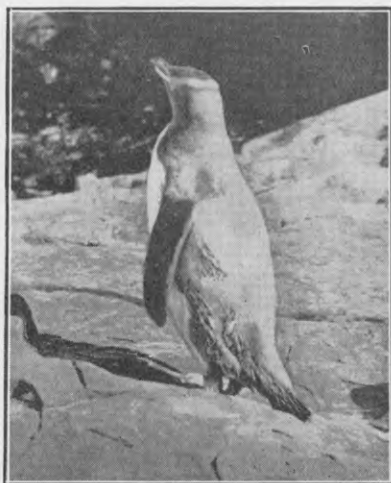# BIRD WATCHING.

Now insects, in contradistinction to vertebrates, are in the great majority vegetable-feeders, both by ancestral predilection and modern practice. So that in regard to what we may call biological trade, the complicated circulation of matter through lifeless forms in earth, water, and air through green plants, animal bodies, and microscopic scavengers like moulds and bacteria, and back into lifeless forms again, the nett effect of birds is to be a check upon insects in their consumption of green plants and their products. In this way they are obviously the allies of man; remove every bird in the world at one stroke, the biological balance would be tilted, and it would be much harder even than now to protect man's crops and trees from the ravages of their persistent insect consumers.

Birds, in fact, are one of the few groups of animals whose activities as a whole are useful to man.

But do not let us run away with the idea that economics are everything. There was a letter in *"The Times"* not long ago apropos of Sir Hilton Young's Bill for safeguarding some of the beauties of the countryside. The writer, after pointing out that the Bill, if it became law, would involve in certain cases some financial sacrifice for individuals or for the country, continued, "and, after all, the aims of the measure are merely aesthetic"—and there-

PENGUIN IN CHARACTERISTIC ATTITUDE.

fore, in his estimation, not to be weighed against even small quantities of £ s. d.

It is just this point of view—the attitude embodied in that word *merely*—which I want to combat. Economics is the foundation of everything, and money is money and must be made. We may know that elementary truth well enough, and yet be permitted the reminder that the really important thing is what we are going to ask of our money when we have made it. We may ask leisure, or a bigger house, or travel, or a gay life, or power, or bits of several of these in turn. And one thing that some will want to ask for is the refreshment of unspoilt country

7