

happy; and on the faith of these dreams he left us one day. I never saw him again. One thing we may be sure of—that fate cheated him of his wild and ambitious hopes.

"My other brother left me to follow a scatter-brained young screech-owl who had entangled him by her fascinations.

"And thus I found myself in the enviable solitude which my sage friend had recommended me. But isolation, instead of making me courageous, only disgusted me more and more with the life I was leading. I began to mingle more and more among the other owls of the forest. My most intimate friendship was with a highly respectable family who lived not far from my castle, and especially with a young owl, the fourth child of venerable parents who had known and valued my unhappy father. Her sweetness and innocence made her very lovely in my eyes. I brought her home to my bower, which was to serve me now as a nest and as the cradle of my children. There we spent blissful days; the happiest perhaps in my life. Soon the nest was full; two newly hatched little ones raised their bald heads and filled the air with infantile cries.

"One day their mother went out in search of food. Hour after hour passed on, and yet she did not return.

"I became very uneasy as I remembered my parents' fate, and at last, telling the children to be very quiet and prudent, I sallied forth in search of her. Soon she appeared, flying towards me. 'At last I have come,' she cried, 'let us be grateful for my escape! A falcon has been chasing me for two hours.' We hastened back to the nest. As we approached the tower we saw the falcon rising up into the air clutching in his horrid claws one of our children.

"You think that was enough, but not so. When we reached the nest and looked for the other one, there we found his poor little body stretched on the wall, torn open with a frightful wound. What shall I tell you? Wild with grief we wandered for days about the forest, insensible to rain or wind, hunger or thirst.

"At last my companion said: 'If you have no objection let us leave forever this hateful wood.' 'But where would you have us go?' I asked. 'Let us go among

human beings,' answered she. 'There at least we shall find goodness, generosity and greatness. Just think how admirable their towns and villages are!'

"'You have convinced me,' I replied. And so, after taking a sad farewell of our old friend and adviser, who saw us depart with many forebodings of evil, we winged our way through the forest to a village.

"We chose one of the largest barns in this village for our home, and at once opened a desperate warfare against the rats and mice who were attracted thither in large numbers by the provisions.

"Little by little we became familiarized with our position and enjoyed it.

"The more we studied human nature the more we admired its clemency, justice and rectitude.

"We at last decided that I should go in search of our old friend and induce him to share our happiness. I flew at full speed and reached the wood without fatigue.

"I entered his dwelling quite suddenly, exclaiming: 'Here I am, father; I have come to take you away from this place, and show you that happiness which you have always treated as a chimera.' 'Is it you, my son?' he said, with a joyful astonishment, but in a weak, choked voice: and I saw that a great change had come over him. 'But what ails you that you do not move?' 'Nothing, my son; it will soon be ended. Before this day closes I shall be cured; the physician is at hand.' 'The physician, what physician?' 'Death,' he answered in a hollow voice. 'Death!' cried I, 'What do you mean? Have you no pity on me?' 'Pity! yes, child. I pity you for your youth, and because you do not stand where I stand now.'

"His head dropped forward heavily. He was dead. Dead at the moment when I offered him the accomplishment of hopes long since abandoned. I flew away horror-stricken, as if an enemy were tracking me to destruction.

"I reached the confines of the village. Afar off I recognized the hospitable roof that had given us shelter, and my heart beat with joy in spite of my affliction. But who were that troop of children who gathered around the barn door? What did their cries of joy, and stamping of feet,