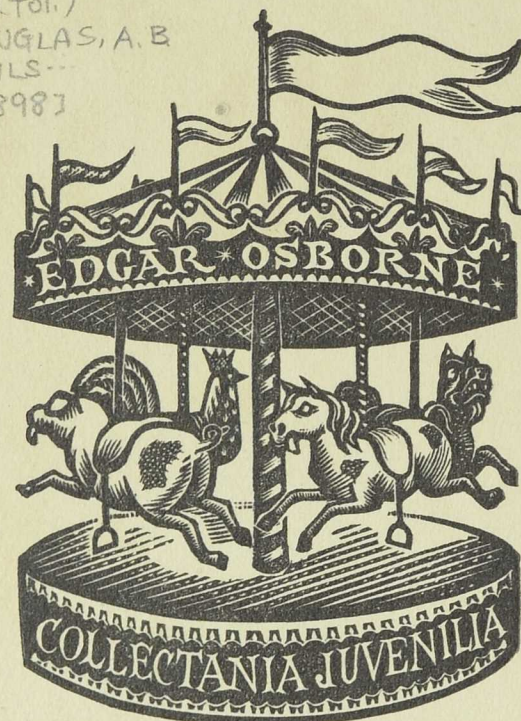




EDWARD ARNOLD, 37 Bedford Street, London.

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LONDON

TAILS WITH A TWIST

THE VERSES BY "BELGIAN HARE."

THE PICTURES BY E. T. REED.

Author of

"Pre-historic Peeps"; "Mr. Punch's Animal Land," &c.

LONDON:

EDWARD ARNOLD,

37, BEDFORD STREET.

PREFACE.

SOME years ago, at a certain country house party, a lady happened to quote to the author of these rhymes portions of a little poem entitled "The Leopard," which that strong and melodious poet, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, had written many years previously for a magazine brought out by some English children of his acquaintance in India. The poem so delighted the present author, that taking it as a model he produced *The Lion*, the first *animal rhyme* proper to see the light; the others followed in due course, and the present collection is the result of efforts scattered over a space of about four years. The author has called *The Lion* the first *animal rhyme* proper for the reason that, while Mr. Blunt's poem served as a model and suggested an idea, it was not an *animal rhyme* in the sense that these are. It differed in that it was not, and was not intended to be, a nonsense rhyme nor even humorous; it was simply a poem describing in language suited to the comprehension of very young children the savage and treacherous nature of the leopard. The intention of these rhymes is entirely different. Their author has attempted to write pure and unadulterated nonsense, nonsense, that is to say, unmixed by any striving after wit, allusion or *double-entendre*. These rhymes mean nothing and are not intended to mean anything.

BELGIAN HARE.

NOTE.—The rhymes on "The Tiger" and "The Giraffe" are by another hand, and are included in this collection for the sake of old association connected with their production. Several lines in the "Eagle," "Sword-fish," and "Rabbit" are due to the collaboration of the lady mentioned at the opening of this preface.

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THE HYÆNA.

A CURIOUS beast is the Hyæna,
He has a very strange demeanour,
He seems at first quite free from guile,
And has a very winning smile.
And yet he often bites so much,
That you are forced to use a crutch.
It really does you good to hear
His laughter ringing loud and clear.
But when he bites your leg in half,
You don't feel much inclined to laugh.

THE RABBIT.

THE Rabbit has an evil mind,
Although he looks so good and kind.
His life is a complete disgrace,
Although he has so soft a face.

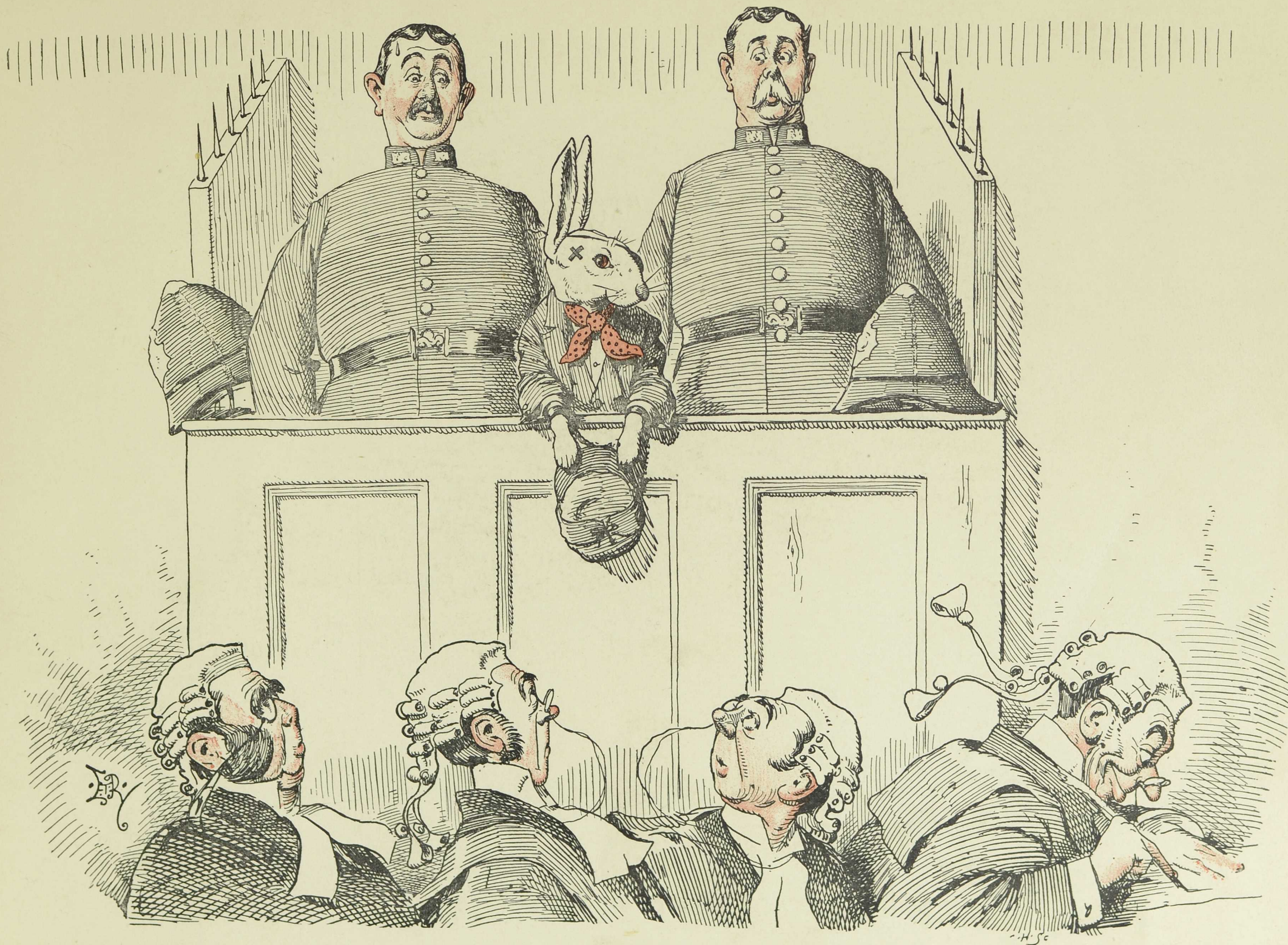
I hardly like to let you know
How far his wickedness will go.

Enough, if this poor rhyme declares
His fearful cruelty to hares.

He does his very best to keep
These gentle animals from sleep,
By joining in with noisy throngs
Of rabbits singing ribald songs.

To wake their fears and make them bound,
He simulates the Basset-hound.

And if he meets them after dark,
He imitates the greyhound's bark.



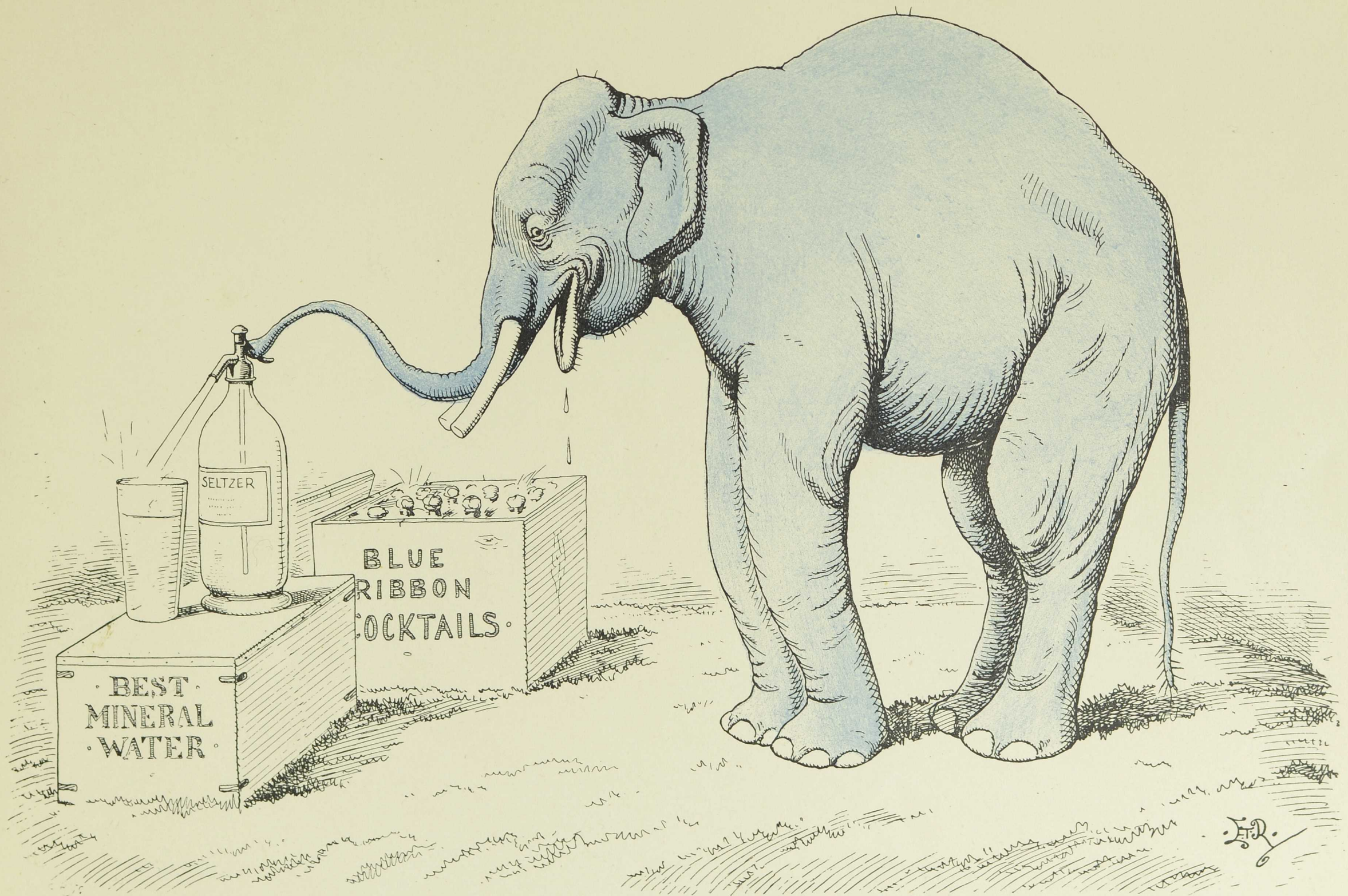
"His life is a complete disgrace!"

THE ANTELOPE.

If you go out alone, I hope
You will not meet the Antelope.
No other beast is half so vicious,
So false, so cruel, so malicious.
It would be wrong for me to write
The sort of things he does at night.
Nor dare I in plain language say
The sort of thing he does by day.
His acts recall, they are so serious,
Those of the Emperor Tiberius.

THE ELEPHANT.

THE Elephant is very wise,
Although he has such tiny eyes.
He is as agile as a pig,
Although he is so very big.
His voice is tuneful as a gong,
Although it is so very strong.
And though he has such frightful tusks,
He lives entirely on rusks.
His size, as you may easily think,
Demands a great amount of drink.
And yet he never once gets drunk,
Although he has so large a trunk.
His life is upright and erect,
And claims unanimous respect.
No beast with him can well compare,
Except, of course, the Belgian hare.



"Demands a great amount of drink!"

THE PANTHER.

THE Panther is a perfect pest,
He gives you not a moment's rest.
From early morn till late at night
He keeps you in perpetual fright.
If you forget to shut the door,
He leaps upon you with a roar.
And when you're sitting at your meals,
He comes and snarls behind your heels.

THE BABOON.

THE Baboon is a fearful ape,
From him there's really no escape.
The highest tree, the deepest cave,
From him is powerless to save.
Although his form you may not see,
He drops upon you suddenly.
And if his way your footsteps tend,
It practically means the end.



"He drops upon you suddenly."

THE HEN.

THE Hen is a ferocious fowl,
She pecks you till she makes you howl.
And all the time she flaps her wings,
And says the most insulting things.
And when you try to take her eggs,
She bites large pieces from your legs.
The only safe way to get these,
Is to creep on your hands and knees.
In the meanwhile a friend must hide,
And jump out on the other side.
And then you snatch the eggs and run,
While she pursues the other one.
The difficulty is, to find
A trusty friend who will not mind.

THE SWORD-FISH.

THE Sword-fish is an awful brute,
He tears your hair out by the root.
And when you're bathing in the sea,
He leaps upon you suddenly.
And if you get out on the sand,
He sometimes follows you inland.



“He sometimes follows you inland.”

THE GAZELLE.

A NASTY beast is the Gazelle,
Unless you know him very well.
For if you're walking in the snow,
He comes and treads upon your toe.
And if you're walking in the wind,
He springs upon you from behind.
And if you're walking in the rain,
He really gives you fearful pain.
But if you always dress in white,
The chances are he'll be all right.

THE LION.

THE Lion is an awful bore,
He comes and dabbles in your gore.
And if he wants to have a feed,
He bites your leg and makes it bleed.
Although the tears stream from your eyes,
He takes no notice of your cries.
In vain you argue or protest,
He finishes his meal with zest.
Nor will he take the least rebuff
Until he feels he's had enough.



"In vain you argue or protest!"



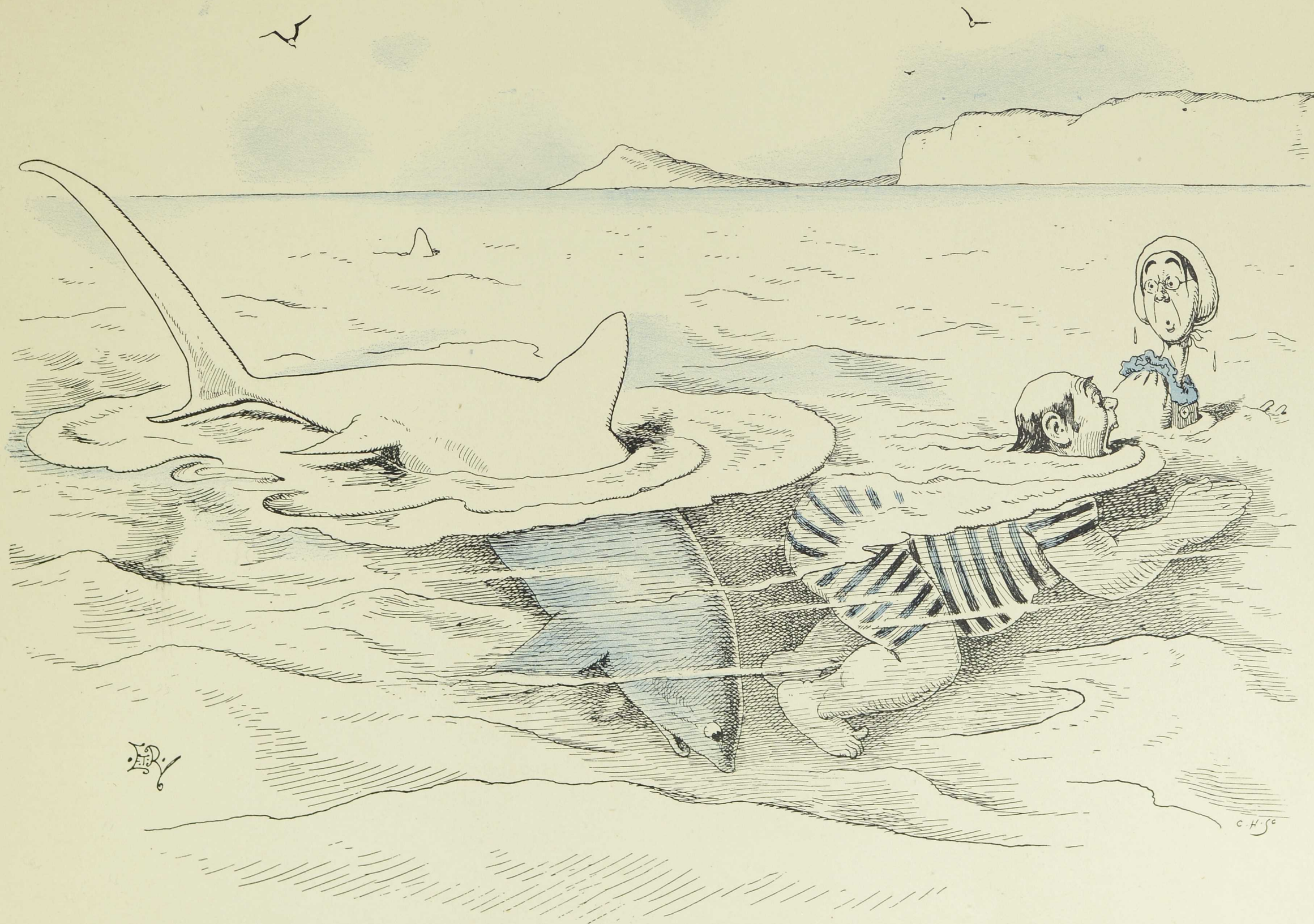
"A nice beast is the crocodile!"

THE CROCODILE.

A NICE beast is the Crocodile,
He has a very pleasant smile.
He's always ready with his jaws
In any really useful cause.
If in the Nile you take a swim,
You need not be afraid of him.
And if your strength should chance to fail,
He will assist you with his tail.
He lives entirely on fruits,
On oats, on mushrooms, and on roots.

THE SHARK.

A TREACHEROUS monster is the Shark,
He never makes the least remark.
And when he sees you on the sand,
He doesn't seem to want to land.
He watches you take off your clothes,
And not the least excitement shows.
His eyes do not grow bright or roll,
He has astounding self-control.
He waits till you are quite undrest,
And seems to take no interest.
And when towards the sea you leap,
He looks as if he were asleep.
But when you once get in his range,
His whole demeanour seems to change.
He throws his body right about,
And his true character comes out.
It's no use crying or appealing,
He seems to lose all decent feeling.
After this warning you will wish
To keep clear of this treacherous fish.
His back is black, his stomach white,
He has a very dangerous bite.



“His whole demeanour seems to change.”



"He whets his talons on your head."

THE EAGLE.

THE Eagle is a fearful bird,
He takes your eye without a word.
And when you're lying in your bed,
He whets his talons on your head.
And if you move or scream or start,
He drives his beak into your heart.
To cause pain is his only care ;
How different from the Belgian hare !

THE VIPER.

THE Viper is a sickening snake,
He comes when you are not awake.
During the day-time he's all right,
But then he always comes by night.
He's quite innocuous by day,
But that's the time he keeps away.
He has a very stealthy creep,
He comes when you are fast asleep.
Say what you will, do what you like,
He's ultimately sure to strike.
His perseverance is immense,
The pain he causes is intense.



"He comes when you are not awake!"



"The Zebra is a perfect jewel!"

THE ZEBRA.

THE Zebra is a perfect jewel,
In Winter he will fetch your fuel.
In Summer, when the heat is strong,
He comes and fans you all day long.
In Spring, when all the birds rejoice,
The woods re-echo with his voice.
In Autumn, when the north winds shout,
His splendid qualities come out.
In every corner of the earth
Men recognise his sterling worth.

THE PHEASANT.

FEW birds or beasts are more unpleasant,
Or more malicious, than the Pheasant.
For when the wind is in the East
He makes himself a perfect beast.
And when the wind is in the West
He makes himself a perfect pest.
All day he's very cross and bad,
And in the night he goes quite mad.
And even in the noonday heat
He's not a pleasant bird to meet.
If you should go out dressed in green,
He's pretty sure to make a scene.
And if you go out dressed in red,
It nearly sends him off his head.
In fact, all kinds and cuts of clothes
He equally abhors and loathes.
But if you wear no clothes at all,
Be ready for a funeral.



"He's not a pleasant bird to meet."



"He whisks them off right out to sea."

THE WHALE.

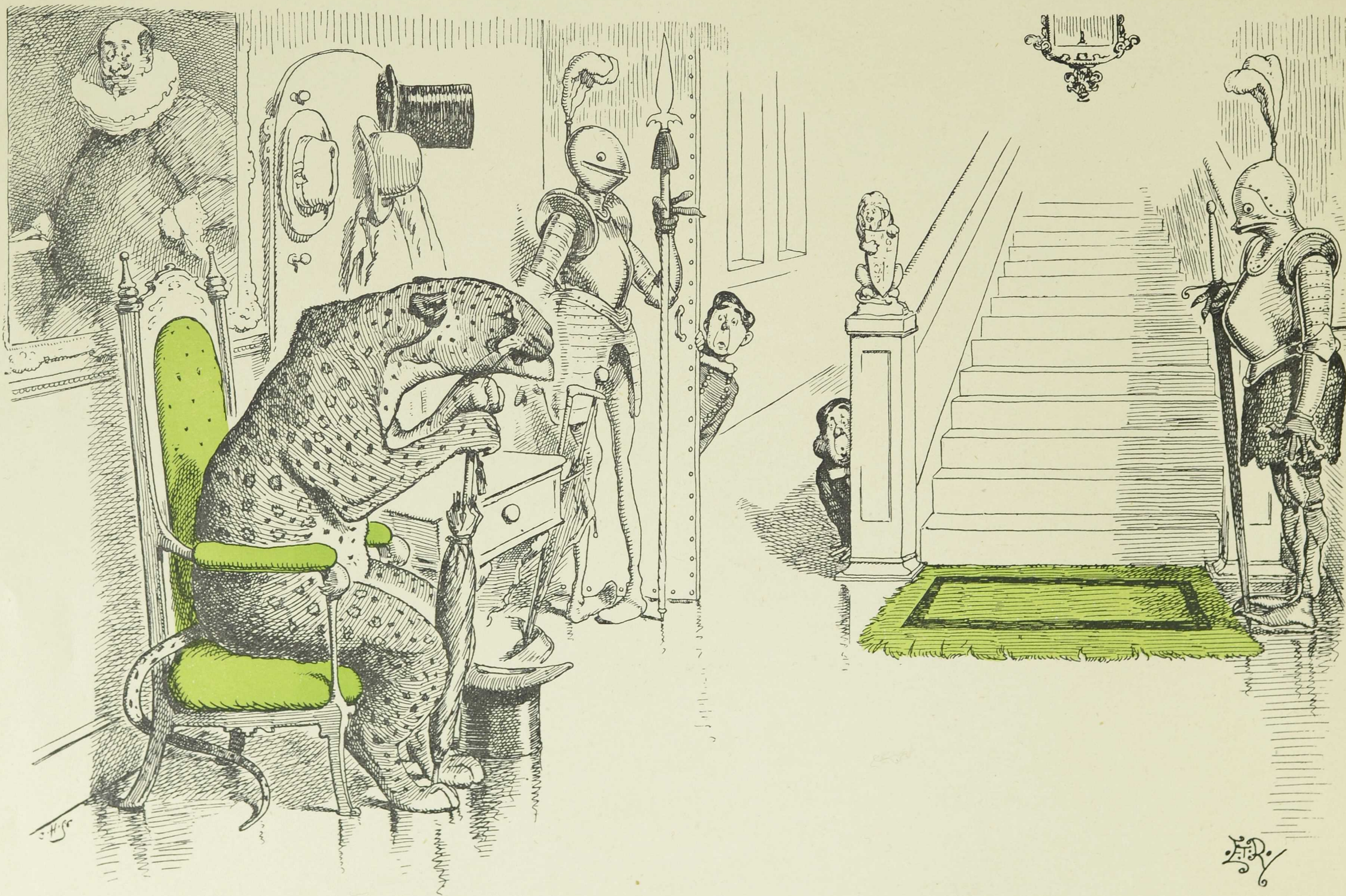
WHEN you are swimming do not fail
To keep a look-out for the Whale !
He always means to do his best,
And yet he is a perfect pest.
He has a most annoying knack
Of taking children on his back.
And when he's picked up two or three,
He whisks them off right out to sea.
Of course, at first you think it charming,
But very soon it gets alarming.
For when you say you'd like to land,
He doesn't seem to understand.
The more you beg him to go home,
The more he dashes through the foam.
He rushes on, mile after mile,
And lands you in some desert isle.
And there, until some ship appears,
You often have to stay for years.

THE WEASEL.

THE Weasel is a perfect dear,
He'll never give you cause to fear.
If you walk out on a fine day,
He bounds before you all the way.
And if your boots are rather tight,
He bites them till they fit all right.



"He bounds before you all the way."



"He waits for hours in the hall."

THE LEOPARD.

THE Leopard always seems to feel
That he is ready for a meal,
Although he mostly comes by night
To satisfy his appetite.
And you will quickly guess, I think,
The things he likes to eat and drink.
He really is a dreadful trial,
He never takes the least denial.
And if you're out when he should call,
He waits for hours in the hall.
He is a very hungry beast,
And always ready for a feast.

THE GIRAFFE.

A DOUBTFUL friend is the Giraffe,
Distrust him when you hear him laugh.
He laughs like people at a ball,
And not because he's pleased at all.
He stretches out his neck like tape,
Until its length precludes escape.
And then he dexterously throws
The window open with his nose.
And if you hide beneath a chair
He finds you out, and pins you there.



"He stretches out his neck like tape."

THE FERRET.

THERE is one animal of merit
And perfect honesty : the Ferret.
I have not time to tell to you
The numerous things that he will do.
For if you do not overtask him,
He will do anything you ask him.
He is as clever as a pike,
He will do anything you like.
He is as faithful as a bear,
And gentle as a Belgian hare.
He is as strong as any fish,
He will do anything you wish :
Bite holes in leaves, tie knots in string,
Or practically anything.

THE OSTRICH.

THE Ostrich always seems to try
If he can peck you in the eye.
And if he can't succeed in that,
He gives a kick and knocks you flat.
And when he's rolled you in the mud,
He eats your flesh and laps your blood.
About this bird there's one good thing,—
He never hits you with his wing.
And he is very easily pleased
When once his appetite's appeased.



"He never hits you with his wing."



"He simply loves the human race."

THE POLAR BEAR.

It's always well to take great care
Not to annoy the Polar Bear.

For though he's usually quite calm,
When roused he may do serious harm.
And though his nature's good and sage,
He's liable to fits of rage.

And when he's in these angry fits,
He sometimes tears you all to bits.

And then, when all the harm is done,
He's just as grieved as anyone.

Indeed, his eyes are often wet
With tears of genuine regret.

The difficulty is, to know
What are the things that rouse him so.
For though you try your best to please him,
The least thing sometimes seems to tease him.

And then, when once he's really nettled,
The whole thing's very quickly settled.

I have no doubt that you will say :
"Then why not keep out of his way?"

But that's the worst part of the case,—
He simply loves the human race.

And so, whatever you may do
To keep away, *he* comes to *you*.

THE ALBATROSS.

THE Albatross is most unfair,
He hurts you more than you can bear.
He does you really serious harm,
When he can get you on the arm.
And if he gets you on the hand,
It's simply more than you can stand.
If from his beak you get a poke,
You'll find it goes beyond a joke.
And if he hits you with his wing,
It is a very serious thing.
He is a nasty, dangerous brute,
He mostly gets you on the foot.



"The Albatross is most unfair."



"He doesn't run so very fast."

THE BLOOD-HOUND.

THE Blood-hound is an awful pest,
He never gives you any rest.
In vain you try to get away,
He follows you both night and day.
He doesn't run so very fast,
But still he wears you down at last.
And so, however far you wend,
He always gets you in the end.

THE TIGER.

THE Tiger never seems to know
Where he may be allowed to go.
When little children say their prayers,
They hear him padding up the stairs.
When other people are in bed,
He roams about the room instead.
And if you wake and strike a light,
Resents this action with a bite.
And if you try and call your nurse,
It only makes the matter worse.



"They hear him padding up the stairs."

THE DUCK.

I HOPE you may have better luck
Than to be bitten by the Duck.
This bird is generally tame,
But he is dangerous all the same ;
And though he looks so small and weak,
He has a very powerful beak.
Between the hours of twelve and two
You never know what he may do.
And sometimes he plays awkward tricks
From half-past four to half-past six.
And any hour of the day
It's best to keep out of his way

THE COD.

THERE'S something very strange and odd
About the habits of the Cod.

For when you're swimming in the sea,
He sometimes bites you on the knee.

And though his bites are not past healing,
It is a most unpleasant feeling.

And when you're diving down below,
He often nips you on the toe.

And though he doesn't hurt you much,
He has a disagreeable touch.

There's one thing to be said fōr him,—
It is a treat to see him swim.

But though he swims in graceful curves,
He rather gets upon your nerves.

