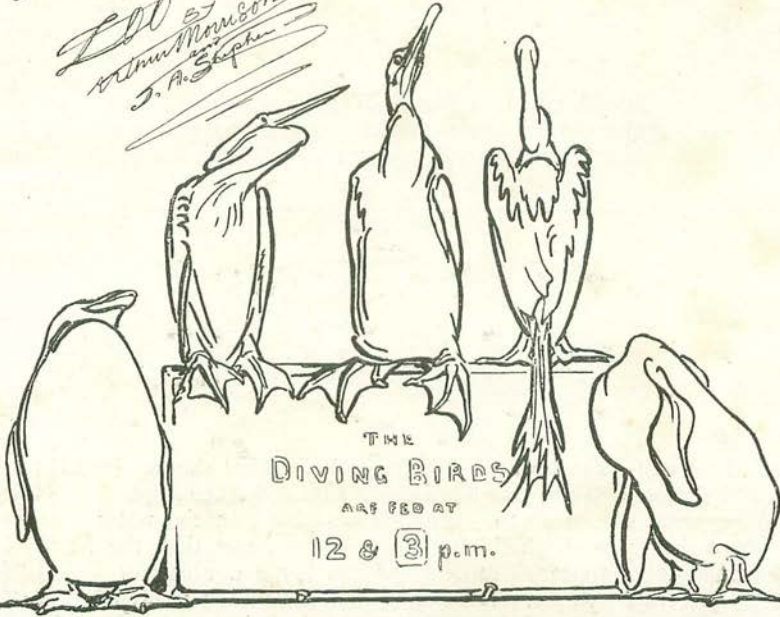
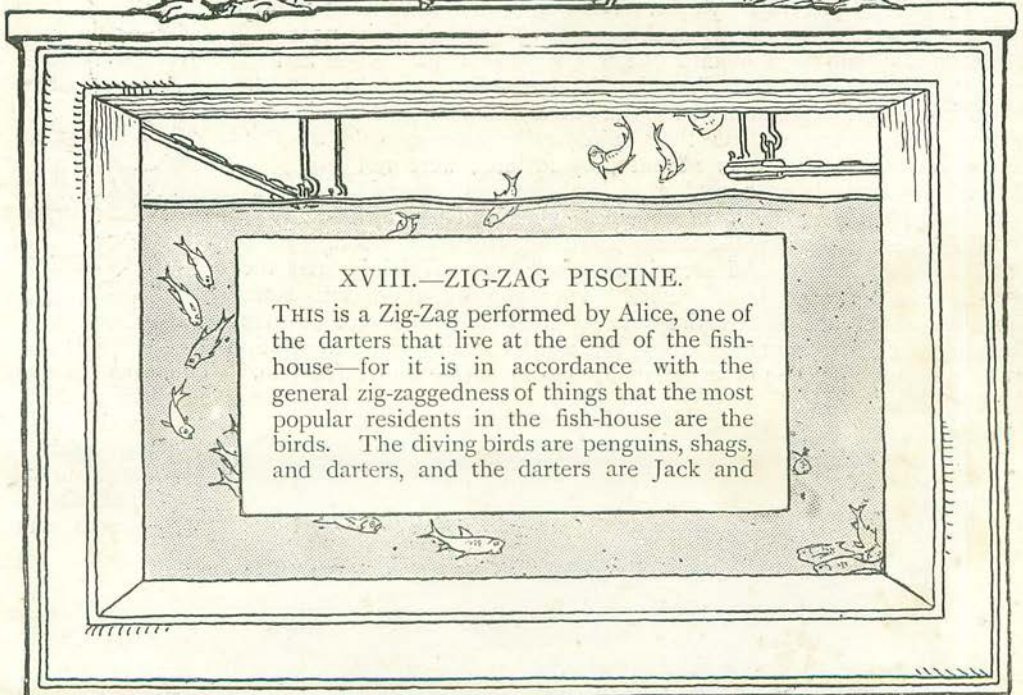


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Wm. Moulton
J. A. Shepherd



THE
 DIVING BIRDS
 ARE FED AT
 12 & 3 p.m.



XVIII.—ZIG-ZAG PISCINE.

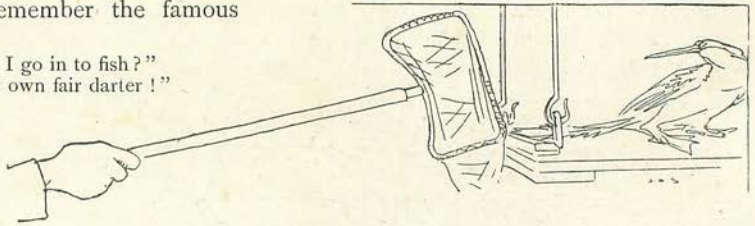
THIS is a Zig-Zag performed by Alice, one of the darters that live at the end of the fish-house—for it is in accordance with the general zig-zaggedness of things that the most popular residents in the fish-house are the birds. The diving birds are penguins, shags, and darters, and the darters are Jack and

Alice. Many may remember the famous ballad beginning—

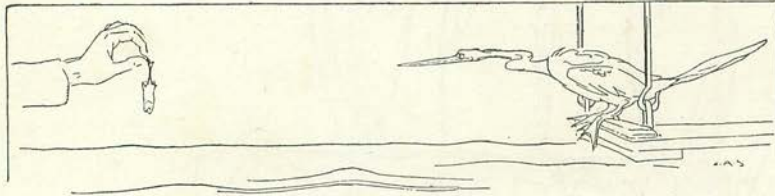
“Keeper may I go in to fish?”
 “Oh, yes, my own fair darter!”

although probably they won't. The darter therein referred to is popularly supposed to have been Alice.

It is probably because of her name that Alice had this remarkable dream, although Waterman (which is the name of the keeper—a man evidently born for the fish-house) thinks it was because of swallowing Jack's dinner as well as her own. Alice certainly had done very well—she always does—and was well disposed for sleep.



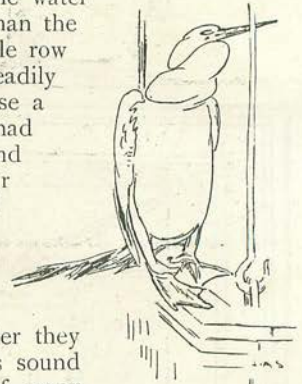
COERCION.



CONCILIATION.

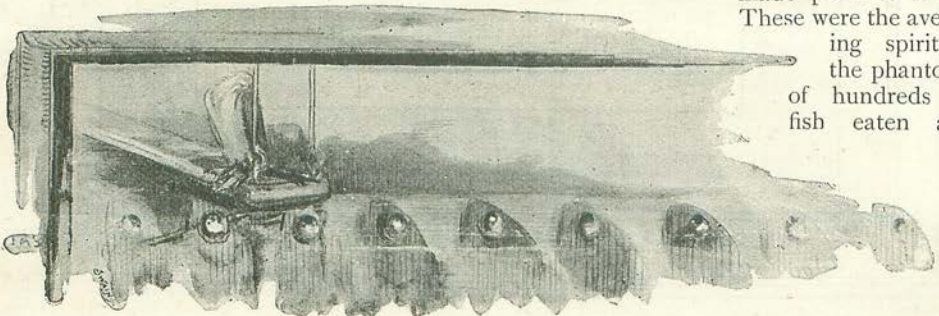
senses by the display of a roach, but Alice remembered that she was loaded to the sinking-line already, and forbore. Waterman was called away, and Alice slept.

Now as Alice slept she dreamed. And it was this. In the water below her (where she knew she had left nothing living larger than the natural animalcula) there appeared, moving towards her, a double row of great phosphorescent fishy eyes. Then between each pair of steadily upturned eyes she saw, as is usual, a nose. Then below the nose a pale, ghastly, half-open mouth. It was shuddersome. Alice had never before seen any fish that she did not welcome gladly and take inside with promptitude. But these fish, all with their noses pointing upward and their unnaturally large eyes fixed upon her—these she knew at once, by instinct, were not to be eaten. There is no record, even in the transactions of the Psychological Research Society, of an edible ghost. These awful-eyed fish passed beneath the diving-board on which she stood, and, strangely enough, Alice could see their eyes as plainly after they had passed out of sight as before. Then a weird, mysterious sound gathered about her, intensifying into a loud wail—the wail of many hundreds of fishy spirits repeating the words of the mystic inscription over the tank: “The diving birds are fed at twelve and three p.m.”

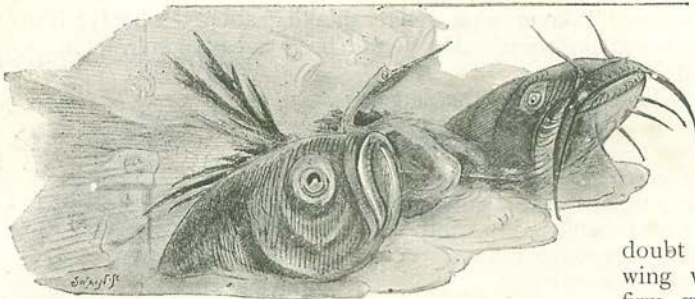


LOADED.

Thus was the case made plain to Alice. These were the avenging spirits—the phantoms of hundreds of fish eaten and



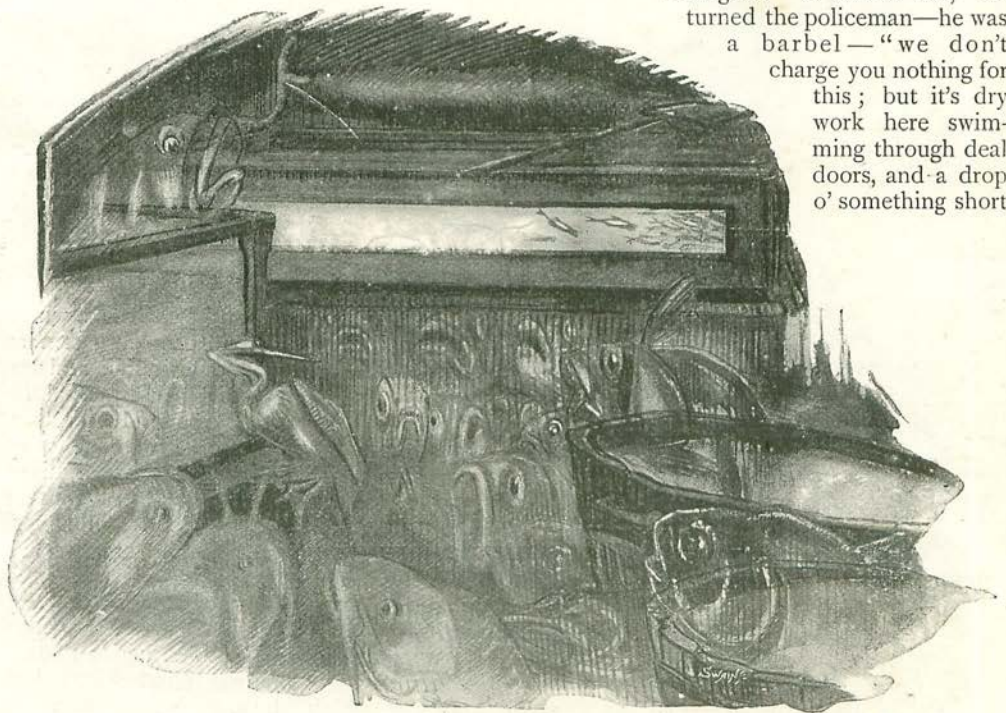
THE VISION.



IN CUSTODY.

side of her. "You're wanted, young person," said a gruff voice at one side, and "Better come quietly!" said another, on the opposite side. "Never you mind wot for," pursued the first voice, as though Alice had asked, which she hadn't; "*you'll* find that out soon enough at the station." And "It's our dooty to warn you," added the second voice, "that anything you say'll be took down as evidence ag'in you." "All right," Alice replied, with a conciliatory flutter, "I won't say anything." "Says she won't say anything," remarked the second voice, "take that down; it's important." All this time they were moving serenely along through the glass, the frames of the cases and the walls of the house, into the black shed of doom at the back where none but keepers go and the fated fish that feed the diving birds. "You're remanded here," Alice's left-hand captor informed her, "till the sessions." "But I haven't been charged yet," protested Alice.

"Charged? O' course not," returned the policeman—he was a barbel—"we don't charge you nothing for this; but it's dry work here swimming through deal doors, and a drop o' something short

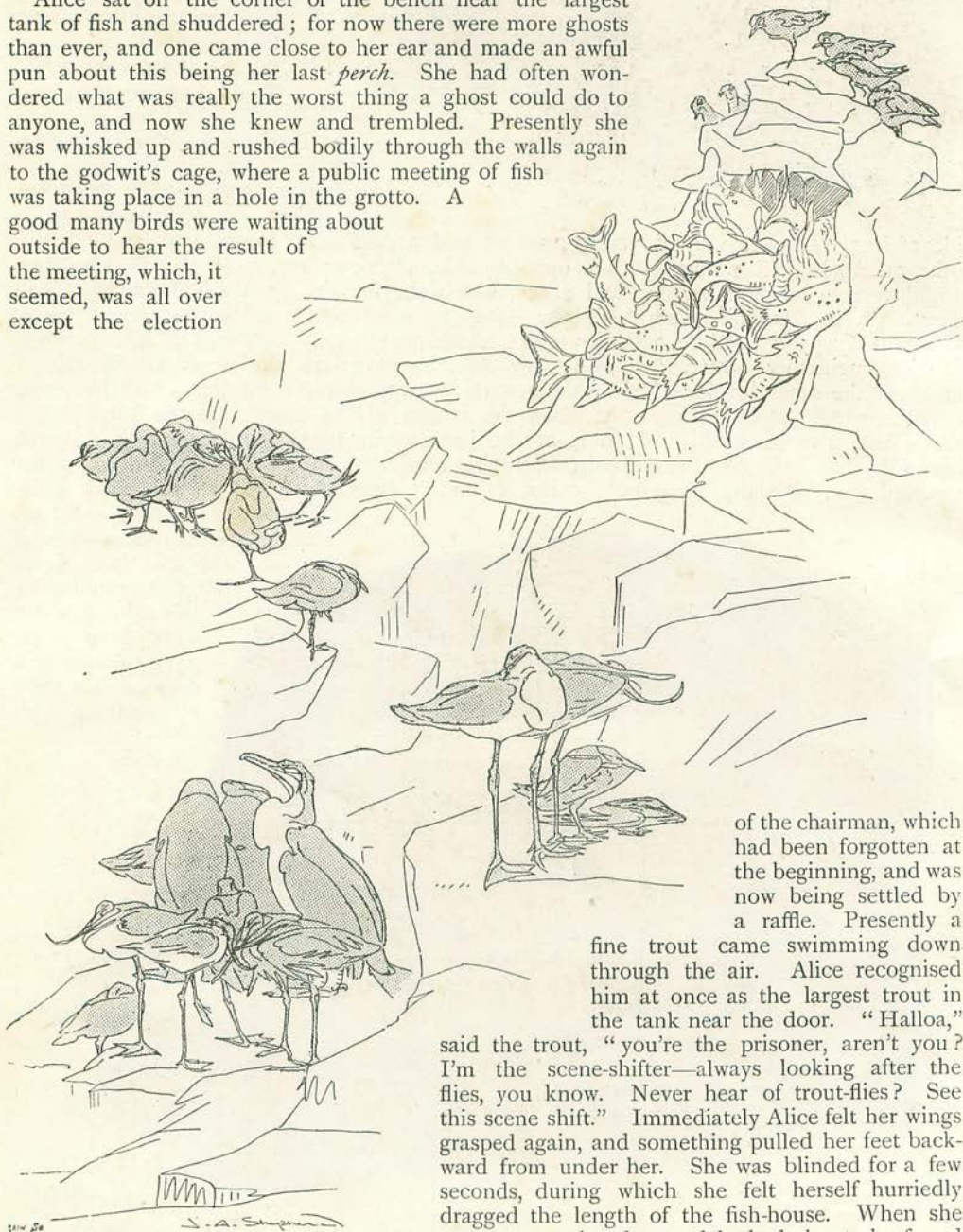


THE SHED OF DOOM.

now—"Look here," said Alice, as an idea struck her, "can't this be squared?" "No," answered the barbel, gloomily, "you can't square a ghost, you know; everything drops through his pockets. That's the worst of being a ghost. Take down that she tried to square us," he added to his mate; "it's scandalous." Nothing was taken down, however, and Alice wondered whether either had been to one of the schools of fish she had heard

of. "Look here," said the barbel, "I know what you're thinking about—schools; board schools, because you used to board on them. Ah, you've been a bad darter. But you mustn't think. It isn't allowed."

Alice sat on the corner of the bench near the largest tank of fish and shuddered; for now there were more ghosts than ever, and one came close to her ear and made an awful pun about this being her last *perch*. She had often wondered what was really the worst thing a ghost could do to anyone, and now she knew and trembled. Presently she was whisked up and rushed bodily through the walls again to the godwit's cage, where a public meeting of fish was taking place in a hole in the grotto. A good many birds were waiting about outside to hear the result of the meeting, which, it seemed, was all over except the election



IN THE GROTTO.

like a system of scene-shifting; a little invention of my own. You shift the spectator—saves lots of trouble. System extensively adopted by the police." Alice was standing in the dock. One of the pike was judge—the big pike from the end tank. The jury were

of the chairman, which had been forgotten at the beginning, and was now being settled by a raffle. Presently a

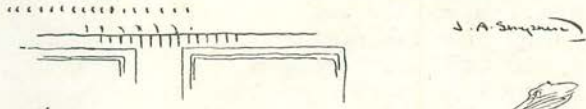
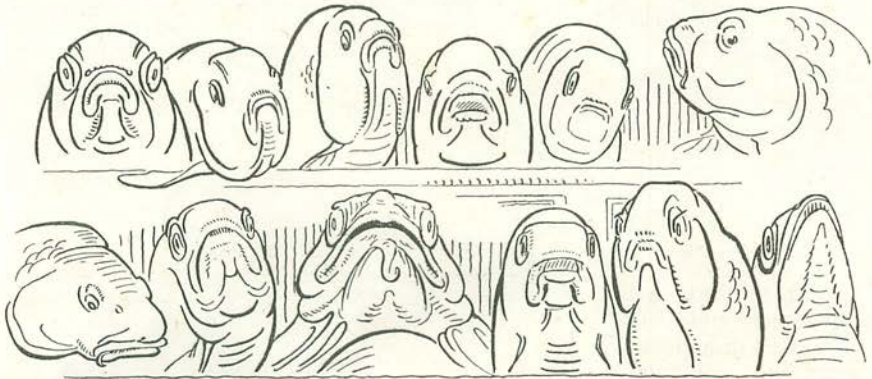
fine trout came swimming down through the air. Alice recognised him at once as the largest trout in the tank near the door. "Halloa," said the trout, "you're the prisoner, aren't you? I'm the scene-shifter—always looking after the flies, you know. Never hear of trout-flies? See this scene shift." Immediately Alice felt her wings grasped again, and something pulled her feet backward from under her. She was blinded for a few seconds, during which she felt herself hurriedly dragged the length of the fish-house. When she was set upon her feet and looked about she found that the place was fitted as a court of justice. "Ah!" said the trout in her ear, "that's something



HIS LUDSHIP.

packed—very tightly—in a box on the left. Alice wondered whether it might put the Court in a good humour to refer to it casually as the sardine-box, but decided to save the idea for an emergency. The judge looked severely about him, and from time to time snapped his jaws sharply, at which all the jury jumped nervously. Presently the judge snapped very loudly and asked, "What's the charge?" At this the bullhead appeared dragging a board, which he displayed. It was the board from above the tank. On it were inscribed the words—"The Diving Birds are fed at twelve and three p.m." "Oh, that's the charge, is it?" said the judge in a loud voice. "And pray, sir, who are you?" "I'm the bullhead, me lud," replied that unfortunate, very frightened. "I am for the prosecution." "Then what do you mean, sir, by coming into court with no horns?" "Beg your pardon, me lud," quavered the bullhead, "but I've got none—none of us have." "What, no horns?" said the judge. "I humbly apologize," replied the bullhead, trembling all over. "Don't argue, sir," roared the judge, savagely; at which invitation the unlucky bullhead fainted away, and all the other fish tried to look as if they thought it served him right. "Now

"come to lunch with me!" At which invitation the unlucky bullhead fainted away, and all the other fish tried to look as if they thought it served him right. "Now



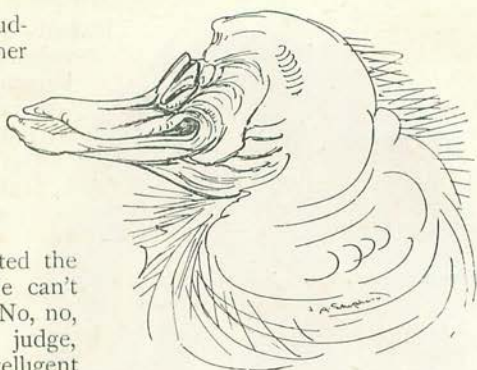
PACKED.

there'll be no speech for the prosecution," said the judge, "and that'll save time. And there'll be nobody to call witnesses for the prosecution, and that'll save time too. There's too much of this dilatory legal formality, delaying meals. Where's the evidence of arrest?" At this a carp stepped into the witness-box. "Well, constable," asked the judge, "did you arrest the prisoner?" "No, yer ludship," said the carp. "Is that what you've come to prove?" "Yus, yer ludship," responded the carp. "Oh, I see," said the pike, "the plan will be to call everybody who *didn't* arrest her, so as to make quite sure of that first?"



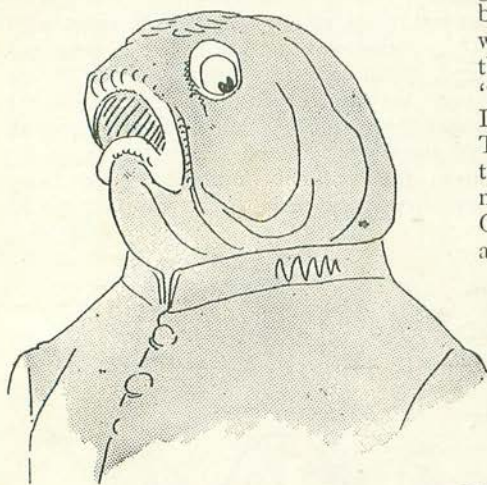
THE CHARGE.

His lordship seemed amused. "Jest so, yer ludship," answered the carp. "That'll be rather slow," said the judge, "and I want my lunch soon. Would *you* like to come to lunch with me?" His lordship looked more amused than ever, but the carp turned pale and gasped. "Because, you know," the judge pursued, "if you *wouldn't*, you'd better say who *did* arrest the prisoner, and save time." "Ghosts, me lud, ghosts!" ejaculated the carp; "we can't call 'em—they're ghosts. We can't call ghostes from the nasty deep, me lud." "No, no, of course not, my poor fellow," replied the judge, soothingly; "of course not. You're a most intelligent carp, and I'm delighted to have met you. Just come to lunch with me to-day, will you?" At this the carp



HIS-LUDSHIP IS AMUSED.

gave a despairing cry and fell out of the witness-box. "I wonder why they don't like lunching with the judge!" Alice thought. "Somebody's thinking in court," shouted the pike, excitedly. "I won't have it. The next person who thinks, I'll commit to my lunch for contempt of Court." Then Alice thought she knew why nobody liked to be present at the judge's lunch. At this moment Mike, the penguin, came waddling into Court as fast as he could in a wig and gown and wiping his beak on his sleeve. "Hope I haven't kept the Court waiting, me lud," said Mike, "but I've only just been called to the bar. The barmaid said——" "Stop!" said the judge, "is the barmaid

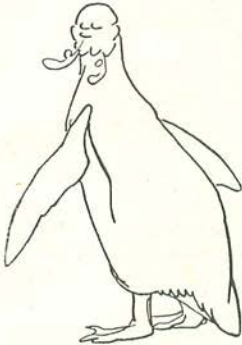
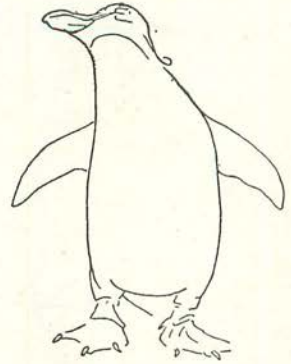
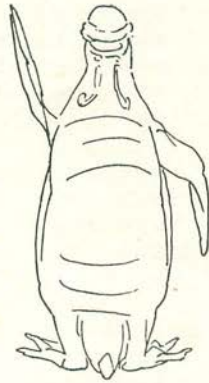


P.C. CARP.

here?" "No, me lud, in the next pond—Spiers and Pond." The judge looked disappointed. "Ah! hum!" he said, "um—not here; well, who said she was? Proceed." "I appear in this case, me lud." "Well, who for?" asked the pike. "I don't care, me lud," said the penguin, "suppose we say the prisoner?" "All right," replied the pike, "be quick." "Me lud," began Mike, with a bow, "and gentlemen of the jury" (with another), "in the whole course of my professional experience I have never approached any case whatever, having, unfortunately, been too frequently called to the bar. The barmaid always—but that is another story. Unaccustomed as I am to public-hou—I beg pardon—public speaking, I feel, me lud, that on this occasion if I failed to plead the cause of my



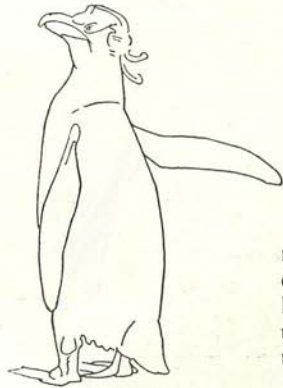
"ME LUD!"



unfortunate client with all my force and all my strength and all my power, that I—in fact, that I should not succeed in bringing these various qualities into requisition in this particular case. Me lud, my client is charged with being fed at twelve and three. I fail, me lud,



to see the gravity of this charge. I am authorized to say that my client will gladly consent to be fed on as many more occasions as the Court may consider proper. As to the few trifling murders involved, that, my lud, I contend is a matter too small for the consideration of this Court. Murder, as we all know,



is a small failing practised by the most honourable birds and fish every day. Even your ludship yourself has lunch. The same hand that ministers unto my unfortunatè client at twelve and three provides lunch, me lud and gentlemen of the jury, for all of us. What! did you never see the keeper? Did you never hear of a jolly young Waterman? Me lud and gentlemen, you with darters—



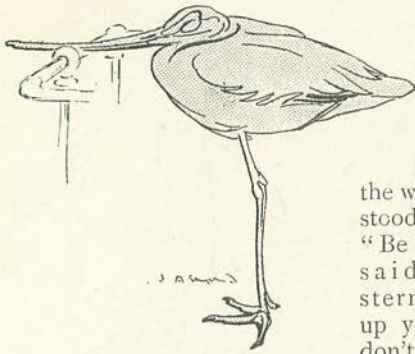
'erring darters, I may say—of your own, I—I throw myself upon—the nearest chair, and implore you to remember the temptation to which my client has been subjected, and how pleasant you would be fried yourselves." The penguin, pulling out an immense handkerchief, flung himself on a chair where the grey mullet had placed a bent pin.



SHAIN SO.



J. A. SHEPHERD



THE GODWIT.

Rising again immediately, and dropping his handkerchief, the penguin put the grey mullet into his pocket and said: "Call the godwit."

The godwit hopped into the witness-box and stood on one leg. "Be careful, sir," said the pike, sternly. "Hold up your head, and don't stand on one leg. It's insolent!" The godwit immediately put down his other foot and straightened up.

"I have heard," said the penguin, "of people coming into court without a leg to stand on." At this a gudgeon laughed, and was immediately taken into custody for the judge's lunch. "Now then, sir," said the judge to the godwit, "tell us what you know." "I don't know anything," said the godwit; "it saves so much trouble."

"Did you ever see the prisoner committing murders at twelve and three?" asked the penguin. "No, never!" "Why was that?"

"Because the centre tanks were in the way," answered the godwit, "and I couldn't see her at all." "There, me lud," cried the penguin, triumphantly; "here is an irreproachable witness who didn't see the crime; what do you ask more

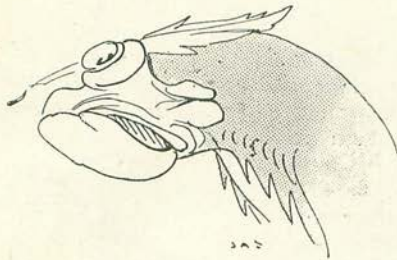
than that? Further, there is proof that he couldn't have seen it. I have any number of witnesses to testify the same thing. Call the avocet." "Call the *what*?" said the usher, very loudly. He was deaf, and a flounder.

"Call the *what*?" "Never mind," said the penguin. "That ain't what you said before," roared the usher; "don't you go playin' jokes on me." The avocet was already in the witness-box behind the usher, and

while the penguin and the flounder shouted at one another the judge suddenly leaned over and snapped the witness up. He sank back in his chair placidly munching the avocet, while the jury, who had been attempting to unlock their box and sneak away before the pike's lunch-time, all stared with such hushed astonishment that the cod-sounds (the foreman was a cod) could be heard distinctly all over the court. When at last the avocet's legs had finally vanished, the judge, leaning back complacently, said, "I don't think we'll wait for that witness; he seems to have disappeared. Hope nothing's



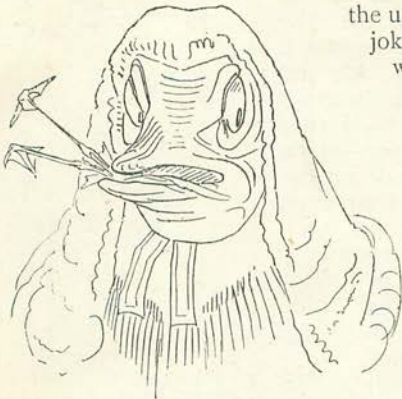
"BE CAREFUL, SIR!"



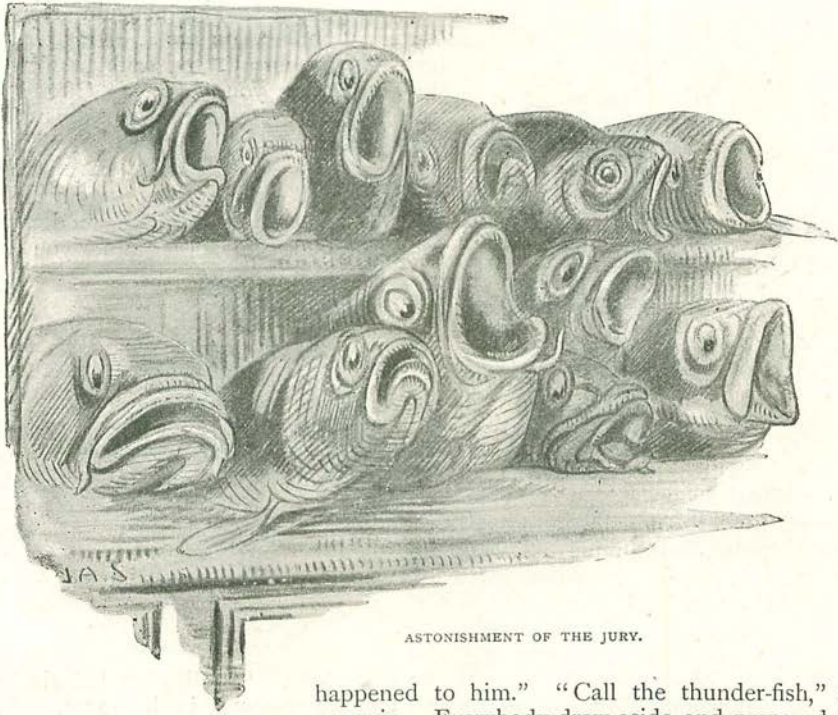
"CALL THE WHAT?"



ATTENTION.



DISAPPEARANCE OF THE WITNESS.



ASTONISHMENT OF THE JURY.

happened to him." "Call the thunder-fish," said the penguin. Everybody drew aside and prepared to make way for something tremendous. "Here I am," said a very small voice in court, and a fish about four inches long wriggled shyly into the box. "Tell the jury what you know of the case," said the penguin. "The case? Oh, yes—the case," the thunder-fish replied, nervously; "it's a very good case, I'm sure. Glass sides and an iron frame; I've nothing to complain of in the case, except that sometimes one runs his nose against the glass without thinking. I *have* heard it called an aquarium. But, then——"

"What do they call you a thunder-fish for, you wretched tittlebat?" demanded the judge. "I don't know, I'm sure," answered the thunder-fish, meekly. "unless it's because it's easy to spell on the label; some ain't." "Oh!" said the pike, and swallowed the thunder-fish. "I was going to invite that witness to lunch with me," he went on, after a pause, "but I shan't now."

Bill, the shag, was called, and examined by the penguin. "How are you?" "Pretty bobbish." Here a voice from the gallery cried "Bobbish!" why, you ain't got a bob in the world; you're only three-pence an ounce." "Who is that person?" asked the judge, angrily. "That's the tittlebat," said the usher; "if I hadn't got both eyes on one side of my head, I shouldn't have seen him." "Here, come," protested the tittlebat, "*you're* not a whale, you know. I may be a tittlebat now, but I have been whitebait—shall be again soon." "Ah!" mumbled the flounder to himself, "sometimes I'm a sole!" "If it hadn't been the tittlebat," said the pike, "I'd invite him to lunch for his disrespect. But it's no use asking tittlebats to lunch—you're as hungry as ever afterwards. That's why



BILL.



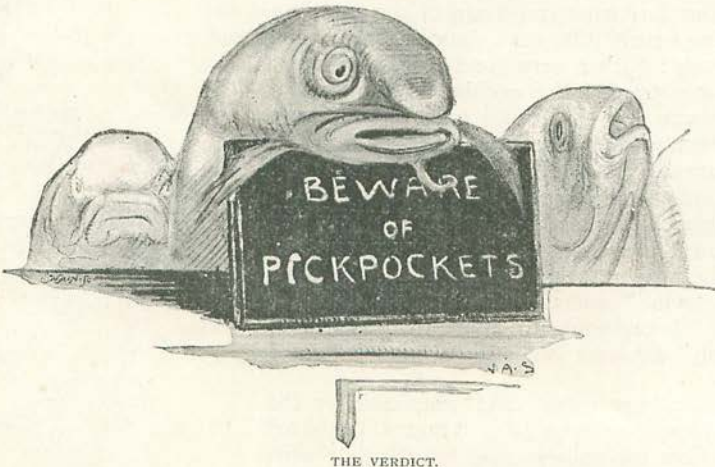
"I WON'T HAVE IT!"

another case." Then, turning to the jury, he snapped, "What's your verdict?" The jury trembled and tried to hide behind each other. "We—we'll think about it, me lud," said the foreman. "What!" cried the judge, excitedly; "think in this court? I won't have it—it's disrespectful. Anybody caught thinking will be committed to my lunch for contempt of Court. I won't have it." Whereupon he immediately fell asleep. "Well, your ludship," said the foreman, "as we mustn't think, and there's only two notice-boards in the house, and one was used for the charge, we shall have to use the other for the verdict. 'Beware of Pickpockets,' me lud." But the pike snored on, and so did Alice.

he's impudent." The penguin resumed the examination. "You are a diving bird of some experience yourself," he said. "Now tell me how often are you fed?" "Often?" replied the shag, with contempt; "it ain't often; it's only twice a day. Call that often?" Here the judge interposed. "Let's have the verdict now," he said, "and then there will be more time for lunch. If this is a good witness you can call him some other time, you know—in



SLUMBER.



THE VERDICT.