

In Leadenhall Market.

BY ARTHUR MORRISON.

LEADENHALL MARKET is a changed place since fifteen years ago. Broad arcades and plate-glass fronts stand where stood and tumbled those singular shops in which no man could tell exactly where the main structure of the building left off and the hutches, boxes, boards, benches, and stock began; where the ways were devious and men's elbows brushed as near either side as they may have done any time since the market was founded by good Sir Richard Whittington, in the year of our Lord 1408. Other things have changed beside the shops; by statute of 1533 no beef might here be sold for more than a halfpenny a pound, nor mutton for more than a halfpenny half-farthing. Nowadays this good old law is defied shamelessly.

But the demolition of 1880 left us something. It did not sweep away everything of hutches, boxes, boards, baskets, and smell; thanks be to the Corporation for that they left us Ship Tavern Passage.

Dear old Ship Tavern Passage! Cumbered with cages, boxes, and baskets, littered with straw, sand, and sawdust; filled with barks and yelps, crows and clucks, and the smell of mice and rabbits! What living thing, short of a hippopotamus, have I not bought there in one of those poky little shops, the door to which is a hole, framed round with boxes full of living things, and guarded by tied dogs perpetually attempting to get at each other across the opening. In the days when the attic was devoted to surreptitious guinea-pigs, when white rats escaped from the school desk, and when grown sisters' dislike of mice seemed insane, then was Ship Tavern Passage a dream of delight.

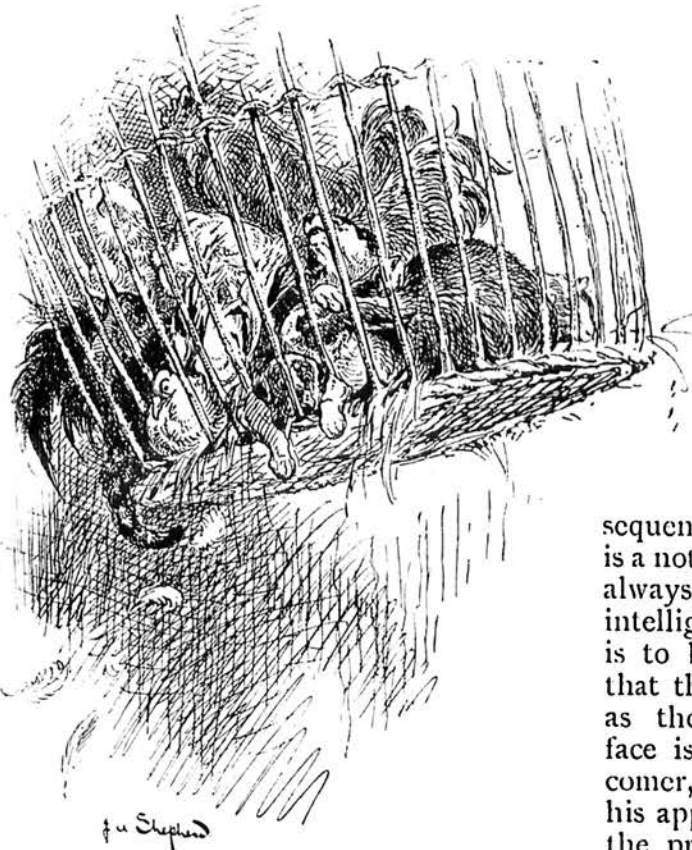
What a delightful door is one such as

these to a boy! Here is a box full of pigeons—puffy pouters, neckless and almost headless. On top of this another box full of rabbits—mild-eyed nibblers with tender pink noses, with ears at lop, half-lop, cock, and the rest. On this, again, there are guinea-pigs; and, still higher, a mighty crowing and indignant cock, in a basket.



"FRAMED ROUND WITH BOXES."

What differing emotions do the inscriptions on many boards convey to different minds! "Small reptiles on hand" is an inspiring



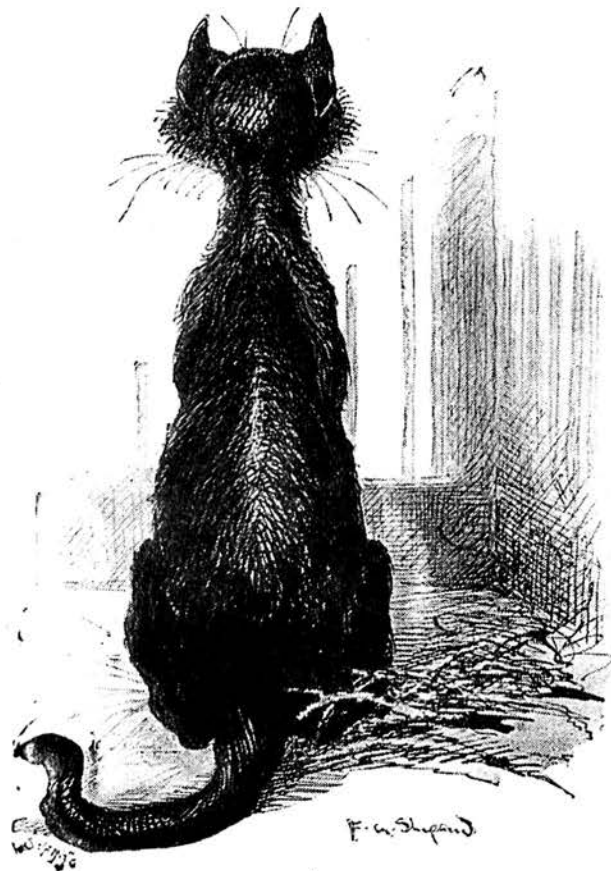
"A WICKER CAGE."

legend to the schoolboy who keeps green lizards and tame snakes; but his sister, his mother, or his aunt—well, she shudders, and instinctively rubs the palm of *her* hand on her muff. She turns with relief to the milder announcement, "Gentles always in stock," and, sorely misled by the name, wonders why Johnny, instead of nasty lizards, can't keep a dear little, pretty, tame gentle, with soft fur, and trustful brown eyes; afterwards being much edified to find that she has recommended the addition of maggots to the juvenile vivarium.

Nobody knows how well animals of different species may agree together till visiting Leadenhall Market. Here you shall often see hung up in one of those wicker cages, of shape like a haystack, a congeries of cocks and hens, ducks, guinea-pigs, and puppies that shall astonish you by its amiability. They do not fight, being bound together by a bond of common interest—the desire to get out. They cannot fight, if they want to, being packed much too tightly; wherein we see how bodily tribulation and discomfort may bring about moral regeneration and peaceful manners. Indeed, we have here, in these cages and boxes, a number of small nations or states; for, no matter how amicably the inhabitants

of each may exist together, beaks and claws are ever ready to reach out whenever possible for attack between the bars of cages adjoining.

All the stock isn't kept in crowds, however. It doesn't do. Here is an old tom-cat, for instance, who would scarcely be a safe companion for half a dozen doves, or white mice; a handsome, wicked-looking old chap who won't allow any liberties. And here is another, just as wicked-looking, and not at all handsome. He has begun to despair of anybody ever buying him, and is crusty in consequence of being a drug in the market. It is a noticeable thing that every animal here, always excepting the cats, shows a most intelligent and natural anxiety as to who is to become its owner. They all know that they are here for sale, quite as well as the shopkeeper himself; and every face is anxiously turned toward each new comer, while a rapid estimate is taken of his appearance, dress, manners, disposition, the probable character of his house, and the quantity of table-scrapings therein available. All this, as I have said, with the



"A DRUG IN THE MARKET."

exception of the cats. A cat has too high a sense of his own dignity and worth to betray any such degrading interest in human beings. Therefore he stares calmly and placidly at nothing, giving an occasional lick to a paw, and receiving whatever endearments may be offered from outside with the lofty inattention of a cast ornament. He does this with an idea of enhancing his own value, and of inflaming the mind of the passer-by with an uncontrollable desire to become connected with so exclusive a cat; quite like the cook on show at a registry office, who lifts her nose and stares straight ahead, to impress the newly arrived lady with the belief that she isn't at all anxious for an engagement, and could scarcely, in any case, condescend so far as to have anything to do with *her*. At the same time, like the cook, the cat is the sharpest listener, and the most observant creature in all this shop, in his own sly way. Watch the casual air with which he turns his head as a stranger passes the shop—to look, of course, at something else altogether, upon which he finally allows his gaze to rest. Note, too, as he gazes on this immaterial something, how his ears lift and open to their widest. The stranger has come about a dog. The ears resume their usual aspect, and the gaze returns to the same far-away nothing as before.

But this unhand-some ruffian has waited so long, and has been disappointed so often, that he shows signs of losing the placidity proper to his nature. Being an unusually good mouser, he has a certain contempt for such cats as have nothing to recommend them but their appearance; and the natural savagery of

unrecognised genius is aggravated by the sight of white rats and mice across the shop, where he can't reach them and prove his capabilities. So he makes vicious snaps and dabs at boys who poke their fingers between the bars, and will probably swear horribly at the next lady customer who says she doesn't want that horrid-looking beast.

This is not a place where any animal fond of a quiet life would come of its own accord. Here is a most respectable owl, whose ideas of the order of things are seriously outraged by its surroundings. A quiet wing-stretch at night is out of the question, because of the cage; and any attempt at going to sleep during the day in that whirl of yells, crows, barks, and light is—well, there! But he has been put high up in the darkest available corner by a considerate tradesman, and makes a shift for forty winks now and again. He is justly

indignant at things in general, and meditates upon them in solemn sulkiness in the intervals of his little naps. As the proper centre of the universe, he contemplates the rebellion of its conditions against his comfort with gloomy anger until he falls asleep. Whenever he does this a customer is sure to arrive, and wish to look at something hard by his corner. The dealer extends a match to an adjacent gas-jet, and, with a pop, a great flame springs into being a foot from the owl's beak. Promptly one eye opens, and projects upon that gaslight a glare of puckered indignation. You observe, he never

opens but one eye—the eye nearer his object of attention. "Why take unnecessary trouble?" reflects the sage; and,



"A GLARE OF PUCKERED INDIGNATION."

sooth to tell, in that one eye is gathered enough of wrath to put out any flame produced by any but the most impudent of gas companies. And though this flame be unaffected, still let us learn from this feathered philosopher, when the world gets out of joint, and all things tempt us to anger—to wink the other eye.

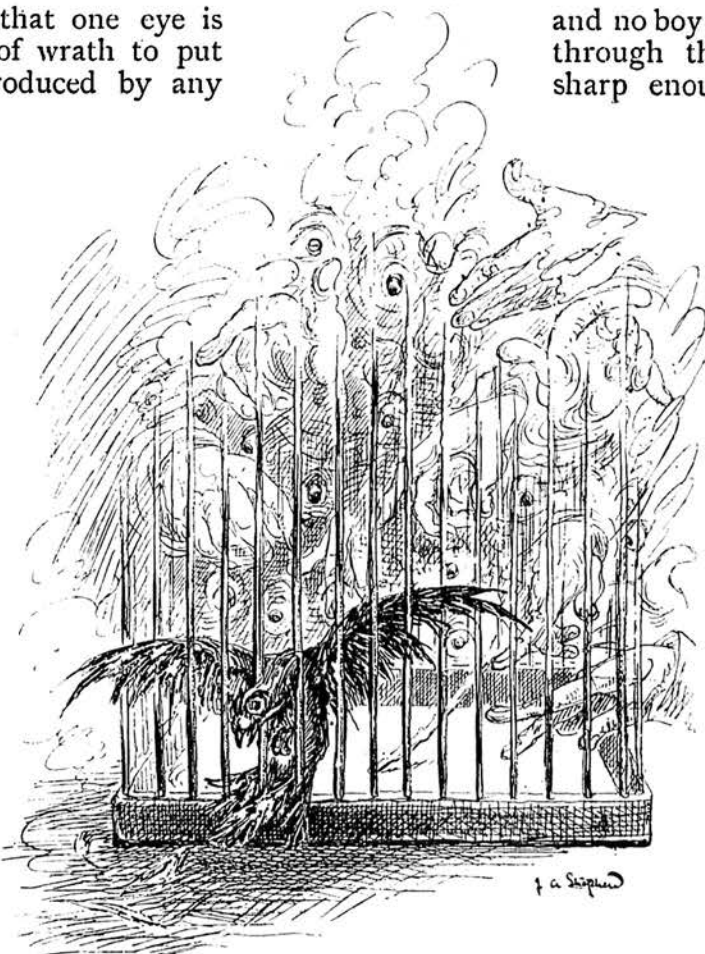
Other birds here, besides the owl, like a quiet life, and don't get it. All such pigeons as lie within boy-reach are among these, as well as some within man-reach. It is notorious that no pigeon can show his points, or even his breed, properly, unless stimulated and prodded thereunto with clucks, whistles, sticks, and fingers. "Bill," says a boy, "look at this'n; tumbler, ain't he?" and he does what he can to make the victim tumble by means of a long lead pencil brought against the legs. "No," observes his companion, sagely, "he's a fantail, only he won't fan"; and thereupon tries a prod with a stick. This failing to produce the desired effect, it seems evident that the luckless bird must be a pouter, so that another prod becomes necessary, to make him pout. But he won't pout, and, as he won't make the least attempt to carry the lead pencil, even when thumped with the stick, obviously he can't be a carrier. The shopkeeper coming out very hurriedly at this stage of the diagnosis, the consultation is promptly removed to some distance off. More pretentious connoisseurs than these contribute an occasional poke, with an idea of getting the bird to show his height; and, altogether, from the retiring pigeon's point of view, Leadenhall Market might be a less exciting place.

But some pigeons are used to excitement,

and no boy who whistles along through the Market is half sharp enough to beat them.

Look about you, young and green pigeon-fancier, and see, if, perchance, there be a bird about here which you remember at some time to have loved, bought, and lost—all, perhaps, in a single day. If so, he is probably one of the sort I mean. He lives a gay and fluttering life, staying a day or two with everybody, but always returning to one place. He is what a fancier, careless of his speech, will call a "dead homer," in spite of his being so very much alive and locomotive

that human sight, week after week, fails to follow his course. He is a man-of-the-world sort of pigeon, this. Knows his way about London—ay, and any



THE PUBLIC—FROM A PIGEON'S POINT OF VIEW



"A DEAD HOMER."

amount of the country round it—as well as ever did Mr. Sam Weller. He knows people too, and their little ways; with the number of owners he has had, a very slug must become a knowing card. Look at the innocent old chap. If you be unskilled in avian physiognomy, what more simple and guileless creature could you carry home from here, with the certainty of keeping him obediently with you for ever? But he who once has owned and lost him sees within the eye of rectitude the wink of absquatulation. The rogue recognises his old buyer again, but makes no sign; so skilled in human nature is he, and so contemptuous of it, that he allows for the offchance of being bought again, and taken to a place which will revive old memories as well as bring a change of air and diet, and from which the road back is familiar. For there is an owner to whom this otherwise fickle bird is ever true, and from whom nothing short of solitary confinement can keep him, an owner who fully reciprocates his affection, and receives him back after each excursion with a delight which springs from the cornermost depths of his trousers pocket.

But the chief article of living merchandise here is the dog; so much so that the customary greeting of the dealers is, "Want to buy a little dawg, sir?" regardless of the rest of their stock. You observe that they always mention a *little* dog, although dogs of all sizes, kinds, colours, and shapes are here to buy. This may possibly be because just now the fashion largely runs to little dogs—fox-terriers and the like; but I rather think it is said with a view of conveying, by a wily sophism, an idea of the pecuniary smallness of the suggested transaction—just as a tradesman talks of a "little bill" or a card-sharper of a "little game." Once having engaged the victim by the administration of this fallacy

—well, it only remains to do business with him, the manner of which business it is easy to learn by the practical expedient of buying a dog.

Nervous men do not like buying dogs at Leadenhall Market. "I'll show you the dog to suit you, sir," says the dealer; "just step this way," that way being into the shop. But at the door of the shop stands, sits, or hangs about on the end of a chain a certain bulldog of uninviting aspect. He isn't demonstrative—never barks or snaps; he just hangs his mouth and looks at you.

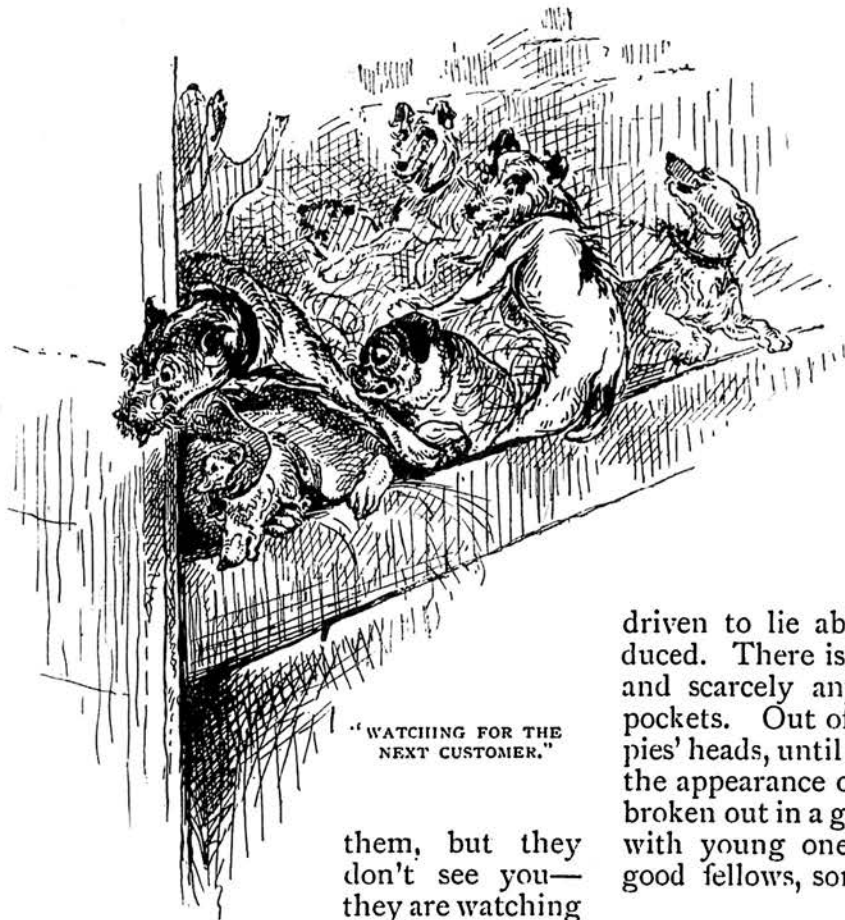
It is wonderful to observe the amount of shyness acquired by a man not naturally bashful by the mere help of this dog's presence; at times it really seems a pity that some of it cannot be made to last. People who have never been known to refuse an invitation before hesitate at that of the dealer; because, even suppose Cerberus passed, the shrinking visitor must, with all the nonchalance and easy grace possible, walk the gauntlet between two rows of other dogs, straining to get at each other across the avenue, at the further end of which stands the dealer. After which he must be prepared to hear that the dog to suit him is being kept

on the roof of the house, at the other end of many black and crooked stairs, also populated, in unexpected places, with dogs; and, possibly, after his disastrous chances, moving accidents, and hairbreadth 'scapes, to find that the dog doesn't suit him at all.

Every living creature here knows that it stands for sale, and speculates upon its prospective owner; that has already been said. Of course, the dogs show it most, and of the dogs the fox-terriers more than any. Come up a side alley, where a window gives light to a bench carrying a dozen. There they sit, ears acock, heads aside, eyes and noses directed intently towards the door. You are standing within two feet of



W. A. Shepherd
"OF UNINVITING ASPECT."



"WATCHING FOR THE NEXT CUSTOMER."

J. G. Shepherd

them, but they don't see you—they are watching for the next customer in at the

door. You rap at the window or call; not one takes the trouble even to turn his head. You are not a customer, and it is only with customers that they have business. Personally I don't believe that all this is due to an interest in the visitors; I know the raffish, rat-catching ways of these fox-terriers, and am confident that they have bets among themselves—something in the nature of a sweepstake—as to who will be taken away next. Or perhaps each of these anxious little dogs is straining his eyes, and his chain, and his neck after that master who has been absent for many, many days, and who *must* come back to him soon—who *can't* have deserted him.

Certain men are seen hereabout whom nobody would expect to see anywhere else, and about whom I have a theory. These men are the exceptions that prove the Darwinian doctrine of the evolution of the human species through the monkey. In their descent from the primordial protoplasm they must have boldly skipped all the species between dog and man, so that now they carry as much external affinity to their last quadruped ancestors as other people do to the monkeys. Indeed, when you come

to know them, you find them to be men of such enterprise and resource that this skipping business is just what they would have done with half a chance. Some keep shops, some help the shopkeepers, and some are free-lances. There is not a dog in the whole world that they will not undertake to get for you, at the right price, at a day's notice; if you were to demand the Dog of Montargis they would undertake to fetch it, even though they were

driven to lie about its identity when produced. There is no end to their enterprise, and scarcely any to their number of big pockets. Out of these pockets stick puppies' heads, until the whole creature assumes the appearance of a sort of canine kangaroo broken out in a general eruption of pouches, with young ones in each. They are very good fellows, some of these, as a man with



J. G. Shepherd

"BUY A LITTLE DAWG, SIR?"

any of the characteristics of a good dog must be, so that I mean no harm when I say that I have seen many a wire muzzle which would fit the features of some of them admirably, were man as unkind to man by police regulation as to dog. And I am convinced that the reason they all wear large coats is to conceal little tails—rudimentary, perhaps, but still tails. This survival from primeval ages is not at all an affliction—on the contrary, a comfort. They quietly wag them when they have “done” a customer rather more than usually brown. This while preserving faces of the severest virtue.

Do they still sell silkworms in Leadenhall Market? I fear not: I miss the signs. In some of the old alleys the privilege was extended to boys of purchasing the eggs—little brown specks spread over a bit of paper—which were kept in a box in a warm place and never came to anything. I must have bought many pints of these eggs; the dealers probably had them in by the peck, for I verily believe they were all turnip-seed.

Singing birds are not so numerous here as they used to be—they have migrated, I believe, with a considerable reinforcement from Seven Dials, to Club Row; but an inconvenient and amusing rascal such as a jackdaw or a magpie is easy to find. If any man live a sad life—a life environed with constitutional blues—let him buy a jackdaw. The mere sight of a jackdaw scratching his head, with his leg cocked over behind his wing, is enough to cure a leaden indigestion. But when, after having one wing cut, for the first time he attempts to fly—well, the recollection brings a stitch in the side.

Now and again, during the hunting season, one may see here a fox, waiting to be bought, bagged, and set going before some pack not very far from London, where a find is out of the question. He is an impudent rascal, and will probably be hunted a good many times before encountering a kill. Maybe he has been here before; in that case, he has a poor opinion of human creatures generally, and rather enjoys his situation. He has just run up to town for a day or two, to see a little life, and presently will go back again and take a little exercise with the hounds, to put himself into condition. Then, perhaps, when he tires of country life, he will look up again for a bit, and take a little more dissipation. It's very pleasant, as a change, to live here under cover and be waited upon, but he wouldn't think of staying more than a few days—that would bore him.

A singular property of this place is the improvement effected in the shape, breed, points, and general value of an animal by the atmosphere. If a man take a dog there to sell, he will find that in the opinion of an expert dealer, who ought to know, it

is too leggy, poor in the coat, bad in the markings, wrong in the size, out in the curve of the tail, too snikey in the head, outrageous in the ears, and altogether rather dear at a gift. But go in there a day or two afterwards to buy that dog, and you will be astounded to hear of the improvement that so short a sojourn has effected. It has good, clean, stocky legs, a wonderful coat, perfect marks, correct size to a shade, a tail with just the exact sweep, a good, broad head, unequalled ears, and altogether is a preposterous sacrifice at fifteen guineas. Marvellous, isn't it?

Since they are here offered for sale, one



“WAITING TO BE BAGGED.”

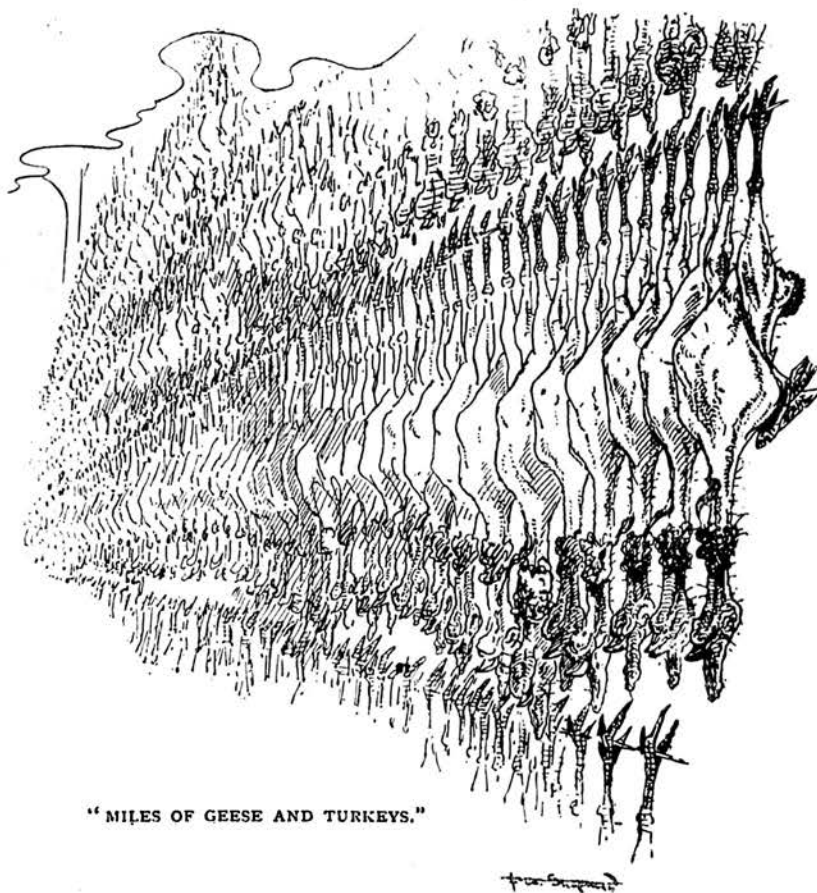
may assume that boys still keep guinea-pigs, although for the advanced boy of to-day such pets may well seem too slow. They are most unintelligent, eat their young, and, so long as plenty of parsley is forthcoming, think very little about their owners. Once having failed to hold one up by the tail till his eyes dropped out, one would expect a boy's interest in these animals to vanish, but a boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are rum, rum thoughts, as Longfellow ought to have said. Wherefore they still keep guinea-pigs. Probably they still keep green lizards and snakes; they used to do so. A friend of mine has to try to earn his living as a barrister, which is a very sad thing. It is all owing to his keeping snakes as a boy, and letting a few of them get adrift in the house of a maiden aunt. She left the premises at a moment's notice, and sold the furniture. This was only funny.



"LIVING MERCHANDISE."

Then she left all her money to a missionary society, and that was serious.

Leadenhall Market, as one used to know it, is going, going; but let us hope it will never be quite gone. Long may the living merchandise resist the inroads of serried ranks of hooks, whereon hang many, many miles of plucked geese and turkeys; birds of no feather flocking together to minister to man's alimentary desires, instead of to his love for those weaker creatures which are so many ages behind him in the tale of evolution, or which have branched off by the way!



"MILES OF GESE AND TURKEYS."