

For the Sunday-School Advocate.

## MY BIRDS.

DEAR CHILDREN,—It is very pleasant this morning. The sky is blue, and the sun is brightly shining. But my heart is sad, so sad that I cannot read or engage in anything. So I want to talk with you, dear children, just for a little while, to try and divert my mind. But what shall I talk about—the trees, and flowers, and singing brooks? or shall I tell you of the mountain that I see from my window? or of the hillside where I used to go when I was a child like yourselves to gather daisies, and buttercups, and strawberries? No, I will not talk now of these things, although they are very pleasant, but I will tell you all about my birds.

Perhaps some of you will think that you are going to hear all about canaries or mocking-birds that sing for me in gilded cages; but if you do you are mistaken, for I love liberty too well myself to deprive even a little bird of it. The birds of which I am going to tell you are wild birds. They were never caged, and they fly hither and thither just as they please. But they do not seem to please to fly far away, for they stay all of the time amid the trees which surround the little brown cottage in which I live. They know no fear, but they come in and out through the open windows whenever they please, and eat from the tables, chairs, or floor, just wherever we chance to place the cake or dainty morsels with which we feed them.

When sitting alone in my room, engaged in reading or writing, I draw a chair close up beside me, and placing upon it a paper of crumbs, await the appearance of my little feathered guests. Soon I hear the pattering of feet upon the kitchen roof, and up from it into my open window hops a little gray bird. It stands for an instant, with its pretty head turning this way and that, and then down upon the floor it fearlessly hops, and up upon the chair close by my side. And so one after another makes its appearance till I have as many as five little gray birds all at once upon the floor and chair beside me, eating as leisurely within reach of my hand as if they were all alone in the open field.

Presently along comes Dick, a beautiful cat-bird, and O, he looks so cunning as he receives the cake which I hold between the thumb and finger of my extended hand! I feed him till he is satisfied, and then Bob, a lovely robin, comes for his share. Bob hops into the window with two or three loud chirps, as if a little frightened; but he knows he has nothing to fear, and so he makes for the table, or wherever he espies bits of cake, and helps himself bountifully, always taking the largest pieces. Quite pardonable in a bird, but not so in a child, do you think so, children? Bob eats pretty fast, but he is excusable, for he and Bobbie, his mate, have a large family to provide for, so I have to be pretty liberal in supplying their wants.

I find birds love cake, and rich cake too, just as well as children, and they are like children too in more than this respect, for after you have commenced feeding them cake they will turn away from anything plainer, dropping the crumbs of white bread which they have chanced to pick up disdainfully from their bills. Dick and Dickie, his mate, know the difference between bread and cake at a glance, even from the tree-top. If I hold bits of bread in my hand and call Dick he will not come from the tree, but as soon as I substitute cake for it, Dick or Dickie will come at once and eat like a chicken from my hand.

Any of our birds will leave their nests in the trees near the windows, and come at our call to receive the food which we offer them. But Dick and Dickie are rather tamer than the others, for they are the only ones that will stand and eat directly from our



hands, or that we can call to us from remote parts of our premises.

For six successive summers past these same pairs of birds—cat-birds, robins, and gray birds—have returned to us, coming directly to our windows, and manifesting almost as plainly as you could, children, their pleasure at seeing us again. This spring our birds returned early, but the middle of May came without bringing us, as it usually did, our beautiful Dick and Dickie. We feared that they had fallen in some snare, or had been destroyed by some cruel archer, but on the seventeenth of May I heard Dick's familiar warble. I ran to the window and he came at once, and lighting upon a branch close by, commenced singing in his loudest, most joyous strains, but I could not greet him or Dickie with a single word. I turned away and wept bitter tears, for two dear members of our family, who had ever been here to welcome the return of these birds with exclamations of delight, were missing from our little circle. The one, our beloved mother, gone to join the immortal throng; the other, our dear sister, far away. Do you wonder, children, that I could only greet these dear birds with sighs and tears? Do you wonder that I feel so sad upon this beautiful morning? Perhaps some of you have lost your mother, or both of your parents, as I have mine. If you have you will know from your own experience just how my heart is aching this pleasant morning.

I still love my birds, and feed them, and provide materials for them to help construct their little nests. Many times every day I place long, narrow strips of soft muslin, pieces of twine, thread, and little bunches of wool in the window, and it amuses me to watch the little creatures carry it away. Not only do my birds come, but I see many other birds—yellow ones, and brown ones, and some with little tufts on their heads and wild-looking eyes—in the windows helping themselves to a bit of wool or a string, just whatever they chance to want. I imagined just now that I heard some of you saying, "O I wish we had birds as tame as Rena Ray's!" Then I thought I heard others say, "I don't believe a word of it! Wild birds never could be tamed so that they would come when you called them and eat out of your hands, and that they would remember you through a whole long winter. Rena Ray has only been telling us a little bit of a story."

No, Rena Ray has been telling you no story, children. It is all true. And if you want to know how I tamed my birds I will tell you. Simply by the power of kindness. Dear children, if there be such a power in kindness over a little bird that has no soul, what power must there be in it over a fellow-creature! A kind deed, a kind word, or even a kind look may soothe some aching heart, save some erring one from guilt, preserve some life, or be the means of converting some sinful soul. Dear children, will you not all try the power of kindness? Be kind to one another, kind to your friends, kind

to your enemies, kind not only to the birds, but to every living creature, and the peace that passeth all understanding will be yours. RENA RAY.

## THE CHILD AND THE RAINBOW.

"O DEAR," said a little boy to his mother, "only see what a beautiful bow there is in the sky, and how many colors it has!"

"Yes, my dear," said the mother, "that is the rainbow. It has seven colors. Let us count them; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. They are—violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red."

"I will reach a chair," said the little boy, "that I may get up at the window and see it better, and try if I can count the colors too."

He reached the chair, but, when he had mounted it, how was he astonished to find that the bow was nearly vanished, and all its colors were gone!

There are many things in this world like the colors of the rainbow. They please us for a little while only, but they are soon gone. So will the world itself lose all its charms when we come to die. It is in heaven alone that we shall be able to find pleasure that shall never fade away.

## MOUTH MUD.

A CONVERTED Hindoo, on being assailed with a torrent of profane and obscene words from his idolatrous neighbors, went up to them and asked:

"Which is worse, the abusive terms that you are just using, or the mud and dirt that you see lying on your dung-hill?"

"The abusive terms," was the reply.

"And would you ever take into your mouths that mud and dirt?"

"Never."

"Then why do you fill your mouths with the abusive terms, which you confess to be the worst of the two?"

Confounded with this rebuke, they retired, saying that "the argument was but fair."

## "SAD LOSS TO HIM."

AN old lady was telling her grandchildren about some trouble in Scotland, in the course of which the chief of her clan was beheaded. "It was nae great thing of a head, to be sure," said the good lady, "but it was a sad loss to him."

MISSES, with corsets tight, do pray have done,  
Lest fell disease precipitate your fate;  
The nymph who truly cares for "Number 1,"  
Should never seek to look like "Number 8."

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