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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## Fleet Wing And Sweet Voice

Mother and Father Pigeon lived with their two young pigeons in their home, built high on a post in the king's barnyard. Every bright morning they would fly away through the beautiful sunshine wherever they pleased, but, when evening came, they were sure to come to the pigeon-house again.

One evening, when they were talking together in their sweet, cooing way, Mother Pigeon said:—

"We each have a story to tell, I know; so let each one take his turn, and Father Pigeon begin."

Then Father Pigeon said:—

"To-day I have been down to the shining little stream that runs through the wood. The green ferns grow on either side of it, and the water is cool, cool, cool! for I dipped my feet into it, and wished that you all were there."

"I know the stream," cooed Mother Pigeon. "It turns the wheels of the mills as it hurries along, and is busy all day on its way to the river."

"To-day I have talked with the birds in the garden," said Sweet Voice, one of the young pigeons, "the thrush, the blackbird, and bluebird, and all. They sang to me and I cooed to them, and together we made the world gay. The bluebird sang of the sunshine, and the blackbird of the harvest; but the thrush sang the sweetest song. It was about her nest in the tree."

"I heard you all," said Fleet Wing, the other young pigeon; "for I sat and listened on the high church tower. I was so high up, there, that I thought I was higher than anything else; but I saw the great sun shining in the sky, and the little white clouds, like sky pigeons, sailing above me. Then, looking down, I saw, far away, this white pigeon-house; and it made me very glad, for nothing that I saw was so lovely as home."

"I never fly far away from home," said Mother Pigeon, "and to-day I visited in the chicken yard. The hens were all talking, and they greeted me with 'Good morning! Good morning!' and the turkey gobbled 'Good morning!' and the rooster said 'How do you do?' While I chatted with them a little girl came out with a basket of yellow corn, and threw some for us all. When I was eating my share, I longed for my dear ones. And now good night," cooed Mother Pigeon, "it is sleepy time for us all."

"Coo, coo! Good night!" answered the others; and all was still in the pigeon-house.

Now over in the palace, where the king, and queen, and their one little daughter lived, there was the sound of music and laughter; but the king's little daughter was sad, for early the next morning her father, the king, was to start on a journey, and she loved him so dearly that she could not bear to have him leave her.

The king's little daughter could not go out in the sunshine like Sweet Voice and Fleet Wing, but lay all day within the palace on her silken cushions; for her fine little feet, in their satin slippers, were always too

tired to carry her about, and her thin, little face was as white as a jasmine flower.

The king loved her as dearly as she loved him; and when he saw that she was sad, he tried to think of something to make her glad after he had gone away. At last he called a prince, and whispered something to him. The prince told it to a count, and the count to a gentleman-in-waiting.

The gentleman-in-waiting told a footman, and the footman told somebody else, and at last, the boy who waited on the cook heard it.

Early next morning he went to the pigeon-house, where Mother and Father Pigeon and their two young pigeons lived; and putting his hand through a door, he took Sweet Voice and Fleet Wing out, and dropped them into a basket.

Poor Sweet Voice, and Fleet Wing! They were so frightened that they could not coo! They sat very close to each other in the covered basket, and wondered when they would see their mother and father and home again.

All the time, as they sat close together in the basket and wondered, they were being taken away from home; for the king had started on his journey, and one of his gentlemen was carrying the basket, very carefully, with him on his horse.

At last the horses stood still and the basket was taken to the king; and when he opened it, the two little pigeons looked up and saw that the sun was high in the sky, and that they were far from home.



When they saw that they were far from home, they were more frightened than before; but the king spoke so kindly and smoothed their feathers so gently, that they knew he would take care of them.

Then the king took two tiny letters tied with lovely blue

ribbon out of his pocket; and, while his gentlemen stood by to see, he fastened one under a wing of each little pigeon.

"Fly away, little pigeons!" he cried; and he tossed them up toward the sky. "Fly away, and carry my love to my little daughter!"

Fleet Wing, and Sweet Voice spread their wings joyfully, for they knew that they were free! free! and they wanted to go home.

Everywhere they saw green woods, instead of the red roofs and shining windows of the town, and Sweet Voice was afraid; but Fleet Wing said:—"I saw these woods from the



tall church steeple. Home is not so far away as we thought."

Then they lost no time in talking, but turned their heads homeward; and as they flew the little gray squirrels that ran about in the woods called out to ask them to play, but the pigeons could not stay.

The wood dove heard them, and called from her tree: "Little cousins, come in!" But the pigeons thanked her and hurried on.

"Home is not so far away," said Fleet Wing; but he began to fear that he had missed the way, and Sweet Voice was so tired that she begged him to fly on alone. Fleet Wing would not listen to this; and, as they talked, they came to a little stream of water with green ferns growing all about, and they knew that it must be the very stream that Father Pigeon loved. Then they cooled their tired feet in the fresh water, and cooed for joy; for they knew that they were getting nearer, nearer, nearer home, all the time.

Sweet Voice was not afraid then; and as they flew from the shelter of the woods, they saw the tall church steeple with its golden weather vane.

The sun was in the west, and the windows were all shining in its light, when Fleet Wing and Sweet Voice reached the town. The little children saw them and called: "Stay with us, pretty pigeons." But Sweet Voice and Fleet Wing did not rest until they reached the white pigeon house, where Mother and Father Pigeon were waiting.

The cook's boy was waiting, too, and the little pigeons were taken in to see the king's little daughter. When she found the letters which they carried under their wings, she laughed with delight; and Fleet Wing and Sweet Voice were very proud to think that they had brought glad news to their princess.

They told it over and over again out in the pigeon-house, and Mother and Father Pigeon were glad, too. In the morning, the birds in the garden were told of the wonderful things that had happened to Fleet Wing and Sweet Voice; and even the hens and chickens had something to say when they heard the news.

The thrush said that it all made her think of her own sweet song; and she sang it again to them:—

"Wherever I fly from my own dear nest,  
I always come back, for home is the best."