

The year advanced, summer was come, and in the swallow's dwelling there chirped and twittered a whole brood of unfledged young. Tenderly had their mother reared them, never stirring from off the eggs until the little ones had issued thence, nor leaving them after they had broken forth from the enclosing shell, lest their featherless bodies should feel cold. Her mate roamed away daily, bringing home to his nest at even spiders, flies, bees, and other insects, to be distributed among his wife and children. If he did on these occasions reserve the titbits to himself, "Well, was it not very natural since he had had the trouble of seeking for them while she had sat lazily at home!"

So spoke the mother to a friend who had once ventured to throw out a hint that the mate was not kind, extolling at the same time in extravagant language her own attentive husband.

"Oh, he brought me such nice worms, my dear, when I had to stay at home with my children. To be sure I was not content like you to remain in, in stupid dulness, but wanted to go out into the woods also, therefore I suppose he thought I needed some consolation."

"I wish you would not interfere with my domestic arrangements," testily answered our swallow. The close confinement had been no small deprivation to her, though she did not choose to own it. "I will not hear any complaints against my husband; he is as good as yours any day."

The other swallow flew off, wondering at the infatuation of the poor she-bird creation; to care for such an animal,—to praise him!—well, well, she was glad he was not hers, that was all.

"My dear wife," said the swallow one morning to his mate ere setting out for his daily excursion, "do not you think our young ones will soon be able to fly and take care of themselves? Then you might go out with me again, which I should find far more pleasant than being alone; and to tell you the truth, when I do stay in it bores me to hear you teach them to speak and fly, and how to find worms, and so on. It is dull when one has passed it oneself."

"But the children must be instructed, my dear, just as we have been."

"True, true; but have they not had enough?"

A few days after this the mother tested the flying powers of her children, and finding that all save one were strong in their wings and would speedily learn to steer their course aright, and not be made giddy by the varying scenes beneath them, she

told her husband, on his return, that of their presence he would speedily be relieved. She could not discover what ailed the youngest. His wings were strong, but he seemed fearful of using them, and never understood her directions as to the course of flight. He would whirl round and round helplessly, and at last with a piteous moan flutter back to the nest and lie panting within its soft warm walls.

Another week, and the other children were able to quit home and begin life on their own account. Their mother was nothing loth, the burden of their education had been heavy, besides entirely separating her from their beloved father. Yet now this little one was still in the nest, and what could it be that ailed him and prevented his learning to fly? In all else he was not stupid, he could speak and sing as well as the rest. At length the truth dawned upon the swallow: he was blind.

When she became convinced of this melancholy fact, she perched herself upon the cottage roof that the little one might not hear her grief, and began to pour forth a sad strain of wailing.

"Look at that pretty little bird," said a child in the garden below. "How sweetly he is singing! Do you think he is glad because the sun shines, Mamma?"

"No doubt," answered his mother, and they passed on.

Poor swallow, what should she do now for her young one? She loved him so dearly, and would have given her own eyesight for his, yet that could not be. Oh, whom should she consult in this strait? Her mate, to whom she had confided this new grief, had become very angry when he heard it.

"Those children have been the plague of our lives," he said, "and if we are still to be burdened with one who will need every morsel of food sought for him—well, wife, you must choose between me or him."

How could the mother leave her helpless offspring?

"I'll stay with our child," she said. "Sweet, will you really go?"

"Of course," was the heartless reply, and from that day he never came back again.

The swallow who had once before called visited her again in this distress, but she would not listen to her invectives against her beloved mate, and comfort or counsel she brought none.

Daily the mother flew down into the garden to seek for nourishment for herself and the little one, and when the children of the house perceived that it was always the same bird that came, they would strew crumbs for it before the window-sill.