

Animal Actualities.

NOTE.—These articles consist of 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.

XI.



THIS is a tale of shameful persecution of the Metropolitan police by a lawless gander and his abetting wives.

In New Road, Mile End, there was a dairy where poultry was kept. Most eminent among this poultry, and chiefly notorious in the neighbourhood, were a gander and four geese. The gander was a large and athletic bird, great in enterprise and immensely venerated by his consorts. It was the way of the troop to form a solemn procession which perambulated the New Road in ponderous state, seeking what or whom it might devour, and during these expeditions the outdoor life of Mile End never lacked for humorous incident. For some time the family enterprise was chiefly directed toward the maltster's opposite the

dairy, and the constant procession of the dignified gander, followed in single file by his harem, strictly in order of precedence, toward the grain-sacks, and the equally constant retreat of the lot, as fast as they could go, with quacks of injured dignity and no order at all, when repelled by the maltster's men, brightened the faces of the passers-by and filled the humorous souls of Mile End boys with gladness. For the gander was apt to be aggressive, his wives followed his example, and the maltster's men disapproved.

Persistently repelled from the grain-sacks, the gander and his ladies began a stately parade of the streets. There are area-gratings flush with the pavement in the New Road, and one day it occurred to somebody in an area to thrust a crust between the bars. The

gander absorbed the crust, but the significance of the hint was absorbed in equal quantities by the entire *cortège*, and the next morning the same area was decorated with the same fringe of geese, who declined to

biscuit as he went. There were a few loose crumbs and pieces in his hand, and in an evil moment he caught sight of the birds. Little suspecting what would be the terrible consequences to the Force,

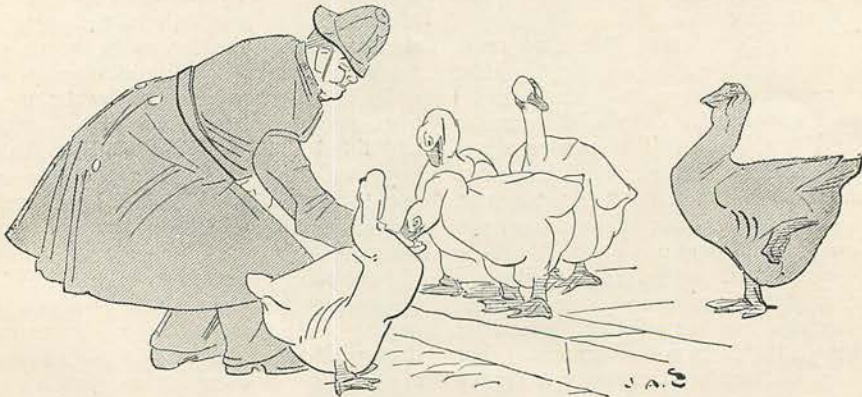


THE BEGINNING OF IT.

leave till yesterday's dose had been repeated. Then they tried every grating in the street in succession, and before long had succeeded in levying a sort of area-tax on the suffering ratepayers of Mile End, returning home after every collection heavily laden, waddling, but preposterously dignified as ever, a source of joy to any onlooker capable of laughter.

But one day a policeman passed on his beat—a policeman whose notions of official dignity did not prevent him munching a

that unlucky policeman bestowed the broken pieces on the gander and his consorts, and went placidly on his beat, unconscious of ill. Mr. Ward, of 67, New Road, had observed this from his window, and saw also the horrible sequel. For on the following day that policeman passed again (but this time with no biscuits), and the geese knew him, and rushed at him with outstretched necks, flapping wings, and wild screeches. And not at this policeman alone, but at every



THE FATAL STEP.



THE SERGEANT.

other policeman who ventured to perform his duty in New Road, Mile End. Words cannot express the terrific scene when a more than usually ponderously-important sergeant was mobbed by this subversive gang. They came at him with yells and flaps, and waited expectantly about him. The sergeant took no notice, but walked on, even more vastly magnificent than before. And behind him, in single file, came the geese, solemn and dignified, too, in their own way. This wouldn't do. An important

the creatures away; whereat they gave a simultaneous quack and grew more eager. That wouldn't do, either. The sergeant turned to walk on, and instantly the geese lined up behind him again, and the pageant recommenced. It was very awkward. The sergeant stopped, and the geese made an expectant, long-necked circle about him, quacking indignantly at this delay in producing the desired biscuits. The sergeant looked abstractedly at the house-chimneys, folded his hands as though about to begin a



THE PROCESSION.

sergeant of police, stalking first in a procession the other members of which were a large gander and his four wives in order of seniority, was an object inconsistent with the dignity of the Force. So he turned to drive

long period of meditation, did everything he could think of to suggest to the minds of his persecutors that they had drawn him blank, and had best go away. Not they, however. The longer they waited, the more im-



BESET.

portunate they grew, and, when the unhappy sergeant made to move on, the procession formed again! A small crowd had collected, and it soon occurred to some small boy to yell "Who stole the goose?" And so the poor victim was harried the length of two long and derisive streets, till someone came from the dairy and drove the birds back.

It was a terrible affliction, and not this sergeant alone, but every policeman who

ventured into New Road in uniform was an equal sufferer. People in the interiors of their houses heard a burst of quacks and flaps, and said one to another, "Here comes a policeman." Nothing could rid the Force of the terror, and the cause of law and order seemed in a fair way to be wholly upset. Till at last urgent representations from the police-station led to the confinement of the birds within the dairy-yard.



RESCUED AT LAST!