

THE LINNETS AND THE FIR TREE

Part 2

KEYWORD: Sharing.

Every day Johnnie came and sat under the fir tree and watched the linnets making their nest. When it was finished, the little bride linnet sat in it, and her husband brought her worms, bugs, and other food and put them in her mouth.

The Air Spirit was away trying her best to get the undines and the sylphs to make it rain so that her friend the fir tree would not die of thirst. The fir tree had given up trying to advise the young married linnets against making their home in her branches; they just would not listen to her.

Soon there flew into the branches of the fir tree some relations of the linnets. They came to attend the birth of the new baby linnets, who were soon to be hatched, and there were going to be great doings and rejoicings. At last the babies arrived, but the father bird would not allow anyone to come near them; he became very important. He of course had to provide for all the four little mouths and the mother as well, for he would not let her leave the babies just yet. When at last he did allow her to get off to nest for a wee spell, he called to her all the time, "tweet, tweet," until she got back on the nest again.

They were all so happy that Johnnie began to think that maybe the Tree Spirit had made a mistake. But he still kept on coming to the tree every day just the same. Then one day the Air Spirit came hurriedly along at the rate of fifty miles an hour and told the Tree Spirit that the committee of sylphs and undines had decided to send a good

shower of rain, and that the gnomes were getting ready to receive it, too. She said, "If we can get the salamanders to join in, there will be lots of fun."

"When do you expect the rain to come?" asked the fir tree.

"Oh," the head sylph said, "when the Moon is in the watery sign Cancer. Then it will last some days, and you will get enough drink to last you for a long, long time." Then she flew away.

Johnnie heard the Tree Spirit ask the linnets about their babies and tell them there was going to be a big storm, and that she hoped the babies would not get wet. But daddy linnet only laughed at the Spirit of the fir tree; he was much too happy and too busy to pay any attention.

When Johnnie went home that evening, he asked his mother to see when the Moon was going to be in Cancer, and told her what the Air Spirit had said. Mother found that the Moon would be in the sign Cancer in two days' time. Johnnie was very excited, especially on the morning of the second day, for the Sun did not shine, and the sky was all cloudy. It kept getting darker and darker. A few large drops of rain fell just to give a warning that more were coming, and away in the distance there were flashes of lightning; the salamanders were getting into action. The wind was getting stronger and the sky darker with ugly black clouds, and all the birds were trying to get home to their nests before the storm.

Johnnie saw that the linnets and their babies were tucked away in the branches of the fir tree and all the other birds were huddled close together when, bang! went a big clap of thunder. Then it poured rain, and the trees were bent almost to the ground. Johnnie dared not wait to see any more, as he had promised his mother he would not stay out in the storm. He could scarcely sleep that night for

thinking of the linnets. The storm lasted till the following day.

The first thing that Johnnie did when he could go out was to run to the park. The ground was all strewn with the broken branches of trees, the rainwater sewers were clogged up, and the streets were partly filled with water. Now what do you think Johnnie saw? Why, the big fir tree was completely uprooted and lay on the ground, its roots torn away from the earth. Perched on a branch of the tree were the parent linnets, huddled close together and pecking down into the branches. They were both calling, "tweet, tweet," to their babies, but the babies were drowned. They



were too small to fly, just as the kind fir tree had said.

Johnnie listened but he could hear no voices, and then he knew that the Spirit of the fir tree had gone home to the Group Spirit. He climbed over the fallen branches to see if he could find the baby linnets. They were on the ground under the tree, and he could not reach them. He then hurried home and told his mother all he had seen; and he cried because he was so sorry for the poor little linnets, the mother and father birds, left all alone.

So you see it is best to listen to those older than ourselves, who are much wiser, isn't it? If the newly wed linnets had not been so foolish, they might have been happy today with their little family.

In our next story we will tell you more about Johnnie and the Air Spirit.