through a window, and extensive other damage was done.

Gurnay went to the town council and demanded an apology and reparations and received both.

So much for mobs. We in the US know a great deal about mob justice and can identify with a rich and successful man at the hands of an envious bunch of thugs.

However, there were writers, Belgian and English, who viewed Gurnay as a collaborator and never forgave him. In many pigeon tracts, he is still persona non grata.

The other incident, related to the war years, was much more dangerous for Gurnay, personally.

Following the beginning of his friendship with Fred Shaw, Gurnay accepted some English bands from Shaw and put them on some youngsters, planning to ship them to England. During the war years, with Shaw in the English army and Gurnay living in occupied Belgium, there was no contact.

However, when the Germans discovered English bands on some birds in Gurnay's loft, they accused Gurnay of spying for the Allies.

Gurnay was eventually able to convince the Germans of his innocence on the spying charge, but it was a dangerous time for him, and we can imagine that he rued the day when he accepted the English bands from Shaw.

The Gurnay dynasty came to an end in 1936, when Gurnay

was 72 and in failing health. One hundred sixty eight birds were sold on Christmas day, and buyers came from all over Europe to get some of the blood of the greatest strain ever known.

Gurnay was to live for three more years. During the first week in May of 1939, he had surgery; for what condition is not known, and he died shortly afterward. We do know that he suffered from a heart condition and had his final sale because he could no longer climb to the third floor, where his loft was located.

Chapter Four

Methods

At last, rather than hearsay and conjecture, we have Gurnay's own words. We must be cautious in only one regard. Gurnay wrote in only one language, and that was French. When we read these words in English, we must always remember that they have been translated by someone who (hopefully) understands both languages.

The following is from, "The Widowhood Book," edited by C.A.E.Osman.

"To fly birds well in a state of "widowhood," attention must be given every second. If a fancier believes that it is merely sufficient to separate the cocks from the hens to obtain results, he will quickly be given proof to the contrary.

The fancier must busy himself all the year around with his pigeons, have them well in hand, stop all "fielding," and have at his disposal very spacious buildings. For as Widowhood gives marvelous results with an experienced fancier - it induces the well-managed pigeon to very great speed - so it will only give pitiful results to the fancier who has not at his disposal sufficient time nor sufficiently profound knowledge.

The Lofts

First of all, one must have a loft for the cocks, a loft for the

youngsters, and a loft for the hens, sufficiently distant from that of the cocks so that the hens cannot either be seen or heard. In addition, one requires a loft for the breeding pairs.

The loft for the cocks, that is to say, the racing loft, must not contain any perches, and possess just as many nest boxes as there are cocks. These boxes must have a board that will turn down and serve as a perch for the cocks. The front of the box must be closed with laths, and there must be an entrance such that the cock returning from a race can enter immediately and cannot get out again.

My loft is composed of boxes measuring about 15 in. deep, 20 in. wide and 18 in. high. The boxes are all of the same dimensions and are placed one on top of the other. They can be removed easily in proportion to the losses in racing, for it is essential that there shall be only one box for each cock.

I pair up about three weeks before the races, and allow the birds to sit for a week and take away the hen. The cock continues to sit alone for several days, and abandons the eggs, which are then taken away. This is the moment when the education of the pigeon commences, or its re-education, if the bird has already been flown in this fashion.

Morning and evening they have to fly, commencing with half an hour, and increasing until, at the end of a few days, the birds fly without interruption for an hour. Whatever the weather, the cocks must fly each day, morning and evening, for an hour. As soon as the flight is finished, the loft is shut up. Then the period of training commences. At the beginning the cock travels without seeing his hen, either on the return or on the departure, but on his return he is greeted by his owner, who gives him some carefully chosen food.

In the few training tosses preceding the races, before the basketing, the hen is left with the cock for a few seconds, but great care is taken to avoid any close contact. The cock

must on his return find his hen shut up in his box, and he must do the same after each race. The pigeon, accustomed to finding on his return the companion he desires, will be full of fire on the return journey. I leave the pair one hour or two together, and then take the hen away again until the next race.

I tried many years ago to fly separated hens, but did not obtain the same results as with cocks, and I abandoned this method temporarily.

Many fanciers have tried Widowhood, and very few are those who have continued with it. The first attempts are very difficult. At the beginning the pigeons are seen to take to the loft. They seem to be morose. They are not really in form until after the time when they know that at each return from a journey they will discover their hens. The fancier who will persevere will see in the long run that the pigeons are in a good state of health, the results are magnificent by this system.

Certain pigeons will not take to Widowhood easily. They lose appetite; they will not eat such and such a grain. It is necessary to give them tit-bits to make them decide to eat. Millet, hemp, rape, even a paste of hard-boiled eggs mixed with bread crumbs. If, in spite of these chosen foods, one or several subjects persist in not eating and pine, Widowhood must be stopped for a certain time, and the birds put in the loft among the breeding hens.

For lofts practicing Widowhood, the period of breeding commences as soon as the races are ended. At this time the hens are replaced in the loft, and they are allowed to rear a couple of youngsters. Contrary to what one might suppose, in Widowhood the pigeon moults with difficulty. The fancier when he has little time to make them moult. It is a critical moment and if they do not have a good moult, the following

season is greatly endangered.

Osman goes on to explain that a Frank Denton was good friends with both Gurnay and his loft manager and relates further points:

Denton called the Gurnay system a "mathematical system," because nothing was left to chance.

For example, each bird was weighed, and the grain which he ate was also weighed. In addition, Gurnay would take their pulse rate, as in human medicine.

He preferred a short, very thick bird with short, very thick legs. He preferred them to be on the big side; like Wegge, he felt that a good big bird would beat a good little bird. Sunbelt flyers in the US will mostly disagree, but that is probably a consideration of climate.

Gurnay liked deep, rich colors, and he called all light hues "bastard colors."

He used a paste involving butter, for he believed that it promoted strong bones.

He fed "vin rouge," (red wine), but his wine was potassium permanganate, which he put in both drinking and bath water.

Gurnay did not fly yearlings very much on Widowhood; he felt that they were too erratic.

He didn't let youngsters out until their wattles were whitening, and he rarely lost one. When questioned, he said, "Why let a youngster out before it has enough sense to know its loft?"

Here, also, more of Gurnay quotes as written to Lee Ford of

Montana and translated from the French by M. Vanvister:

Comments by Ford: Although breeding and racing pigeons for several years, it wasn't until 1919 that I purchased two pairs of birds from Mons. Gurnay, and continued to import a few birds annually down to and including the year 1928. Through frequent correspondence, an interesting friendship developed and in due course Mons. Gurnay gave freely of his time and experience to advise me of his methods in breeding, rearing and racing pigeons.

In response to my request, he gave me the following information on his widowhood system of racing cocks, which I adopted in my own loft. Gaining experience, I asked questions from time to time, which he gladly answered, and what I have jotted down here is quoted almost word for word from his replies, omitting sentences where repetition occurs. Gurnay writes: "Regarding my system, I enclose a photo of my loft in order to make explanations clearer.

Loft 1 is for hens separated from their mates.

Loft 2 is the grain room.

Loft 3 is for 16 cocks (racers alone)

Loft 4 is for 16 cocks (racers alone)

Loft 5 is for 25 pairs of good breeders.

Loft 6 is for the season's youngsters.

As you see, the hens are far away enough, so as to prevent the cocks from hearing their cooing as far as possible. Six weeks before we start our races, all my birds are mated and sitting on eggs about eight days.



As soon as the racers and their hens have 4-5 days' eggs you make them exercise over the loft, morning and evening for fifteen minutes for the start, increasing daily by five minutes, twice, until you reach the maximum of one hour morning and evening - thus two hours per day. For all distances this preparatory work is necessary.

Every time you drive your birds out for exercise, just haul up a flag, or some kind of scare over the loft, and leave there for the time you want them to fly. They will keep flying until you remove that strange thing.

When the youngsters are twenty days old (sometimes 2 are reared) take the hens away. Now the cocks fly morning and night and are kept in the loft without hens.

Before basketing the cocks intended for the day's race, you force them to fly out, and while they are exercising you put the hens into the nest boxes. When the cock comes in, he finds his hen in the nest, cuddles her and when the hen is feeling amorous, she cuddles him. You leave them together about five minutes, but are careful not to let copulation take place. When you take him away, be careful to let him have a last look at his hen so as to be sure that she is in the nest box, and off he goes, madly in love. He is sure to remember that when he comes back. When you expect the birds back from the race you put the hen back in the nest box again, and you leave the pair together thirty to sixty minutes. You take the hen away again and keep her out of sight and hearing until you are ready for the next race.

You will be surprised to see their speed when coming back from a race and unless untoward incidents happen you will never have a bird so trained losing time over the loft, but he will drop like a stone. This system you may use for all races up to 500 miles.

The system is as good as and perhaps better if you separate the pair after 8 days' sitting, but in that case you have no offspring from the racers so treated. For ten years I have so treated loft No. 3 separating the birds after eight days sitting in loft No. 4 I let the parents raise the first nest up to twenty days, then only taking the hen away. As I have done as well each year with Loft No. 4 as with Loft No. 3, I have made up my mind this season (1924) to apply the system used on Loft 4 to both Lofts 3 and 4.

No doubt with this system you will have some birds which, after a certain time, will not keep up their vim, but I do think this depends much on the strain, for mine got used to it wonderfully well. Do not alarm yourself if the cocks look less lively than usually - carry on with out discouragement. It is a double-edged weapon to be sure, but when one knows it well it is the very best one.

Quite naturally it will happen that after five or six weeks, some of the hens will pair together and lay eggs. That is the draw back, for after that, when you put such a hen in the presence of her cock, she does not take any notice of him and that is bad. The best then is to get hold of another hen, similar in color if possible and very amorous so as to excite the cock before basketing him for the race. As soon as you notice hens have laid when separated from the cocks, take the eggs away, never let them set. Do not feed them too much.

If mated to your racers, there are a few hens which you value, you ought, after rearing their first hatch with that cock-racer on the widowhood system, to give them another mate in another loft, and to the racers, give them other hens which you do not like so much, for the rest of the season, provided they are in a fit state to 'attract' their mate when he is allowed to see them. Thus your good hens will be kept mated for the season and your racers will have a hen which will answer the purpose of 'warming them up' when needed

for the races and after they come back from the races too.

It is with yearlings handled this way that I have always done best. The one drawback is fog, for in that case they run blindly into the thick of it, they are liable of getting lost; but in bright weather they are there, the more so against a head wind. Do not over work the birds too young; at yearlings 325 miles at two years and older 500 to 600 miles.

After exercise, morning and evening you get the birds to drop into the loft and you scatter on the floor (which has been well cleaned) some 50 grams of tares and 25 grams of peas. The loft being closed, you wait until they have picked up everything of that 75 grams of food which makes half of the meal. Then you take the other half of the meal, made up 50% hemp, 25% red rape seed, and 25% canary seed, and you put a tenth of that ration into each nest box, being about 7.5 grams to each bird. Thus you come to 150 grams for each meal or 300 grams per day for ten birds. Start this feeding a fortnight before your first training toss.

About the middle of the racing season when the best races are on and so as to excite the birds still more, you alter the mixture of the small grains as follows: put into a dish one cupful of red rape seed, one of canary seed, two of hemp and mix with six hard boiled hen eggs, which you have mashed with a fork, also have some white bread toasted dry and which you have reduced to dust, and put two cupfuls of it into the mixture of seeds and eggs.

Add to this so much as the volume of an ordinary egg pure natural honey. Mix well and dry thoroughly in the sun, preferably, but inside if necessary. Some powdered sugar can do no harm. Put some of that mixture in a small pot in the nests of such birds as will go on the road, for the four days before basketing them, but always after they have had their regular meal."

More Ford comments: "Mons. Gurnay's loft was on the third story of his home, I believe, and probably sixty feet or more in length. To facilitate the handling of his birds, the windows of the entire loft were equipped with shutters. By manipulation of the shutters the light entering the loft was controlled, and his racers could be prevented from seeing their mates while they - the hens - were exercising. It matters not if the racing cocks see or hear the birds from the breeding loft.

The nest boxes in Loft No. 3 and Loft. No. 4 were equipped with a wire bob which allowed the cock to enter but kept the hen in. A small door was hinged to the front of the nest box so that the birds could be confined, but when opened served as a perch for the cock, and as there were no other perches in the loft each racer must perch on the small door to his own nest box.

After the cocks were exercising in the morning the shutters to their loft were drawn and all birds except hens in Loft No. 1 were given their freedom until 4:00 pm. Hens in Loft No. 1 were exercised separately.

In exercising under Gurnay's Widowhood System, I found that within a short time my racing team became accustomed to the flag, or scare, and I had to be on hand to jiggle it up and down the pole, should the birds suddenly pitch toward the loft. Changing to a flag of a different color proved helpful.

Most fanciers have not the loft space needed to follow the Widowhood System of racing, and cannot spare the time to exercise their birds one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening" .(Gurnay's loft man probably attended to this for him.) Ford note.

"For rearing youngsters, this is what I feed the parents, tares 30 percent, beans 15 percent, wheat 25 percent, coiza seed

15 percent and linseed 15 percent.

For the moult - as soon as the racing season is over, give the birds a good purge; one gram of Carlsbad salt per head. Close the loft, take away the water, give the birds but light food. At noon the next day, give them the water containing the salt. As they will be thirsty, they will drink and be purged.

Food for the moult: fresh wheat 2 parts, linseed 1 1/2 parts, black rape coiza 1 part, tares 1 1/2 parts, maple peas 1 1/2 parts, barley, unpeeled 1 1/2 parts, rice, unpeeled, 1 part; total, ten parts, along with plenty of greens, lettuce, cress, and spinach well chopped. Mind that both barley and rice should be raw; i.e., unpeeled. When the moult is over, give the same food, but made up of 14 parts, in which the barley will come in for 5 1/2 parts instead of 1 1/2 parts as during the moult.

Also you should have in the loft always at the birds disposal the following mixture: powdered sulfate of iron, chemically mixed, 1 part; bicarbonate of soda, 2 parts; bran of wheat 10 parts; meat powder (ground beef) 10 parts; washed flour of brimstone (powdered sulfur, purified), 10 parts; flour of hemp, 10 parts; bone powder, 10 parts; this mixture being 53 parts for 7 sorts. All this well mixed with health grit in every loft and do not forget the greens. Also two to three baths a week."

If a fortnight before the open (short) fast races, you could take them (the racers) every other day to some short distance, ten to fifteen miles and toss them individually from five to fifteen minutes apart, it would be ideal for them to return alone and choose the way by themselves, not going with the crowd.

(On outcrossing) "I am no adversary of crossbreeding but contend it must be carefully done and well tried before going

to any great length with any crossing. If the experiment proves successful, it is quite time to carry on with it, but not before proofs of any success are at hand. I search for blood that will fit with mine. It is a delicate thing to do I assure you.

However one may be a careful connoisseur in birds, and however careful one may be in making crossings, there will always remain an element of luck, or ill-luck which cannot be countered, but which must be taken into account. I have been working at my strain for 35 years (written in 1924) and that is no easy task to obtain both beauty and capability in a strain, you will realize in time.

Do not lose sight of this, the keystone of a loft is the good breeders, which are worth much more than the racers. Good racers are not always good breeders, and one ought not to breed much when one is racing a bird. Except in exceptional cases it is almost impossible to have it both ways. Never risk a good bird beyond 500 - 550 miles for they have too many enemies to deal with."

Ford comments, "Gurnay introduced new blood from time to time, but if the experiment proved unsuccessful, which it often did, he killed all the birds containing the blood of the new introduction. He had success in introducing the blood of M. Verhoye and in 1921 he sent to me a mealy hen whose sire was his well known mealy cock 146-13 strain of Verhoye of Courtrai. (Her brother later became one of Mr. Gurnay's best racers.)

In 1926 Gurnay mentioned in a letter to me that in March he had purchased at very high prices four birds for the purpose of experimenting in the introduction of new blood into his loft.

January 26, 1925 he writes, "I take this opportunity of letting you have a late bred red Bricoux 1351721-24, which I have had in this way: Dr. Bricoux is an intimate friend of Mr. L.

Fraigneux, a Liege fancier judge at the Commercial Court of Liege, who also is a great friend of mine. Last year I let him have the father of the chequered bird which I am sending to you at this time in order to breed a pair of youngsters off him. His loft (Fraigneux) is composed of all first class Bricoux, and in acknowledgement of my loan he sent me a pair of late bred Bricoux of his breeding, of which I keep one and send you the other."

Ford commented that Gurnay wanted Ford to try a Bricoux cross.

Ford concludes: "My association through correspondence with the late M. Gurnay was most pleasant. On several occasions he invited me with my family to be guests at his home and I regret that we were unable to accept. In all he sent to me as presents eight very choice birds among them the 12th prize Bordeaux in 1924 (507 miles) and a 1920 chequered son of Derby, a marvelous show bird winning a great many prizes; among them December 1924 Liege show, the Excellency prize at Liege show - 1400 birds competing - at the 1924 Brussels International Show first prize."