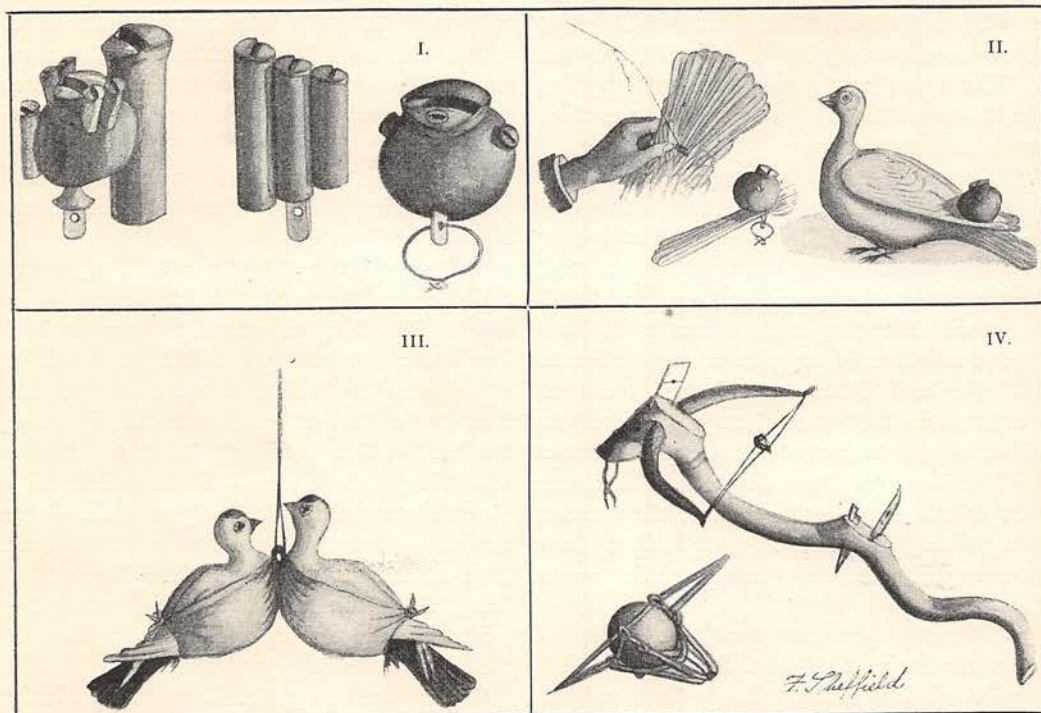


## PIGEONS OF PEKING.

BY ALFRED D. SHEFFIELD.



I. DIFFERENT FORMS OF PIGEON-WHISTLES. II. HOW THE WHISTLE IS ATTACHED. III. HOW PIGEONS ARE CARRIED. IV. BOWGUN FOR SHOOTING PELLETS OF CLAY TO STUN PIGEONS.

THE Chinese have made pigeon-flying the decoying game that it is because they like any kind of "playing for keeps." Even in kite-flying, they fix little hooks to their kite-strings and try to pull in each other's kites, and count it fair to keep any kite that drops into their yards. They will tell you that a kite or a strange pigeon that comes to your place, if given up, takes away your "family luck." So you must tear the kite and keep the pigeon. But when you see the town dandies sauntering out with their fans and bird-cages to watch the noon kite-flying, criticizing the flocks and their tactics, and arguing the fine points of decoying, you guess that "family luck" has very little to do with their game.

To decoy strange pigeons, pigeon-keepers

must first train their flocks to "fly in spirals"—that is, to rise steadily in circles without straying far from the home roof. Pigeons naturally fly together in circles. Even wild pigeons wheel about in flocks before straggling off to the fields. Chinese make their birds eager for circling by keeping them shut up in a wicker house built on the ground around the dove-cote; and they cure their birds of straggling by pelting them with pebbles when they try to alight anywhere except on one spot—the ridge-pole of the roof facing their wicker house. The flock must alight here in a bunch, and immediately walk down to the eaves. This is done to bring any strange pigeon among them down within sight of the grain, which is then scattered on the floor of



the wicker house. Pigeons are fed only after flying, for unless hungry they are lazy and unmanageable. Their food is millet, sorghum-seed, or corn, which their keepers use to get as much work from them as possible for as little feeding as possible. When there is much flying and calling down to do, they are usually fed with millet, which is so small that it keeps them eating a long while without filling them. At other times their food is sorghum-seed. Corn is not very good for pigeons, but they are so fond of it that pigeon-keepers usually have it on hand to call them down when they are already fed.

Chinese talk of three regions of pigeon flight: the "sparrow region," just above the housetops; the "crow region," where the crows pass over the city at daybreak; and the "eagle region." In every flock are several strong-winged birds that will rise to the eagle region. These are the "high-fliers," which are usually sent up first, carrying whistles, as a challenge to other flocks to join them. When they have mounted to some height, the heavier-winged birds, or "low-fliers," are sent up to meet them. A few stay-at-home birds are kept back to call the others down, which they do by flying round the roof and clapping their wings. Pigeon-whistles were in early times put on the birds to scare away hawks. Nowadays the hawks do not mind them at all, but they are still useful for attracting stray pigeons, for signaling, and for guiding the younger pigeons when flocks become mixed.

In Peking, flocks are sent up at sunrise, at noon, and just before sundown. Neighboring flocks always join, and their keepers then try each to draw apart his flock with call-birds, so as to bring with it any unwary pigeons from the other flocks. If a stranger is brought to the roof, the keeper coaxes it down with his own birds by throwing millet into the wicker cage.

No one ever demands back a pigeon lost in this way. Two friends will sometimes "play live pigeon," that is, give back each other's birds that may be captured from the flock during the game; but the rule is to "play dead pigeon," or, as boys say, "for keeps."

## FIRST STORY.

## THE FLIGHT OF "MU WHA TOU."

EVERY morning, when the crows were all back from the cemetery pines, and the sun rose upon the polished housetops that stretched unbrokenly for miles to the blue-black city walls, "Little American" had watched small clouds of white-winged pigeons circling high overhead—so high, sometimes, that he would not have found them but for the faint singing of the reed whistles at their tails. He was so enchanted by the dreamy whirring and butterfly-like glimmer of the flocks, turning deftly in the open sky, that at first he supposed, as other foreigners do, that their owners sent them up just for the sport of their flying. That is, indeed, part of the reason, but the morning when "Mu Wha Tou" went astray Little American learned that there is something more.

Mu Wha Tou was one of Little American's first ten pigeons. They were all *tientes*,—white with black tails, and each with a black spot like a watermelon-seed on its forehead. On all of them, as high-bred pigeons must have it, the white and black met in regular lines (without a straggling black feather among the white or a white among the black), except on Mu Wha Tou, whose name, meaning "She Speckle-head," was given her for some rings of black on her neck. These rings, which grew out mysteriously some weeks after Little American had bought her, very much cheapened her in the eyes of Li Loo, the old gate-keeper, who had charge of the flock, and who taught Little American the secrets of pigeon-keeping. But the rings caused no loss of caste with the other pigeons. Her big mate, indeed, strutted after her with great pride; for she was really a fine bird, with wide-awake eyes and long, muscular wings.

"When Mu Wha Tou flies," said Li Loo, "she 'll hit up a pretty pace. Those pale eye-rims come by flying in the eagle region."

For several weeks none of the flock were allowed to fly. They had first to become at home in their new brick pigeon-house. This Li Loo had built on the ground against a wall, facing the house on which they were to



alight. Around the pigeon-house was a cage of wickerwork, big enough for a man to move about in; and in this cage they were always fed, so that at any time Li Loo could call them in, shut the wicker door behind him, and catch any pigeon he wished. When he let them run around the court they were still secured from flying, for Li Loo had "sewn their wings"—that is, he had sewn together the first eight feathers of each wing, so that, even when spread like a half-opened fan, it could not catch the air.

Every morning they were thrown up on the roof of the pigeon-house, for with sewn wings they could safely flutter down, though they could n't fly up. This was to make them know their alighting-place, so that, when free, they would go to no other. How soon they should be loosed depended on their behavior. At first, with Mu Wha Tou leading, they would all scramble up the slippery roof and stand at the ridge-pole, alert and uneasy, turning up their little red eyes when neighboring flocks passed overhead. Four younglings, with "Topknot" and "Sleepy Dame," less spirited birds, then lost their strangeness, and would saunter back to the eaves, and sit contentedly preening their feathers, or dozing in the warm sun. But Mu Wha Tou and "Big Tientse" stayed alone by the chimney, listening curiously to the hum of the big city, starting at the far-away calls of fruit-peddlers, and looking off to the East Gate, where the bulb-shaped towers of the mosque rose in the morning haze.

So long, indeed, was Mu Wha Tou in bringing her mind to her new home that at the first flying Li Loo would not risk losing Big Tientse with her. He would not even send her up with the other pigeons, but held her in his hand until the flock was near alighting.

The first flying was timid and stealthy enough. "It is a run across the open in an enemy's country," said Li Loo, squinting at the sun to catch sight of any whistleless flock that might be manœuvering unnoticed in its dazzle. Then he sent Little American to climb upon a back wall, where he could watch the roof of Kao Chün, and give alarm if Kao Chün's pigeons flew again.

Only Topknot, Sleepy Dame, and the four

younglings were to fly. The first two had lined their cell with broom-straws in promise of nesting, and the others were giddy squabs whose voices broke into infantile squeals when they tried to coo, and who had n't flown enough to turn their eyes red, much less to learn the straight flight to their country home. From his lookout Little American saw them walk up the roof and stand in a line, nervously stretching their wings, from which the confining threads had been cut. Then a bamboo rod was waved above the eaves, and they flew up together, making a wide circle over the houses, and rising vigorously into the air.

It would have been easy for a practised eye to tell that they were a new flock, for they straggled out on the turn, not knowing which would lead. They flew without bearings, too, for at the dip of their circle they lurched out of range of the alighting-roof, and became confused at the giant elms of the American compound, which seethed under them in clouds of green. Any one of them, flying alone, would have fetched up hopelessly in the Granary waste lands, but the first commandment of the pigeons is, "Fly together," so they kept beating in uncertain circles overhead.

At last they began to settle toward the great temple, where some gray wild pigeons offered to join flocks. But Li Loo flung a pigeon on the alighting-spot, and the six, catching the quick glimmer of its white wing against the blue lime roof, veered about. They passed close over Little American's head, noiselessly except for the soft whipping of their full-feathered wings. Little American looked nervously at Kao Chün's bare roof, for the fluttering of a pigeon there might lure aside his half-trained birds. But Kao Chün gave no sign; and Little American chuckled with relief, not dreaming that at that moment Kao Chün, with a cageful of the veterans of his flock, was squatting complacently in the lane behind Little American's house, waiting for what he had guessed would happen next.

As the six, on poised wings, were settling toward the roof, another pigeon was thrown up to meet them. It was Mu Wha Tou. Li



Loo had thrown her skilfully, flinging her straight as a stone, to catch herself precisely as the flock overtook her. But at the same instant six other tienteses were thrown from the lane, shooting up like rockets, to burst into flight around her, in the very midst of Little American's flock. The bewildered birds, carried along by the strong dash of the new-comers, would have missed their alighting-place, had not one of the youngers, spying his mate on the roof, turned out his tail like a fin and led them down. Mu Wha Tou, however, fresh-winged, and startled at her new freedom, beat up for the open sky.

It was then that the new-comers showed their tactics. They rose around her, hemming her into their circles, and bearing down on the turn to bring her within call of Kao Chün's roof.

But Mu Wha Tou had caught the keen, sweet smell of sorghum blowing in from the fields, and it had awakened the home-hunger.

When the flock settled, she simply mounted above it, and, but for a resolute spurt on its part, would have launched on the straight flight. She was now in the middle region,—the "region of a crow's flight,"—rising in a slow spiral till she could see far beyond the city walls, where the grain-boats were threading the checkered green plain, and the eastern hills pushed their icy purple edges into the sky. As Li Loo had promised, she was setting the flock a pretty pace; but they were picked fliers, and she could not shake free of them. They passed into the eagle region, where Little American's eyes could barely follow them. The seven pigeons were reduced to the size of gnats, sparkling white when they turned to the sun, but almost transparent against the wind-swept blue. From time to time a solitary gnat would appear to move apart from the rest, take a straight course over the West Gate, and then turn irresolutely, when the flock would trail out like a floating spider-web and draw it in.

Mu Wha Tou's flight had now been noticed by many pigeon-keepers, whose flocks were rising from the distant housetops like puffs of white smoke. Kao Chün, too, sent up a big second flock of low-fliers to meet the seven,

which must soon begin descending. Mu Wha Tou had failed to sight her home, and though her companions, on stiff, half-shut wings, now dropped in swift zigzag lurchings toward the second flock, she kept docilely behind them. In the middle region they came upon the new flocks, weaving dizzy circles and counter-circles, until Mu Wha Tou, too confused to wheel in time, was drawn aimlessly from one to another.

Li Loo drove Little American's pigeons up on the roof, but could do nothing more, for it would be madness to fly his new birds into the mazes of trained decoys. He waited till their last circling, and then cast Big Tientse up on the roof, in the hope that Mu Wha Tou might know her mate and be coaxed aside. But it was all in vain. Kao Chün's second flock closed over her like a mountain mist, and swept her to its alighting.

A little later, Kao Chün's pigeons suddenly flew up with a great clattering, but Mu Wha Tou was not among them.

"They are scared up by the net," said Li Loo to the tearful Little American. "When a strange pigeon goes to the eaves, Kao Chün can climb up softly below it with the hoop-net. His boy then watches from the yard until it begins preening under its wing, and then signals to cast up. That has happened to Mu Wha Tou."

So Little American found out why the pigeons were flying every morning, with their tricky circling and soft, tremulous whistles. Big Tientse called for his mate in loud wailing coos for many days, and then, seeming to forget her, mated with "Topsy Skew," the heroine of the next story.

## SECOND STORY.

### A CHESS GAME IN THE SKY.

THESE are the rules for flying by spirals which Little American copied on a slate and hung in the wicker pigeon-house:

Fly immediately on opening the wooden doors for the day. Pigeons take the air more eagerly after penning up, and are more promptly called down when hungry. First drive up high-fliers with whistles. When they have risen to the crow region, throw up scout-fliers by twos and threes to join them. Your pi-



geons can then take up a stranger flying at any height. If the high-fliers join with a neighbor flock, or the scouts fall in with a stranger, send up the body of your flock, keeping back only call-birds. This second flock will rise to meet the high-fliers, sweeping in scout-birds and strangers. When the pigeons are all massed in one flock, flying without rifts or stragglers, fetch them down with the call-birds, which should be held ready in your hands. A call-bird flung high into the air will rise in a spiral to the flock, which will lower for it only slightly. If tossed gently above the roof a call-bird will circle without rising until the flock settles to it. If merely loosed by opening the hand, a call-bird will fly only to the roof, and the flock will pitch down immediately to alight. This call is usually too abrupt, and should be used only when the stranger is a young bird, or heavy-winged, or lazy. Sometimes, however, even an old bird will be scared down by it, thinking that the flock is careening out of the path of a hawk. If no strange flocks join, you may train your new or young pigeons, either sending them up with escorts, or throwing them into the flock on its last circling.

So every morning, when the early bell boomed in the temple, Little American flew his pigeons by the rules, until they learned their parts in the game, and liked it. The high-fliers would spring from their cells when the doors swung back, and clatter up without touching the roof; scout-birds would flutter against the wickerwork in their hurry to begin zigzagging after strangers; and the call-birds would lie quietly in Little American's hands, turning up their keen, bead-like eyes when the shadows of passing flocks touched the house. Their master, too, learned to know them apart, no matter how far off they were flying, nor how mixed with other flocks, and could tell just what every one could be counted on to do. But there was one pigeon that seemed out of sorts with the game; not that she balked at her part, but that she did it freakishly, as if meaning to do something different.

She was a little hooded tientse, called "Hsiao Chueh Wu" ("Little Topsy Skew"), because her feathers, although faultless, seemed, like her flying, always to be starting awry. Her waywardness came, no doubt, from her very odd bringing up. A Shantung farmer, driven north by the great flood, had brought her to Little American when she was a mere lump of pink flesh, with yellow down and black bead eyes. The farmer said the old birds had

been tumblers, but had flown straight north on the morning that the river broke through. If the squab were "man-fed," he declared, it would grow into the cleverest of fliers.

Pigeons feed their squabs by taking the young one's bill in their own and thrusting into it the softened grain from their crops. So Little American chewed up sorghum, and taught Topsy Skew to thrust its bill between his teeth for it. The squab learned its part, however, better than Little American learned his; for, in spite of constant feedings, it grew thin and undersized, and its feathers turned up at the end. At last Little American took it to Li Loo.

"Its crop is swelled like a door-knob, but it keeps squealing for more."

Li Loo gently pinched the crop. It flattened, and the air hissed from Topsy's bill.

"You must n't *blow* the sorghum into it," laughed Li Loo. "A pigeon is not a turtle, that it can live on northwest wind!"

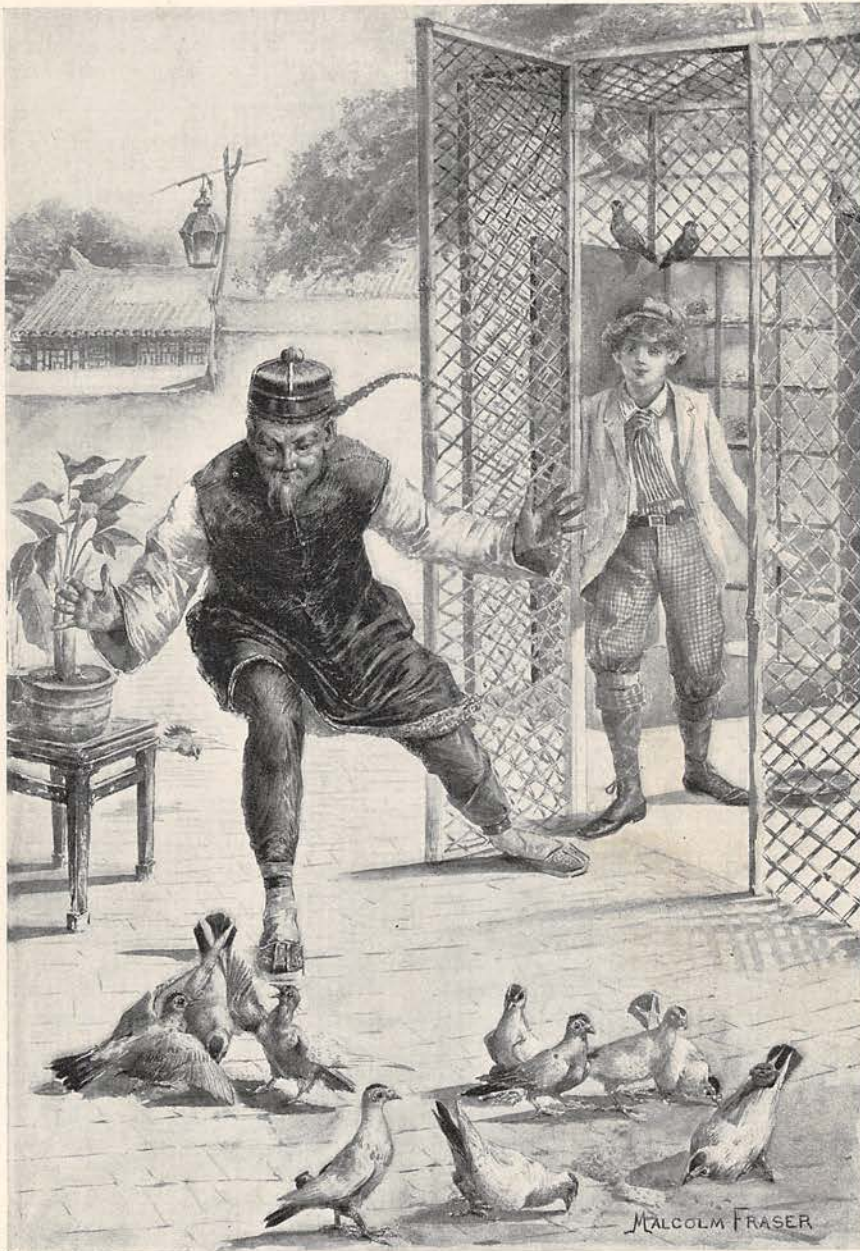
After that Topsy Skew fared better, and though she remained small, she was finely shaped—wide in the chest, with long taper wings and the large, pale eye-rims of a high-flier. Her action in flying was perfect. Heavier-winged birds rustle through the air; high-fliers make a gentle whipping; but Topsy Skew cut the air with the faintest thin whisper, as of a finger drawn over stretched silk.

She had the hood and long white bill of a tumbler, but, never seeing any tumbling, she never learned the tumbler's queer mounting flight. When the instinct was strong upon her she would hitch quickly, as if checked by something thrown in her path, and then, by a strong pulse of her big fans, would regain her place in the flock. Her masters did not care, however, about the tumbling, which, after all, is a mere fancy trick, of no use in circle-flying, where it only puts out the other birds. But they watched her wayward starts and hoverings until they hit upon a plan for playing her off as a decoy.

They chose a windless morning, of the clear, ringing kind of sky which keeps pigeon flocks scudding gleefully for hours. The sun was just breaking over the city wall when Little American rode his black donkey to the



North Tower, carrying Topsy Skew tied in a Skew picked her way above their path, moving in uncertain curves without lowering, even handkerchief. She was not trained to



"LI LOO, STEPPING UP, NOISELESSLY AS A CAT, NABBED HER FROM THE GROUND." (SEE PAGE 325.)

straight flying, and her masters knew that if loosed at that distance she would circle to a great height. The middle region was still flecked with belated crows, so that Topsy when she drew in sight of the home roof, which no doubt looked bare and unfamiliar in the early light. This was just the movement wanted of her.



In a moment seven high-fliers shot noiselessly out from Kao Chün's roof, and Little American, straining his eyes from the North Tower, saw that his bait was taken. Kao Chün was plainly hoping to draw the stranger down without attracting rival flocks, for his birds wore no whistles, and cut their way directly up, in brisk, clean, swinging turns. The upper air sparkled in the sunrise, and the pigeons nerved themselves for a vigorous chase. Topsy Skew was moving in evasive loops and figure eights above her pursuers, who swept toward her in a stubborn ring.

The crafty Li Loo now loosed the high-fliers of Little American's flock, chasing them up with great gusto, as if he himself had just spied the stranger. His pigeons carried whistles, shrill reeds and mellow-toned gourds, and they rushed singing upward at the other flock, below which they were soon describing a third ring.

Kao Chün was now forced to risk a move. To keep the rival high-fliers from joining his own, he must send up his second flock. This flock, as Li Loo well knew, had half-trained and young pigeons, which, with their leaders high out of reach, would be closed in upon from above and below by Little American's pigeons. But Kao Chün was bent on drawing his rival's birds away from the stranger, for they carried all the whistles, and, if once joined, would take the lead over his own fliers. His second flock dashed out with screaming whistles, promptly followed by a second flock from Little American, whose high-fliers now dropped to them, and all began whirling in a mingled cloud, three flocks swept into one, while Kao Chün's picked fliers, high overhead, still circled under Topsy Skew.

The bigger a flock, the stronger it draws, so both Kao Chün and Li Loo had turned out their pigeons in a body, scout-birds and all. When Little American came galloping back from the city wall he found only two call-birds left in the pigeon-house, and he carried these to the lane behind Kao Chün's house, believing that his rival's only call-birds would be new or young. He crouched in the narrow alley, where he caught glimpses of the scudding flocks between tile walls and elms, and

heard excited voices from Kao Chün's yard. Some one was crying out that Kao Chün must call down his pigeons to save them; but no call-birds were thrown, for his upper flock was close upon Topsy Skew, and he would not stop the chase. Little American, too, could not bring down his flock yet, without deserting the clever little decoy. So the pigeons whirled on at a dead-lock, and their masters looked to Topsy Skew for the turning of the game.

She was now skimming above her pursuers in long curves, drooping to left or right, when she thought to cut by them to her own flock below. But Kao Chün's fliers veered out to meet her, as if drawing a charmed ring to hem her in. Gleeful shouts arose from Kao Chün's court,—for the whole family was watching the game,—and Little American grew anxious. Topsy Skew, however, began a fitful, hovering movement, as if tempted to a new dodge. The puzzled fliers spread to cut under her again, when she suddenly tripped in her course, mounting, and poising for an instant like a hawk. Then she threw herself over backward, dropping in a string of somersaults, like a pinwheel of sparkling feathers, straight through the charmed ring to the lower air! Here she was caught up by her own flock. It was Little American's turn to laugh now, for Kao Chün's picked fliers were left high and dry, his new and young pigeons were mixed with a bigger and better trained flock of Little American's pigeons, and Topsy Skew was safe!

At this moment a tientse shot up from Kao Chün's roof. Little American, guessing from its startled flight that his rival had risked a new bird, flung both of his call-birds with it.

But the new bird clattered up so boldly that Little American saw that he had again been outwitted. Kao Chün had expected his ambush, and kept back an old high-flier, which, instead of drawing down the flock, carried up his last call-birds. This held the flock back until Kao Chün's fliers pitched down to it, and Little American's chance was lost.

The rest of the game Kao Chün played alone. He tossed a pigeon up on his roof, making his flock instantly drop apart from





"LITTLE AMERICAN, GUESSING THAT HIS RIVAL HAD RISKED A NEW BIRD, FLUNG BOTH HIS CALL-BIRDS."

Little American's. Then, seeing that his new and young birds had safely followed, he trained the rest of his new birds, flinging them, one by one, into the flock. Li Loo and Little American looked on in helpless rage, for their flock was now shelved, in its turn, and they had no call-birds left to bring it down.

At last, as a parting flaunt, Little American thought, his old Mu Wha Tou, the captured pigeon, was thrown up. As on the day when Kao Chün had captured her and Little American had lost her, Kao Chün's flock gathered her into their number, swept her to their alighting-spot, and the game was done.



## THIRD STORY.

## THE RECAPTURE OF MU WHA TOU.

THE enemies of the pigeons are three—the weasel, the hawk, and the cat. Of these the weasel is deadliest, for it can work into a pigeon-house by the merest crack, and its rule is to kill all. The hawk is a gallant robber, for he takes but one, and that by fair strategy in the open sky.

The slyest enemies of the pigeons, however, and those they most dread, are the cats. They will spring into a pigeon-house at sundown, when the pigeons have gone to their cells to be shut in for the night. When this happens the flock is stampeded and numbers are lost, for pigeons are blind in the dark, and cannot be called down.

So when, one dark night, several months after the flight of Mu Wha Tou, Little American was wakened by the sudden screech of a pigeon-whistle passing overhead in the darkness, and saw from his window a red glow over Kao Chün's roof, he knew that some cat had scared out his rival's flock at roosting-time, and that Kao Chün was trying the "fire decoy"—burning corn-stalks soaked in oil to draw down his panic-stricken birds. He knew, too, that after a night-flying, Mu Wha Tou might be tempted to alight with his flock again.

The rule is that after three alightings a strange pigeon will never be drawn down again, and Mu Wha Tou had twice been brought to roof by Little American's pigeons without being taken. The first time she had followed them to the eaves, and had just poked over her head and drooped her wings to join the birds feeding in the wicker cage, when one of Kao Chün's call-birds, cleverly thrown over the house, startled her up and led her to its home. The second time she alighted was by a misleading flurry at the splitting of the two flocks. This time she knew her mistake, and could not be coaxed from the ridge-pole. It is allowed by the rules of decoying to stun a strange pigeon with the crossbow by shooting it in the crop (though not to maim its wing). So Li Loo then took down the cunning bow—an odd-shaped thing, so stout that it took two coolies to string it, and so nicely sighted by a

needle-hole in a bamboo stem and a red bead on a thread that it would hit a fly on the wall. But Mu Wha Tou knew about that, too, and promptly clattered off. She was not to be brought to roof again. But there was now a chance that by morning she would be scared and hungry enough to alight on the ground if she saw pigeons feeding in the open court in front of the wicker house—especially if she saw red corn; for sorghum-fed pigeons are gluttonous after red corn.

At daylight Little American saw by the waving trees that it was a morning of west wind. The yellow edge of a great dust-cloud was moving up the sky, threatening a day of closed windows and lamplight. Already the copper sky was ugly for flying. Little American's flock struggled up in slanting circles, whirling high into the air when it stemmed the wind, and dipping to the very housetops on the turn.

The whistles sounded out only at the dipping, because in the teeth of the wind they became choked; but they sounded enough to call back some of Kao Chün's stragglers, which could be seen rising and falling in the storm, as they cut their way toward the flock. Little American would not stop for these, and chased his flock back from the roof again and again, until he saw, as they mounted from a long sweep behind the great temple, that a new tientse was among his birds, one with the long wings and spotted neck of Mu Wha Tou.

Li Loo knew her at once. He had climbed the wall to watch for her, and now ran for the corn-bag, shouting to Little American to hold back the call-birds until the flock should careen directly over the brick-paved yard by the pigeon-house. On they came, laboring over the housetops, keeping together in perfect order, but whipping their half-shut wings unwillingly, and turning down their hungry little eyes as they drew close overhead. This was the moment. Little American chased out the call-birds just as Li Loo threw a handful of big red kernels dancing upon the pavement. The greedy call-birds flung themselves upon it, and the flock, Mu Wha Tou and all, dropped straight between the houses to the ground. Mu Wha Tou stood a-tiptoe as she



touched ground, as if scared to find herself there, and ready to spring into the air at a movement. No one moved, however, so she began warily to snatch up the kernels within reach.

"How will you touch a skittish thing like that?" muttered Little American, from the pigeon-house. "Better try the crossbow again."

"You can't shoot at her, ducking about among the other birds," said Li Loo. "Watch me, and learn the baby-pigeon trick."

Li Loo was standing back against the wall as he spoke. He held his hands together without stirring, and Little American now saw some new-fledged squabs poking out their heads from his big sleeves. He kept his eyes on a little heap of corn, around which he had scattered the handful which the flock were eating.

The birds, quickly pecking up every stray corn, now began to draw into a close circle around this little pile, Mu Wha Tou even forgetting to look up at Li Loo, who quietly set

the young pigeons loose upon the ground. Seeing the corn, the eager squabs ran squealing and shaking their wings among the other birds. Then Little American saw what was to happen. Squabs always spread their wings when they squeal to be fed. Even when they can pick up for themselves, they begin by squealing and fanning at the other pigeons. So these squabs pushed among the unheeding feeders, clumsily shaking their silly fans over their heads. In a moment Mu Wha Tou was "hooded" between two of them, and as if blindfolded; whereupon Li Loo, stepping up behind the three, noiselessly as a cat, nabbed her from the ground.

Little American was so happy at the "baby-pigeon trick" that he gave Mu Wha Tou as a present to Li Loo, who clipped out her speckled feathers, and glued in proper white feathers so neatly that no one knew her for *wha tou*, or "speckled head." And she was sold for a big sum to a farmer, who took her to Shantung, so that nobody knows what he said when the black feathers grew out again.

