

WILLIAM BERNHARD TEGETMEIER.

BY

F. W. SMALLEY.

AT Golder's Green, on November 19th, 1912, there passed away, at the great age of ninety-six, that well-known naturalist, breeder, exhibitor, judge, author and journalist, William Bernhard Tegetmeier. Born at the small village of Colnbrook in Buckinghamshire, on November 4th, 1816, a son of a surgeon in the Navy, Tegetmeier originally intended following his father's profession; and with this object in view passed the necessary examinations in medicine and surgery at University College, London; indeed, for a time, he became a practising surgeon, but the call of Nature became too strong for him, with the result that he threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of a naturalist and journalist. By so doing he proved, during the rest of his long life, of the greatest service to all breeders of poultry and pigeons and exhibition-stock generally, and to such his name will go down to future generations as one of the few men to whom the huge industry of breeding poultry and pigeons for exhibition and utility purposes owes its origin.

Pigeons always held chief place in Tegetmeier's heart, his two favourite groups being dragoons and racing homers, varieties which, in no small measure, owe the high position they hold to-day to his early efforts on their behalf, and in connexion with the last-named, he made the acquaintance of the best fanciers in the home of the *Pigeon Voyageur*—Belgium—and was the first to inaugurate "pigeon races" from Brussels to London.

Turning to Tegetmeier's literary work, foremost comes his book, published in 1868, entitled *Pigeons: their Structure, Varieties, Habits, and Management*, a masterly work on the different breeds as they existed then, and illustrated in colours by the late Harrison Weir, himself a well-known fancier. About the same time he brought



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(Photographed by Messrs. Parker.)

out another book dealing with pigeons, entitled *Homing Pigeons*, which is still held in great esteem; there are also two other well thought-out works—namely, *Breeding for Colour*, and *Physiology of Breeding*, long since out of print and now very scarce and valuable.

In 1873, Tegetmeier published his book on *Poultry*, which was again illustrated by the same artist-fancier as was his “Pigeon” book; a work widely read. In connexion with the breeding of poultry he was always strongly advocating the necessity of combining “exhibition” and “utility” properties in each individual bird, for he was no believer in “fancy” points alone, and this led up to *Poultry for the Table and Market*, published in 1893, a book which did infinite good. In co-operation with Sir Walter Gilbey, he was instrumental in forming the “Table Poultry” section at the Dairy Show, London, and it must always be remembered that it is to Tegetmeier and his great friends—F. Esquilant, Parkin, H. Jones and Charles Howard, so well known in the past in the pigeon-world—that we owe the institution of what has now, for a generation past, become acknowledged as the greatest exhibition of poultry and pigeons in the world, namely the “Grand International Show” held at the Crystal Palace.

Perhaps the best known of all Tegetmeier’s works is that entitled *Pheasants: their Natural History and Practical Management*, a book widely read and much appreciated and to which must be attributed the present-day industry—I can call it by no other name—of rearing game-birds for shooting purposes.

When the Willughby Society was formed by some members of the British Ornithologists’ Union, he undertook the duties of general editor; he also edited the fourth edition of Morris’s *Nests and Eggs of British Birds* and a new (fifth) edition of Beverley Morris’s *Game Birds and Wildfowl*. On the invasion of these Islands by Pallas’s Sand-Grouse, in 1888, he published a pamphlet giving some account of this bird and of its “history,

habits, food, and migrations, with hints as to its utility and a plea for its preservation," which however appeared too late to prevent the extermination of the flocks which visited us.

In 1895, in collaboration with the late Charles Sutherland, he published *Horses, Asses, Zebras, Mules, and Mule Breeding*, with a special view to the uses of mules for Army Transport. In 1890, he contributed an article to the *Ibis* on the principal breeds of domestic poultry, and in 1889 he published a little book on the *House Sparrow*, with special reference to the food of this bird, from observations made by Miss Eleanor Ormerod.

Special mention should be made of the fact that for over fifty years Tegetmeier was editor of the "Poultry and Pigeon" department of the *Field*, and of his wonderful journalistic record of having contributed a leader for nearly twelve hundred consecutive weeks to the *Queen* newspaper.

The above record of Tegetmeier's literary work must in no way be taken as a comprehensive list of the many articles and books which emanated from his pen, but merely as a guide to show how varied was the field of his activities.

I have purposely refrained, until the close, from alluding to what must, I think, ever remain the most lasting memento to his name—I refer to his connexion with Darwin and the latter's work. It is interesting to note that he was first introduced to Darwin by that great ornithologist Yarrell, an introduction which led to his rendering Darwin invaluable aid in the preparation of his *Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* such aid including, besides numerous breeding-experiments, the tabulation of the births of race-horses, covering a period of twenty-one years and taken from the *Racing Calendar*, and a similar tabulation of the births of greyhounds for a period of twelve years from the records in the *Field*. Tegetmeier had over one hundred and sixty letters from Darwin in connexion with the subject in

which both were so deeply interested, and to the end of his life he closely followed the development of the theory of evolution. That Darwin fully appreciated the help rendered is amply proved in the pages of the *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, and Tegetmeier was not unnaturally proud of the fact that the help he had been the means of giving should have been appreciated in such a way.

Tegetmeier was at the time of his death the oldest living member of the Savage Club, of which he was one of the founders.

Although of a reserved temperament—almost frigid at times—which rather tended to keep him aloof from the general run of fanciers, Tegetmeier will be remembered as a man possessed not only of extensive knowledge and acute judgment, but of a transparent honesty and sincerity of purpose in all he did; and it will only be now, after he has passed away, that his great loss will be appreciated to the full. He has left a name behind him as spotless as it was great—a name that will ever be revered and held in the highest esteem by one and all.