

## THE SELFISH SPARROW AND THE HOUSELESS CROWS

A SPARROW once built a nice little house for herself, and lined it well with wool, and protected it with sticks, so that it equally resisted the summer sun and the winter rains. A Crow, who lived close by, had also built a house, but it was not such a good one, being only made of a few sticks laid one above another on the top of a prickly-pear hedge. And so, one day when there was an unusually heavy shower, the Crow's nest was washed away, while the Sparrow's was not at all injured.

Then the Crow and her mate went to the Sparrow, and said, "Sparrow, Sparrow, have pity on us, and give us shelter, for the wind blows, and the rain beats, and the prickly-pear hedge thorns stick into our eyes."

But the Sparrow answered, "I'm cooking the dinner, I cannot let you in now, come again presently."

In a little while, the Crows returned, and said, "Sparrow, Sparrow, have pity on us, and give us shelter, for the wind blows, and the rain beats, and the prickly-pear hedge thorns stick into our eyes." The Sparrow answered, "I'm eating my dinner, I cannot let you in now, come again presently."

The Crows flew away, but in a little while returned, and cried once more, "Sparrow, Sparrow, have pity on us, and give us shelter, for the wind blows, and the rain beats, and the prickly-pear hedge thorns stick into our eyes." The Sparrow replied, "I'm washing the dishes, I cannot let you in now, come again presently."

[290] The Crows waited a while, and then called out, "Sparrow, Sparrow, have pity on us, and give us shelter, for the wind blows, and the rain beats, and the prickly-pear hedge thorns stick into our eyes." But the Sparrow would not let them in, she only answered, "I'm sweeping the floor, I cannot let you in now, come again presently."

Next time the Crows came and cried, "Sparrow, Sparrow, have pity on us and give us shelter, for the wind blows, and the rain beats, and the prickly-pear hedge thorns stick into our eyes," she answered, "I'm making the beds, I cannot let you in now, come again presently." So, on one pretence or another, she refused to help the poor birds.

At last, when she and her children had had their dinner, and she had prepared and put away the dinner for the next day, and had put all the children to bed and gone to bed herself, she cried to the Crows, "You may come in now, and take shelter for the night." The Crows came in, but they were vexed at having been kept out so long in the wind and the rain; and when the Sparrow and her family were all asleep, the one said to the other. "This selfish Sparrow had no pity on us, she gave us no dinner, and would not let us in till she and all her children were comfortably in bed; let us punish her." So the two Crows took all the nice dinner the Sparrow had prepared for herself and her children to eat next day, and flew away with it.