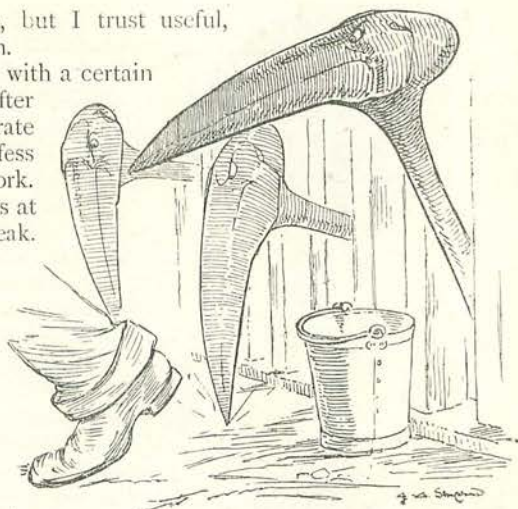


IF the gentle reader, full of a general desire for knowledge and a particular enthusiasm for natural history, will refer to any one of the great standard works on birds, and, turning to the index, seek for the family title of the Conkaves, I have every hope and confidence that he will not find it ; because, as a matter of fact, it is a little invention of my own, and, I may modestly urge, rather a neat thing in scientific nomenclature, on the whole. It has the advantage of including in one family the storks and the pelicans, which in all orthodox books on birds are planted far apart and out of sight of each other, with many orders, tribes, and families between. Under my title they are gathered amicably together in the common possession of very long bills, like two tailors on a man's doorstep. The word is derived, in the proper and regular manner, from ancient sources ; from *conk*, a venerable Eastern word, signifying a nose or beak, and the Latin *avis*, a bird.



And I offer the term freely as my humble, but I trust useful, contribution to science ; my first contribution.

The stork is regarded, in many countries, with a certain semi-superstitious reverence and esteem. After many prolonged and serious attempts to saturate myself with a similar feeling, I regret to confess to a certain smallness of esteem for the stork. You can't esteem a bird that makes ugly digs at your feet and heels with such a very big beak. Out in their summer quarters the storks are kept in by close wire, and close wire will give an air of inoffensiveness to most things. But, away in a by-yard, with a gate marked "private," there stands a shed wherein the storks are kept warm in winter, behind wooden bars ; and between these bars stork-heads have a way of dropping at the



PICKS AND CHEWS.

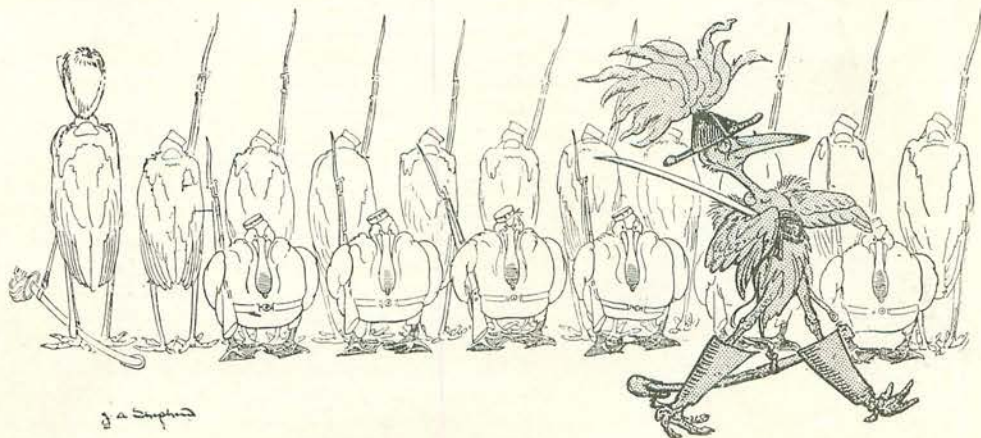


THE PELICAN LEFT.

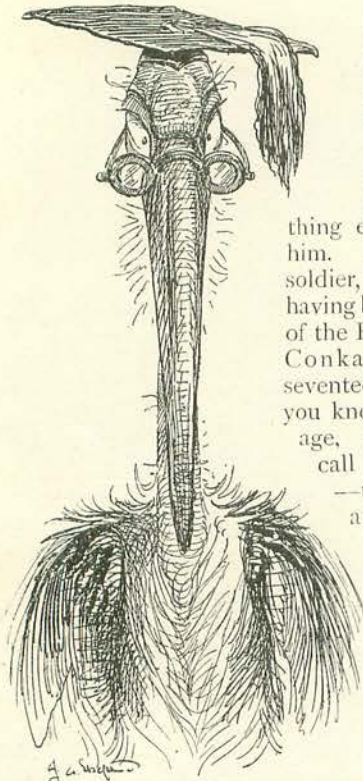
toes of the favoured passer-by, like to the action of a row of roadmen's picks.

The stork has come off well in the matter of bodily endowment. The pelican has a tremendous beak—achieved, it would seem, by a skimping of material in the legs ; but the stork has the tremendous beak and legs of surprising growth as well. His wings, too, are something more than respectable. At flying, at eating, at portentous solemnity of demeanour—in all these and in other things the pelican and the stork score fairly evenly ; but at walking the pelican is left behind at once. This makes one suspect the stork's honesty. The pelican has a good beak and wings, and pays for them, like an honest bird, out of its legs, just as the ostrich pays for its neck and legs out of its wings. But the stork is abnormally lucky in beak, neck, legs, and wings together, and even then has

material left to lay out in superfluous knobs and wens to hang round its neck, which leads to a suspicion that many of its personal fittings belong properly to some other bird. I've a notion that the unlucky kiwi might identify some of the property.

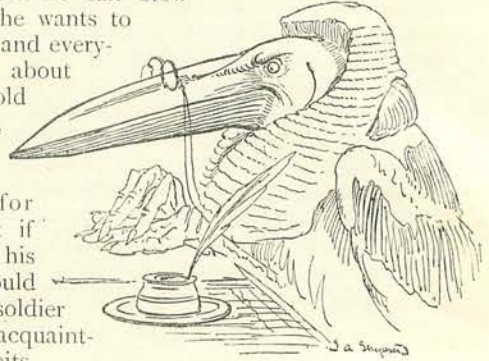






UNIVERSITIES.

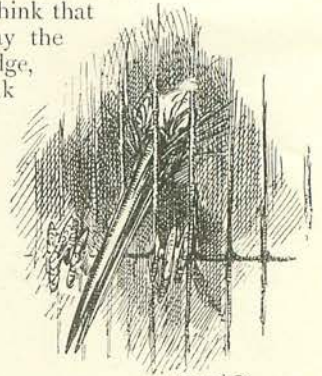
Perhaps the adjutant should be acknowledged king of the conkavians. Billy, the Zoo adjutant, has, I believe, no doubt on the subject at all. Billy is an ornament to the military profession—a very fine fellow, with a thing on the back of his neck like a Tangerine orange, and a wen on the front of it, which he can blow out whenever he wants to amuse himself, and every-thing else handsome about him. He is an old soldier, too, is Billy, having been Adjutant of the Regent's Park Conkavian Corps for seventeen years; but if you knew nothing of his age, still you would call Billy an old soldier—upon a little acquaintance with his habits.



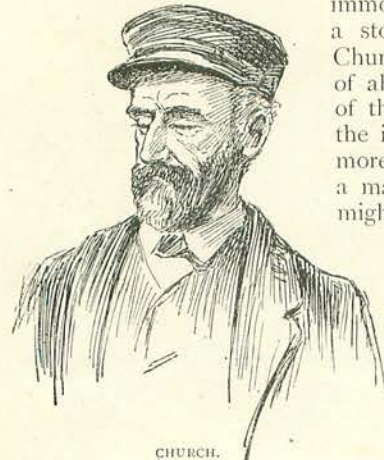
LAW.

There seems no valid reason why the professional aspirations of the stork should be restricted to the army. If an adjutant, why not a dean? Why not a proctor? There is the making of a most presentable don about a stork; and I have caught a stork in an attitude of judicial meditation that might do honour to any bench. There is no reason why "sober as a judge" should not be made to read "sober as a stork," except that the stork is the more solemn creature of the two; and I think that some species of stork—say the marabou, for instance—might fairly claim brevet rank as judge, after the example of the adjutant. The elevation of a beak to the bench might be considered an irregular piece of legal procedure; but, bless you, it's nothing unusual with a stork. Put any bench with something to eat on it anywhere within reach of a stork's beak in this place, and you shall witness that same elevation, precedent or no precedent.

A common white stork hasn't half the solid gravity of an adjutant or a marabou. He has a feline habit of expressing his displeasure by blowing and swearing—a habit bad and immoral in a cat, but worse in a stork accustomed to Church. Church, by-the-by, is the keeper of all the conkavians, as well as of the herons, the flamingoes, the ibises, the egrets, and a number of other birds with names more difficult to spell. It is impossible to treat disrespectfully a man with such widespread responsibilities as this, or there might be a temptation to mention that he is not an unusually high Church, although his services are not always simple, often involving a matter of doctorin'. But, then, some people will say anything, temptation or none. And after all, it is pleasant to know that, whatever a stork or a pelican wants, he always goes to Church.



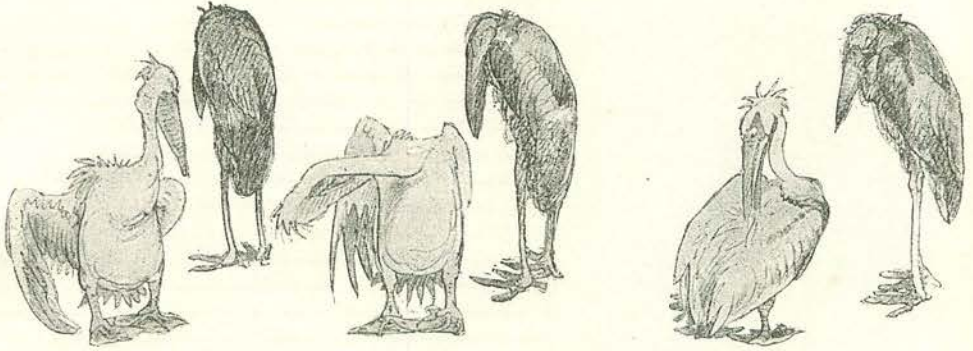
SWEARING.



CHURCH.

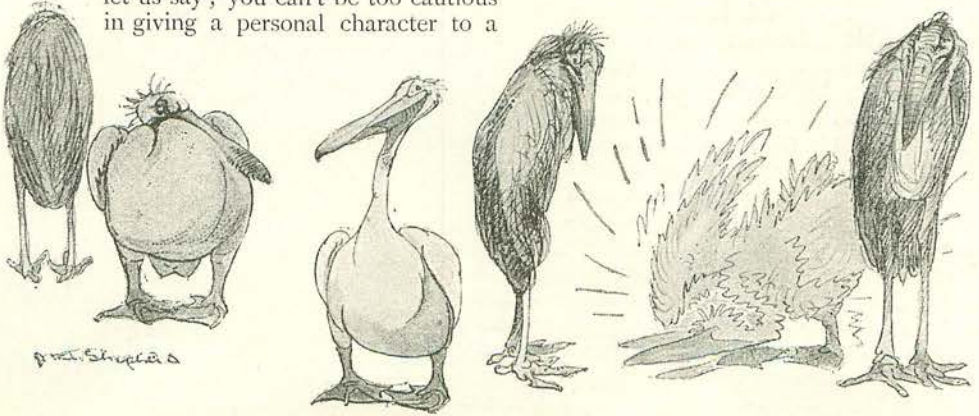
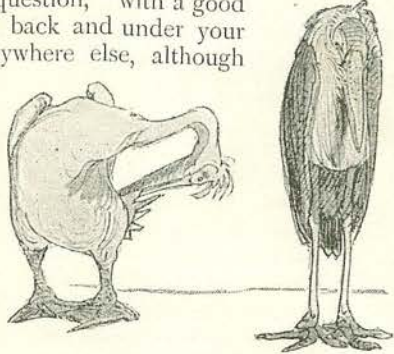
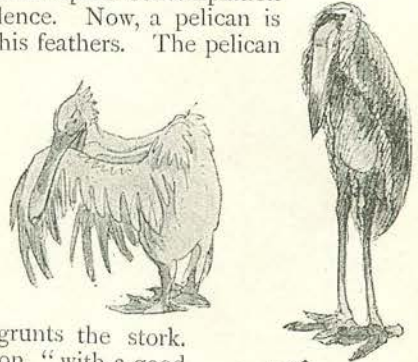
This being the case, there is a proverb about cleanliness that makes one wonder why the marabou stork doesn't wash himself. It isn't as though he never wanted it. I have a horrible suspicion about this





philosophic old sloven. I believe his profession of philosophic contemplation is assumed, because it is the easiest excuse for indolence. Now, a pelican is not a bird of graceful outline, but he *is* careful about his feathers. The pelican is a scrupulous old Dutchman, and the stork is an uncleanly old Hindu. And uncleanly he must be left, for it takes a deal to shame a stork. You can't shame a bird that wraps itself in a convenient philosophy. "Look here—look at me!" you can imagine a pelican cleanliness-missionary saying to the stork. "See how white and clean I keep all my feathers!" "Um," says the stork, "it only makes 'em a different colour." "But observe! I just comb through my pinions with my beak, so, and they all lie neat and straight!" "Well, and what's the good of that?" grunts the stork. "And then you see," says the pelican, ignoring the question, "with a good long beak you can reach everywhere, over your back and under your wings; see, I'm as clean under my wings as anywhere else, although it's covered up!" "Beastly vanity," growls the old Hindu, getting bored. "Then," continues the Dutchman, "you give yourself a good shake, and there you are!" "And then," says the philosopher sarcastically, "to-morrow, I suppose, you'll have to do it all over again?" "Of course!" "Oh! I hate a fool!" says the stork, and closes the lecture.

Thus the marabout. The ordinary white stork is comparatively respectable, and so is the adjutant—or comparatively almost respectable, let us say; you can't be too cautious in giving a personal character to a



profr. Shupka's





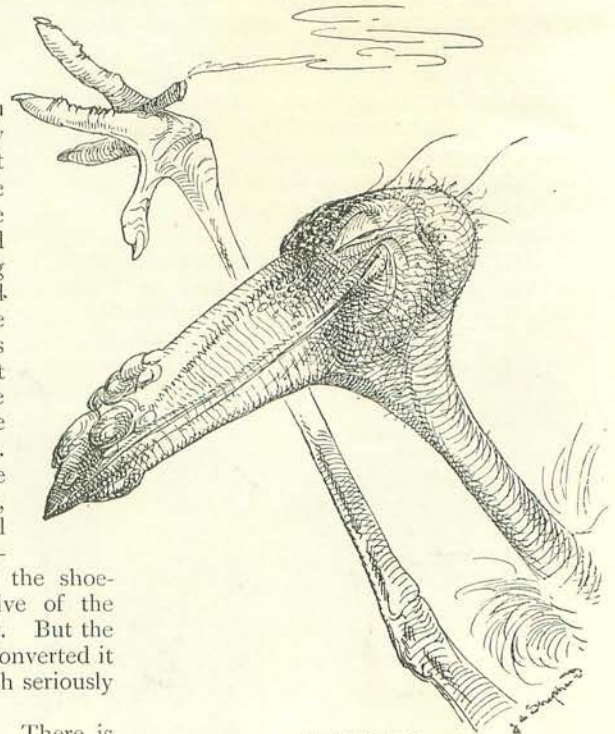
COGITATION.

I should like to see the marabou stork on his nightly ran-tan, if only to gloat over his lapse of dignity, just as one would give much to see Benjamin Franklin with his face blacked, drunk and disorderly and being locked up. But, as a shocking example, the marabou is quite bad enough with his awful head in the morning; his awful head and his disreputable nose, that looks to want a good scraping. I respect Billy, the adjutant, for his long service and the Tangerine at the back of his neck. The ordinary stork (although he swears and snaps) I also respect, because the goody books used to tell pious lies about him. The whale-headed stork, which is also called the shoe-bird, I respect as a sort of relative of the shoo-fly that didn't bother somebody. But the marabou has forfeited all respect—converted it into nose-tint. I must talk to Church seriously about the marabou.

Now, the pelican is no humbug. There is

stork. For long, long, the stork has enjoyed a reputation for solemn wisdom, for philosophical dignity. Now for the first time I venture to question this reputation—to impeach the stork as a humbug. It is easy to achieve a reputation for profound and ponderous wisdom, so long as one looks very solemn and says nothing. This is the stork's recipe. Go up to Billy here, or one of the marabous, as he stands with his shoulders humped up about his head, and make a joke. He won't see it. He will lift his eyebrows with a certain look of contempt, and continue to cogitate—about nothing. If the joke is a very bad pun—such a frightful pun that even a stork will see and resent it—perhaps he will chatter his beak savagely, with a noise like the clatter of the lid on an empty cigar-box; but he will continue his sham meditations. "Ah, my friend," he seems to say, "you are empty and frivolous—I cogitate the profounder immensities of esoteric cogit-bundity." The fact being that he is very seedy after his previous night's dissipation.

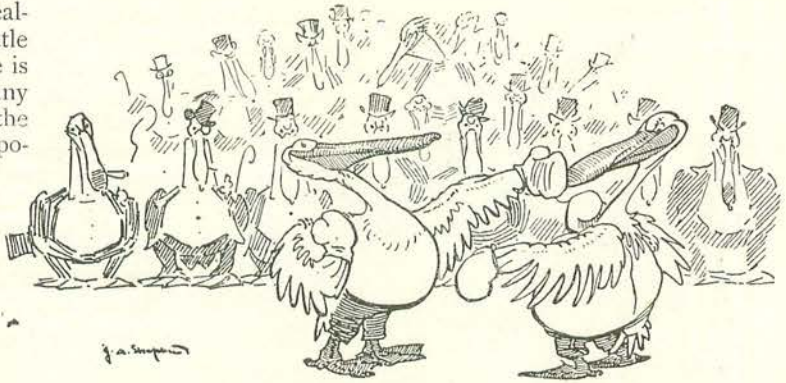
That is the chief secret of the stork's solemnity, I am convinced. He has a certain reputation to maintain before visitors, but after hours, when the gates are shut and the keepers are not there to see, the marabou stork is a sad dog. I haven't quite made up my mind what he drinks, but if he has brandies and sodas he leaves out too much soda. Look at that awful nose! It is long past the crimson and pimply stage—it is taking a decided tinge of blue. It *looks* worse than brandy and soda—almost like bad gin—but we will be as charitable as possible, and only call it brandy and soda.



THE RAN-TAN.



nothing like concealment about his little dissipations; and he is perfectly sober. Any little irregularity at the pelican club just opposite the eastern aviary never goes beyond a quiet round or two for a little fish dinner. It is quite a select and a most proper club. Indeed, the first rule is, that if any loose fish be

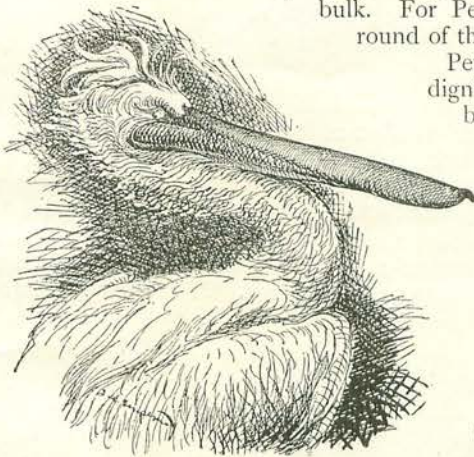


A QUIET ROUND OR TWO.

found on the club premises, he is got rid of at once by the first member who detects him. And the club spirit is such that disputes frequently occur among members for the honour of carrying out this salutary rule. The chairman of the club is an old crested pelican, who, by some oversight, has never been provided with a private name of his own. I think he should be called Peter, because he can take such a miraculous draught of fishes. It is a draught; you know—a pelican doesn't eat fishes—he drinks them down in bulk. For Peter, a dozen or so fresh herrings is a mere swill round of the mouth.

Peter walks about the club premises with much dignity, deferred to on all sides by the other members. His kingship is rarely disputed, having been achieved by the sort of conquest most familiar in the pelican club; and his divine right is as much respected as his tremendous left.

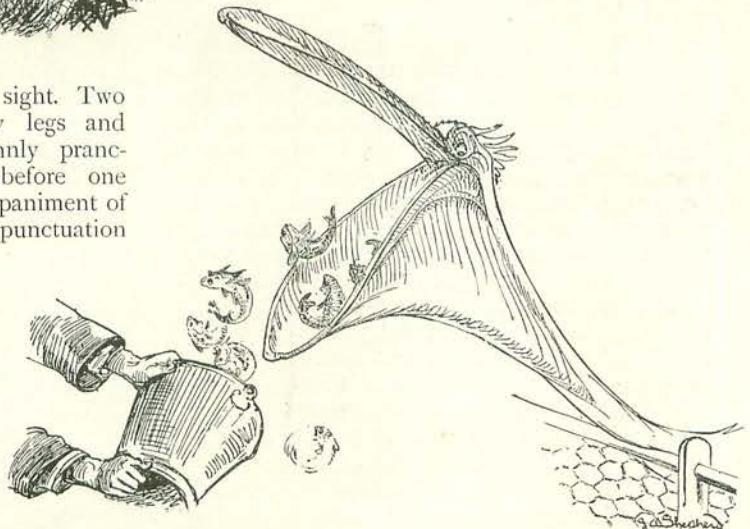
A pelican never bears malice; he hasn't time, especially now, with competition so keen in the fish business, and Church's fish pails only of the ordinary size. There is never any ill-feeling after a little spar, and each proceeds, in the most amicable way, to steal some other pelican's fish. A spar at this club, by-the-by,



PETER.

is a joyous and hilarious sight. Two big birds with stumpy legs and top-heavy beaks, solemnly prancing and manœuvring before one another with an accompaniment of valiant gobbles and a punctuation of occasional pecks—a gleesome spectacle.

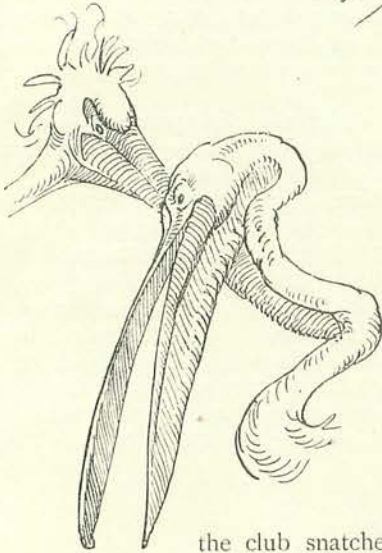
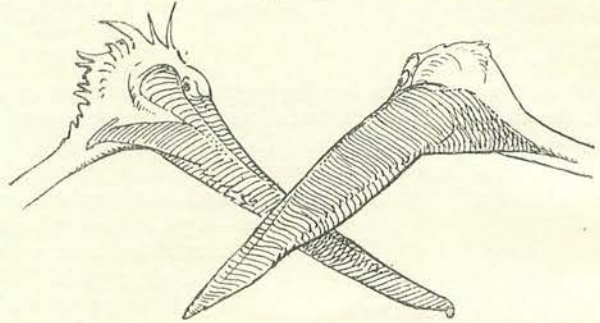
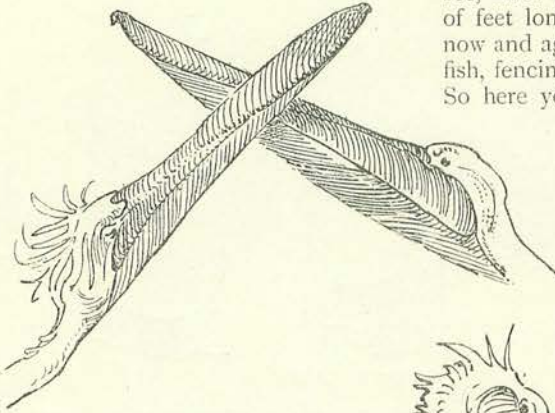
Another sport much exhibited at the pelican club is that of the broadsword. The school of fence is that of Mr. Vincent Crummies—one—two—three—four—over; one—two—three—four—under. You



A SWILL ROUND.



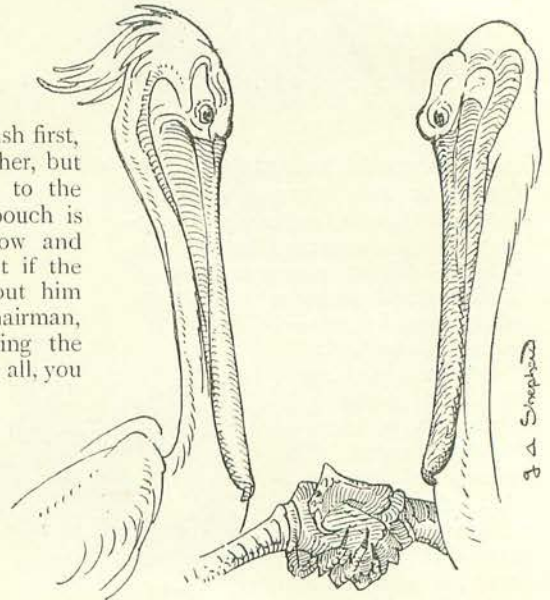
see, when a dozen or two birds with beaks a couple of feet long or so get together in a small area, and now and again rush all in the same direction for fish, fencing is certain to develop, sooner or later. So here you have it, *secundum artem*—one—two—three—four—over; one—two—three—four—under; and although none have yet attained the Crummleian degree of knocking out sparks, there is a deal of hollow noise, as of thumping on a wooden box. But there is never any after-malice, and in less than five minutes



either combatant will swallow a fish rightfully belonging to the other, with perfect affability.

There is a good deal of the philosopher about the pelican, and of a more genuine sort than characterizes the stork. The pelican always makes the best of a bad job, without going into an unnecessary tantrum over it. If another member of

the club snatches a fish first, the pelican doesn't bother, but devotes his attention to the next that Church throws; a fish in the pouch is worth a shoal in somebody else's. Now and again Peter loses his temper for a moment if the others catch the first snack, and lays about him with his bill—but then, when a fellow's chairman, and a lot of other fellows come snatching the lunch from under his nose—why, hang it all, you know . . . But it is only for a moment, and Peter is soon in position for the next pouchful. He is artful about this position. When Church appears at the rails with a pailful of fish most of the members rush to those rails, jostle together and shove their beaks through them and over them—any way to get nearer the pail. But the chairman



knows very well that Church doesn't throw the fish outside the rails, but into the inclosure, somewhere near the middle; and near the middle the sagacious Peter waits, to his early profit—unless Church is unusually slow about throwing the fish, in which case Peter is apt to let his excitement steal his sagacity, and to rush into the pell-mell, anxious to investigate the delay.

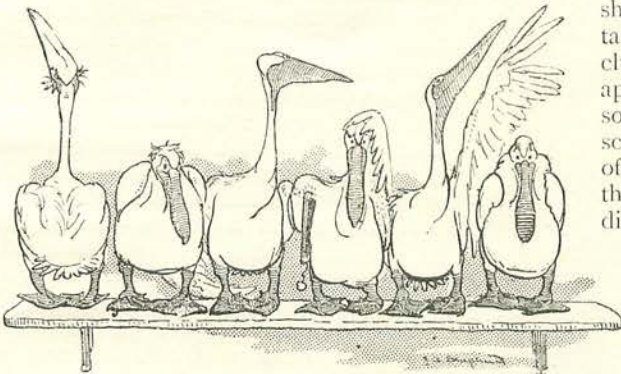
There is a deal of excellent wear in a pelican. One has been here about thirty years, and two more have been established on the same premises for a quarter of a century. All these three are in capital working repair and will probably last, with a patch or two, and a little soleing and heeling, for a century or two more; no respectable pelican is ever bowled out for less than three figures.

In the winter the club takes up its quarters in the shed behind the inclosure; a



A LITTLE SOLEING AND HEELING.

shed sumptuously furnished with certain benches and forms, whereon the club stands in rows, with a general appearance of a number of very solemn naughty boys in a Board school. In winter, too, Church will often put his bucketful of fish on the ground, so that the club may dine in a clubbier way. But whether you watch this club feeding together from the pail, each member doing his best to put away the whole painful at a gulp, or whether you observe them playing a sort of greedy game of lacrosse with fish



SCHOOL.

which Church throws them, you will be equally amazed that the pelican was used as a symbol of charity and brotherly love in early and middle Christian art.

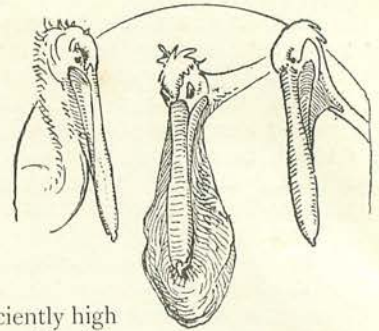
I have seen a pelican enact a most instructive moral lesson at a pail-dinner. Observe the bill and pouch of a pelican.

The pouch is an elastic fishing-net, and the lower mandible is a mere flexible frame to carry it. Now, I have observed a pelican to make a bounce at the fish-pail, with outspread wings, and scoop the whole supply. But then his trouble began. The whole catch hung weightily low in the end of the pouch, and jerk and heave as he might, he could never lift the load at the end of that

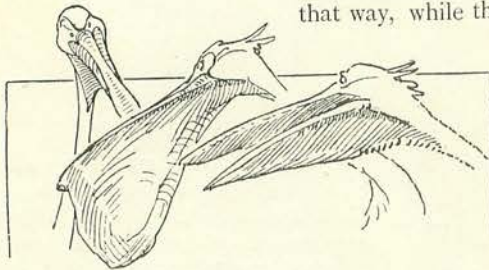


CLUB DINNER.

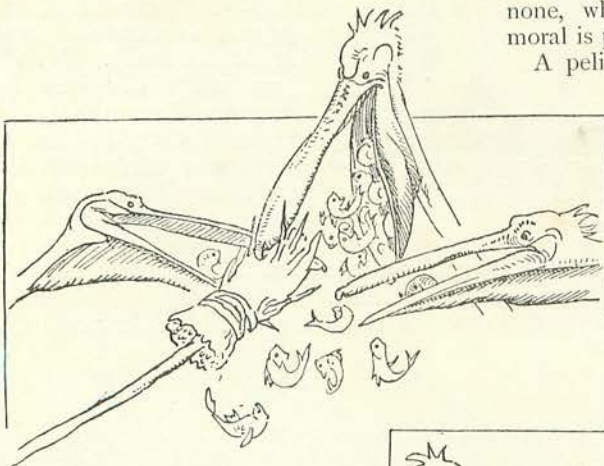




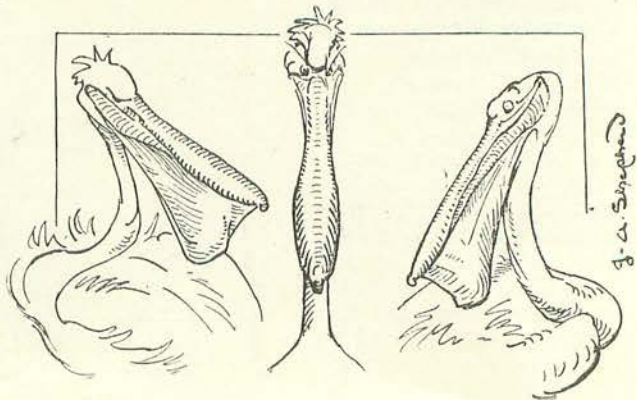
long beak sufficiently high to bolt it. Meanwhile, his friends collected about him and remonstrated, with many flops and gobbles, betting him all his fish to nothing that he would lose it after all; this way they chased that bag, and that way, while the bagger, in much trepidation and with many desperate heaves, wildly sought remote corners away from his persecutors. Now, by the corner of the club premises stands an appliance, the emblem of authority, the instrument of justice, and the terror of the evilly-disposed pelican — a birch-broom. This, brandished in the hands of Church, caused a sudden and awful collapse of the drag-nets, an opening, a shower of fish and many snaps; wherefrom walked away many pelicans with fish, and one with none, who had looked to take all. The moral is plain to the verge of ugliness.



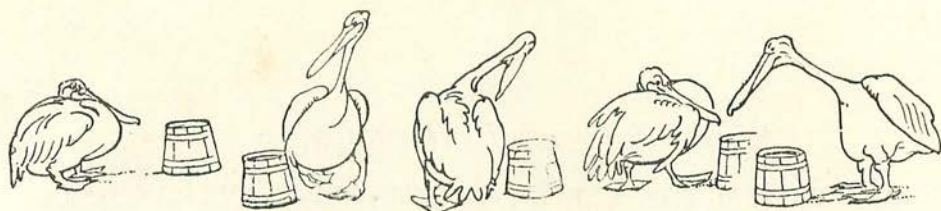
A pelican has no tongue—or none to speak of. It is a mere little knob scarcely the size of a cherry. The long, long meditations of the pelican (lasting between feeding times) are given up to consideration whether or not the disgrace of this deficiency is counter-balanced by the greater capacity for fish which it gives the pouch. After all, it is only another instance of that com-



mercial honesty which makes the pelican pay for his beak out of his legs; he gives his tongue for a pouch. There should be a legend of the pelican applying honestly to Adam to buy a pouch, and the wily stork waiting and waiting on the chance of snatching one without paying for it, until all had been served out; afterwards living all its life







on earth in covetous dudgeon, unconsolated by its wealth of beak, legs, wings, and neck, and pining hopelessly for the lost pouch. There are many legends of this sort which ought to exist, but don't, owing to the negligence of Indian solar myth merchants, or whoever it is has charge of that class of misrepresentation.

The pelican can fly, although you would never believe it, to look at the club members here. To a Zoo pelican a flight of two feet is an undertaking to be approached with much circumspection and preparation, and a summoning of resolution and screwing of courage proper to the magnitude of the feat. It takes a long time to learn to fly on to a bottom-up bucket. The Zoo pelican begins on



a shadow—not a very dark one at first—and works his way up by jumping over darker shadows to straws and pebbles, before he tries a bucket. The accomplished bucket-jumper makes a long preliminary survey and circumnavigation of his bucket before performing, and when he does begin it is with a number of wild rushes and irresolute stops. When at last he gets the proper length of run, and the right foot in front, and doesn't see anything to baulk him, he rises with a great effort, and all the lookers-on who don't know him stare up over the trees, and are astonished to find him, after all, only on the bucket. His pinions are cut, poor fellow! If they were not, what would become of the fishmongers' shops?