

SUNBEAM

Vol. XXIII.

TORONTO, JANUARY 25, 1902.

No. 2.

THE RAZOR-BILL.

We are standing on the sea-side, and turning from the waves we look up to a rocky cliff rising to a height of five or six hundred feet. Lonely is it? Oh, no, it is a peopled city, or rather it is a vast house tenanted by living creatures to the very attics. Only the tenants are not men and women, but birds.

Story after story, ledge above ledge, is occupied by a different race, and they keep themselves to themselves, never visiting or interfering with their fellow-lodgers above or below them.

As we look again, at the towering cliff, we see a row of black spots on every tier, which we know are the heads of sitting birds. Some are called Guillemots, some Razor-bills, some by other names, but the strange thing is that not only does each species keep to the same ledge, but that each separate bird knows its own mate. To us they all look alike, but the birds are wiser than we think. The "foolish" guillemot (as its name is) is not so very foolish after all, is it?"

There is no pretence of nest-building, that is left to the denizens of the woods.

A slight hollow scooped out is all they want, and sometimes there is not even this; the single egg is laid simply on the shelf of rock, and there the mother tends it.

In due time, if all goes well, the little downy creature appears, and then what is to be done next? Nothing but the mother's

wing protects it on that rocky ledge; if she leaves it for a minute it will be over. It will not be able to fly for many a day yet; and though it could swim if only on the sea, what of that, when the sea lies five or six hundred feet below; so that now we can come back to the question with

desire. Perhaps in their own language she has a little motherly talk, reassuring and comforting, with her offspring.

Then it mounts on her back, and down, down they go, mother and child, to the surface of the waiting deep below. Nor to the surface only. The razor-bills, another

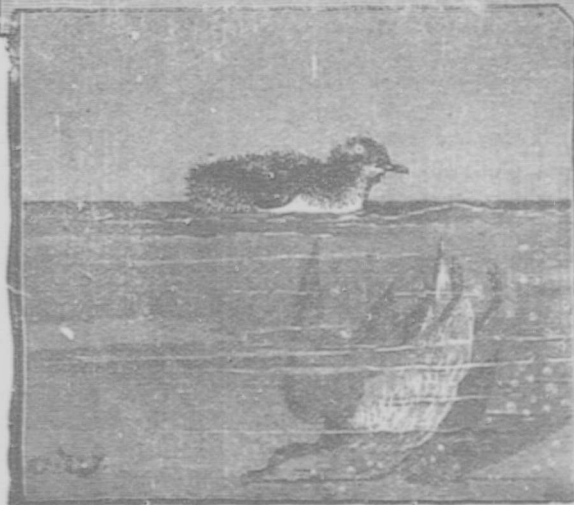
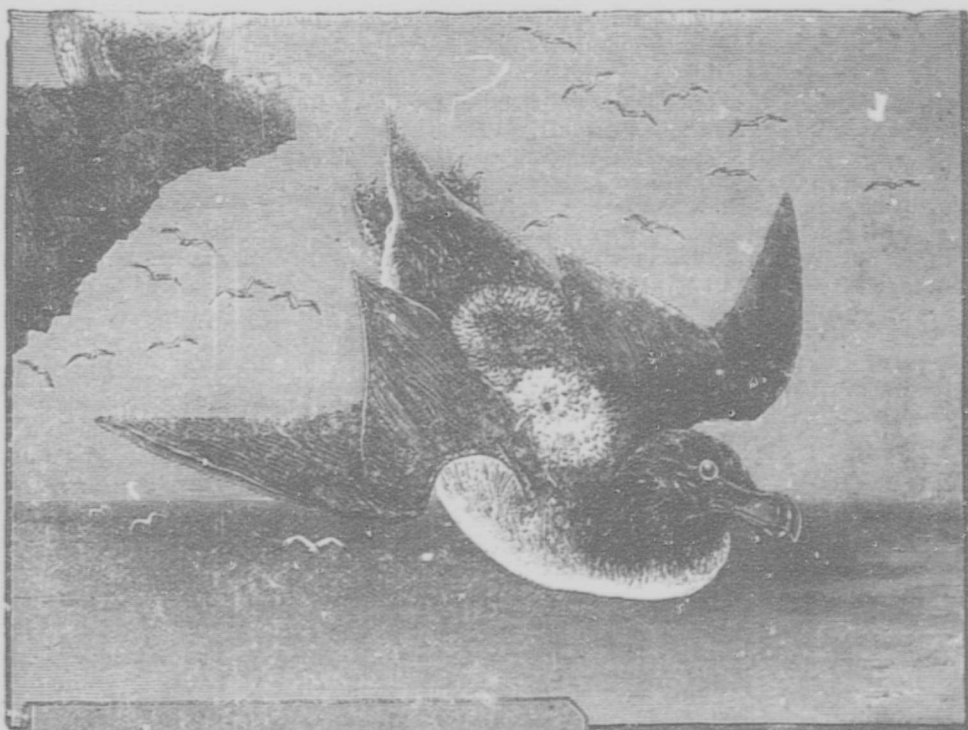
species, are divers, so that there is yet a deeper depth to which they can descend. Most likely diving as well as swimming comes natural to these infants. They never go back to their birth-place on the rock; the waters are now their home till another season or two, when they have turned from downy chicks into full-plumaged birds, and have become in their turn parents and protectors.

QUEER CATS.

I think cats are most interesting animals; and I say this after observing their habits for some years.

There is a good deal of originality about cats. You can find scarcely two alike—not in appearance merely, but in their ways. All cats like fish; but some I have met with had their own peculiar tastes in the eating line. One cat I know well, and have a great respect for, cares very little for beef, but very much for mutton. You may leave beef on the table, and it will not meddle with it; but only bring a leg of mutton into the house, and I assure you, unless you watch it very closely, it will run off with it. Another cat I was acquainted with had a weakness for—what do you think? Why, raw potatoes. Another was most happy when nibbling at a dry crust. But I know a cat that beats all I have seen or heard of. Its special accomplishment is sucking eggs; rather a troublesome sort of pet to keep where there is a dairy.

To have sweet sleep, let the conscience be pure.



which we began. How are we to get them down?

We may ask the question, but the seabird does not. She has no need, for all arrangements are made, and there's a carriage ready for the journey, soft and pillowy as the most tender nestling could