



THE CHIEF POSTMASTER'S ROOM. Mr Biss and his Chief Clerk at the table.
The Auckland Post Office.

Noodlesby Exercises Himself.

He laid the paper down, removed his glasses and smiled benignantly across the table at Mrs Noodlesby. "Phebe," he said, "too many chickens on this plantation."

"Ah?"
"Yes; but can't you devise some better way of expressing your views than by everlastingly firing 'Ah?' loaded with a hump-backed interrogated point at eveything I say? I was just observing, Mrs Noodlesby, that these diggings are becoming

overcrowded with a congested population of chickens. We ought to be gin killing them off."

"Quite right, Peleg, my dear. Several sizable friers were picking up scraps around the kitchen door this afternoon."

"Exactly. There's a young ingrain polka dot rooster with a lordly strut in his walk, and I propose catching and executing him in the morning."

"By yourself?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"I suspect you can't do it, dear."
"Faugh! Can't catch a little, wabble-shanked spring chicken? Bet yer dollar I can!"

"But wouldn't it be better to take him from the roost to-night, Peleg? You are getting rather too old to run chickens down when there's an easier way of securing them."

"Old! Me old? Phebe Noodlesby, I am now fully resolved upon catching that ingrain polka dot on foot, and doing it alone, to-morrow morning. Hear my warble?"

And he shambled off to bed, mumbling and grumbling as he went.

Never was rooster, young and inexperienced in the ways of this deceitful world, more completely astounded than when, having just begun scratching for an early worm, the figure of Farmer Noodlesby came bearing down upon him with blood in his eye and both coxiflairs flapping in the morning breeze. The rooster scurried to one side, unlimbered a foot or so of neck, and gave vocal utterance to several dozen successive notes of alarm. Noodlesby recove ed his equilibrium in a moment, tucked his course and went frantically galloping arter the rooster.

The race was interesting from the start. The rooster described an eccentric ellipse of wide dimensions, Noodlesby following a close ten feet in the rooster's wake, and reaching after the doomed fowl as if life and all material glory depended upon his exertions.

Entering upon their second tour of the premises, Noodlesby, waxing furiously impatient, began warning to his work.

So did the rooster. Noodlesby's breath came and went at the rate of sixty-odd revolutions per minute. His mouth stood picturesquely ajar, and his eyes resembled a pair of overdone ginger sn's. But he was gaining on the rooster, that was clearly in evidence, and it inspired

him with renewed zeal and longer strides. The ten feet of distance between them was quickly reduced to four, three, two and one-half, two, one and one-half, and Noodlesby, spreading his hands apart as if in preparation for a flight through space, threw himself forward and caught—his hands full of sand bars!

The rooster darted under the fence and disappeared, excited and cackling, in the jimson patch.

"Can I help you, dear?" It was Mrs Noodlesby softly addressing her husband over the fence.

"You can go into the house and keep yer mouth shet," he promptly snapped.

In less time than it takes to record it Noodlesby had cleared the palms of his hands of surplus vegetation, had thrown his coat in one direction his vest in another, and his hat in a third, and with head thrown back was careering, flushed and panting, through the jimson patch, the fugitive polka dot lending the wuy and setting the pace. The devious windings and turnings and doublings made by that pair of bipeds are simply indescribable.

The rooster, convinced that the jimson patch had become a delusion and a snare, broke cover and with wings outstretched and voice pitched to a declamatory key took his pursuer around the barn, through the pig pen and across the feed lot, where in making his exit through the barbed wire fence Noodlesby left a sample patch of his trousers as big as his two hands, and another patch of skin as big as a button, and then with a dozen other fleeing, clamorous companions the rooster plunged under the corn crib and was lost to view.

"Ha, ha! You skulking idiot, I'll fetch ye!"

Noodlesby went down on all-fours, peered cautiously under the crib, followed his eyes with one hand, and, chuckling audibly, drew his squaking, fluttering victim forth by the legs.

"Phebe! Phebe Noodlesby!" he yelled, "I've caught the varmint!"

He came stalking up to the back door five minutes later, hot and palpitating, but jubilant, and laid the decapitated rooster down upon the stone step for Mrs Noodlesby's inspection.

"Which one did you get, Peleg?" his wife sweetly inquired.

"Ingrain polka dot, of course! Think I'd go floundering all over creation trying to exterminate a miserable rickety critter like this just to entertain you with pleasant surprises and keep you in good humour and then gather in the wrong bird!" Uh, uh-h! Not if old man Noodlesby knows himself."

Noodlesby looking up from a plate of boiled chicken and fluffy dumplings at dinner time, abruptly asked:

"Phebe, was it the ingrain polka dot?"

"Why, no; of course not. It was the blooded two dollar prize taker you brought home from the fair last fall. Hark! That's the polka dot crowing outside."

Noodlesby harp oned a luscious dumpling with his fork and went on with his meal in savage silence.

Tit for Tat.

Amongst the peculiar marriage customs of the world may be classed that which prevails in Brittany. When the wedding ceremony is over, it is the practice for the lord and master to give his bride a sound box on the ear and to say as he gives it:

"That is how it feels when you make me vexed."

After this most unlover-like proceeding he greets her with an ardent kiss and tenderly utters the words:

"And thus it feels when you treat me well."

A Breton once had the temerity to link his fortunes with those of a German lass, and, nothing daunted, gave her the usual salute on retiring from the altar. But he had mistaken his girl, and the stout hearted damsel, ignorant of the custom, did not wait for the kiss, but dealt her swain a resounding clout on the side of his face and exclaimed with emphasis:

"Look here, Jean, you had better understand once for all I'll have none of that!"

The young fellow, sadder and wiser, rubbed his cheek and left the church with the settled belief that he had, without doubt, a better half who would stand on nonsense.



Hanna, photo.

Copy Aug 10/123
[See letterpress.]

THE LATE MR GEORGE FRASER.