

BIRD CHAMPIONS SHOW

... and no wonder! It's the biggest, costliest parade of aristocrats in the whole feathered world: the 76th. "Crystal Palace" Cage Bird Show in London. Any one of the 5,000 entries is apt to cost up to twenty times the price of the fattest turkey - but the fanciers don't fancy paying a hundred pounds (the value of this Gouldian) for a meal. Together, the exhibits are worth more than a hundred thousand pounds. Five hundred buys a talking Indian Mynah - guaranteed not to use bad language.

Many a heart flutters in captivity as feathered champions try to distinguish between genuine admiration and the "You'd go nice on a hat" look.

Judges say that cage-birds are coming back into favour. But one way and another, the birds have an easier time than the breeders; they don't have to worry about getting import licences. And with the world the way it is, opinion is; "You're much better off behind bars."