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## **Hogarth moralized**

**Hogarth, William**

**London, 1831**

The Cock-Match.

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## THE COCK-MATCH.

As there are few scenes in life expressing the folly of mankind that Mr. Hogarth has not taken an opportunity of exposing ; this among the rest is also worthy of our notice, being, like that of horse-racing, one of the fashionable diversions calculated to support the spirit of gaming, which this country is remarked for. Exclusive of this, I am persuaded it can afford very little entertainment, unless we delight in cruelty, and find pleasure in giving pain ; for, an act of cruelty it must, certainly, be allowed, to be instrumental to the sufferings of nature, to behold with satisfaction two poor animals seeking the death of each other, and to rejoice at the sight of blood.

Take notice then of this group of gamblers of all ranks, as well noblemen as butchers, chimney-sweepers, shoe-blacks, post-boys, thieves, and blackguards of all denominations ; I say noblemen, for to what meanness will not men submit to gratify their reigning passion ? Read in their faces the disposition of their hearts. Look stedfastly on him in the middle ; see him lost in the enjoyment of his favourite amusement ; eager to bet, and full of cash, he is the dupe of every one present, who are but too ready to take the advantage of his weakness. In this confused state of his mind is one villain purloining a bank-note from him ; behind whom is another actuated by envy, wishing to do the same, and grudging his neighbour the happy opportunity. The next but one above the last I noticed is a blind man, who with that old sporter on the other side, (supposed to





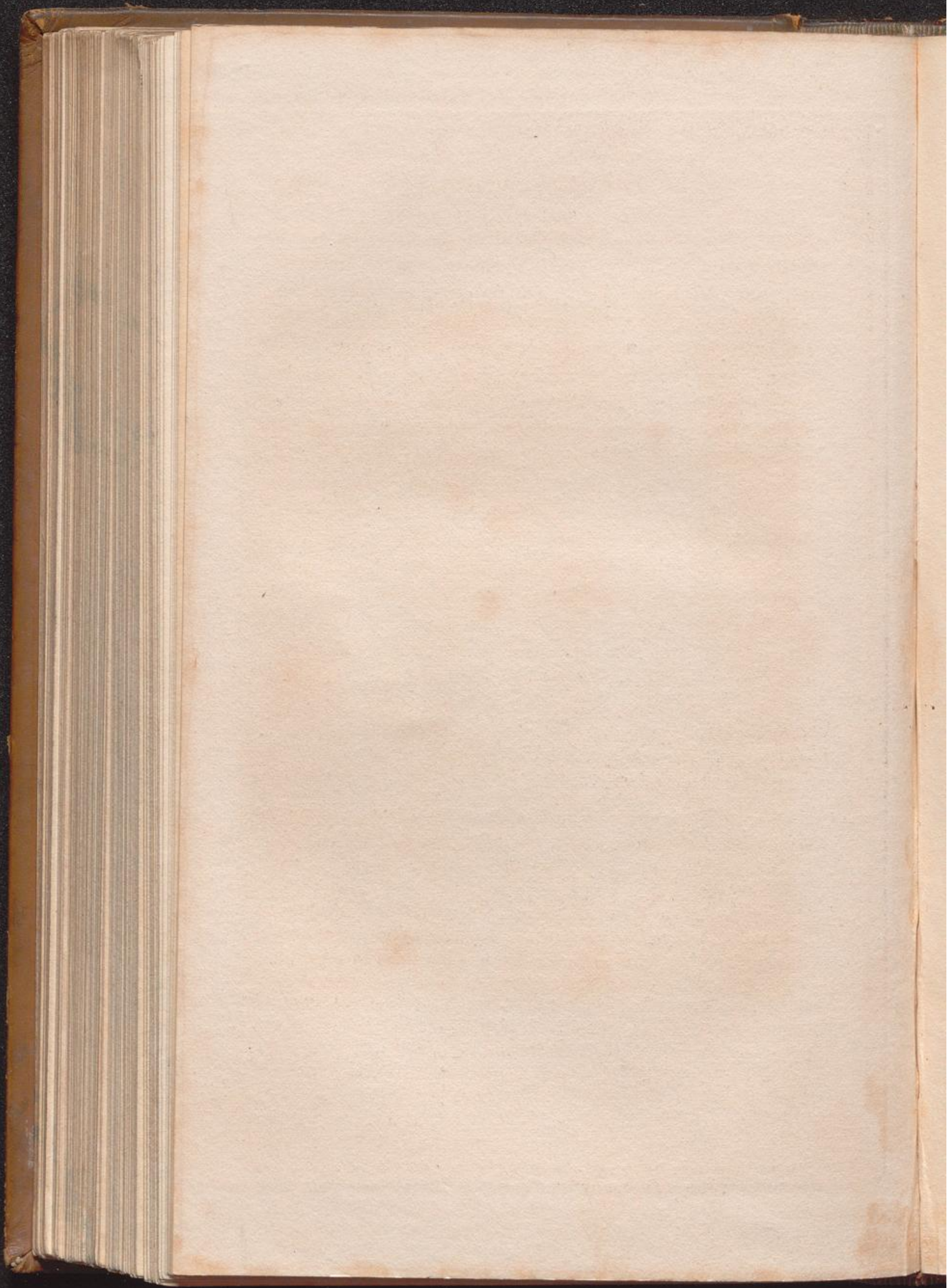
THE COCKPIT.



*Published by John Mayor & Co, Fleet Street, Sep 21, 1831.*

*W. H. Worthington, del.*







have lost his hearing, and the use of his limbs by age) is introduced, by way of intimation, that so bigoted are we to our particular inclinations, that although we have not powers to indulge them so much as we could wish, still are we desirous to partake of the enjoyment, though it be even but a taste. Next the pit, on the left of this plate, is one man registering the bets; another, with a bag, containing a favourite cock for a by-battle; and near him another, with the utmost eagerness bawling out, "Ginger against Pye, for that piece; who says done?" Above, without the pit, is a Frenchman turning up his nose at this insipid entertainment, dropping his snuff in the eyes of the man below him. Indeed many of our diversions have met, and do still meet with the contempt of foreigners, who from such vulgar and low-bred amusements have too justly looked upon us with an eye of disdain, and considered us as a rough and unpolished people.\* That picture hanging against the wall is the portrait of one Nan Rawlings, a noted woman who lived by gaming, and who for that purpose made it her business constantly to attend horse-racing, cock-fighting, and all sorts of

\* ["The people of France," says a recent public journalist, "occasionally rate us, and with some reason, for our passion for animal combats; but in reality, these things take place as frequently, and with more brutality, on their side of the water. The following is from a bill "lately circulated," inviting to the "amusements" of bull and bear baiting, boar hunting, &c. on *Sunday*, March 20, 1831. "The Sieur Montesque sells and buys all sorts of dogs. A great and bloody battle every Monday! Nothing will be neglected to render the combat obstinate. Heated irons for the use of amateurs, should the dogs not loose their hold at the word of command. Sporting and heavenly airs suited to the amusements will be played turn and turn about. Children and Ladies half price." "From such amusements," says the narrator, "whether in Paris or London"—"Good Lord deliver us!"]



public diversion. In the middle of the pit is the shadow of a man drawn up in a basket to the ceiling, (there being no room to introduce the figure) a punishment inflicted on such persons as bet more money than they have to pay; he is represented as offering his watch to redeem his liberty. On this side of the pit are a number of persons at the same employ, betting, and taking of bets; among whom is one overpowered with liquor, looking with concern on his almost-empty purse, and condemning himself for his folly in playing it away.

Upon the whole, the moral tenor of this piece is to create in us a disgust of such vulgar entertainment, and an abhorrence of such inhuman merriment, where the gentleman is disgraced and the man degraded.

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[“The scene” says Mr. Ireland is probably laid at Newmarket, and in this motley group of peers, pick-pockets, gentlemen, gamblers of every denomination, Lord Albemarle Bertie being the principal figure, is entitled to precedence. In a former print (the March to Finchley) we saw him an attendant at a boxing match; and here he is president of a most respectable society assembled at a Cock-pit. What rendered his lordship’s passions for amusements of this nature very singular, was his being totally blind. In this place he is beset by seven steady friends, five of whom at the same instant offer to bet with him on the event of the battle. One of them, a lineal descendant of Filch, taking advantage of his blindness and negligence, endeavours to convey a bank note, deposited in our dignified gambler’s hat, to his own pocket. Of this ungentleman-like attempt his lordship is apprised by a ragged post-boy, and an honest



butcher ; but is so much engaged in the pronunciation of those important words, Done ! Done ! Done ! Done ! and the arrangement of his bets, that he cannot attend to their hints ; and it seems more than probable that the stock will be transferred and the note negotiated in a few seconds.

A very curious group surround the old nobleman, who is adorned with a ribbon, a star, and a pair of spectacles. The whole weight of an overgrown carpenter being laid upon his shoulder, forces our illustrious personage upon a man beneath ; who being thus driven downwards, falls upon a fourth, and the fourth, by the accumulated pressure of this ponderous trio, composed of the upper and lower house,—loses his balance, and tumbling against the edge of the partition, his head is broken, and his wig shook from the seat of reason, falls into the cock-pit.

A man adjoining enters into the spirit of the battle,—his whole soul is engaged. From his distorted countenance, and clasped hands, we see that he feels every stroke given to his favourite bird in his heart's core,—ay, in his heart of hearts ! A person at the old peer's left hand is likely to be a loser. Ill humour, vexation, and disappointment, are painted in his countenance. The chimney-sweeper above is the very quintessence of affectation. He has all the airs and graces of a boarding-school Miss. There are those who remember the man, and assert that his character is not heightened in the portrait. A sanctified quaker, and a fellow beneath, who, by the way, is a very similar figure to Captain Stab in the Rake's Progress, are finely contrasted.

A French Marquis on the other side astonished, is exclaiming, Sauvages ! Sauvages ! Sauvages !—Engrossed by the scene, and opening his snuff-box rather carelessly, the contents fall into the eyes of a man below, who, sneezing



and swearing alternately, imprecates bitter curses on this devil's dust that extorts from his inflamed eyes,

“ A sea of melting pearls which some call tears.”

Near him is an old cripple with a trumpet at his ear, through which a person in a bag-wig roars in a manner that cannot much gratify the auricular nerves of the company ; but as to the object to whom the voice is directed, he seems totally insensible to sounds, and, if judgment may be formed from appearances, might very composedly stand close to the clock of St. Paul's Cathedral when it was striking twelve.

The figure with a cock peeping out of a bag, is said to be intended for Jackson, a jockey : the gravity of this experienced veteran, and the cool sedateness of a man registering the wagers, are well opposed by the grinning woman behind, and the heated impetuosity of a fellow stripped to his shirt, throwing his coin on the cock-pit, and offering to back Ginger against Pye for a guinea.

On the lower side there is only one tier of figures ; a sort of an apothecary and a jockey are stretching out their arms and striking together the handles of their whips in token of a bet. An hiccuping votary of Bacchus displaying a half-emptied purse, is not likely to possess it long, for an adroit professor of legerdemain has taken aim with an hooked stick, and by one slight jerk will convey it to his own pocket. The profession of a gentleman in a round wig is determined by a gibbet chalked upon his coat. An enraged barber who lifts up his stick in the corner, has probably been refused payment of a wager by the man at whom he is striking.

A cloud-capt philosopher at the top of the print coolly smoking his pipe, unmoved by this crash of matter and wreck of property, must not be overlooked ; neither should



the dog be neglected, for the dog gravely resting his fore paws upon the partition, and contemplating the company, seems more interested in the event of the battle than his master. Like the tremendous Gog and terrific Magog of Guildhall, stand the two cock-feeders ; a foot\* of each of these consequential purveyors is seen at the two extremities of the pit.

As to the birds whose attractive powers have drawn this admiring throng together, they deserved earlier notice :

“ Each hero burns to conquer or to die,  
What mighty hearts in little bosoms lie !”

Having disposed of the substance, let us now attend to the shadow on the cock-pit ; and this it seems is the reflection of a man drawn up to the ceiling and there suspended as a punishment for having betted more money than he can pay. Though suspended, he is not reclaimed ; for in this degrading situation he offers to stake his watch against money in another wager on his favourite champion.

The decorations of this curious theatre, are a portrait of Nan Rawlins (a famous cock-feeder) and the King's Arms.

In the margin at the bottom of the print, is an oval with a fighting cock inscribed “ Royal Sport,” and underneath it is written “ Pit Ticket.”

Of the characteristic distinctions in this heterogeneous assembly, it is not easy to speak with sufficient praise. The chimney-sweeper's absurd affectation sets the similar airs of the Frenchman in a most ridiculous point of view. The old fellow with a trumpet at his ear, has a degree of deafness that I never before saw delineated : he might have lived in the same apartment with Xantippe, or slept com-

\* Vide Mr. Lamb's quotation from Shakspeare, p. 113, ante.



fortably in Alexander the coppersmith's first floor. As to the nobleman in the centre,—in the language of the turf, he is a mere pigeon, and the peer with a star and garter, in the language of Cambridge, we must class as a mere quiz. The man sneezing you absolutely hear ; and the fellow stealing a bank note, has all the outward and visible marks of a perfect and accomplished pick-pocket ; Mercury himself could not do business in a more masterly style." ] \*

\* [Although the works of Hogarth in general are far from requiring a lengthened commentary, there are few persons who will not survey this particular print with additional interest, after reading Mr. Ireland's excellent description. In proportion as the various subjects have appeared to demand, (and it occurs chiefly in the lighter ones), the editor has every where endeavoured to blend the most valuable parts of this gentleman's labours with the work of Dr. Trusler. At the same time, it is perhaps only doing justice to other and more recent aids to say, that the attempt has been to render this a variorum edition of Hogarth in miniature.]