

FOR EVERY BOY AND GIRL

THE PIGEONS OF PEKING By Alfred D. Sheffield

THE Chinese have made pigeon-flying the devious 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 circle for circling by keeping them shut up in a wicker house built on the ground around the dovecote, 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.

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."

THE CAPTURE AND RECAPTURE 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.

Mu Wha Tou was one of Little American's first ten pigeons. They were all dentless—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 gatekeeper, 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 or with Little American, and he was sorely grieved when on her very first flight she was decoyed into captivity, by his sly old neighbor Kao Chun.



"NOW, DOLLY, IT'S TIME YOU BEGAN TO TALK. I'VE SEEN A WAX DOLL NO OLDER THAN YOU, AND SHE SAYS 'PAPA' AND 'MAMA.' EVEN TOWSER CAN SPEAK FOR A LUMP OF SUGAR."



LI LOO, STEPPING UP NOISELESSLY AS A CAT, NABBED HER FROM THE GROUND.

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 awakened by the sudden screech of a pigeon-whistle passing overhead in the darkness, and saw from his window a red glow over Kao Chun's roof, he knew that some cat had scared out his rival's flock at roosting-time, and that Kao Chun 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 Chun'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.

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 Chun'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 tentse 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.

Li Loo 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" behind 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 what she was, 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.

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JINGLE.
By Joel Stacy.
There once was a knowing raccoon
Who didn't believe in the moon.
"Every month—don't you see?"
"There's a new one," said he.
"No real moon could wear out so soon!"

THREE LITTLE RULES.
Three little rules we all should keep,
To make life happy and bright—
Smile in the morning; smile at noon;
And keep on smiling at night!
Stella George Stern.

A DEER ON SNOWSHOES

By WILLIAM J. LONG

The title sounds queer, I know; but if you ever have the chance to examine a caribou's feet you will see what is meant in a moment. In the first place, the hoof is very large, and the cleft between the halves is very deep, so that the feet spread widely when the caribou's weight is on them. The hoof of a large bull that I saw once on the Renous Barrens measured five and one-half inches across; and when (with far less force than the caribou's weight would have exercised) I pulled apart the halves, the spread was nearly ten inches.

Besides this, the caribou's ankle-joint is exceedingly flexible, so that the large dew-claws, which are five or six inches above the hoof and behind, bend down easily and rest on the snow, spreading like the hoofs when they touch. This gives to the caribou a broad supporting surface on which to travel—very much wider than that of his great cousin, the moose.

It is indeed a kind of natural snowshoe, not unlike that which grows on the grouse's foot every winter to help him over the snow.

The result of this wise provision on the part of nature is to give the caribou an enormous advantage over the rest of his family. While deer and moose are half prisoners in their yards, unable to leave the paths which they have made in the snow, the caribou wanders where he will, kept from sinking too deep by his widespread snowshoes.

There is another curious thing about a caribou's hoofs. The edges, in winter, are sharp and convex, like a bell's rim, so that he can travel on the ice without slipping. He likes this kind of traveling, and is often seen trotting far out on the northern lakes, in pure fun apparently, for there is nothing to eat on the ice, and he drinks no water in winter, contenting himself with a little snow when he is thirsty.

The "Soap-Bubblers'" First Reception

By MEREDITH NUGENT

THE "Soap-Bubblers'" reception was a success from the start.

The Soap-Bubblers—but recently organized, with Phil Thompson as Head Bubbler, Harry Baker as Chief Cornucopia, the minor Bubblers occupying minor odd-titled positions, as well as Bubblers occupying no positions at all—had resolved that the ancient and honorable amusement of blowing soap-bubbles was sadly in need of reformation; and, further, that it was their mission to reform it.

Thus it came to pass that on this late blustery winter evening the interior of Masonic Hall presented such a scene of brilliancy as had rarely been equaled within its historic walls.

The magician's wand had hardly fallen when there arose forty-seven large bubbles from forty-seven golden cornucopias, held in the hands of forty-seven rosy-cheeked boys and girls standing by twenty-four little oblong tables. A cry of delight swept round the hall, and forty-seven more bubbles arose, and still another shower of the iridescent spheres glittered in the surrounding brilliancy before the Bubblers settled down to the business of the evening.

For this occasion every member had promised to perform at least one bubble trick, and to perform it well. Eddie Stark showed a top spinning within a bubble, and Minnie Sargent—seated opposite—a beautiful rose within another. Freddie Wilder did fully as well at the table allotted to him, while "Little Victor" cleverly dropped all sorts of objects through some beautiful bubbles blown by Frank Burt.

Then Phil, the Head Bubbler, stepped on the platform and was uproariously greeted. He announced he would show the Bubblers how to make large bubbles without blowing them!

mals could move. Phil quickly lifted a hoop from the pan, and in a twinkling covered both kittens over with a glorious bubble. "First kittens ever inside of a soap-bubble!" Harry Baker announced, just as the little kits started to wade about within the iridescent dome. Phil spared them over a second and even a third time, when the pussies, excited by their uproarious surroundings, offered decided objections to being imprisoned any more. Then Bubblers and audience were treated to an exhibition of what were perhaps the largest bubbles that have ever been made. Harry Baker was especially fortunate, and, at the end of a very exciting contest with Phil, succeeded in spherifying the pan over from brim to brim! Realize, if you please, that this bubble measured over nine feet in circumference!

Phil now turned his attention to the hoops and rings again, and drew forth storms of applause by some wonderful "film tricks." One in particular, the giant letter S, was especially brilliant. It looked like a serpentine tongue of flame, and the manner in which Phil whirled the flashing light above his head fairly thrilled the audience.

"Leroy Kimball!" now shouted out Harry Baker, "Leroy Kimball!" And a minute later there walked on to the stage the youngest, shortest, and jolliest Bubbler in the club. Everybody knew Roy, and as the little fellow blushing stepped on to the square block of wood set fast in the middle of the big pan, he was greeted with loud cheers and cries of "What are you going to do there, Roy?"

Phil promptly began to answer this volley of questions by lowering a hoop over the little Bubbler until it lay immersed in the pan of soap mixture. "Oh!" cried the Bubblers in unison, "Phil's going to put Roy in a soap-bubble!" And the excited audience



FIRST KITTEN EVER INSIDE OF A SOAP BUBBLE.

The pandemonium increased when six Bubblers, with Harry Baker leading, formed in procession, and walked on to the platform, carrying between them two large galvanized-iron pans (each measuring nine feet in circumference), five children's wooden hoops, a number of copper and brass rings, two shining pails full of soap and water already mixed, and a think of it!—not a pipe, tube, or cornucopia of any kind!

After a few words explanatory of the evolution of the soap-bubble from the clay-pipe stage to its present one, Phil dipped a wire ring into the solution, and, gently sweeping it before him, cast off a bubble fully twice the size of his head. Every Bubbler boy gave a cry of satisfaction at this, and he looked as though all the Bubblers might fling their golden cornucopias on to the stage, when the master of the soap and water tossed off five large bubbles in succession, not only from the same ring, but from the same film!

Almost immediately Phil's assistants—there were five of them—followed his example, and from that time on the stage was continually aglow with the brilliant spheres.

Harry Baker now came forward with the club's two kittens, and set them on a dry block of wood resting in the centre of one of the large nine-foot pans—now filled with soapy water. Before the ani-

rose to their tiptoes. Amid a profound silence Phil started to lift the hoop; but after raising it a short distance, the film broke with a peculiar noise, sounding like "w-h-e-e-p." "W-h-e-e-p" went the film again, "w-h-e-e-p, w-h-e-e-p."

Suddenly there was a swish, a flashing gleam of silvery light, and Leroy Kimball, the jolliest of the Bubblers, looked smilingly upon the audience from within a soap-film house!

A FIGURATIVE TALE.

By Grace Fraser.

Once an Elfin, 1-droy cotee,
Came un-2 my cottage door;
There he played wi-3-d and lute,
As no elf had played be-4.

"If-5 pleased thee, lady fair,
Speak," said he.

"Thy mu-6 grand!
Ni-7-ts like this are rare—"
Thus, as with 8-ender hand
On the youth be-9, I spoke,
I (oh, 0-y fate!)—awoke!