



The Family Circle.

SEA-BIRDS.

BY MARY E. ATKINSON.

There's a flock of beautiful sea-birds
Alight on the sandy bar,
How they gleam in the morning sunshine!
How white their feathers are!
The tide has almost covered
The island where they stand,
And the little waves creep nearer
Along the yellow sand.

And there, at the edge of the water,
A hundred sea-birds play
Among the white-capped wavelets,
As foamy white as they.
Out there on the sandy shallow
They find their daily food;
The motherly Ocean feeds them,
Her countless and hungry brood.

She comes with a comforting whisper
And plenty of food for each
Of her little feathered nurslings,
Who wait for her waves on the beach.
Now, over the bar where they lighted,
The Tide her broad arms flings,—
Look, what a sudden uplifting
Of white and flashing wings!

Now, half of the flock are flying,—
How fair they are in their flight!
From the pale blue sky beyond them
Gleam out their breasts, snow-white.
They make me think of the angels,
With spotless robes and wings,
Or the thoughts of little children
On high and heavenly things.

And half of the flock are floating
On the dark blue sea at rest,
Like babes that are rocked to slumber
On their mother's heaving breast;
Like a bevy of water-lilies
Adrift on a quiet tide;
Or like hearts that were wild and restless,
Now tranquil and satisfied.
—N. Y. Observer.

ON A CANDLESTICK.

If Allan Bleeker, immediately after he had made a profession of religion, had developed an active Christian life, I should have had no story to tell; and it is only the fact of his seeming carelessness and indifference after that event that gives me a sufficient cause for story. And it was in view of this fact that, one Sunday, after school, Mr. Coleridge, who was Allan's teacher and felt a peculiar degree of responsibility in the matter, sought to impress the boy with a sense of his obligations, and began a conversation, somewhat abruptly, after this wise:

"Are all the men in your office Christians, Allan?"

A look of surprise.

"Why, no, Mr. Coleridge; they can't be!"

"What indications have you, Allan, that they are not?"

"They swear, Mr. Coleridge, and drink—and they tell stories."

The boy compressed his lips, and Mr. Coleridge could see that the very remembrance was strengthening his moral purpose.

"Wicked stories, Mr. Coleridge!" he went on to explain.

"Do they know you're a Christian, Allan?"

The boy colored and looked down.

"I don't know, sir."

"Did you ever tell them?"

"No, sir."

"Do they judge of it from your manner?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Do you listen to their stories?"

"Not always, sir."

"Do you ever tell any?"

"No, sir, never!" indignantly.

"And you never drink with them?"

"They never have asked me, Mr. Coleridge," and the boy's uplifted countenance was so frank and fearless that Mr. Coleridge could not but be relieved.

"Well, then, Allan," he said, "you've got a start in the right direction—and you've got a big work to do."

The boy looked up enquiringly, and Mr. Coleridge went on:

"Don't talk about there being no work for you, Allan; every one don't find work in the Church. Christian work was never meant to be shut up inside of church walls, nor confined to Sunday, nor to be done altogether by ministers and missionaries. It's to go into the house, into the store, the bank, the ship—everywhere, Allan, where you or I go, where

we can 'lend a hand,' or speak a word for Christ. It isn't enough simply to refrain from doing wrong things; it's your business and mine to resist the wrong, to declare ourselves emphatically on the right—to shine, Allan," and saying this he linked his arm in the boy's and together they went away from the room, "to shine 'as lights in the world.'"

Mrs. Plumtree, who was an excellent woman, had a burden on her heart; she had borne it, indeed, for fifteen years, but this year it was unusually and depressingly heavy. So after enduring the trouble as long as she was able, all alone by herself—for she was a widow—she had come to Dr. Eastwick, on the Monday morning after what has already been told, to tell her story and get his advice. The story was long, and I cannot recite it here, but give a few words to show its purport.

"It will be a loss to me, doctor," Mrs. Plumtree said, with tears in her eyes, "to take the boy away. Mr. Clayton is very good to him, and has raised his salary, so that now he's really a help—and places are so scarce, doctor."

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" the doctor asked, almost abstractedly.

"That's just what I say, doctor; and if he stays there I'm sure he'll be ruined. He always used to be so frank and tender-hearted, and never a thing did he do wrong but he'd come right afterwards and tell me. But now, doctor, he never tells a thing; he's restless and fidgety; he don't want to be alone with me; and the other night, doctor, when I went to kiss him—and here Mrs. Plumtree burst into a flood of tears—"I knew he'd been drinking."

There was a moment's silence, in which the good woman regained her composure.

"He's a good boy, doctor," she went on; "but he hasn't any back-bone, and he needs some one with him all the time to put it in. If there was only one boy in the office he could lean on, he'd get along, but there isn't, doctor—not a single one," and she shook her head mournfully over the prospect.

"Isn't young Bleeker there, Mrs. Plumtree?"

"I guess he isn't any better than the rest of them, doctor."

The doctor's face fell.

"And he could do so much good," he said, sadly.

"Oh, well, doctor," returned the woman, "those as can do the most good don't always do it."

"We can all do something, Mrs. Plumtree," readily assented; whereupon the good old gentleman diverged into some excellent counsel which it is not necessary to reproduce here.

Now, if Mrs. Plumtree in that hour of her anxiety could have looked in at Clayton & Co.'s office in Wall street, she would indeed have found just cause for all her apprehensions.

It was a leisure interval in the business of the day. Stocks were neither coming in nor going out, money for the time was inactive, and a knot of young fellows were gathered idly around one of the desks, having no occupation but to chaff one another. There were Jack Wendover, Joe Simpson, Harry Sheridan, Remsen Cronyn, Tom Parke, Allan Bleeker, Murray Rutgers, and Willie Plumtree.

I can't undertake to describe them—the limits of this paper won't allow it—except to say that whereas all the others had a fair share of manly growth and vigor, the last was a fair, delicate boy of sixteen, who seemed hardly fitted to deal with the world or to mix with men. I don't believe he was intentionally weak, but one could see in his frail form and timid manner the physical lack of moral strength which his mother had described as an absence of back-bone.

They were running each other with a ready play of wit, which was often neither delicate nor charitable, and was quite as often widely at variance with truth. Of this attack each one came in for a liberal share, and Allan suffered with the rest.

"Say, Cronyn!" called out Tom Parke from across the circle.

"Well?" responded the other, indifferently.

"Did you ever know our friend Bleeker was fond of his wine?"

"Had my suspicions," returned Cronyn; "these proper fellows will take it on the sly."

Tom nodded acquiescence, and Allan without speaking awaited further developments.

"Know Jim Ward, don't you, Cronyn?"

Cronyn signified that he did.

"Says he met Allan at Ten Eyck's the other night. Ten Eyck had some of his rare old port out. Jim took half a glass, and says it made his head buzz. Says he saw Bleeker drink three glasses and take two small bottles afterwards."

"To be sure!" chimed in Murray Rutgers; "don't you remember, Allan, that time you and I had the champagne supper at the Bruns- wick?—Beg pardon, though, my dear fellow—I don't suppose you do remember; I forgot what a state your head was in that night."

"Never mind," put in Sheridan forgivingly, "never mind, Allan; it's what we all do—only you ought to do it aboveboard."

But Jack Wendover's face took a judicial look, and Willie Plumtree's large eyes expanded to an alarming extent.

"I'm disappointed in you, Allan," said Jack sadly, shaking his head; "and yet it's only the 'dear gazelle' business over again. Can't you draw up a pledge, fellows—make it very strong? I think," he added musingly, "that you ought to prohibit soda-water; it's certainly a mild form of stimulant—on a hot day. Here's little Plumtree, too. By all means count him in."

"Let Billy alone, Jack," said Simpson; "he's getting educated. He'll be a man yet one of these days—won't you, Billy?"

But the boy shrank away from the rough blow that accompanied the words, and looked still anxiously at Allan, on whose face the blood had been deepening with every syllable, until now it was fairly scarlet.

"By the way," said Parke, "Jim Ward told me a capital story."

"Tell it to us, Tom," eagerly from half a dozen voices.

"It's pretty bad," he said, with seeming reluctance.

There was a loud laugh from Simpson.

"That'll suit Bleeker," he said.

But upon Tom's remark Allan had moved away and was now at his desk.

"Allan's mad," observed Rutgers, hesitatingly.

"Troubled about Jim Ward's tales I guess," said Cronyn.

"Pity he can't bear the truth," put in Parke, and Allan, hearing the remark, turned back and stood again before the group.

"It isn't that," he said hotly. Then, pausing for a moment, while his lips tightened and the blood once more rushed to his face, "I don't mind how much you run me—it isn't true, not a word of it—but I can't stand that."

Then he paused again.

"Well?" said Tom sarcastically.

"You're telling a story," Allan went on rapidly, "that I don't want to hear—that's why I'm going off."

"Phew!" ejaculated Tom; and the others set up a chorus of ironical surprise.

"Since when?" enquired Rutgers.

"Honi soit!" began Cronyn.

"My dear fellow," asked Tom, "isn't this a new departure?"

"What you're going to tell," continued Allan, still more emphatically, "isn't a fit thing to listen to, and I don't believe in it."

He firmly stood his ground.

"Ain't you a little fastidious?" enquired Tom, with a curl upon his lip.

"I'm not fond of touching pitch," the boy continued; "and besides"—and here his voice took on a lower tone, and for an instant his eyes dropped before the bold gaze of his half-dozen opponents—"and besides," he went on now looking them full in the face, "I'm a member of the Church, and a mighty poor one if I stand by and hear God's name profaned, and sacred things reviled and impure things told, without saying a word to prevent it!"

"Don't get in a passion, Allan—that's just as bad," put in Cronyn, satirically.

Allan did not at once reply, and the reasons were obvious, for his lips were quivering and his eyes moist.

"Thank you, Cronyn," he said, quite steadily, at length. "I don't want to be unfair or uncharitable; but I don't think such things are right, and I won't take any part in them."

He waited a moment for some response, then turned slowly and went back to his desk.

"Saint!" he heard some one exclaim as he went by, and then, after a moment, Joe Simpson's voice—

"I'm going out, fellows; anyone want to come?"

"I'll go, I guess," and Jack Wendover swung his long legs off the stool.

"Don't you want to come, Bleeker?" asked Cronyn, as he too turned away.

"Bring Billy," said Simpson, looking back from the door.

"Hold on!" interposed Allan, springing from his stool, and intercepting the boy's departure. "What are you going to do with Willie?" he demanded, as Simpson came slowly back.

"Give him a liberal education," said Simpson, boldly, laying a hand on the shoulder of the boy, who shrunk back and looked helplessly at Allan.

"Now, Simpson," Allan said, and he tried to say it with due calmness, "if you try to take that boy outside this office on any such errand, I'll go at that very moment and report you to Mr. Clayton. I'll do it, Simpson, just so sure as that's your name."

The other winced.

"I suppose that's a sample of your Christian spirit," he said.

"That's just it," returned Allan, "to help those who can't help themselves."

"And to tell tales," muttered Simpson. But the others saw the tide was turned.

"Come ahead, Joe," said Wendover. "You can't do anything with Bleeker," and realizing the fact, Simpson moved sulkily away.

Just then one of the firm sent Willie out in another direction, and Allan had no chance for a word with the boy as he wished. But later in the afternoon, when the others had gone home and he was still busy over his cash-book, he heard a step at his side, and looking up saw the pale, child-like face looking into his.

"Well, Willie," he said encouragingly.

There were tears in the boy's eyes, and his voice was anything but firm.

"I was glad you said what you did, Mr. Bleeker," he began.

Allan flushed a little as he asked, "Did it help you any, Willie?"

"It made me feel there was some use in trying."

Allan could see how hard it was for the boy to get over his timidity.

"Haven't you tried before, Willie?" he asked.

"Yes, I have, Mr. Bleeker, real hard; but there wasn't anybody to help, and they made me go with them, sir, and I had to give up. I always thought you were better than the rest of them," looking frankly at Allan, "but I didn't dare say anything to you about it. Then to-day when they were running you, I was so afraid it might perhaps be true," and his gaze seemed to ask further confirmation.

"There wasn't a syllable of it true, Willie," the young man said emphatically; "only I'm very sorry I've been so neglectful all the while. But if I can help you now with these fellows I'll do it; and, perhaps, Willie, we can both do something to help them," and as Willie leaned confidentially over the desk for some time longer, happier and brighter than he had been for many a week, Allan Bleeker was glad to know that he himself had not that day hid his light altogether under a bushel.

And when Willie had finally gone, Murray Rutgers, who had been meanwhile hovering uneasily around, came up in a hesitating way, and said:

"Of course, Bleeker, none of us believed that trash about your drinking."

"I didn't imagine that you did," said Allan, quietly.

"And what you said let the fellows know just where you stood," went on Jack, warmly.

"That's just what I wanted," said Allan, pausing in an interval of calculation.

"And I'm glad you stood in the right place," emphatically, as he moved away. And then for at least ten minutes, while the column of figures remained untouched, Allan sat thinking over the day's history.

Well, not long afterward, though Allan himself never breathed a word of it, the whole of that history came to Mr. Coleridge's knowledge. For Willie Plumtree, in an agony of shame and remorse and better purpose, told it all to his mother that night, and she carried it the next day with a thankful heart to Doctor Eastwick, and he brought it promptly and gladly to Mr. Coleridge. And you may imagine with what joy the teacher learned how Allan Bleeker had set his candle on a candlestick, and was giving light to all within the house.—Christian Union.

THE MOWING MACHINE WHICH WORKED ON SUNDAYS.

Few men, women, or children, would unblushingly acknowledge that they are prone to tell lies. A lie has an ugly look; it is a disgrace; it is a cowardly and sinful thing; and this everyone agrees in. But there are plenty of kinds of lies; and some of these touch us all more nearly than we are ready at first sight to believe.

"A lie which is wholly a lie can be met with and fought outright; But a lie which is part of the truth is a harder matter to fight."

So the poet Tennyson says; and his opinion ought to be worth something. And it is of a lie which was partly the truth that I'm going to speak now.

Our village is, like many other villages in the northern counties of England, outgrowing its name. Much smaller places are called "towns" in the south; with sessions-houses, and county banks, and sundry other glories. But our village is a village still, although its inhabitants number many thousands. Large factories are in its streets, and long rows of "villa residences" stand on its outskirts.

Our old parson died not long ago. He was a kindly man, who had long been ailing in body and failing in mind. He was unfit to do any work for years before he died; yet we missed him when he was gone, and many tears fell upon the churchyard grass the day he was buried.

The new parson is a contrast to him in every way. He has thick black hair instead of the few lines of silver which were on dear old Mr. Langdon's head. He has a clear ringing voice, and a brisk step, and he seems