**apple fairy.**

**From The suns babies by Edith Howes.
Age Rating 2 to 4.**

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**She was usually a busy little fairy, but one year she grew lazy. "I am going to take a rest," she said; "I don't see why I should work so hard. I shall sleep all the winter and play all the summer, and the apple-tree can take care of itself." She curled herself up in her snug little bed, down amongst the roots of the apple-tree, and there she slept through the winter, creeping out only now and again to peep and shiver at the cold, wet world outside. No work was done in the workroom, where in other winters she had been so busy, and so, when the spring came, and all the other apple-trees were wreathed in sweet pink flowers, hers alone stood bare and brown. The bees came round the tree, buzzing their surprise and disappointment. "Wake up, Apple Fairy!" they called. "The spring has come, and your tree is bare. Where are our honey-cups and pollen-bags?" The moths and early butterflies came fluttering round the bees, for they too were anxious about the honey-cups. But the Apple Fairy gave them no satisfaction. "Go away," she called from her bed; "I don't care about your old honey-cups; I am going to rest." So they had to fly away to other trees. The birds came next. "Why, Apple Fairy, where are your flowers?" they chirped. "At this rate there will be no apples, and that will be a sad loss to us, for yours were the sweetest in the garden." "Go away," called the Apple Fairy. "I don't care about your old apples; I am going to rest."**

**"How very strange!" said the birds to one another. "This is not like our little Apple Fairy of other springs." They flew away to the flowered trees to sing. The sun shone brightly, the air was clear and warm, and the apple fairies came up from their workrooms for their spring dance on the young clover-leaves. "But where is our little sister?" they asked. They ran to her tree, only to find it bare and empty. "Where are you, little sister?" they called. She came up and stood on a branch to look at them. "What is the matter?" they asked. "Why has your tree no flowers, while ours are pink? Where are your petals? Perhaps you have not yet had time to unroll them all. Shall we help you?" "No, thank you," she said; "I am having a rest; there will be no apples this year on my tree, for I have slept all the winter and am going to play all the summer." The fairies looked shocked. "You mustn't do that!" they cried. "Why, if we all did that there would be no apples at all!" "I don't care about the old apples," she said sulkily, and down she went again. She came up a few minutes later to peep at the happy fairies dancing on the clover, while the birds sang their gayest songs, and the crickets played their little banjos; but she did not join them, for she felt that they did not approve of her laziness. "Ah, well, my leaves will soon be out, for I put the buds on last summer," she said to herself. "When they come I shall make a swing, and swing all through the long sunny days."**

**Soon the leaves opened out. She made the swing, hung it on a branch, and sat in it in the pleasant shade, while the other fairies polished up the growing apples and formed the buds for the next year's leaves. She was not really happy, but she tried to think she was. She was rather lonely, and, somehow, it was dull when there was nothing to do. But she did not go down to her work; she swung herself to and fro, to and fro, till the autumn came, and the apples on the other trees were ripe. One day a merry, childish voice floated through the garden: "Oh, grandpa! it's my birthday, so I have come for an apple off your best tree." Then at last the Apple Fairy hung her head, and was sorry, for her punishment had come. Every year, on her birthday, pretty little Elsie had been given the best apple in the garden, and every year until now the Apple Fairy had been proud to know that it had been picked from her tree. Now, alas! she had no apples. Elsie would be disappointed; and she was very fond of Elsie.**

**Elsie was indeed disappointed. She listened to her grandfather as he told her how his best apple-tree had failed this year, and how he thought he must cut it down if it did not do better next year. Then Elsie came and stood under the tree and looked up anxiously into the branches. "I am so sorry!" she said aloud. "I wonder if it will have apples on next year? I do hope it will." "It shall! Indeed it shall!" cried the Apple Fairy. She sprang to the end of a branch so that Elsie could see her. "I have been lazy," she said. "I have slept all the winter and have played all the summer, but now I shall work. You shall have apples next year. Good-bye, little Elsie! Here is my swing." She took down her swing, put it into Elsie's hands, and went down to her workroom. Elsie was so astonished at the sight of a real fairy and a real fairy swing that she could find nothing to say; but, when she came again the next year, the apples on her favourite tree were again the finest in the garden, and the Apple Fairy was again busy and happy.**