

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.

V.



HIS rabbit lived at a house in Lonsdale Road, Barnes, and for four years was a celebrated character in the neighbourhood. He was an orphan, and the only survivor of a numerous family, so that, being

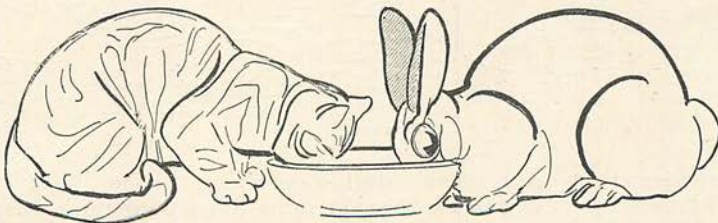
hutch, the door of which was left constantly open for his convenience, or he could scarcely have turned round in it. With his size, he developed un-rabbitlike tastes and accomplishments; chiefly he struck up an intimate friendship with the cat—also a big animal



GREAT CHUMS.

brought up by hand, he grew very tame as well as enormously big. As to his size, indeed, he altogether "grew out of" his

or its kind. They played together, "sat out" many long hours side by side, and ate from the same plate with all possible amiability.

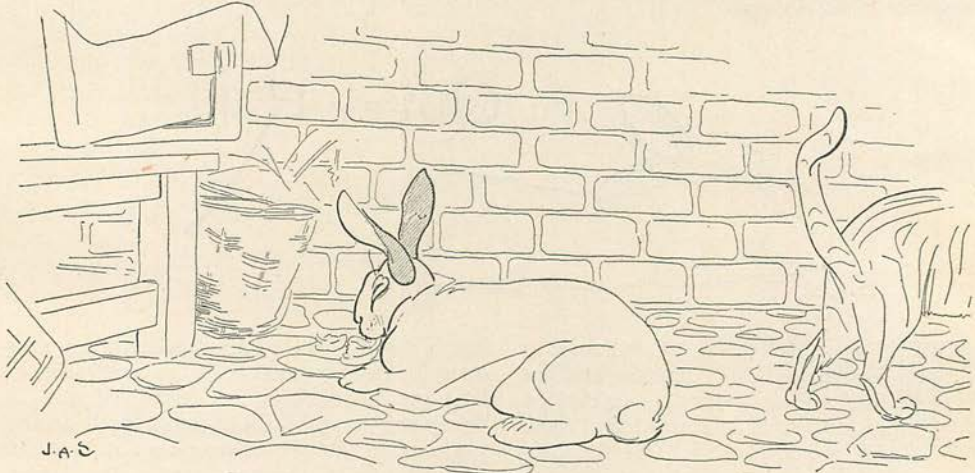


AMIABILITY.

Also, the rabbit acquired a great taste for wandering beyond the limits of its owner's premises, together with a wonderful ability in jumping. Perhaps the cat taught him both. At any rate, he thought nothing of

from behind, and he instantly jumped clean through the railings to the ground beneath—alighting quite safely, without the smallest injury.

Whenever the garden gate was left open



J.A.S.

THE PARTING.

scaling the garden wall—5ft. or so high—and exploring the adjoining gardens; and on one occasion his owner, Mr. Vincent Hughes, witnessed a jump that surprised him, accustomed as he was to his pet's feats. Bunny (who thought nothing of coming into

he would go off for a stroll down the road and about the adjacent streets. These excursions frequently entailed complications with vagrant dogs, and it was a very common sight to see him tearing along homeward with two or three dogs hard in chase. The



J.A.S.

"WHAT'S THIS?"

the house and wandering up and down the stairs, if so disposed) was sitting in the balcony, seventeen feet or more from the ground. Something suddenly startled him

dogs were always "done," however, for he would swing round into the garden gate at top speed, and, as often as not, bolt into the house, leaving the astonished dogs, unable so

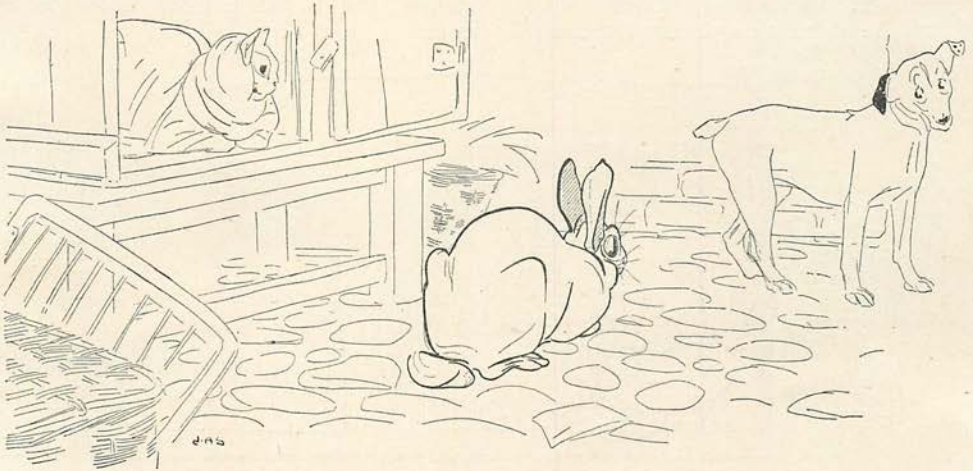


DEFIANCE.

quickly to check their career, to dash past, and when they turned back, to find no rabbit visible anywhere.

Once, however, he turned the tables on a dog completely. The dog lived next door, and it was a mongrel fox-terrier rejoicing in the sufficiently appropriate name of "Cats." Now, much of the daily exercise of this dog was obtained in chase of the unfortunate cat who was Bunny's most intimate crony, till

cabbage-leaf, strolled off in search of adventures of her own. Very soon she found one, though one with an annoying lack of novelty; for "Cats," the next-door terrier, spied her, and in an instant was scampering at her tail. Pussy headed for the rabbit-hutch, and the rabbit saw her coming. Anger and indignation rose in his breast, and though he might bolt from a dog on his own account, in the sacred cause of friendship he would



DOUBT.

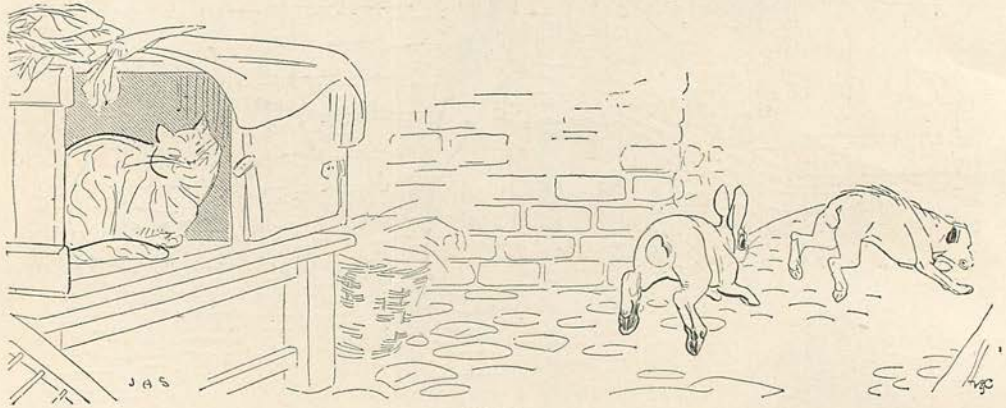
at last Bunny rose in defence of his chum, with most brilliant success.

The usual morning chat over, Bunny turned to a slight lunch of cabbage-leaf, and the cat, feeling little personal interest in

brave anything. The cat flew past, and instantly the rabbit sprang to his feet and confronted the savage pursuer. The dog pulled up. Nothing like this had ever occurred before in the whole course of his cat-chasing

experience. Bunny rose to his hind legs, with fierce anger in his eye, and began a display of that curious stamping and drumming of the hind legs practised by a rabbit which is very infuriate indeed. It was the only proceeding

spectacle of the truculent terrier bolting for his life and the suddenly-emboldened rabbit galloping furiously after him. What he would have done to the dog if he had caught him is a difficult thing to guess, but as a matter



FLIGHT.

he could think of in the circumstances. The dog was altogether non-plussed—even dismayed. What terrible attack that extraordinary stamping might presage he couldn't for the life of him imagine. He got back a step or so, and thought. Then it occurred to him (as it did to the suddenly beloved toad in our last anecdote) that perhaps, on the whole, the best thing would be to clear out. So he dropped his tail between his legs and left the rabbit victorious. As soon as he perceived this, Bunny bounced out in chase, and at once there was witnessed the novel

of fact the dog got clear away and avoided the rabbit's vicinity in future, while the triumphant rabbit returned to receive the congratulations of his chum, the cat.

For four years Bunny remained with Mr. Hughes, providing amusement to all beholders. So famous, indeed, did he become that during that time more than one unsuccessful attempt was made to kidnap him—possibly by some enterprising showman. And at last he *was* kidnapped in good earnest, and Lonsdale Road knew him no more.



PEACE.