

# U.S.A. Poultry Farmer's INGENIOUS DISCOVERY

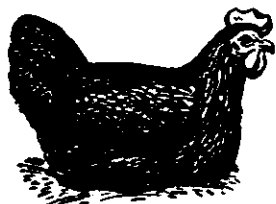
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**MONTH'S SUPPLY**

**2/6**

**ALL STORES**

## The Return

(continued from previous page)

"Sure, Tim, sure."

Mrs. Tawhero sat in her navy costume and red hat, her hair straggling on to her coat collar. She was smiling, smiling, nodding and smiling. The children looked at him out of great round black eyes. The horse flicked his head, itched his feet up and down. The blackened shop behind him served as a background to it all.

Timi, after his first indulgence of words, paused, searched, drew something that wanted to be said.

"See Pete over there?"

"Never set eyes on him, Tim. Heard enough about him though. Felt quite proud I could say we grew up together. He's done pretty well, hasn't he?"

Timi, hands now in trouser pockets, flyaway coat spraying out behind, natty green stetson pushed to the back of his head, cracked his dark face with a grin.

"Pretty well," he admitted, with a poor display of disinterest. "Pretty well. In Italy now. Captain Tawhero. Sounds good, eh?" and Timi's pride in Pete brushing aside pakeha subterfuge of mock modesty, broke through. Timi rocked back and forward on his large feet, smiling hugely at the thought of Pete, Captain Tawhero, somewhere in Italy.

They both stood, seeing Pete Tawhero in a Grecian pass, blowing oncoming Jerries to hell with a tommy-gun while the rest of the company took the wounded on down towards the sea.

Pete Tawhero of Thermopylae and the old pa. Captain Tawhero of Tahunui and the olive groves, the vineyards, and the old cart with its smiling Mrs. Tawhero and the cluster of great-eyed children.

The stale smell from the ruined shop choked the back of Bob's throat, but Timi didn't notice.

"You an' Pete had a few good times together," he announced.

"We sure did, Timi, we sure did."

"Remember the night you went eeling and you fell in? An' the time you pinched the apples from old Grant's shed? And old Grant was going to have you up before the Court? I tanned Pete's hide for that—but the apples were damn good! An' the time you put the fire-crackers under Mrs. Thompson's chair?"

"Sure, Tim, sure I remember."

And all at once there was nothing more for either of them to say. "Better get goin'" and Timi struggled back, took the reins from Mrs. Tawhero's flaccid fingers.

"Great seeing you, Bob. See you again soon. If you're out our way, come and see us."

"I will, Pete, sure I will."

Timi's roar started the horse and the wheels again. Bob waved to Timi, to smiling Mrs. Tawhero, to the clutch of children in the back.

PEOPLE were starting to drift into town. He didn't want to talk any more, so he turned off the main street and went down towards the river.

The houses on this side of the town were older, smaller, not so well kept as the houses in the street where his home was. Some of them here were no more than the original two-roomed cottages that had been built when pakeha ways first invaded the district. Others,

built round about the 1880's were bigger, sporting verandahs and peaked roofs and 20-foot studs, but they all needed coats of paint and a general brushing-up. Their gardens were heavy with sprawling bushes and old trees. Then there was the Winstone place, biggest of the lot, its two-storied extravagance topped off by gables and an attic. He half expected to see the Winstone kid—Sally—sitting swinging her skinny legs over the verandah, a half-eaten apple in a slim grubby hand, her impudent mouth ready to jeer. But she wasn't there.

He followed the road to the river, striking off down the path, seeking the place he knew under the bridge overlooking the whirlpool which had held such terror and such fascination for him when he was a boy. But the ledge where he used to sit was gone, a rubble of earth and split pebbles showing where a miniature landslide had taken place. On the opposite bank, men and machines were shifting the shingle, biting deep, scooping, dipping and shovelling. Leave it alone, he wanted to call, leave it alone.

He went along the river bed to where the old willows, planted by the Maoris in the days of the fighting, dipped leaves into the stream, dug twisted roots down through earth to water. The river running before his eyes, now in a deep channel, now thinly over gravel, struck a pleasant nostalgic note.

A battle had been fought here, years ago, between the white men and the brown, but nothing of their strife remained. There were only the trees and the river.

Now that the coming home was accomplished and the being here an actuality, he became aware of the lassitude, of an emptied-out feeling as though all reserves and ambitions had been focussed on this one point, which now achieved, had something less to offer than had been anticipated.

\* \* \*

HE found himself automatically weighing and moulding a handful of the soft brown river earth. He let it dribble through his fingers and he watched it as it fell. Before his eyes it merged with the sands of a desert, with the dust of Crete, with the bones of his ancestors. The bones of his old man's old man who had been one of von Tempski's guerillas; the bones of Timi Tawhero's old man who had fought the pakeha under Rewi and had joined in that last audacious desperate retreat.

You go away and you come back, Battle, murder, and sudden death—but you are more or less the same as when you went away and change is in the earth of home and in the people you left behind you.

His feverish distaste for change in the others had been a pleading for them to wait, not to go too far ahead until he could come and catch up with them. And the impossible fulfilment of his desire lay in the sight of his sister who had become a woman, and in the face of his mother who was now old. Joe Dyer knew a changed world because Ron had gone out of it. Death doesn't change you—living does that, and the last few years for him had been neither death nor life, but a static enduring period in between. Death halted your image in the minds of the people that knew you like an eternal "As you were." Like those statue games you used to play when the music went on and on and then suddenly stopped and you stayed, as you were, motionless, poised. Ron would never appear

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