

GO very much to the Crystal Palace. My wife, indeed, who is a very remarkable woman, and stands five feet ten, buys me a season ticket every year, and puts me in at the turnstile whenever I am likely to be in the way in the house, or whenever she judges that I require amusement and instruction. I think that must be one reason why she chose our house at Sydenham. It is very thoughtful of her, and, as she says, the Crystal Palace is a very proper place of resort, where one is not likely to get into habits of dissipation so long as

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one has no money. I, as a matter of fact, always have a shilling, which my wife ties in the corner of my pocket-handkerchief when she leaves me at the gate. This, you will understand, is in case of emergency. I have never yet summoned courage to have an emergency, so that I have always carried home the shilling intact. I understand nothing of poultry, dogs, cats, goats, and rabbits, though I have seen so many of them at the shows that they have made me giddy. I saw fowls (Cochins and Brahmas, I believe, were the sorts) at a show lately that would, I imagine, terrify any ordinary fox who tried

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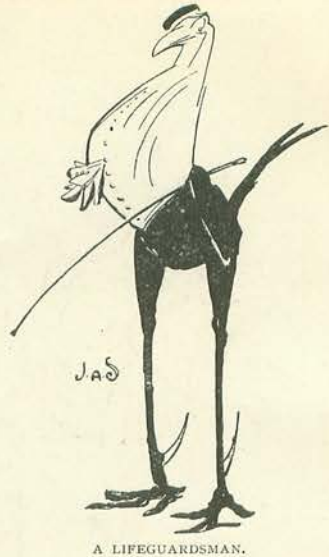
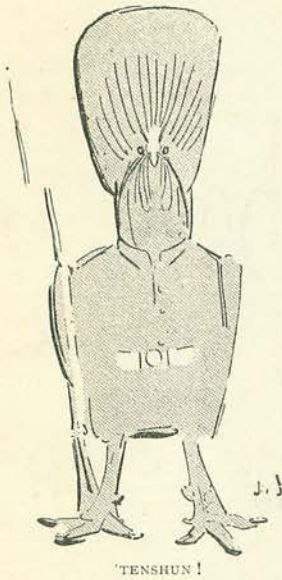
"LOR! SHALL I VENTURE?"

to steal them, and I saw bantams so small that they might have been included in lark-pie without anybody suspecting it. I saw so many of these things that at last I

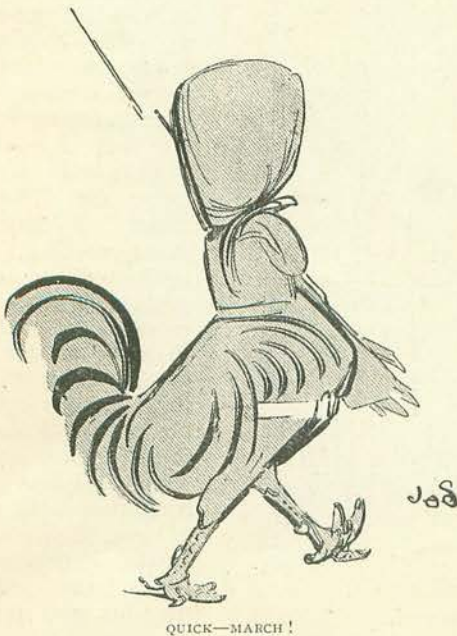
grew very tired, with the familiar Crystal Palace weariness, and sat down in the Egyptian Court to rest. Presently I perceived that what I had supposed to be a large, reddy-brown gentleman of Egyptian extraction, painted on the wall, was in reality a stout person in tweeds, who had terrified me a little time before by treading heavily on my toes, and apologizing in a very loud voice.

Much to my alarm, he approached me again, and, ere I could escape, slapped me on the back.

"Come along here and see the exhibits,"



he said. "I don't believe you're enjoying yourself a bit. See what wonderful things breeders are doing! Perfecting species till their mothers wouldn't know 'em. What's the good o' fowls that only lay eggs, and



stuff pillows, and help to make dinners, and so on? See these game-cocks, now. We're breeding 'em into lifeguardsmen. Good notion, eh? And Houdans, too—they're evolving into grenadiers. And we're getting boxers as well. We're working up to heavy-weight champions with Indian game fowl, and we're getting feather-weights out of the game-bantam class. Beats cock-fighting, that,





THE PEKIN BANTAMS.

don't it? Oh, I tell you, I knew all along what careful breeding would come to. The recruiting difficulty will be got over altogether as soon as we've bred off a little more of the lifeguardsman's tail, and brought that grenadier's toes close enough to go into boots. And we breed the uniforms on 'em all ready, too! Look at the saving in bearskins alone! Paying game, too! I believe you, my boy. When a breeder's got a few thousand Houdans and game-cocks all drawing full privates' pay and allowances, why, his fortune's made—to say nothing of the sale of dead poultry after a desperate battle. And there's a deal o' money in boxing matches, too—and you can keep a whole nest of champions going on a handful of oats now and again, and an occasional worm. Cheaper than the usual sort of boxing champion, I assure you.

"Of course, some breeders aren't so

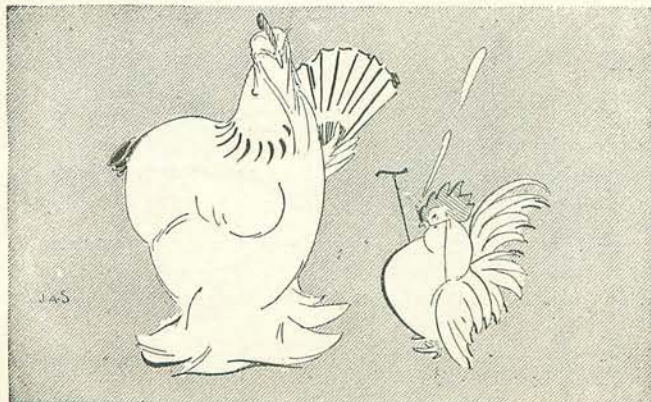
successful. Here's the Pekin bantams, for instance. Well, there's been a deal of trouble taken with them, but they haven't got far. We've cut down the Cochins' clothes for 'em, but they haven't grown a decent fit yet, and never will, so far as I can see. Why, any common bantam you like can show a neater figure than them. Look at that precocious little chap pre-Cochin' with that big hen."

I glared, but the stout person never blenched. "Halloa, Maria," he ex-



"MARIA!"

claimed, familiarly, and I quailed, for my wife's name is Maria. But I perceived that he was addressing a black Spanish hen, who was busy with a powder-puff. I had never understood before how the black Spanish hens got their beautiful complexions when on show. Now that I saw it at last, it seemed the most natural thing in the world, and I was not in the least surprised to hear the bird reply, in tones that



PRECOCIOUS.



reminded me singularly of my wife's. "Oh, don't bother me," she said, "it's sickening. Here I'm expected to keep a good complexion for four days right off! It's all very well as regards my face, but I can't make it stop on my nose. And a pretty sight I'm beginning to look, Orlando!" The Spanish hen looked straight in my face. Now, my name is Orlando, and what with the Spanish hen's voice, and other things that reminded me of my wife, I felt so uncomfortable that I began to run swiftly—many, many miles, it seemed, till I arrived at the part of the show occupied by the geese and ducks.

But the man in the brown suit was still with me. "We haven't done so much in breeding with ducks," he said. "The duck remains pretty simple, even a

course I *knowed* I shouldn't get no prize. Just like these fellers. It's scandalous. Why, only yesterday as never was I says to Mrs. Harris, I says"—but I fled again. The geese seemed a shockingly



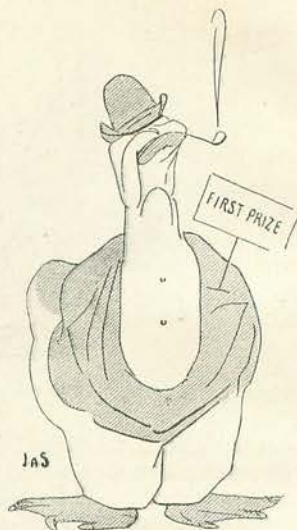
"CALL HISSELF A JUDGE, INDEED!"

first prize duck. Something white with a beak and legs, and there you are. They're so much alike that duck judges go mad regularly after three shows each."

Here a very hoarse goose, shuffling impatiently in its cage, addressed me as though in response to an observation of my own. "Prize?" she said, "no, of course not! It's disgraceful! Oh, I know how these shows are worked! Ketch me comin' agen, and leavin' the washin' an' everythink! Him call hissself a judge, indeed! Of



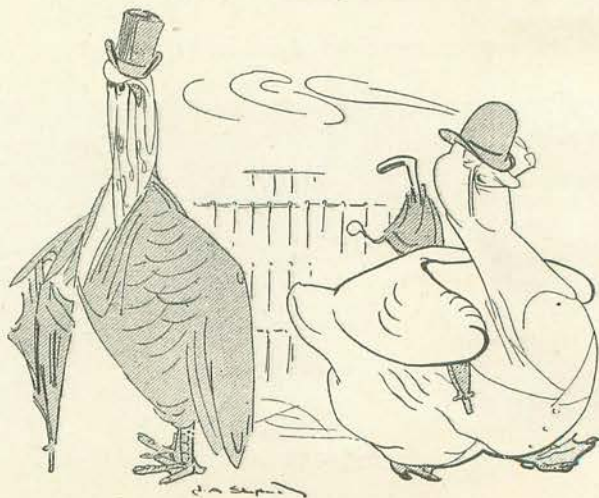
THE TYPE.



"YUS—I'M FUST."

vulgar crew, and were "guying" each other and the very respectable turkeys near them, like bad boys in a theatre gallery. One had begun to ask me an impudent question as to my feet, when I left, and came again among the much better behaved fowls.

"Here," said the brown man, who followed



"ALL RIGHT—SEE YOU AGAIN AT CHRISTMAS!"

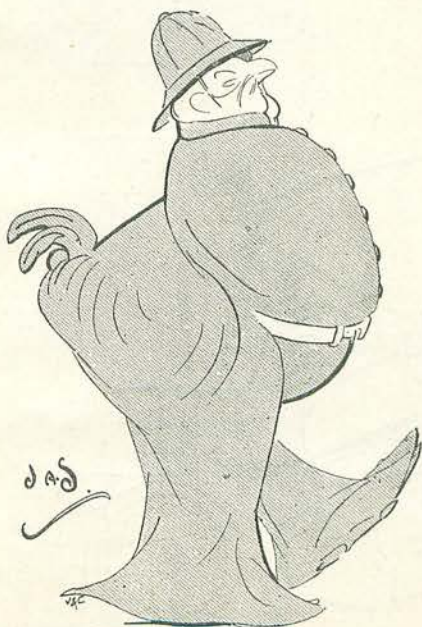


me everywhere, "here are the Cochins." By this time, I began to distrust my previous recognition of the brown man. They were certainly *not* tweeds he was wearing, and there was something very distinctly Egyptian about him. Was he the figure on the wall, after all? Certainly his hair was rather oddly plaited, and his hat had the aspect of a curious canister from a grocer's shop. Also I began to doubt whether they were actually tight brown trousers or only the mural brick-brown of his not very fleshy legs. But he was very active, and he went about freely prodding the Cochins with a brass telescopic "stir-'em-up" to make them



"I'M A FINE OLD ENGLISH GENT."

as we've bred the tail very small and turned it into a pair of white cotton gloves sticking

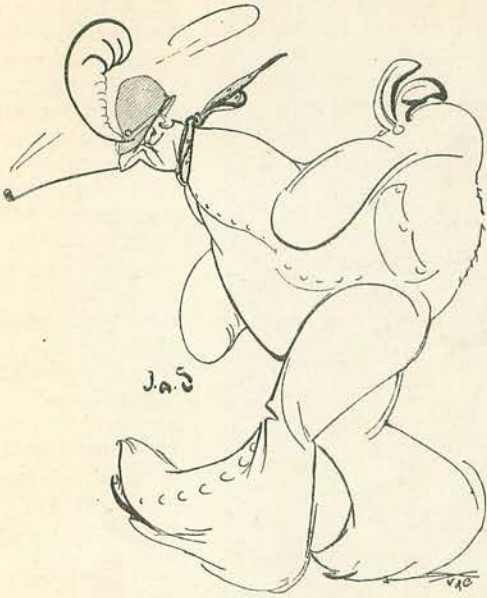


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"NICE DAY FOR A SAIL, SIR."

out of the pocket. We have great hopes, too, of adding to our hardy sea-coast population.



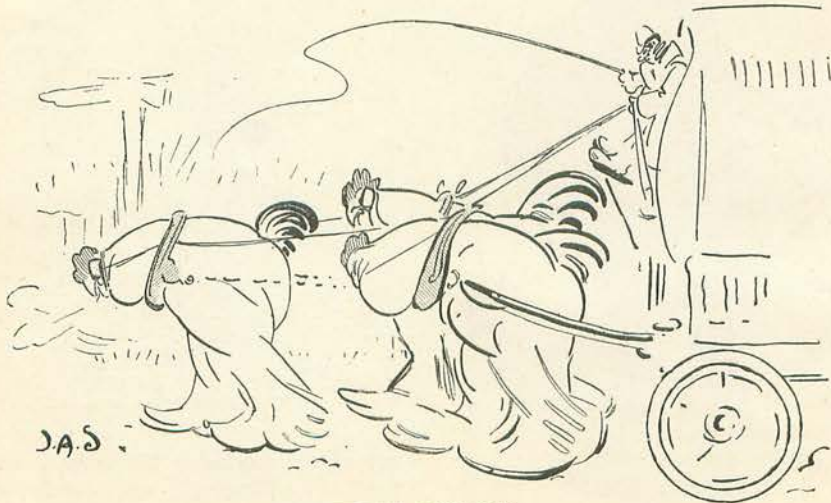
THE CHICKALEARY VARIETY.

all the mistakes in breeding as dray-horses—look at their legs! If only those motor-cars would keep off, we should have great times in the new Cochin days!" I frowned, but he went ahead—perhaps he hadn't meant it. "And we quite expect to get an old-fashioned inn-landlord or two," he said, "just accidentally among some of the broods, you know; we're pretty near it already. It's a great thing to revive old institutions like this by breeding from poultry, isn't it? And



“ FOWL, SIR? YESSIR.”

“There is a certain safe and steady character about an old Cochin cock that should inspire confidence in the most timid tripper looking for a boat. As a music-hall vocalist, too, if we can only get his crow hoarse enough and loud enough, he should have a great future. Then as a City waiter we might do excellent business with him. They can't get City waiters fat enough nowadays—the old sort is dying out. And then we can use up



THE NEW COCHIN DAYS.





A LANDLORD.

money in it, too, I assure you—lots. Just a little trouble, and a little oats, and a few worms, and you draw all the waiter's tips,

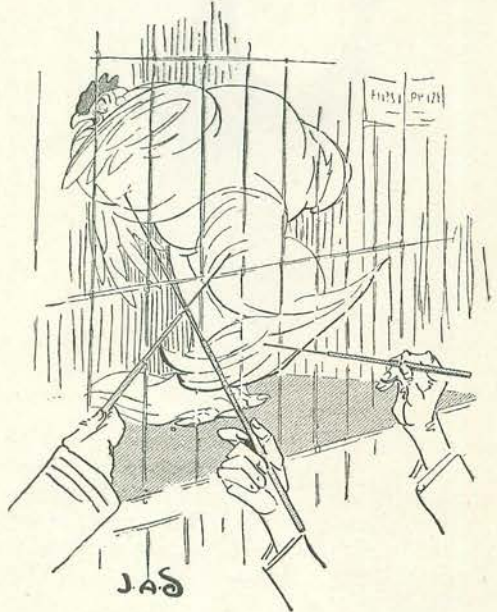


THROGMORTON STREET.

the landlord's bills, the policeman's mutton, and the princely salary of the music-hall singer! I'm getting up a syndicate to run the notion. When we've bred a few more bantams into stock-brokers, I think we'll sell the idea for big money in Throgmorton Street." It was really very wonderful, and I began to feel an immense respect for the oddly-shaped birds in the cages before me. I had once longed for one of the telescopic brass "stir-em-ups" that fanciers use, but now I wouldn't have used one if I had it.

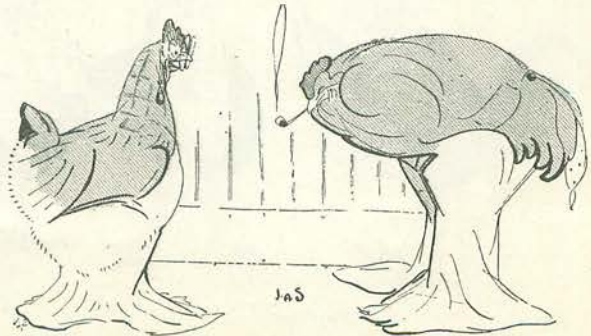
"See this black Spanish cock, now," pursued my guide. "We're

experimenting with him. The idea is to make him a gentleman. It would be altogether a fancy breed, you understand, and of little use commercially, unless we could get them a few directorships and so forth. We thought they'd breed best into evening dress, considering the plumage.



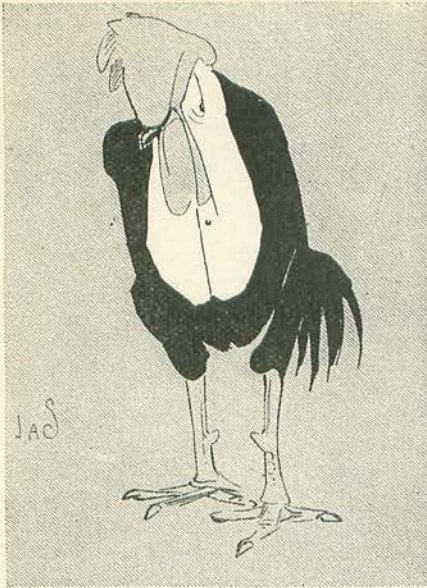
THE "STIR-EM-UP."

We're also getting on very well with some more black Spanish, which we are gradually working up by successive generations, into nigger minstrels. The sands, you know, will be so good for them—excellent thing, sand, for fowls; and we calculate to produce in time a complete troupe from each sitting of eggs. So that, with a few good sitting hens, every popular seaside resort could be supplied in a very

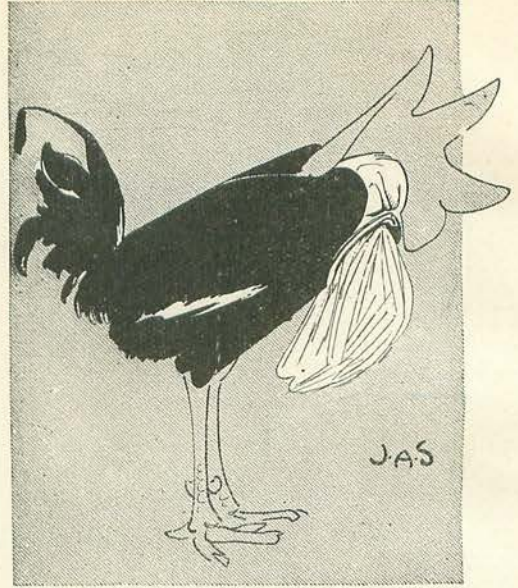


HENPECKED.





FRESH.

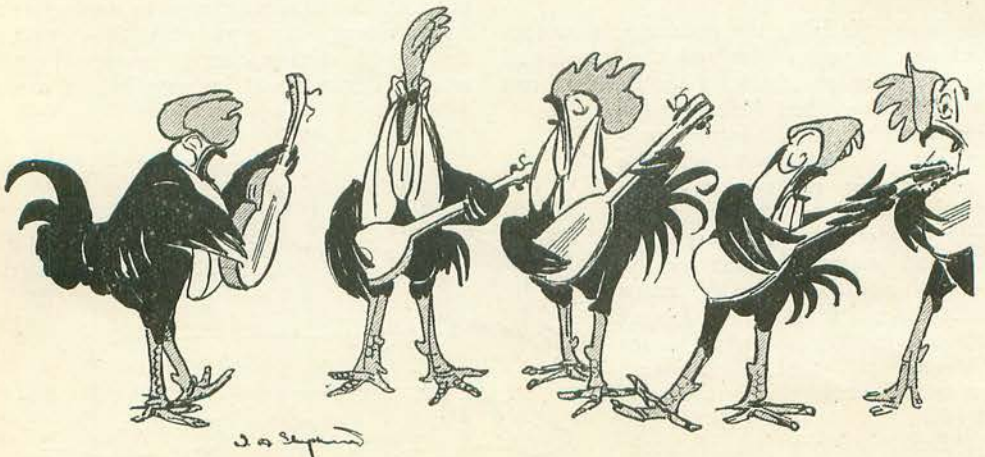


AFTER FOUR DAYS.

short time, and the net income would be enormous. I'm putting money in it. Won't you take shares?" For a moment I reflected on the shilling secured in the corner of my pocket-handkerchief. Was this an emergency? Perhaps it was. But I didn't dare. What would Maria say?

"But speaking of the black Spanish which we are developing into a gentleman," the brown man proceeded, "you see, we've managed to breed his black trousers some little way down his legs, and, although we have not yet developed a complete shirt, we have achieved a dickey. It was very nice

and bright when he first came here, but after four days, you know, it's—well, it's a little dickey, as they say." I began to suspect the brown man of the low vice of punning. But he went on: "I expect he himself feels a little dickey (though he's really a large bird), after four days and nights in evening dress. One does, you know. Besides, he's the only person here in evening dress, and no doubt he feels uncomfortable in being so. That's natural in a gentleman. Oh, yes, we're bringing out the feelings of a gentleman, too, I assure you, though they're really useless—in fact, a dead loss, commercially. It's



"NOW WE SHAN'T BE LONG!"



an experiment, you know,—purely a fancy matter. Nothing of consequence, of course, compared to the policeman, or the niggers. We shall make money out of *them*.

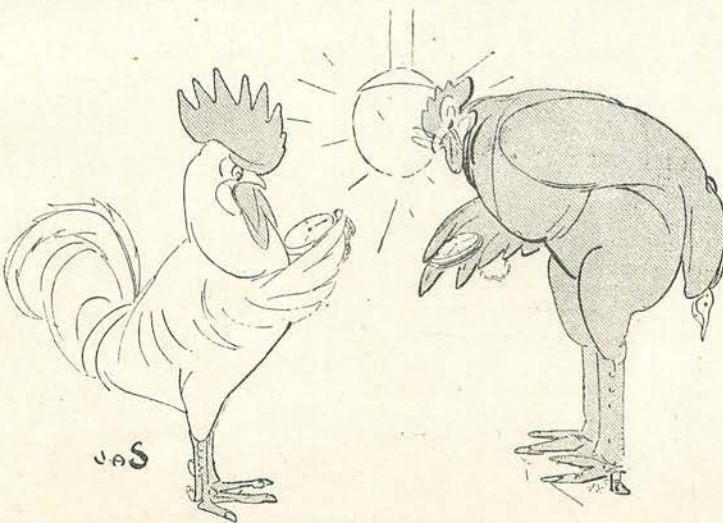
"There'll be a deal of human labour saved, of course," he went on presently; "but it's being compensated for in other ways. You see, what with incubators and foster-mothers, and one thing and another, fowls get very little of their own old-fashioned work to do nowadays, and they must find some new outlet. Why, they do say there are some fowls now who don't even lay their own eggs! So that they must do something to occupy their time. It would be foolish to let them waste their efforts in mere amusement—they'd go playing the piano, and singing, and reading novels by Miss—but, there, never mind who. As it is, they'll be bred up to decent trades, and *we'll* take their profits, see? That's what I call keeping up with the spirit of the times. That's the watchword of progress. Improve, improve; make the world, and the poultry in it, better, happier, cleverer—and scoop in the profit for the syndicate. This



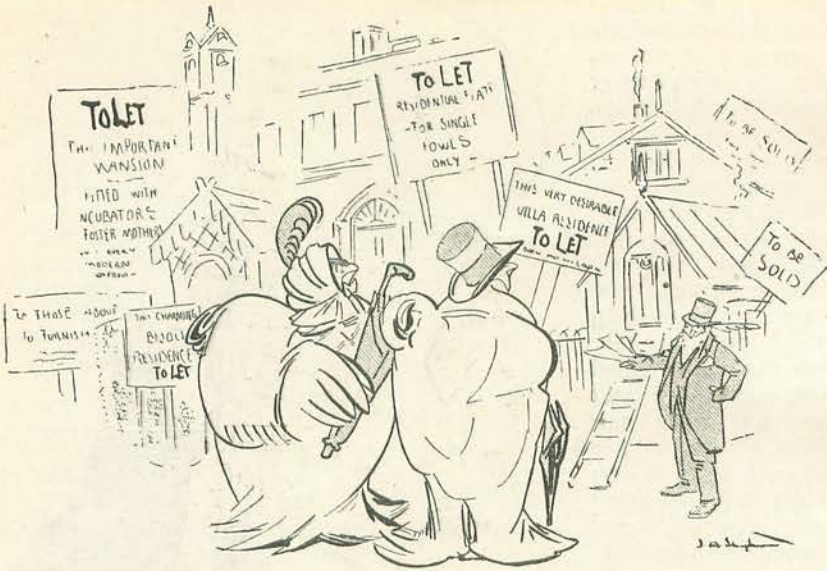
PLAYING THE PIANO AND SINGING.

sort of benevolence doesn't amount to much unless it is run on strictly business lines. Our chief difficulty, of course, will be, while we make the cocks and hens clever enough to carry on all our work for us cheap, to take

care that they don't get clever enough to demand wages, and go striking, and all that. There is a danger, although it isn't very apparent as yet. Coming up here from the country teaches them a great deal. Why, do you know, when the electric light was turned on the first evening, I heard a white Leghorn and a Langshan disputing like anything. 'What's the time?' asks one. 'I don't know,' says the other. 'Why, hang it,' says the first, 'I got through all my



"WHAT'S THE TIME?"



day's crowing hours ago, and here's another blessed sun!" But they've learnt better by this. They get more knowing every day of the show, and the humanizing influence will land them a long way ahead in shrewdness presently. The thing we must take care of, as I have said, is to get all we can out of them before they get too clever to stand it. At present they are only at a fair average of ordinary intelligence. We're closing to-night, and you'll find all the more intelligent and cul-

tivated breeds looking over the eligible coops and desirable troughs and runs that they show there at the end, with the idea of taking home a new residence. And last of all, when everybody's worn out and tired to death, and seedy as caraway, you'll find some respectable old couple stranded on the inhospitable railway platform—having lost their last train as naturally and intelligently as any pair of human beings you can name! Oh, I tell you, we're doing a lot for progress in poultry!"



(To be continued.)