

I hope I'm not a vindictive man, and I'm sure I'm not a cruel one, in spite of what was said before the mag; but I'm coming to that presently. All I wish to observe is that, having got my new game cock in the fowl house, I went to bed that night with a fervent desire that Peter would awake me next morning with his crowing as early as might be convenient to him. My wish was gratified. At 4 a.m. Peter came out, and stated, with his usual conceit, that his firm was the most influential in the trade. His observations were made with so much emphasis that they woke me from a pleasant dream of holding Higginbotham's head in a dye vat. I listened for a moment. Then I whispered to myself, "I'll put some salt in your porridge, my gentleman." So I put on a dressing gown and a pair of slippers, and, without waking my wife, crept down to the fowl house, and taking my new purchase from his perch, set him on his legs outside. I can't say I admired him. He had a little, square-cut tail, like the horses' tails I've seen in old hunting pictures; and, generally speaking, he'd a trim and yet a disreputable appearance. In fact he reminded me of a "rough" just clean-shaved and subjected to the "county crop" by the prison barber. He seemed, too, very naked and bare about the legs, like a child at the sea-side, with its drawers pulled up for paddling purposes. Still there was, on the whole, a workmanlike look about him; and, when he heard Peter, he put his head on one side, as if he'd an amendment to move to that resolution. However, I left them to their job, and went back to bed, where, after listening for a while, I soon fell asleep again. Before breakfast, of course, I took my usual turn round the garden. There, sure enough, I found Peter as dead as a door-nail on the path. While I was looking at him, old Higginbotham came out. "Mornin'," says I. "Mornin'," says he. "Your cock," says I, "handing him over Peter's remains, has been trespassing in my garden, and a new cock of mine has hashed his mutton for him. He's rather disfigured for boiling; but perhaps he'll do for potted fowl and ham." "Oh, thanky," says he. "Don't name it," says I.

To make a long story short, Higginbotham in a day or two set himself up with a new cock of the same species as mine; and a day or two after that I had to find out Healthy William again. My wife, who through grief at the loss of the bantam, had at first given me her support, now began to turn restive, and to say that we were disgracing the neighbourhood and what not. However, my blood was up, and I determined to go through with it, though I confess I felt some misgivings when a score or two of colliers, who had come to see the fun, began to line our garden wall every morning with dirty faces, and made bets, interspersed with the most middling language I ever heard. In all I had laid out with Healthy William £7 10s., and a suit of clothes, and four silver spoons—the latter investment being involuntary on my part, but not, I am sorry to surmise, on the part of Healthy. Then I saw a sight which opened my eyes. I was training a Virginia creeper round the corner of my house, and I happened to be standing on a ladder in such a position that I could see into Higginbotham's back yard. And what I saw was this:—I saw Higginbotham handing over to that execrable villain, Healthy William, a bundle of clothes and some gold money; while Healthy was taking out of his capacious pocket

a new game cock with the remark that it would soon "settle the hash of old stick-i the-mud's cock next door." Now, I'm an obstinate man, but I'm not beyond reason; and at that moment I saw very clearly what an ass I'd been. Acting promptly on this conviction, I sought Higginbotham on' Change that very day, and we made peace and clean breasts of it over a pint of Chablis and two dozen natives at a neighbouring restaurant. The terms of peace were that we should both take enthusiastically to Cochins, Dorkings, Houdans, and suchlike breeds, and should share the expense of a wire netting between our gardens. I then shook hands with Higginbotham, and went home a happy man. I've always noticed that a man never thinks himself so clever as when he's just got out of a scrape that he got into through being a fool.

On returning home that evening I happened to see our local lawyer, who is also clerk to the magistrates. He was talking to a strange gentleman in an Ulster, with a lot of papers sticking out of his pockets. The stranger moved away as I approached. "Who's that?" says I to the lawyer. "That!" says he, "Why that—oh! that's an agent of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals." "I subscribe to that society," says I with some pride. "Do you?" says he; "then I expect you'll get good value for your money." "How so?" says I. "There's a deal of cock-fighting down here," says he, "and among gentlemen of position, too, that ought to set a better example." "Deary me!" says I. "Hem" says he. "It's a chilly evening for the time of year," says I. "It is inclined to be chilly," says he.

I won't dwell on what followed. I will only say that five minutes afterwards I met a policeman with a summons for me at my own door, and all the servant's heads out of the windows; that Healthy William was the principal witness for the society, and was highly complimented by the bench for the straightforward way in which he gave his evidence; that old Higginbotham turned up trumps; that I think a barrister engaged special from Manchester with twenty guineas on his brief might have found something more to the point to say than that Socrates was fond of cock-fighting; that I've just got into my possession some overdue acceptances by the particular magistrate who remarked that a fine would be of no use in my case; that I wonder how he'll like the operation of the Bills of Exchange Act; and that at our last School Board election an undemonstrative candidate, whose committee had the bad taste to placard the town with the story I've just related, gained my seat by a large majority.

—NUGATOR.

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