

## THE MONARCH OF THE FOREST

KEYWORD: Cooperation.

Night had fallen on the forest, and there was a great hush, a stillness. Then there was a rustling of wind, and the giant pine trees swayed and sighed, softly lulling to sleep the birds in their nests. No wonder the birds felt so safe in —

“A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray.”

There were rustlings in the pine needles on the ground, and out crept the little wood sprites, the gnomes. They seemed anxious to get out into the moonlight, but looked cautiously about to see if all was well. They scampered here and there, merry and bright. But suddenly they stopped and gathered in a group under the biggest tree in the forest, for there was something strange happening! The bravest of all trees, the Great Monarch, was not swaying in the breeze, but was groaning as though in great pain. What could the matter be? Something dreadful must have happened!

The little gnomes looked up, and oh, what a shock! The beautiful rainbow colors that had always been around the tree were not there. Something must be done, so they looked up at the Moon and said: “Won’t some kind Angel of Mercy come and help the Great Monarch?” And then they stood, oh, so still, and waited. Suddenly there was a rustling sound and a sound of soft music, too, and there stood the Group Spirit of the pine tree, all in glistening white.

“Be not so troubled, Great Monarch,” said the Spirit, “for I bring you wonderful news. You and your comrades,

the trees of the forest, those of you who are old enough, are going on a long journey into the great, wide world. You are going to give shelter from storms and winds to many who are in need of it."

"But," said the Great Monarch, "who will take care of the birds and the Nature Spirits and the little creeping things?"

"Oh, Monarch," said the Spirit, "where is your faith? Have I not guided and watched over you and the other trees well? I have a lot of baby trees ready to take your places. Early tomorrow morning there will come into this forest a band of men, great strong men, called woodcutters. They will bring sharp axes with which to cut you all down. But they have no hate in their hearts, only love for your beautiful bodies. So be brave and calm, and all will go well. I shall watch over you. Be awake early so as to start the birds on their flight at dawn, that they need not be made sad. Send the gnomes to another part of the forest to do their work just as soon as the Sun is up. Good night, Great Monarch. I will guide you on your journey in the wide world." And then the Group Spirit floated gracefully away.

In the morning there was a hurry and scurry, followed by a deep stillness. But nothing happened for ever so long. Then of a sudden there came the sound of cheerful song from happy men. As they came closer, they stood silent as they beheld the giant pine trees.

"What wonderful trees," said one of the men.

Another one said: "I wish I could remember a poem I once read about trees, but all I can recall is the way it ends — 'But only God can make a tree!'"

"It seems almost a crime to cut them down," said their leader, "but we have to obey orders. So men, fall to!"

Such noise had never been heard before in the forest. The trees tried hard to be brave and calm, but they did not

feel a bit like their old selves. After they had been cut down, they were loaded on a huge wagon, and were given a new name — logs. They were hauled a long way to the wagons, and just when they were very tired and wondered what would happen next, they had a great surprise. Right before them appeared a beautiful cool river, inviting them to ride on its lovely waters. Then the strong men rolled them down into the river. Such a splashing there was, as they went gliding down the river on their journey.

They couldn't understand what the men said, and they didn't know what it was all about. Their courage was about gone when at last they came to the log boom. But there they saw the beautiful Group Spirit of the pine trees hovering over them, and at once they became brave again.

Then one by one they were sent slowly through the sawmill, and out they came at the other end, not as logs now but as beautiful pine boards. They were put into neat piles, and then some strange men came and looked at them and said they were good boards and would make the finest kind of houses.

One morning a big motor truck backed up to the lumber yard, and the driver said: "Well, I have come for that lot of pine boards I ordered yesterday." Then the trees, who were now boards, had another surprise, a ride through the beautiful country, and at last they were unloaded on a lovely green hill.

Soon there was the greatest noise — hammer! hammer! hammer! The boards could scarcely talk above the noise, and they really grew almost frightened. Then they heard a voice which they all recognized—the Spirit of the Monarch of the pine trees was hovering over them. It said, "Be brave and strong! Each of you has a part to play in the building of a house, which is to shelter a lovely family from the weather and the storms." So the hammering went on,

and up went a beautiful house, all ready to be lived in.

Then again the Group Spirit hovered over them, and said: "Your great lesson has been learned, the lesson of COOPERATION in God's great plan. *Cooperation means working together for the good of all.* In the forest you cooperated with Nature by sheltering the birds. Then when man needed you for a greater work, you cooperated with him and made a beautiful house for his family. Each day now you will hear the laughter of happy children. Their mother speaks lovingly to her friends about her new home, and their father tells his friends that his house is built *of the finest pine to be had from the great forest.*"

Then the Group Spirit returned to the forest to give to the baby pine trees also the loving message of COOPERATION with God and man.