

dows, and armed themselves with home-made guns in defence of their self-assumed fort. You may be sure the master did his best to get in, for school-masters, with all their good points, and however much they may like a holiday to themselves, are not noted for their superabundance of alacrity in advancing the claims of their scholars for one. So he tried to take the fortress as well as he could. If he got in, he wreaked his vengeance in heavy tasks. If not, terms of capitulation were proposed and accepted, and a good feast of sport paid up for the imaginary insult.

#### THE PENITENTIAL SPORTS,

in these old days, were not, however, so innocently carried out, nor did they always end in such harmless fun. The very extravagance of the season led the people on to cruelty. Poultry were tied to a stake by a short cord. Men and boys stood at a distance of twenty yards, and shied broom-sticks at the poor birds, who were killed stroke by stroke amid the heartless laugh of the spectators. If some fellow were in need of money, he charged twopence for three such shies, and, I am sorry to say, that oftentimes he drove a roaring trade. Cock-fights, too, were common, and whole schools of children took part in them. It was the custom for the master to supply the cocks, and to preside over the battle. The birds were buried to the neck in sand, and so enraged by the cruel multitude that even in this predicament they tore at one another. If a bird got frightened and ran away, he became the property of the school-master, and appeared at the next family dinner, and the custom was so common, that in counting the salary to be paid to that worthy functionary for his ardour in training these young ideas how to shoot (broom-sticks), he got—not so many hundreds of dollars and cents, but a few pounds and a great many frightened roosters.

#### EVEN DEAR LITTLE MOTHER HEN

did not escape the general desire for penitence. If she forgot to lay her first egg before Shrove Tuesday, she was thrashed to death on the barn-floor. When the people were so sorry for their sins that they wanted to play blind-man's-buff, they took a hen and tied her to the back of one of the players, who had some bells attached to his shoulders, and who ran hither and thither to avoid being caught. The others, blindfolded, chased him in order to get a blow at the poor hen. If the man and not the hen had the misfortune to receive the blow, you may imagine the turn in events; but the squabble usually wound up by Mistress Hen being walked off to the pot of the nearest inn, boiled, and made into a delicious supper with bacon and pancakes.

After all this preliminary sorrow, the people were ready for

#### ASH WEDNESDAY,

the first day of Lent, of self-sacrifice, of inward talk with themselves about their past and future lives. The priest took ashes, blessed them, and sprinkled them with holy water. His flock gathered before him, dressed in sack-cloth, the coarse stuff out of which sacks are made, and which, in itself, is a symbol of humiliation. The priest then dipped his finger into the ashes, and with them marked each humble forehead with a cross, repeating in Latin a short exhortation reminding his people that they were made but of dust. The ashes were made from palm that had been consecrated on Palm Sunday.

Still the spirit of fun would out, even on Ash Wednesday, and after this most solemn service they went back to their games. The proceedings of the previous day having made poultry rather scarce, puppets had to take their place. These were set up, strange scare-crow looking things, and shied at with sticks—a regular old-fashioned Aunt Sally. Boys went about begging the wherewithal for an Ash Wednesday feast, and all who were crusty enough to refuse had their key-holes plastered up with mud.

#### THE KING'S COCK-CROWER,

too, was a curious custom, or rather his peculiar duty in Lent was curious. During that season he took the place of watchman in the Palace, and at every hour in the night, as it came round, he appeared and crowed out in a very unearthly voice, "two o'clock," "three o'clock," right on till day.

Even the abstinence from food, so familiar to ourselves, was, by time and custom, perverted into habits very far from fasting. As flesh meat was forbidden, the quantities of fish consumed would astonish us, and the daintiness of the cookery quite compensated our forefathers for the monotony of the material, although, as the sea-wolf, the grampus, the porpoise, and the whale were then believed to be fish, the material cannot have been too monotonous. Herring pies were a favourite dish. Sturgeons by the barrel, and herrings by tens of thousands, were ordered for the Royal Household; but lampreys were the delicacy; no feast of correct form could dispense with them; no more valued present could be offered to the King than a lamprey-pie; envoys were sent abroad to procure them as often as they were sent to procure peace in war; and, if you remember, it was a lamprey-pie that brought King Henry I. to his grave.

---

FROM " '85."

---

BY BARRY STRATON.

---

Shall we not all be one race, shaping and welding the nation?  
Is not our country too broad for the schisms which shake petty lands?  
Yea, we shall join in our might, and keep sacred our firm Federation,  
Shoulder to shoulder arrayed, hearts open to hearts, hands to hands!