

Animal Actualities.

NOTE.—Under this title we intend printing a series of perfectly authentic anecdotes of animal life, illustrated by Mr. J. A. Shepherd, an artist long a favourite with readers of THE STRAND MAGAZINE. We shall be glad to receive similar anecdotes, fully authenticated by names of witnesses, for use in future numbers. While the stories themselves will be matters of fact, it must be understood that the artist will treat the subject with freedom and fancy, more with a view to an amusing commentary than to a mere representation of the occurrence.

IV.

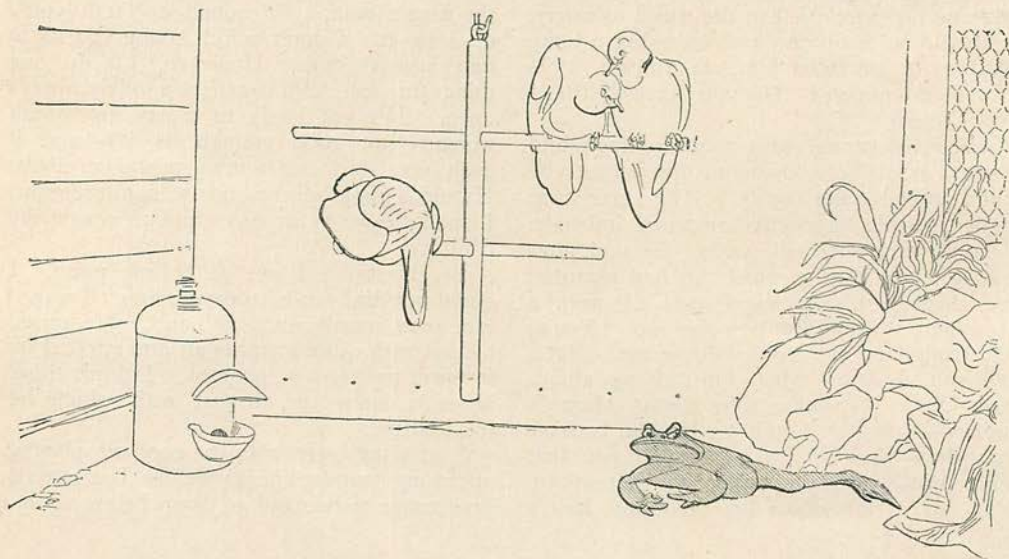


A Dove
and a TOAD.



DISPLACED attachments among animals would seem to be somewhat less rare than one might expect. Last month we had an odd case of love at first sight, on the part of a very fat and motherly old

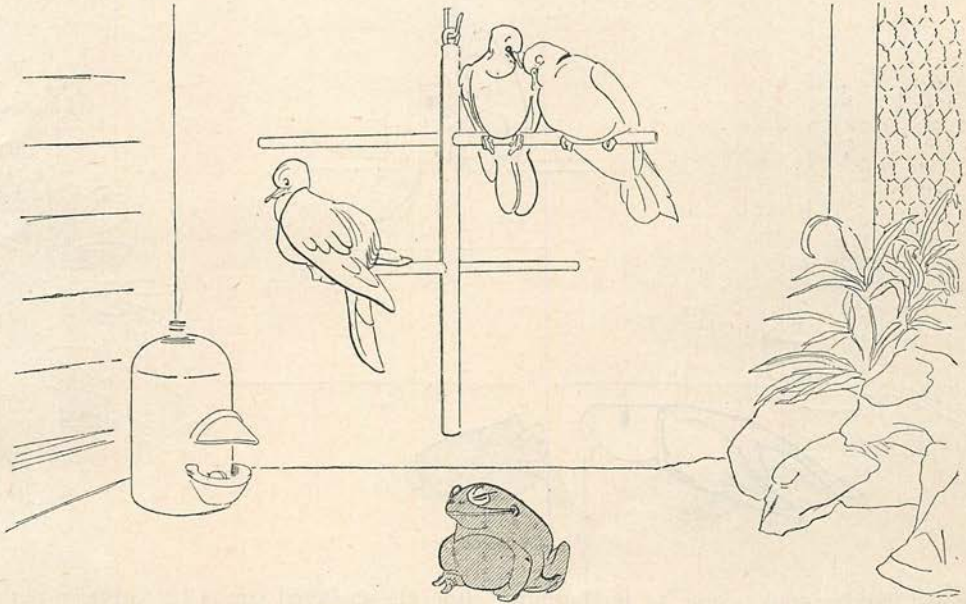
being a toad. A goose and a barn-door fowl are at least both birds, while the toad and the turtle-dove are of different classes in the animal kingdom. More, it was the turtle-dove who was enamoured—the beautiful turtle-dove, type of felicity



"ENTER THE BIG TOAD."

goose, for a barn-door cock. Now we have a quainter thing still—the love-making of a turtle-dove, the object of its affections

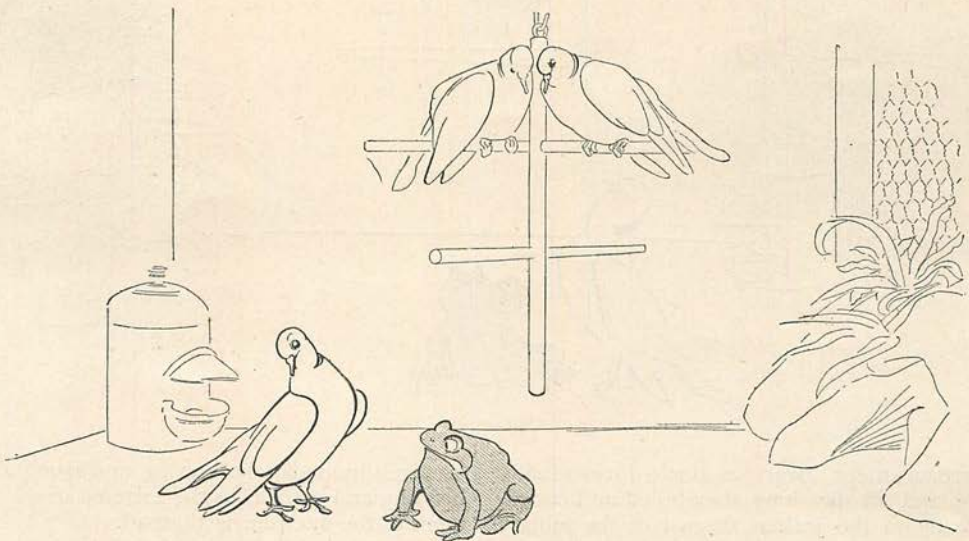
in affection; and it was the toad—the dank, ugly, despised toad—who rejected its proffered love.



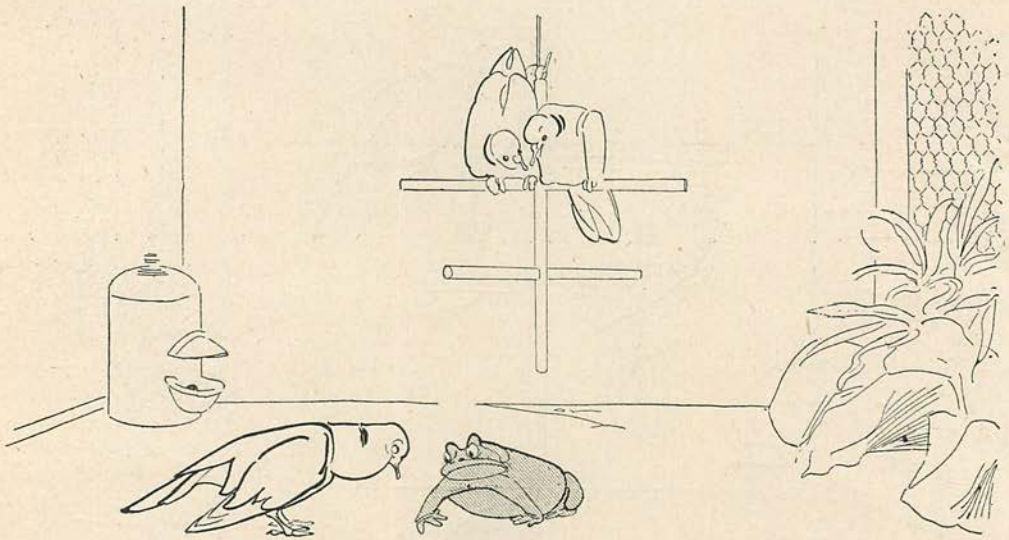
"SEEMS SATISFACTORY, ON THE WHOLE."

The creatures belonged to the private collection—some might call it a menagerie—kept by Mr. J. A. Shepherd, the artist. It is a collection continually changing its *personnel*, there are frequent additions of all sorts, and occasional subtractions because of death or escape. And as these fluctuations occur with little or no notice, questions of accommodation are apt to arise, sometimes resulting in the

"chumming-in" of strange companions, the governing consideration being that of who is likely to eat what. On one of these occasions a number of lizards arrived at the menagerie—so many, that they filled the only reptile case then available, and crowded out an immense Italian toad. The problem of what to do with the homeless toad was considered at length, and in the end it was



"WHAT?"

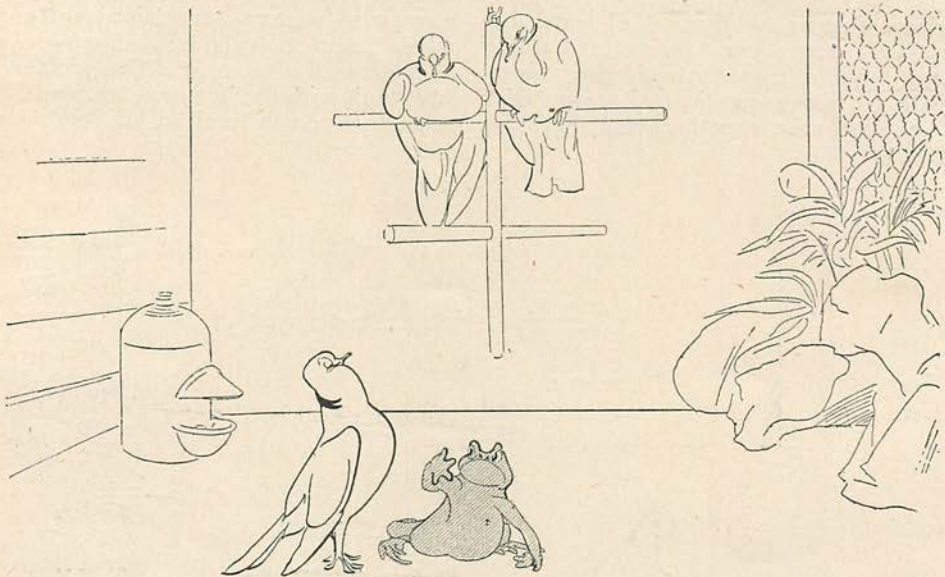


"coo-oo!"

decided that he could come to no harm in that part of the aviary reserved for the turtle-doves—at any rate, for a little while.

Now, the collection happened just then to be rather short of turtle-doves. There were only three—a pair and a spinster. The pair

from the sheltered corner he had been put in at. He crawled cautiously toward the centre of the aviary, and looked about him. The pair of doves took no notice, but the spinster was instantly alert. Here was the longed-for true love at last. The dove was down from

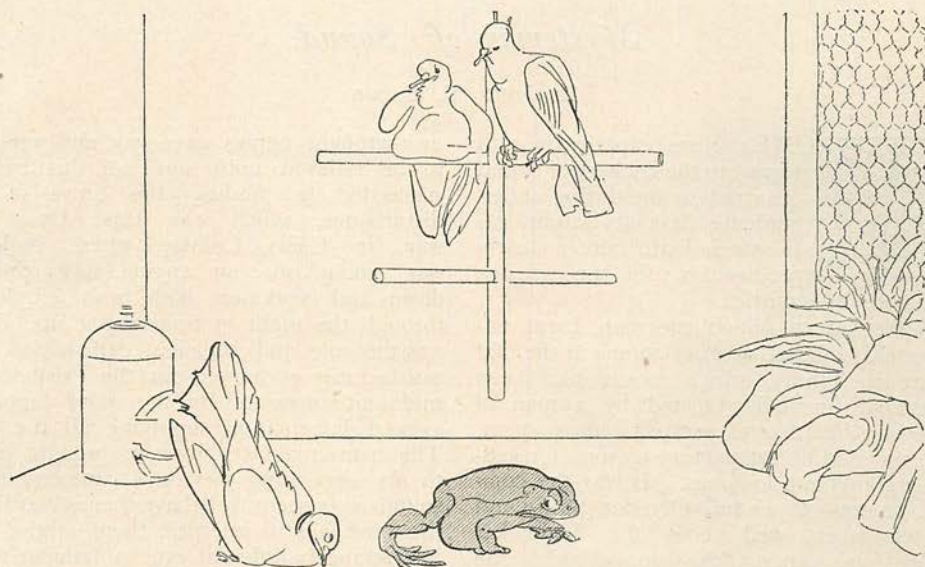


"coo-oo-oo!"

were as ardent lovers as turtle-doves usually are, and all day long they billed and cooed, greatly to the jealous disgust of the solitary spinster. Till enter the big toad, very quietly,

its perch immediately, bowing and rising and bending and cooing, to the extreme astonishment of the unenthusiastic toad.

"Coo!" went the dove; "coo! coo-oo-oo!"

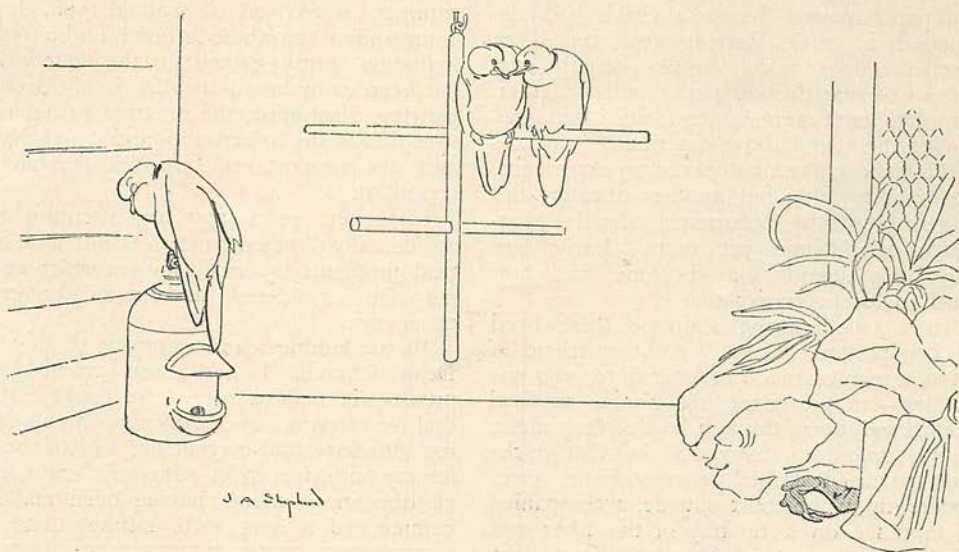


"OH! LOR!"

And she rose to her best height, ducked alluringly, flopped and nestled, as is the manner of doves in their love-making. But the prosaic toad was not in the least in love; in the phrase of the street, he "wasn't taking any." "Coo-oo!" pleaded the dove once more, desperately, curtsying again, and then bobbing and rising like clockwork. "Coo-oo-oo!" But the toad had never seen love-making of this sort before, and didn't understand it at all. It struck him that

on the whole the wisest proceeding would be to get out of it while he was safe. So he got.

He sneaked off sheepishly to a corner of the aviary where a few plants and pieces of rock offered shelter, and there he remained till accommodation was found for him elsewhere, and no blandishments of the disconsolate dove could bring him out. Till at last the dove gave up the attempt, and resigned itself to single blessedness.



J. A. Stephens

"SLIGHTED! DESERTED!"