

DREAMIN' O' HOME.

Altogether comfortable. I can't tell you what's come to her, an' yet I think it's clear. That somethin' 's goin' wrong o' late—no see her sittin' there. A dreamin' in the doorway, with that look in her eyes. As if they still was restin' on the old time floored and wains.

MY CONFESSION.

Leon Mead, in New York Star: Though living at some distance from the city, I was sufficiently in touch with urban life to be spared the appellation of a rustic. Yet I was called an eccentric man because, being something of an experimentalist, I seldom did things like my neighbors. They regarded me as a harmless zealot, and in the community I was characterized as "better than fool average."

To be entirely frank, my knowledge of Horace, my subscriptions to three agricultural papers and my only untiring devotion to the more scientific methods of farming did not assist me financially. While not aspiring to reap a fortune in agriculture, I dared to hope for a moderate monetary success from the application of approved modern methods to agricultural affairs.

At the end of each year I found myself somewhat poorer than I had been at the beginning. Despite my industry, my acres did not thrive. While I was deep in the study of ensilage and other interesting matters, my produce garden became choked with weeds and nettles, and while I was erecting them by hand in laborious process requiring a fortnight's steady toil, my little dairy of six cows died, one by one, of an epidemic which other sufferers like myself called by a great variety of names.

No matter how hard I worked, and finally, being cramped for a little ready money, my small balance in the First National bank of Centerville—the nearest town—having been gradually withdrawn, I began to ponder how I could raise the needed sum. I thought of borrowing or mortgaging my farm. At last I decided to sell my four carrier pigeons, which some three years before had been presented to me by a friend who had presented them to his father.

He assured me that originally they had belonged to a Neapolitan count, who, while imprisoned for a crime, had used them as messengers between himself and his lady love. This count, it is said, did little else during his incarceration but induce burning epistles to the fair senorita and dispatch them to her by these pigeons, which were kept flying from the prison to his sweetheart's villa and back by day and night. The senorita, of course, responded to each impassioned row of her captiva lover, and to each of her perfumed notes was attached a scarlet ribbon, which was tied to the tail-feathers of the faithful carrier.

Neapolitans who lived in the neighborhood of the prison used to stand in the street for hours watching the pigeon set forth from and return through the narrow second-story window of the cell occupied by the count. This was one of the interesting sights in Naples. Finally, the count died suddenly while in the act of addressing one of his most ardent declarations to the senorita, and his property, including the four pigeons, was publicly sold to redeem his debts.

What became of the fair senorita I have never heard. Perhaps she languished away in a convent. My friend happened to be in Naples at the time of the sale of the count's goods, and he bought the pigeons at a rather extravagant price. But each one was indeed a rara avis. As I have said, he presented them to me in remembrance of our close friendship formed while at college. On account of the romantic story he related concerning them, I always had dearly prized them, since becoming their possessor. And now, though I needed money, I keenly disliked the idea of parting with them. In my bachelor loneliness they had been excellent companions. Throughout my forty-five years' existence never have been especially fond of any domestic pets, but these pigeons won my tender affections from the start, and I trust I shall not be considered vain if I hint that my feelings were charmingly reciprocated by them. They lived as much in doors as out. They followed me to the fields and indulged in their own instinctive pastimes when I was too busy to pay them attention, but they never far away from me. At night when I went to my chamber to read, or into my adjoining home-made laboratory to fuss, they accompanied me, and, lighting on my shoulder, would coo and pose in the most plucking affectionate manner. I called them respectively "Josephine" after a young lady for whom I once entertained a sentimental but futile regard, and "Tobias" after a favorite deceased uncle. "Ralph" after a married sister and "Ralph" after my friend who gave me the pigeons.

After they thoroughly knew me I tested their training by taking them one day into a hillside forest about four miles distant from my home and leaving them in charge of my farm boy, who accompanied me, with instructions to

free them within an hour. I hastened back to my house, which I reached before the hour was up, and getting my birchwood pipe and tobacco pouch seated myself on the veranda to await the coming of my resources. Soon, however, doubt began to prey upon my thoughts. Would they ever return? I eagerly consulted my watch. The hour would be up in three minutes. Those three minutes, how full they were of suspense—but I will not pause to detail my misgivings. Eight minutes later I descried three birds flying directly toward me. Yes, they were my pigeons. I believe I never extended a more genuine welcome to any human being than I did to these birds as they landed on my outstretched arms. Nor were their greetings, in their dumb way, less cordial. But it is enough to say that I liked my pigeons and that they liked me.

I did not need the money for myself, because my habits of life were very simple and inexpensive at that time. True, in my college days and afterward, while I mingled with the world, I spent money freely—too freely, in fact, for a man whose salary had been but \$20,000. But, fortunately for me, at about the time I had nearly run through my inheritance I began to think for scientific knowledge. I purchased a farm of nearly two hundred acres and a considerable number of books and in this way settled down. I entertained a vague notion that I could become an accomplished scientist and a practical farmer at the same time.

I desired money to give my younger brother a liberal education for several hours, who was suffering from what is commonly known as catarrh of the eyes. This trouble had become so serious as to require him to consult an oculist, who had urged him to submit to an operation. I was in a quandary as to the circumstances and appealed to me for money to pay for the operation. "My whole career," he wrote, "depends upon this operation, which Dr. Powell assured me would be successful. What could I do in the law or in any other else, without my eyesight? I dislike to call upon you for funds, but I know of no one else to apply to. It would be a pity and a shame, now that I am an attorney, to be blind and stand a fair show of working up a practice here in New York, to have everything go by the board. Dear brother, help me if you possibly can. The operation will cost only a trifle, but I am sure I can manage it, as I have a little ready money to meet my board, laundry bills, etc. I cannot see to write this—my friend Lawrence Shipley, is kindly acting as my amanuensis."

It is unnecessary to observe that this letter touched my heart. I had not heard from Jack before in nearly three months. He was a pushing, independent, clever fellow, and I never had had any occasion to worry about him, except in regard to his poor eyesight. But, before I could respond to his letter, I had not known how bad it was getting. Of course, I resolved to provide Jack with the money. But how? The pressing out of my hands of my entire farm I am not allowed to stand in the way of furnishing him with assistance in his exigency. But being a man of middle age and not as practical as the law will allow a man to be, and also sensitive as to my shortcomings in this respect, I really hated to give up my farm.

After much reflection I hit upon the expedient of disposing of my cherished pigeons. The very afternoon I received Jack's letter I worded an advertisement to insert in the Centerville weekly Farmer and Rural Companion, and sending it in an envelope, with a note to the editor requesting him to send his bill for the same, gave it to Jim Bloodgood, the stage driver, to deliver, as his regular route led along the dusty turnpike in front of my house about the set. The notice ran as follows: "Gordon Hildreth, Esq., of Weaver Valley, offers for sale four beautiful carrier pigeons, with a history. For terms inquire of the owner, George Pullen, Centerville. On the following Saturday morning I was sitting on my veranda after having eaten a fragrant breakfast, prepared as usual by my housekeeper, Priscilla Hildreth, when a lively lean and buckboard, whose approach from the station of Centerville, ever since it appeared in sight over the knoll on South Hill I had been watching, turned into the lane leading up to my modest abode. This unusual circumstance at once directed my attention to the sole occupant of the conveyance, whose form and features were now plainly visible. He was a trifle stout, shabbily dressed, a pair of colored check hat and an outer coat of the same hue, and though it was July, thick buckskin gloves. A nearly exhausted and poorly lighted cigar rested in one side of his rather capacious and sensuous looking mouth. He did not glance at me as my house during the time he was driving up the lane, which covered a distance of 200 yards from the turnpike. Even when he stopped opposite my threshold his gaze was reflectively inclined downward. He climbed clumsily out of the buckboard, for he was a heavy man, put his whip in his iron socket and curled the reins carefully around the whip. Then, after patting the neck of the horse and testing the security of the nearest foot of the buckboard, he turned sedately and, looking unconcernedly at me, said: "Mr. Hildreth, I believe."

"The birds," I nervously remarked, "as you can see, are very fine specimens. They have sir, a remarkable history." Mr. Sinclair closely scrutinized the birds, and asked: "What is their history?" I the reupon related to him the story of the pigeons, to which he listened attentively, but with a slight expression of incredulity. When I had finished he rather indifferently inquired my price for them. I replied that I valued them at \$150, which sum he pooh-hood as altogether too exorbitant. After considerable bickering he agreed to give me \$125, which I accepted. I then left his shop secretly pleased at the success of my roguesy.

Squire Willoughby's check for \$2,000 I had in my pocket. That and \$100 I had exchanged at a Truccion bank for \$2,100, made out to the order of my brother-in-law, Horace Dunbar, to whom I immediately mailed it. I returned home on the Centerville stage, and for several days afterward I kept myself very closely indoors, allowing my little boy, John Sanders, to perform all the duties pertaining to the farm. Only under cover of darkness would I steal out for my usual exercise, and frequently I cut short my walk by reason of a vague fear that I was being followed. During this period my life was miserable, and I learned for the first time that conscience not only makes a coward of a man but tortures him worse than any bodily pain. I was somewhat consoled, however, for my dishonest transaction with Mr. Sinclair, by the receipt of a letter from Penelope and Horace—a letter full of tender gratitude and thanks for the relief I had afforded them; and, finally, I gave up brooding over my infamy, and my conscience with the resolve that as soon as possible I would trace the party to whom Mr. Pullen had sold the pigeons and reimburse him for their loss.

I now began to take an interest in my

farm and, instead of brooding so much of my time to my brooding and to the care of my fruit trees, I labored hard like an ordinary farm hand at tilling the soil. One afternoon, while engaged in plowing in a new field I had freed from stones and stumps, I happened to look up at the sky, wondering what the weather would be on the morrow, when I observed four birds flying in a straight line towards me. Instinctively I knew they were my four pigeons which I could almost from me. A moment later they were perched on my shoulder, indulging in their wonted cooings and manifesting a redundant joy in again being with their old master.

This time their return affected me to tears, and exultantly I called to John who was in a neighboring field, to continue my labor at the plow, and went proudly homeward with my pigeons loudly clinging about my neck, as with the h. u. e. Priscilla handed me a letter, which had been left by the postman during the day. I opened the letter which was from Jack, and read as follows:

New York, Aug. 10, 1889. Dear Brother: I am now in the hospital and getting along pretty well. The operation was performed last week and my eyes must be kept bandaged for three weeks. I was obliged to come to the hospital in order to obtain the necessary care which my case demands. I will not be able to get home until the end of the month. Can you possibly take up that amount for me? I will work my main eye for you. I will be glad to see you, dear brother, through this crisis and you will never regret it. Affectionately yours, Jack.

The perusal of this message I did not lose my patience; on the contrary, I resolved to double my sin and again sell the pigeons—this time in the large city of Pittsburgh, fifty miles away. The next morning I started on the Centerville stage, my pigeons securely confined in a bundle as before. I had but an hour to wait at Truccion before taking a train for Pittsburgh. I did my waiting in a remote corner of the gentlemen's room in the station, behind a newspaper. I reached Pittsburgh too late in the day to transact any business, but before going to bed I learned the name of the largest bird dealer in the city from the hotel clerk.

The next morning I visited the bird shop and inquired of the proprietor, who mailed to Jack, in care of the New York hospital.

Little remains for me to add. I returned home, my conscience hardened by the reputation of a dishonest act, and resolved that so long as my pigeons remained faithful to me, and my family continued unfortunate, I would pursue the same policy. My pigeons did remain faithful, for in less than a week after I disposed of them in Pittsburgh they returned to me. But, happily, my family did not have occasion to appeal again to me for funds, and so I was, perhaps, spared a career of unique knavery.

Jack came out of the hospital with his eyesight wonderfully improved, if not wholly restored, and within six months sent me his check for the amount I had advanced him. He is working his way up in the law, and I am certain he will succeed. As for

Horace, he pulled through his reverses and now is well on the road to fortune. Two years after his failure he repaid me the loan, with which, and what I had managed to save, I lifted the mortgage from my farm, which nets me nearly a thousand a year—all an old bachelor like myself requires or desires. In conclusion, I will say that the man who purchased the four pigeons of Mr. Pullen has been paid \$175 by me, that being the price he paid Mr. Pullen for them. Mr. Jenkins of Truccion, who bought the pigeons of Mr. Sinclair, I paid \$300 to cover his loss. To Mr. Spicer, who bought the pigeons of the dealer in Pittsburgh, I remitted the same amount. For a gift to me, those birds proved rather expensive, but they have taught me several practical and salutary lessons, and next to Penelope and Jack, there is nothing in the world I love so much as I love them.

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"Bon to Boston, ho ye, Benkin?" "Yes." "Mrs Benkin go 'long?" "Um—hum." "How'd ye like it, Mrs Benkin?" "Laws' sake!" snapped out Mrs. Benkin. "Ev'ry thin' I see there was just frightful!"

"I believe ye, Mary Jane," broke in Farmer Benkin. "Ye 'a't' don't doin' nothin' the whole day but stoppin' in rout o' lookin' 'glasses!"

A Clergyman's Queer Idea. A distinguished clergyman has recently condemned all social and polite fetions, says the New York Tribune. When, for instance, a stupid bore calls upon you, he thinks you ought to tell him that you are not glad to see him, but that, on the contrary, you are sorry to see him, and that you wish he would go. This sort of brutal frankness would not do in the case of a clergyman, a clergyman might as well quit preaching who should begin his sermon as follows: "My selfish, mostly ignorant and despicable hearers, I should like to call your prayerful attention to my text, but I know most of you are thinking about other matters and that you do not come here to learn piety, but rather to show your good clothes and maintain a social position."

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