

CAGE · BIRDS · AND · PETS.

"PETE."

A Remarkable but True Story of a Pet Canary Bird.

The following interesting story is by a member of the Eight O'clock Club, Miss Beatrice Clayton, of this city, and originally appeared in the Philadelphia Times. Some time ago she called to see the editor of Our Boys and Girls, which is part of the Sunday Times, and in talking about pets told him such a wonderful story of her canary bird that he requested her to put it into writing so that he might print it for the club. The editor says: "In our opinion it is the best bird story that ever appeared in type, and lest you should think it in part imaginary we vouch for its strict fidelity to truth. Permit us to say, also, that Miss Clayton, who is only fourteen years old, deserves great credit for the admirable manner in which the story is told." Here it is:

Pete is my canary, and "though I say it as shouldn't," being his owner, he is a handsome bird; bright yellow, with a little green cap on his head and green wings. Before he had been with us a week we discovered that Pete had a mind, and a very great one. He became favorite with everyone, and as we petted him a good deal, he soon picked up a great many cute tricks, some of which I will try to describe.

First, then, Pete's diet is not restricted to seed and water. When he hears the rattle of the knives and forks he comes flying on to any available shoulder with a chirp, and there waits anxiously for anything eatable that may fall to his share. Vegetables, fruit, bread, he likes them all, and having received a choice morsel, he takes it daintily in his beak, and carries it off to his cage. If he is not attended to he alights on the table and helps himself to whatever is within reach that suits his fancy.

One day a bunch of flowers was brought into the room where his cage hangs. Coming in a short time afterward I found him perched right in the centre of the bouquet working away busily. He had pulled a fine rose completely to pieces and was just commencing an attack on some fronds of fern.

One very curious trick of his is this—when I am writing he settles on the desk and begins to amuse himself by turning over the pens, penwiper, etc. By and by he hops nearer and nearer, casting furtive side glances at me, and begins to fight the pen as I write. If I take no notice but keep on he grows very angry, and contests every inch of the way with the pen as it travels over the paper, sometimes becoming so troublesome that I have to drive him away.

One day the wires of his cage became so bent that the sliding door would not remain open. To remedy this I tied it up with a piece of string. Master Pete watched the operation from afar and became interested. As soon as it was done he went into the cage. Shortly after I heard a snap. After much industrious labor he had succeeded in cutting the string with his beak, thus letting the door down and shutting himself in.

I tied it up again with a stronger cord, and after a long interval the same thing happened. After it had gone on for a week or so a hook of wire was substituted for the string. Pete eyed it for a time and then ran up to it. A few dexterous twists of his strong bill and the hook was withdrawn, allowing the door to fall down. Then he came to the corner of the cage and by anxious chirps and the most expressive gestures plainly asked us to let him out again.

One day I noticed that he seemed unusually affectionate. Wherever I went he would follow me, twittering excitedly the while. As he was very erratic I took no notice, but when he flew upstairs after me, a thing he had never done before, I began to think something was wrong. I examined his cage and found that he had not one morsel of seed nor a drop of water. When these were supplied he seemed contented and troubled me no more that day.

When I am at the piano Pete alights on my shoulder and nestles down, apparently listening to the music, never moving until I cease playing. Generally when I call him he will come flying half across the room to me, but one day I

could not find him anywhere. Alarmed lest he should have met with some mishap I hurried here and there calling his name.

Just as I had given him up for lost I caught sight of him crouching quietly on the piano keys. As soon as he saw me looking at him he gave the answering chirp I had been waiting so long to hear, and flew up to my shoulder, stroking out his feathers and rubbing himself against me in such a pretty cooing way that I had not the heart to scold him, as I had intended.

Being so privileged he is in no way restricted, but flies all over the house and two or three times I have found him in rooms where the windows were open and entirely unprotected. He is perfectly domesticated, however, and seems to have no idea of making his escape.

I regret to state that he has one naughty propensity, namely, tearing book leaves and newspapers. When I am reading he alights on the top of the book and pecks at the edges, often slitting a leaf half across if he is not prevented.

But the plaything that pleases him most is a pin. His sharp eyes perceive one from a great distance, and he needs nothing to complete his satisfaction more than a pin-cushion well filled. Provided with one, he never leaves it until every pin is extracted and thrown upon the floor. Sometimes, for convenience, I carry a few pins in my dress, and Pete's mind is never easy until he has plucked them out, played with them awhile and thrown them away.

Some months ago I began to wear glasses. Pete was rather shy of them at first, but soon overcame his fears and began to investigate. I was amused and indulged him. Pretty soon he discovered the hooks which rest over the ears. Selecting the one on the right side he picked at it. Finding that it offered no resistance he grew bold. Three vigorous pulls of his strong beak and he had wrenched it fairly off and was contemplating it with much satisfaction as it dangled over my cheek. This piece of mischief he repeats daily.

When I wear my club button and ribbon he never fails to come and peck at it inquisitively, evidently attracted by the bright colors. When he wants to descend from my shoulder to my lap he lets himself "hand-over-hand" down the front of my dress, holding on by the buttons, or runs down my arm as though it were a ladder.

One day Pete was on the piano mutilating the music after his own peculiar fashion. I advanced to drive him away, but he saw my object and at once resisted me with angry struggles and pecks. But alas! his feet slipped on the polished wood of the instrument (temporarily without a cover). The impetus was too great for him to stop himself; he "skated" rapidly across and vanished down the back of the piano, which stood near the wall.

As it was an upright a fall of its entire height was a serious thing, and immediately there was consternation. In hot haste the instrument was dragged forth and our poor pet was discovered crouching on the floor very much frightened, but otherwise unharmed.

Once by way of teasing him, we hung a small looking glass in his cage. Pete seemed delighted to have a companion and sang his sweetest songs to his reflection. Finding that it made no response to his welcome, he became suspicious and touched the glass cautiously with his beak. As it continued to do nothing but imitate his movements, he grew much enraged and pecked and scolded savagely. Then he seemed more perplexed than ever at its strange behavior and—what do you think?—he peered over the top of the glass to see if there was a bird behind it! Seeing there was not, his interest cooled.

Now there is a glass kept for his special benefit, and he uses it precisely as we use our mirrors; for after taking a bath he arranges his feathers standing before it. As I write he is examining the inkstand and vigorously protesting against my dipping a pen into it. I think all Eight O'clockers will agree with me that he is a wonderful bird.

—A kitten in Hood River, Ore., caught a lizard, but will never catch another. The reptile, in attempting to escape, ran down its enemy's throat where it lodged, with fatal result to the cat.

FANCY MICE.

Their Care and Management—Profitable Breeders.

BY AN OLD FANCIER.

Under this heading comes the ordinary routinal work connected with the keeping of mice, whether they are kept for pleasure or profit, but if for the latter, the closer our notes are applied the better.

The first and most important item to be borne in mind is cleanliness, as anyone who has paid any attention to this subject will testify. In a wild state mice and, in fact, all rodents are very clean, both in their skin and in their dwellings, and it is therefore necessary that in a tame state this cleanliness should be afforded by artificial means, as the animals cannot clean themselves as they do when at liberty. Besides, in holes in the earth the soil acts as a deodorizer of all offensive smells, whereas in an absorbent wooden box, filled, or rather strewed, with another absorbent, sawdust, neither of which possesses any deodorizing properties, the whole soon becomes impregnated with impurities, and, as a natural consequence, disease and death will soon supervene, unless means are taken to ensure cleanliness. These means must be thorough also, or the work will be only half done, and but little improvement of the animals will be effected.

Injury to the mice will also result if the food vessels are allowed to become dirty and encrusted with the stale food and fecal matter, which is often the case in badly kept collections—sore feet, sore noses and other bodily ailments being easily traceable to this cause alone; and where brass-backed feeding tins are used the mice are liable to be poisoned by the verdigris that is sure to be present in unclean vessels. And, again, the mass of insects which soon accumulates in a dirty cage is something wonderful. Both dirt and insects will give the mice a rough appearance, and in nearly all cases the animals soon die if kept as we have described. The smell they cause in a dirty state is almost intolerable, and there is little doubt that instead of being admired the animals will be voted a perfect nuisance.

In the first place, it is necessary to thoroughly scald out the feeding tins at least three times a week, and scrape out the open part of the cage every day, putting in a handful of bran and sawdust in equal parts. This should be done before feeding, so that the whole shall be clean at once. Fresh hay should be put into the nest places once a week, if there are no young litters; but should there be any young mice the nest should not be interfered with until they run about the cage. Besides scraping and dusting the insides of the cages frequently, as we have advised, they (the cages) should be thoroughly cleaned and scrubbed out with boiling water once a month, being very careful that the water penetrates every crevice, or most undesirable insects are liable to congregate together, to the great detriment of the animals. We used to make it a rule to add one per cent of carbolic acid to the water, and not return the mice to the cage for a week after it was scalded out, and by this means perfect immunity from unpleasant smells was secured. This, of course, would necessitate the use of extra cages, but this is rather an advantage than otherwise, as greater cleanliness can be insured.

Before the does litter it is advisable to mix a quantity of cotton wool among the lay in the nest box, so that the nest can be arranged by the mice to their own satisfaction, and as is sometimes the case, if the doe removes it to the open part of the cage, it should be carefully put back into the nest place. She will then take to it at once, without again removing it, as a rule.

The best place in which to keep the cages is a loft, where plenty of air can be admitted, or in a rabbit hutch out of doors, as the smell is then less than it would be in an indoor place; but in all cases care should be taken to avoid damp or excessively cold situations, for although in a wild state mice are perfectly hardy, yet in a domesticated condition they are

liable to suffer from cold and damp, and becomes asthmatical, rough in coat, and generally out of condition; and when in this state they are of little value and there is but small pleasure in looking at them. A certain amount of warmth is necessary to maintain them in the best condition, particularly in winter, and size is much influenced by this alone, a chill when young ones are but imperfectly clothed with fur being at times fatal, and if not, is apt to cause them to remain of small size, to the depreciation of their monetary value. To keep mice well, care and cleanliness are as necessary as they are with dogs and other animals, although to a lesser extent so far as labor is concerned.

In no case should a damp cage be used, nor should the mice be changed about too much, as they will become very wild and unmanageable. When any mice are not required, either from disease or from the color not being suitable, they should be sold, or if this cannot be done, they should be killed, and so got rid of.

Mice, if properly cared for, will live for two or three years, and then die of old age. They are, however, of little or no use for breeding purposes after they are two years old, but during that time they would produce over a hundred young ones.

The London Fancy Canary.

J. H. Verrall in Feathered World.

Modern writers and non-breeders of the London fancy canary consider as their ideal of this bird it should be a clear body bird, with black wings and tail. In the book that I took with me to the meeting of the London Cage Bird Association, and subsequently lent to one of the members, it states that the back of the bird should be spangled with dark spots; most prize winners of late years have been so spotted, but too much so, the spots extending to the sides and breast.

In another old book, over a hundred years old, that I have on birds, in stating the colors of canaries it follows on with "Breeders of fancy birds are still more curious as to feather; there being several subscription societies in London which raise annual premiums for the finest birds, and who have a pattern bird, beautifully engraved and colored, as the standard of perfection; with his various characters explained in a technical style underneath." If one of these engravings could be hunted up what a help it would be to those desirous of restoring this bird. In the book that I lent to a member of the London Cage Bird Association was a list of the club houses at which, in former times, shows of these birds took place. If any of these houses are still in existence it is possible that an illustration and some of the old rules might be found.

At a meeting of the London Cage Bird Association a member stated that he believed that not more than twenty London fancy canaries could be found in the London district. Even with this number the variety ought to be kept in existence. It is a difficult bird to introduce crosses from other varieties. Whatever cross might be used for strengthening the constitution, it would be advisable to continue breeding in-and-in, or the young most resembling the points to be desired to be produced by the cross might be paired the succeeding year to pure-bred London fancy.

This bird ought to be taken in hand by the fancier who objects to the modern method of feeding for color, as before the time of orange colored canaries it was the highest natural colored canary of any variety. It is seldom entered at the Crystal Palace shows at the high figure demanded for other varieties; winning birds being catalogued at one pound five shillings, and seldom over two pounds. No Jonque birds have been exhibited at the Crystal Palace since 1888, and no third prize offered since 1884. Three out of the four that competed at the last Crystal Palace Show were claimed—it is to be hoped by new lovers of the bird. Breeders should enter as many as they can, even if only half-breds, at the coming show of the London Cage Bird Association. If a fair entry is seen there possibly the Crystal Palace Company will not cancel the class. At one of the many shows that I have visited at the Crystal Palace there were more London fancy exhibited than lizards.