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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The White World

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One morning, Mr. Cardinal Bird opened his eyes very early, as usual, intending to fly to the white birch tree and sing before breakfast. He looked all around him, and then he closed his eyes again, for a strange sight had met his eyes, and he felt he must be dreaming.

When Mr. Cardinal looked again, he was surprised to find the world looked just as it did the first time he opened his eyes. "My dear, get up and look at the world," he called to Mrs. Cardinal Bird.

Mrs. Cardinal opened her eyes and looked. "Whatever is the matter with the world?" she asked, in alarm. "I never saw it look like this before. I don't like it. Where is our nice green world? I am sure something dreadful has happened."

Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal hopped to the end of the limb of the tree, where they had started housekeeping very early in the spring, and looked around. Instead of the green grass and trees and the brown earth they were accustomed to, everything was white.

They winked and they blinked and they chattered, wondering whatever was the matter, for they had never seen a white world before, and they dared not fly down from the tree.

"It looks soft," said Mrs. Cardinal. "I think we better fly down on the ground and try it. The little I found on the limb here didn't hurt a bit when I stepped on it, and we must have breakfast, you know."

"You stay right here, my dear," said Mr. Cardinal, "and I will fly about a short distance. It may be that somebody has put some flour all around this place. I feel sure the whole of the world cannot have changed in one night."

Mrs. Cardinal stayed in the tree and hopped about, turning her little head first one way and then the other, hoping to see some spot that was not white.

By and by, her husband returned. "It is all alike," he reported to her. "The world has turned white, and it is cold and wet. I do not know what will become of us birds. We never can live in this white, cold world."

"It seems nice and warm in this sunny spot," said his wife. "Come here and sit by me."

"Good morning," said Robin Redbreast, alighting on a limb not far from the Cardinals. "I was afraid we came from the South too early this year, but it will not last long."

"What is the matter with the world? What turned it white?" asked Mr. Cardinal.

"Oh, dear, did you never see it this way before?" asked Robin Redbreast.



"No, never anything but green," replied Mrs. Cardinal. "Whatever shall we do?"

"Don't you know what all this white is?" asked Robin. "It is snow. It will melt soon, and then you can find lots of worms and good things to eat. I have been caught in a snowstorm many times when spring started in early, but it always grows warm again."

"Oh! I don't like it," sighed Mrs. Cardinal. "I like a green world best. I am so cold and hungry."

Grandmother Sparrow alighted on a limb nearby and heard what Mrs. Cardinal said about being cold and hungry.

"Don't fret, it will be warm soon, and you will find plenty of food, for all the folks are very kind to the birds when the snow comes. You will find plenty of crumbs, my dear. And as for being cold, I will tell you how to keep warm until it grows warm again. Just fly over to that house you see and get behind a shutter or creep under the eaves that keep the wind off."

Away flew Grandmother Sparrow, and Mr. Cardinal and his wife followed her advice and flew to the house, where they were soon snugly tucked behind a blind.

The sun melted the snow, and the next morning, when the Cardinals awoke, the world looked just as it always had to them, and they found so many worms that they were almost glad the snow had come.

"I have learned one thing," said Mrs. Cardinal, "and I never before knew just what the saying meant."

"What is that?" asked her husband.

"Oh! something about a touch of nature making everybody akin or feeling kindly toward everybody else," said Mrs. Cardinal.

"Well, what has that to do with the world turning white, I should like to know?" asked her husband.

"Everybody was so kind yesterday when the ground was white and cold. Even old Madam Sparrow, who is always cross and never will let anyone have a worm without trying to take it away from them, yesterday saw we were all in the same trouble with the world all white, so she forgot to be cross and told us where to go to keep warm and how it would soon be over and all would be well again."

"That is so," said Mr. Cardinal, "but I do hope that touch of nature, as you call it, will not come again while we are here, even if it did make old Madam Sparrow kind."

"Oh! I am rather glad," said Mrs. Cardinal, "for now I shall always think of the Sparrows more kindly than I did before."

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