


## COCK FIGHTING.

†† ELL it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ascalon"—but once upon a time, only once, I attended a Shanghai cock fight. It was in a savoury neighbourhood in Hongkew. Not the proverbial wild horses of fiction could drag from me any closer indication of its whereabouts. It was a filthy hole, and of the gentlemen who patronised it there was no doubt whatever of what they were made—dust, every man of them—filthy dust too.

Most of the cocks that I have seen used for fighting purposes here differ considerably from the celebrated game cock of the English "pit." In fact it is hardly correct to say that there is any special breed that does duty, since the Manila man, who is the great patron of the sport here, appears to be satisfied with what he can get. Anything that will slow fight enough to lay a stake upon.

Cock fighting is common enough in most parts of Asia, from which continent indeed it is supposed to have taken its origin. Sometimes in the south quails are employed instead, and, failing such big game as this, crickets! There is no law against any of these things either in China or in Spain, and the Malays, of whom we have so many here in Shanghai, having been Spanish subjects till 1898, could not be prevented from following their racial bent.

It is less than a century ago that cockfighting was one of the chief sports of our own forefathers. A thousand guineas per battle and five thousand on the "main" represented the stakes on one celebrated occasion. Good cocks, like good horses, might be any colour, but the lighter ones were avoided, white and dun birds being "no good except to run away." It is thought that our expression for cowardice "showing the white feather" is derived from the cock pit.

Here is a description from an old sporting book of a cock pre-



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pared for battle. It will do fairly well for one of the best at the local "entertainment" of which I was witness. "He was a red and black bird—slim, masculine, trimmed—yet with feathers glossy, as though the sun shone only upon his nervous wings. His neck arose out of the bag snake-like—terrible—as if it would stretch upward to the ceiling; his body followed, compact, strong, and beautiful; and his long, dark-blue, sinewy legs came forth, clean, handsome, shapely, determined, iron-like! The silver spur was on each heel, of an inch and a half in length, tied on in the most delicate and neat manner. His large vigorous beak showed aquiline, eagle like; and his black dilating eyes took in all around him, and shone so intensely brilliant, that they looked like jewels. . . . His comb was cut close, his neck trimmed, his wings clipped pointed and strong. . . . The tail was docked triangularwise like a hunter's.'

The description of the fight which followed is full of spirit. But there is no need to quote further. Of the cruelty of cock fighting there is no question, and though much may be said of the matchless courage which the best birds would ever show, and of the benefit of the example, which was claimed as one of the main arguments for it, human experience has ever shown that it is not he who most delights in cruelty that is most brave. Rather the opposite, and it is just as well that Shanghai cock fighting should be confined to the only class that loves it.

