

Chapter VII - Jim Crow is Punished

SO one day Policeman Blue Jay hid himself in some thick bushes until he saw the big white bird fly by, and then he followed quietly after it, flitting from tree to tree and keeping out of sight as much as possible, until at last he saw the white bird alight near a bullfinch's nest and eat up all the eggs it contained.

Then, ruffling his crest angrily, Policeman Blue Jay flew to attack the big white robber, and was astonished to find he could not catch it. For the white bird flew higher into the air than he could, and also flew much faster, so that it soon escaped and passed out of sight.

"It must be a white crow," thought the Blue Jay; "for only a crow can beat me at flying, and some of that race are said to be white, although I have never seen one."

So he called together all the birds, and told them what he had seen, and they all agreed to hide themselves the next day and lie in wait for the thief.

By this time Jim Crow thought himself perfectly safe, and success had made him as bold as he was wicked. Therefore he suspected nothing when, after rolling himself in the chalk, he flew down the next day into the forest to feast upon birds' eggs. He soon came to a pretty nest, and was just about to rob it, when a chorus of shrill cries arose on every side of him and hundreds, of birds--so many that they quite filled the air-- flew straight at the white one, pecking him with their bills and striking him with their wings; for anger had made even the most timid of the little birds fierce, and there were so many of them that they gave each other courage.

Jim Crow tried to escape, but whichever way he might fly his foes clustered all around him, getting in his way so that he could not use his big wings properly. And all the time they were pecking at him and fighting him as hard as they could. Also, the chalk was brushed from his feathers, by degrees, and soon the birds were able to recognize their old enemy the crow, and then, indeed, they became more furious than ever.

Policeman Blue Jay was especially angry at the deception practiced upon him, and if he could have got at the crow just then he would have killed it instantly. But the little birds were all in his way, so he was forced to hold aloof.

Filled with terror and smarting with pain, Jim Crow had only one thought: to get to the shelter of his nest in the pine-tree. In some way he managed to do this, and to sink exhausted into the hollow of his nest. But many of his enemies followed him, and although the thick feathers of his back and wings protected his body, Jim's head and eyes were at the mercy of the sharp bills of the vengeful birds.

When at last they left him, thinking he had been sufficiently punished, Jim Crow was as nearly dead as a bird could be. But crows are tough, and this one was unlucky enough to remain alive. For when his wounds had healed he had become totally blind, and day after day he sat in his nest, helpless and alone, and dared not leave it.