

*THE DOG AND THE SPARROW*

THERE was once upon a time a sheep-dog whose master was so unkind that he starved the poor beast, and ill-treated him in the cruellest manner. At last the dog determined to stand this ill-usage no longer, and, one day, he ran away from home. As he was trotting along the road he met a sparrow, who stopped him and said: 'Brother, why do you look so sad?'

The dog answered: 'I am sad because I am hungry, and have nothing to eat.'

'If that's all, dear brother,' said the sparrow, 'come to the town with me, and I'll soon get food for you.'

So they went together to the town, and when they came to a butcher's shop, the sparrow said to the dog: 'You stand still and I'll peck down a piece of meat for you.'

First she looked all round to see that no one was watching her, and then she set to work to peck at a piece of meat that lay on the edge of a shelf, till at last it fell down. The dog seized it ravenously, and ran with it to a dark corner where he gobbled it up in a very few minutes.

When he had finished it, the sparrow said: 'Now come with me to another shop, and I will get you a second piece, so that your hunger may be satisfied.' When the dog had finished the second piece of meat, the sparrow asked him: 'Brother, have you had enough now?'

'Yes,' replied the dog, 'I've had quite enough meat, but I haven't had any bread yet.'

The sparrow said: 'You shall have as much bread as you like, only come with me.' Then she led him to a

baker's shop, and pecked so long at two rolls on a shelf that at last they fell down, and the dog ate them up.

But still his hunger was not appeased ; so the sparrow took him to another baker's shop, and got some more rolls for him. Then she asked him : ' Well, brother, are you satisfied ? '

' Yes,' he replied ; ' and now let us go for a little walk outside the town.'

So the two went for a stroll into the country ; but the day was very hot, and after they had gone a short distance the dog said : ' I am very tired, and would like to go to sleep.'

' Sleep, then,' said the sparrow, ' and I will keep watch meantime on the branch of a tree.'

So the dog lay down in the middle of the road, and was soon fast asleep. While he was sleeping a carter passed by, driving a waggon drawn by three horses, and laden with two barrels of wine. The sparrow noticed that the man was not going out of his way to avoid the dog, but was driving right in the middle of the road where the poor animal lay ; so she called out : ' Carter, take care what you are about, or I shall make you suffer for it.'

But the carter merely laughed at her words, and, cracking his whip, he drove his waggon right over the dog, so that the heavy wheels killed him.

Then the sparrow called out : ' You have caused my brother's death, and your cruelty will cost you your waggon and horses.'

' Waggon and horses, indeed,' said the carter ; ' I'd like to know how you could rob me of them ! '

The sparrow said nothing, but crept under the cover of the waggon and pecked so long at the bunghole of one of the barrels that at last she got the cork away, and all the wine ran out without the carter's noticing it.

But at last he turned round and saw that the bottom of the cart was wet, and when he examined it, he found that one of the barrels was quite empty. ' Oh ! what an unlucky fellow I am ! ' he exclaimed.

'You'll have worse luck still,' said the sparrow, as she perched on the head of one of the horses and pecked out its eyes.



When the carter saw what had happened, he seized an axe and tried to hit the sparrow with it, but the little

bird flew up into the air, and the carter only hit the blind horse on the head, so that it fell down dead. 'Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!' he exclaimed again.

'You'll have worse luck yet,' said the sparrow; and when the carter drove on with his two horses she crept under the covering again, and pecked away at the cork of the second barrel till she got it away, and all the wine poured out on to the road.

When the carter perceived this fresh disaster he called out once more: 'Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!'

But the sparrow answered: 'Your bad luck is not over yet,' and flying on to the head of the second horse she pecked out its eyes.

The carter jumped out of the waggon and seized his axe, with which he meant to kill the sparrow; but the little bird flew high into the air, and the blow fell on the poor blind horse instead, and killed it on the spot. Then the carter exclaimed: 'Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!'

'You've not got to the end of your bad luck yet,' sang the sparrow; and, perching on the head of the third horse, she pecked out its eyes.

The carter, blind with rage, let his axe fly at the bird; but once more she escaped the blow, which fell on the only remaining horse, and killed it. And again the carter called out: 'Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!'

'You'll have worse luck yet,' said the sparrow, 'for now I mean to make your home desolate.'

The carter had to leave his waggon on the road, and he went home in a towering passion. As soon as he saw his wife, he called out: 'Oh! what bad luck I have had! all my wine is spilt, and my horses are all three dead.'

'My dear husband,' replied his wife, 'your bad luck pursues you, for a wicked little sparrow has assembled all the other birds in the world, and they are in our barn eating everything up.'

The carter went out to the barn where he kept his corn and found it was just as his wife had said. Thou-

sands and thousands of birds were eating up the grain, and in the middle of them sat the little sparrow. When he saw his old enemy, the carter cried out: 'Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!'

'Not unlucky enough yet,' answered the sparrow; 'for, mark my words, carter, your cruel conduct will cost you your life;' and with these words she flew into the air.

The carter was much depressed by the loss of all his worldly goods, and sat down at the fire plotting vengeance on the sparrow, while the little bird sat on the window ledge and sang in mocking tones: 'Yes, carter, your cruel conduct will cost you your life.'

Then the carter seized his axe and threw it at the sparrow, but he only broke the window panes, and did not do the bird a bit of harm. She hopped in through the broken window and, perching on the mantelpiece, she called out: 'Yes, carter, it will cost you your life.'

The carter, quite beside himself with rage, flew at the sparrow again with his axe, but the little creature always eluded his blows, and he only succeeded in destroying all his furniture. At last, however, he managed to catch the bird in his hands. Then his wife called out: 'Shall I wring her neck?'

'Certainly not,' replied her husband, 'that would be far too easy a death for her; she must die in a far crueller fashion than that. I will eat her alive;' and he suited the action to his words. But the sparrow fluttered and struggled inside him till she got up into the man's mouth, and then she popped out her head and said: 'Yes, carter, it will cost you your life.'

The carter handed his wife the axe, and said: 'Wife, kill the bird in my mouth dead.'

The woman struck with all her might, but she missed the bird and hit the carter right on the top of his head, so that he fell down dead. But the sparrow escaped out of his mouth and flew away into the air.

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