

THE WICKED CHICKEN.

BY ERNEST JARROLD. Author of the "Mickey Finn" Stories.

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The most recent addition to Mickey Finn's museum of natural history proved to be a plump pigeon of the gentle sex. He regarded the bird with peculiar solicitude, chiefly because it was his latest acquisition. But the coming of the pigeon created a fierce jealousy in the heart of the goat which no cajolery served to soften and time failed to appease.

Mickey procured the pigeon from Jack Deolan in exchange for the stoupe of a vinegar cruet, a glass agate and a mammoth doze. He made a nest for the pigeon in the back yard, and attended to its wants with assiduous care. The pigeon grew plump and round on the scraps which Mickey procured from his mother's humble store, and became so tame that it would perch upon the boy's shoulder, eat from his hand and coo its content into his delighted ear. The tame crow and the yellow gosling regarded these evidences of distinction with decided disfavor, the crow especially revealing his anger through the vigorous use of his bony beak upon the tender neck of his rival.

But Jean Ingelow's famous mourner was not more patient than the pigeon, and so, sustained and soothed by the unwavering affection of Mickey, the days passed too quickly to please the boy until the summer coaxed the cherry trees to blossom and wooed the fields to robe themselves in green. And when smiling June came tripping over the hills into the little valley, her warm breath conjured melody in the throats of birds, made the brooks babble, and the goat frisky. And, whisp' the revivifying influence of spring awakened the dormant maternal instinct in the breast of the pigeon, and she showed a desire to "set."

Instead of flying up to the gable of the shanty and preening her plumage in the sunlight, as she was wont to do, she remained in the coop and refused to eat the rations upon which Mickey's biggest marbles. This mental and physical attitude of the pigeon caused Mickey much annoyance; for, while the bird evidently supposed she was procuring marbles she repulsed carcasses and refused to eat the rations which she had so patiently hoarded. In his distress Mickey went to his mother for advice. In justice to the maternal Finn it is necessary to state that "swindle-mintalism" was not one of her weaknesses. She regarded her boy's pet purely from a pigeon-pole vantage point, and this economic view colored her remarks when she said: "Lave her set, me boy. Sure you can play wid the goat while she's raisin' children. But there's no use for her to be wastin' her time on marbles. Now, as you have no pigeon's eggs, faith 'twill do no harm to put a hin's egg under her. She'll never know the differ and her mind'll be aisy. There's 2 cents. Go down to Brady's and get an egg out of the barrel, and mind you don't get wan' o' them eggs that's made by machinery."

Mickey was delighted with the idea, and, running down to the grocery, he bought an egg and placed it beneath the pigeon. The egg was one of unusual size and Mrs. Finn was doubtful if the warmth of the pigeon's small body would be sufficient to hatch it out. But in order to aid the pigeon in her maternal endeavor Mickey and his mother stuffed an old tin wash basin with soft wools and flannels taken from the ragbag. In the homely incubator the pigeon was installed. It was two days before the pigeon could fit her small, warm body to the hen's egg, but after much querulous cooing, twisting and turning she settled down to business and started to become a foster mother in earnest. And now that the pigeon had gone into temporary ecstacy the goat took Mickey back into his confidence again and permitted his head to be scratched, while the crow perched upon the shoulder lately usurped by the pigeon, and all went merrily as a fairy dancing upon a moonbeam. The ensuing three weeks were filled with interest to little Mike. Every afternoon when he came home from school he lifted the pigeon carefully from the egg to see if the rats had invaded the coop during his absence and devoured the embryo. But each time, as

an unusually vigorous bird, with a strong beak and a pair of keen, inquisitive eyes. The pigeon was alarmed at the proportions of her offspring and also at its independence and self-reliance. Unlike the usual pigeon baby, it refused to remain in the nest, but, jumping out, started, like Ulysses, in search of adventure. The pigeon followed the chicken with morose love, hovering over it, but the feathered knight errant was oblivious to her care and started in to hustle and scratch for himself. There was no happier boy in the world than Mickey when he saw the chicken running around the yard, while the pigeon sat on the fence and watched its erratic course with tender solicitude. So lively was the youngster that it required ten minutes of hard work on the part of Mickey to throw his cap over it and take the chicken into the yard for closer inspection. The pigeon flew in at the door and perched upon the mantel. The chicken stood upon Mickey's palm with a calm confidence which was surprising in one so young and tender, as he extended it toward his mother, while his face glowed with pride and satisfaction. But in proportion as the boy was pleased with the chicken, the pigeon was puzzled. Her instinct taught her there was something wrong with her child. The infant was so wild and headstrong that it did not accept the gentle counsel of its mother, nor would it be fed as pigeons usually are in their extreme youth. It was almost pitiful to see the puzzled look on the mother's face as she watched her self-reliant offspring



FAITH 'TWILL DO NO HARRUM TO PUT A HIN'S EGG UNDER HER. SHE'LL NEVER KNOW THE DIFFER.

foraging for worms under the currant bushes and vigorously scratching among the debris in the back yard. And as the chicken grew and thrived it developed a strength of character which was utterly at variance with the timidity of its foster mother. Before it began to assume physical attributes which indicated that it belonged to the haughty ruling sex. Small knobs made their appearance on its legs near the feet and an incipient comb began to sprout upon its head. "That's no decent young bird," remarked Mrs. Finn. "Begorra, 'tis a shanghai rooster." The rooster seemed to grow at the rate of three inches every day and developed an appetite which no amount of feeding could appease. So greedily, indeed, did it eat that not even its own mother was permitted to eat from the same dish. It afforded Mickey a never-ending source of delight to watch the relations existing between these two birds. He saw quaver behind every day which escaped the attention of his heedless mother. One afternoon he boldly asserted that he had actually seen the rooster deliberately kick the pigeon and cause her to turn three somersaults. Such ingratitude seemed ridiculous to Mrs. Finn, but Mickey asserted that it was true and that the pigeon had trept under a currant bush and sobbed as if its heart were breaking.

Mother Bird Filled With Sorrow. By the first of October the chicken had developed into a bird of extraordinary height and leanness. Its legs were covered with feathers and its body was as angular as that of an army mule. Meanwhile the pigeon bird was filled with sorrow at the erratic conduct of her wayward son. She would perch upon the dividing fence separating the Finn estate from O'Brien's half acre with a wailing and wailing boy-tough in her eye, while he invaded the neighbor's garden and ruthlessly stole the lettuce as the Norsemen despoiled the coast of Brittany. The wayward rooster also developed pusillitic inclinations and dominated the yard like a veritable deity, which Mickey regarded with delight as he himself was the best wrestler in school. But Mrs. Finn began to look upon the chicken with disfavor, because of his lack of gallantry toward his faithful little mother and she resolved that he should be killed and made into savory pot-pie for the Christmas dinner. But she did not let Mickey of her determination as she knew he would resent it with tears and protestations. And as the cold December winds swept down the valley she felt the chicken all he could do with the idea of making him fat and juicy for the pot. The greedy and selfish bird forced his cooling mother away from the dish with savage thrusts of his cruel beak and gorged himself, thereby covering his bones with those tender morsels of white and black meat which are so toothsome when fished from a lake of gravy with a fork. But all through the ignominious and contemptuous upon her by her son, the pigeon remained faithful to her giant offspring. She cooed him to sleep at night and wakened him in the morning with gentle caresses to secure the early warm.

The day before Christmas dawned bright and cheerful. As soon as Mickey had gone to school Mrs. Finn took the hatchet which she used to split wood with into the cellar and sharpened it on the grindstone. Just before noon Mrs. Reilly came in. "I'm a-goin' to kill the young rooster," said Mrs. Finn. "Why?" asked her neighbor. "Because he's that dignacious to his poor mother I can't bear him any longer and I'm goin' to cut his head off." The pigeon was seated on the back of a chair during this conversation, but when Mrs. Reilly went out the pigeon followed. Half an hour later Mrs. Finn searched the coop, peered into the cellar and invaded the henhouse of all her neighbors with the hatchet in her hand, but both the rooster and the pigeon were missing. At 12 o'clock Mickey came rushing breathlessly into the shanty, exclaiming: "Mother, mother, the chicken and pigeon are gone. I saw the chicken runnin' down the road like a runaway horse and the pigeon sittin' on his back like a sojer."

The Mystery Revealed. One afternoon late in June, when the bumblebees were stalling honey and the butterflies speckled golden gossamer wings like argosies sailing over sunlit seas, the mystery was revealed. An infant chicken broke its calcareous environment and stepped out into the sunlight with a piece of shell clinging to its back. It was

HERE NATURE EVER SMILES

Porto Rico Pictured as the Eden of the Caribbees.

LAZINESS THE SOLE EXCUSE FOR HUNGER

Abundance of Fruits and Vegetables to Be Had for the Picking—Proposed Experiment Station on the Island.

Dispatches from Washington announce that the Department of Agriculture is to establish an experiment station in Porto Rico with a view to promoting the development of agriculture and horticulture on American lines. "We know a great deal about the island and the people already," Secretary Wilson is quoted as saying, "but our observations thus far have been only superficial, merely preliminary and educational. Now we are going to make a thorough scientific investigation of the soil, the climate and the agricultural conditions generally. We shall first study the island from the producers' standpoint, take up the principal industries and teach them how they can get more and better results for their labor than they now receive. Take the tobacco crop, for example. While the available area for tobacco culture in Porto Rico is limited compared with that of Cuba, the soil is just as good, and with the application of scientific principles the crop can be much improved. For example, under the primitive processes it takes ten months to ferment tobacco, but we can show them how to do it just as well in thirty days, with better re-

sults to the leaf. "Coffee is the great staple of Porto Rico, but science has never done anything to improve coffee. It has never been cultivated as it should be. Nature has been allowed to take its course. The coffee trees are liable to all sorts of diseases. We will study them and find the best preventives and correctives. We will find the tree that produces the best berries and the tree that produces the most and will cross-breed those trees. Another very important industry in Porto Rico is almost entirely neglected. They have very few horses there. I have been told that you cannot hire a horse in the city of San Juan and that all the hauling is done by oxen and donkeys that are fed on sugar cane. The absence of horses is due to the lack of grass and hay and these we intend to supply. We can find some grass. I have no doubt, that will grow in that climate and that will enable us to introduce the dairy cow. "We are going to study, too, the best means of improving the conditions of the poor classes, who under Spanish rule have been in a state of semi-serfitude. There are already a lot of schools in operation to teach them reading, writing and arithmetic, but we will try and give them an education in the art of living and the science of labor—that is, how to be useful. Porto Rico is essentially an agricultural country and there are many industries that have never been introduced there which might be made profitable."

Resources of the Island. In an article on the condition of the natives of Porto Rico, written for the New York Tribune by Frederick A. Ober, author of "Porto Rico and Its Resources," the writer shows the lavish generosity of nature on the island and points out the abundance of fruit available to sustain life. The only excuse for hunger there is that the native is too lazy to pick the fruits and vegetables. "The Porto Rican," says Mr. Ober, "has no winter to provide against, with its consequent expenses for comfortable habitation, fuel and clothing. And by the Porto Rican is meant the giharo, or peasant laborer, about whom the politicians are so tenderly solicitous. He is the present representative of a long line of paupers extending through centuries, not one of whom ever possessed a dollar over night or had a voice in the management of insular affairs. "He is a veritable peon, or slave of ancient and cumulative debt, and in probably nine cases out of ten is owned body and soul by his sugar, coffee or tobacco raiser. He is now clamoring so loudly that he shall 'have his rights' and so insistent upon the return of those 'millions wrong as customs from unwilling contributors.' "Well, without seeking to involve the giharo in politics, except, perhaps, to show how he has been a contributory cause of discontent, let us show how nearly impossible it is for him to starve, or even to suffer severely, save through his own fault. In the matter of a habitation he is content with the merest shelter from the elements, and if he were ordinarily industrious (which he is not) the head of a family might erect such a shelter as suffices the average Porto Rican in less than two days. First, four holes are dug in the ground into which four posts are inserted and set erect. These are connected by frameworks of smaller poles, which are covered with palm leaves, and the house is made. This is the simplest type of dwelling, such as generally answers the needs of the peon. The floor is of hardened mud or clay, and sometimes the wattle sides are plastered over with mud or lime; sometimes the walls are constructed of palm leaves and wattle, thatched with palm leaves or 'yagua' shingles, made of palm apices. "The giharo's house costs him nothing but a little labor and is mainly set up without nails or any furnishings whatever from the palms. The palms, growing everywhere in the country, yield all necessary materials. For the simple utensils used in his domestic economy the householder goes to another tree, the calabash, the fruit of which is converted into vessels of various sizes, such as dishes and water bottles, plates and spoons, while the 'yagua' of the royal palm furnishes tubs for washing clothes in, cradles for the babies, wrappers for cigars and bundles that are to be kept dry, and even foundations for the rude beds which, when hammocks are not used, are spread upon the floor at night. From those two species (two palms, the royal and the cocoa)

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INDIANS DRYING FISH



and the calabash the Porto Rican obtains ample material for his house and its equipment.

A Household Outfit. "We have seen that a newly coupled pair of Porto Ricans just starting out in life incur no expense whatever for a dwelling, and, judging from the statistics furnished during Spanish domination, no great amount was squandered on the marriage ceremony, for out of 25,000 births in 1887, for instance, 11,000 were illegitimate. Let it be assumed, then, that a pair of giharos may be established in domicile, or 'encasa,' without the expenditure of a dollar. What will be the household expenses as the months and years roll by? House and furnishings they already possess. The first necessity, fuel for fire (for culinary purposes only), lies in the field or woods at or near their door. An iron pot and probably does not aggregate \$5 a year. Until the age of 7 to 10 the children go about as naked as they were born.

Food Products. "The first reliance of the giharo in the matter of food is the plantain, which, with the banana, grows almost spontaneously at his doorway. It has been most pathetically set forth that the supplies of plantains and bananas having been destroyed by the hurricane of last August the poor peon has nothing wherewith to feed himself. As if those two fruits were the sum and substance of his dietary! "Let us inquire now into the range of food plants that the giharo has, or might have, recourse to, aside from bananas and plantains. First of all, it may well be assumed that the peon is shiftless and improvident, even if not actually lazy. More than plants and tubers of the fields and woods and the terminal bud, or 'cabbage' of the royal palm, which is either eaten raw or boiled like cauliflower. In the prostrate palms, again, he might have found the fat and delicate fruits of the palm beetle, which are said to be delicious fried crisp, or eaten raw like a radish. Birds and mammals are scarce and there is no great abundance of animals to be hunted; but in the streams are crayfish and muscels, while great land crabs sometimes swarm in the woods along shore, where also various kinds of shellfish abound, and in the sea are many kinds of fish, like red snapper, groupers, 'medic' and mullets.

"But the main diet of the native is a vegetable one, and consists of whatever can be most easily raised or ravaged. If he had bestirred himself he might have had peas

and more than a score of minor fruits, such as the guava, cashew, avocado pear, nispero, grenadilla and star apple. Thus it will become apparent that no man, woman or child, with spunk enough to crawl out into the groves and keep his or her mouth open could fall of having something edible drop into it!"

Soldier and the Ant Hill. London King: Only the other day a volunteer regiment got under a fire so heavy that, after spreading out in line of skirmish, the order was given to lie down. One unfortunate soldier tumbled squarely into an ant hill. Thousands of the little pests swarmed angrily over him, biting with peculiar penetration. In a second the soldier jumped up, swearing with the pain. "Lie down, my man," shouted the captain. "Blankety blank, captain, I can't!" protested the poor fellow. Just then a sheet of Mauser bullets flew past him at all heights, from his shin to his head. It was marvelous that the standing soldier was not hit in a dozen places. But he changed his mind swiftly about the possibility of lying down—down he went, regardless of ants, shouting to his commanding officer: "Yes, I can, captain! By the Lord Harry, yes, I can, sir!"

Schoolboy English. Los Angeles Times: Even our education is "silvery" on the under side. You go into the school and are so pleased with the correct intonation, the precision of grammatical construction, the exactness of statement in the language used by the pupils in their recitations. You compliment the pupils and you praise the teacher and your opinion of our schools goes up to 90 in the shade. Then you walk down the street after school hours you hear two young gentlemen who have prize papers discussing a cross, the length of the block, bodily discussing the examinations through which they had evidently passed triumphantly. "Hello, skin-me!" "Hey, skin-me!" "Which go gittin' rithmetick?" "Eighty-seven—unni didun texpert togit more facts! Jus passed him of piles that!" "Becher boots add! not three and one, made two mistakes in history, an't got hurred in spellin' all right." "Sod, George Goodie failed in spellin'." "Yessanni, nodewoodood; furry always looked in the book. Commot after supper navesome fun!" "Sod! Goto meetin with mum-mum!"

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