

"But," said Bill, the youngest of the three, looking up into the old man's face, "are not *you* an old Revolutioneer?"

"Not yet," replied Uncle Benny. "I am old, but not old enough to be a Revolutioneer."

From this spot they wandered over the outskirts of the city, looking into the pig-pens that abound there, in search of an eligible porker with which to make a beginning. They went about leisurely, and of course saw a great variety, some in nice clean pens, and some in pens so foul that it was evident the dirty pigs were not doing nearly so well as the clean ones. All this was carefully pointed out to the boys, and they did not fail to remark the difference. At last they came to a man who had a number of what he called the Chester County Whites,—fine round fellows with short legs, short ears, short faces, and long bodies.

This was the kind Uncle Benny had been seeking for. The boys themselves acknowledged that they looked nicer and fatter than any others they had seen. As all were now deeply interested in pork, the boys bristled up and entered into these matters with zeal; and their opinion being asked by the old man which pig, of all they had seen, they would prefer, they agreed upon the Chester Counties. So a young sow was purchased, which would drop a litter of the pure breed in about two months. For this purchase Uncle Benny advanced the sum of thirty dollars out of his own pocket, the money to be refunded to him by the sale of the pigs that were to come, the seller agreeing to deliver the sow at Mr. Spangler's farm the following week, so as to allow time for putting up a suitable pen.

This purchase made, they set out to inspect the hen-roosts and pigeon-houses. It was concluded not to buy any chickens just then, as Mrs. Spangler had quite a number already on the farm, and Uncle Benny thought there would be danger of disputes arising with her about eggs and other matters, and he did not choose to run the risk of ruffling her feathers. But he advanced four dollars to pay for six pairs of pigeons, which he was to receive back from the increase of the flock. He thought it better to lend the money to the boys than to make them a present of it, as it would rest on their minds as a sort of weight or obligation, teaching them the necessity of care and economy to clear it off. The pigeon-dealer put the birds into a roomy box with a covering of slats, and the party started for home.

The boys were at work early next morning, under Uncle Benny's direction, fitting up a pigeon house. There was a large loft over the wagon-shed, where they resolved it should be. It had a good, tight floor, to which they could ascend

through a trap by means of a step-ladder. The front was open, but this they soon made all right by nailing up laths sufficiently close to keep the pigeons in, yet so far apart that they could put out their heads and survey the premises, so as to become perfectly familiar with them before being allowed their liberty. Part of this lattice-work projected two or three feet beyond the front, thus affording to the birds a view, from two sides and the front, of all that was going on out of doors. They then provided nests by making rough boxes about fifteen inches square and four inches deep, which they pushed back under one of the eaves, giving the pigeons a chance at the seclusion which they invariably covet, when ready to lay and hatch out their young. These fixtures were made of odd stuff they found lying about. But the great help toward doing even this was found in the old man's tool-chest. They could have done very little without him and his tools.

When these hasty but sufficient preparations had been made, he required them to put into the loft a low earthen pan, of large size, filled with water, for the pigeons to bathe in, as well as to drink from; for pigeons are thirsty beings, and delight in water. No creatures enjoy drinking more heartily. They plunge the head in nearly up to the eyes, and take a full draught at once, not slowly and deliberately, like chickens. He also fitted up for them a feeding trough about two inches deep, which he covered with a wire net-work, so as to keep the pigeons from getting into it, but with the meshes large enough for them to put in their bills and take out the food. This would keep the latter free from dirt, as well as prevent waste. Then over one corner of the loft he caused to be spread at least a bushel of fine gravel, broken lime, and pounded bricks, to assist digestion and furnish material for the formation of egg-shells. Beside this there was a supply of common salt, an article which is indispensable to the health of pigeons.

The making of all these preparations was of course a great affair for the boys, but it was surprising how heartily they carried them through. The simple fact was, their sympathies had been enlisted in a cause exclusively their own. They therefore kept to their work as energetically as if sure to get rich by it. Indeed, while thus engaged, there were a great many conjectures indulged in as to when the pigeons would begin to lay, how many eggs would be hatched in the course of a year, and whether they should take the squabs to Trenton market and sell them, or whether it would not be better to let them grow up, and thus increase the flock to a large size, before they began to sell any. There was a general impatience among them to hurry up the laying, and have it begin immediate-