

this? You see I am exact. It is my habit to be so in everything. I do not wish you to mistake the flower owing to any carelessness on my part. You comprehend?"

"Quite," said the swallow, who was getting very anxious, what with the lateness of the hour, and her child alone; and would this be a remedy after all? "Go on, I beg."

"Well," proceeded the owl, "as I said, the flowers are yellow, the leaves bluish green. It grows about two feet high, and has a thick juice of dull orange hue very acrid and noxious. This you must extract by piercing the plant with your beak. Apply it on the eyes of your little one, and after two or three such applications you will probably find he will see as well as you or I; for, from what you tell me of the nature of his blindness, I do not hold it to be incurable. Now you can go; I wish to begin my hunt. You may return again after a few nights to tell me the result. Good-bye." The owl was setting forth on her midnight rambles.

"One thing more," pleaded the swallow, "and I go, full of gratitude and love to you."

"Bother that," gruffly answered the owl. "What is it? Quick!"

"Will the flower die if I take its juice?" The swallow had grown so compassionate now, she could not bear to hurt the meanest thing.

"Not if you take the juice from the leaves and are careful. Why do you bother yourself about that? Be glad if it cures your child. Once more good-bye," and the owl flew off.

The poor mother could hardly await the morning, and with the first ray of daylight she sought the wall, and found, exactly as the owl had described, the herb that was to heal her little one. Carefully she detached a leaf with her beak, and gathering up the juice that dropped therefrom, flew upwards with it to her nest, and laid it on the young one's eyes. Towards evening the little bird complained of something hurting its eyes: it was the light. The swallow's heart leaped for joy, the juice was evidently doing its work. Next day, and again the next, she sought the sight-restoring plant, and on the fourth day after this her little son could bear the daylight without pain, and was eagerly questioning his mother about the various objects he could behold from out the nest. A few days later and the mother once more taught her son how to fly. Their first journey was to the owl to testify their gratitude, and to show the good results of her advice. But the owl only grunted that she was glad to hear it; of course she had been right, as usual. She wished they would not tease her with thanks; she hated them. If, by the bye,

they wished to do anything for her, they might sing of this matter in all lands, extolling her wisdom and sagacity.

Which the swallows did, mother and son, praising the owl's wisdom and the flower's virtue. They told their tale so well that from henceforth if aught ailed the eyes of swallows they would seek the wondrous healing herb. Wherefore men called it the Swallow-wort when they beheld how these birds congregated around it, and they call it so to this day.

Autumn came once more upon the earth; mother and son prepared for their migration to Egypt. The son felt full of eager longing to behold a new land, fresh scenes; the mother wondered sadly and lovingly if she should meet her mate on the banks of the Nile, to whom in spite of all his unkindness she yet clung tenderly. So, with different hopes and fears, they set off on their journey, and the children said:

"Winter is coming again, for there go the birds. And Christmas will come soon, and the snow, and then they'll come back. Good-bye, swallows, come again soon," they cried, as they saw them wing off in shoals.

They had not fled far ere the mother, looking down to earth, beheld a bird in the claws of their arch-enemy—the vicious cat.

"Look at that poor swallow, my child," she said. "Stay for me, I will try and rescue him," and she fluttered to earth. But it was in vain she strove to save the poor bird,—in whom, on nearer approach, she recognised her mate,—hard though she struggled with all her tiny might. The cat had already given him the mortal blow, and, seeing another bird so close within her reach, sprang upon it, cruelly wounding the poor mother with her claws.

"Adieu, my child, my little one," she chirped in her death-throes to the bird that hovered above, awestruck by the scene. "Fly to Africa with your fellows; fly away and be happy. I have found your father, and am at peace. The monster who has murdered him has killed me also; we die together. Go, little one," she said, as her son seemed wavering in his resolution.

And he flew on, on; over the heaving sea, over the desert, over the palm-trees, over the glistening Nile; far, far into the sunny wastes of Africa, where all was life and gladness, and where he nearly forgot his distant English home among the vine-leaves, but never his tender mother.

As for Pussie, she had not enjoyed so ample a meal for many a long day.