

## THE LINNETS AND THE FIR TREE

### Part 3

KEYWORD: Poise.

Our last story told how the spirits of the air, water, and fire caused such a bad storm that the beautiful fir tree in the park was uprooted and thrown to the ground. It lay for a whole week before it was removed. Johnnie used to go every day and sit *on* the branches instead of *under* them. He would have liked to have buried the little baby linnets, but he couldn't reach them as there were too many branches in the way. After a while he noticed that daddy linnet and his wife gave up calling to their babies, and started building another home in a thick vine on a wall

Suddenly one day the beautiful Air Spirit stood before him. She smiled at him rather sadly and said:

"Well, little brother, we all make mistakes, don't we? That is how we learn our lessons. I had no idea that the salamanders were going to fight so hard, and it made us sylphs so offended that we blew and blew as hard as we could. The undines also overdid it and soaked the earth. So instead of helping our friend the fir tree, we only made things worse, we killed her; she couldn't stand it. But, oh! I'll be so careful after this."

"Maybe the time had come for your friend the fir tree to die," said Johnnie. "You know she felt something terrible was going to happen. You remember how she warned the linnets not to build their nest in her branches. I think she wanted to go; she seemed to think that she had done all the loving service she came to do."

"That may be so, Johnnie, but I've learned a lesson,

and I will never make such a mistake again. I should not have lost my temper at the salamanders," said the Air Spirit.

"But see how soon the linnets have forgotten their babies," said Johnnie.

"Don't you know why?" asked the Air Spirit.

"No; please tell me why."

"It is because the mother linnet is expecting some more babies, and I heard that they are the same babies coming back to the same mama and papa. You see, they died too soon."

"Oh, how lovely! No wonder they seem to be happy again. I'd much like to meet you again," said Johnnie.

"I'm sure you will," said the Air Spirit. "We sylphs are never far away from little boys like you who are always trying to do something nice for other people."

Johnnie continued: "Mother said the storm did great damage, the sewers were stopped up, and the rain went into people's houses and stores and spoiled lots and lots of things. It was very hard on poor people who hadn't much money."

"My!" said the Air Spirit, "I certainly will relate all you have told me to our head sylph at our next meeting, and promise you we will be most careful not to let it happen again."

"And I," said Johnnie, "have made a resolution: always to listen to those older than myself, and not do as the linnets did, who built their nest in the fir tree and lost their home and their family."

While they were talking, the gardeners came with big axes to chop off the branches of the fir tree before taking it away. It was too much for the Air Spirit to see the body of her friend chopped up, and the tears came to her eyes. She said good-bye to Johnnie, and promised she would see him again soon. Then she waved her wand over him and flew away.