



Bird-Houses.

The possessors of lawns, yards and gardens have been, within the last few years, awaking to the fact of the valuable assistance rendered by the birds. The graceful flitting, cheerful chirping and merry singing of the birds add animation to a country landscape.

Children who are trained to observe and care for birds will many times have an occupation for an otherwise dull and idle hour. Two brothers twelve and fourteen years old, who are spending their first year in the country, found untold delight during the spring in building houses for the birds which have so interested them. They hesitated at first about commencing the work, fearing that it was so late in the spring that the birds would have already selected the places for their nests. Their uncle reassured them, by telling them that some late comers would be sure to need and like the houses, and that they would be surprised how many second broods would be raised in the homes they would provide.

The boys decided to make the most simple and easily constructed ones first, and take a longer time for the more elaborate houses, thinking, even if they were not occupied, they would be an ornament to the grounds, and ready for the first-comers next spring.

Tin cans were used for making the first houses. Where the cans were opened to remove the fruit,

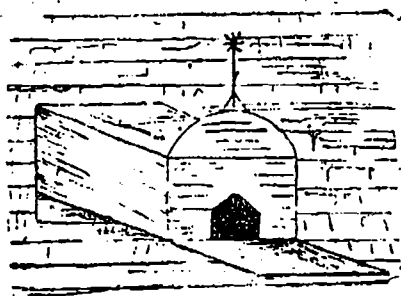


Fig. 1.

the tin was cut out to make a square instead of a round opening. On the lower edge of this opening a thin bit of board was fastened by wires passed through holes to give the bird a place to light on. Two holes were also cut on both sides of the top and of the bottom of the cans, through which strings were passed by which the cans were securely fastened to a branch of a tree. The cans were painted a dark grey.

On the side of the wood-house was fastened a very neat brown cottage fashioned out of cigar boxes (fig. 1). This cottage was adorned with a rounded front, surmounted by a weather-vane made of wire. The door was cut with a fret-saw, and was pointed instead of arched, to suit the capacity of the workers. One box formed the house proper. A larger box furnished the pieces for the rounded front, platform, and the bracket at the back by which it was fastened to the wood-house.

A larger dwelling to be nailed on the side of the carriage-house and intended for the use of the martins (fig. 2) was two stories in height with a balcony in front of each. A small flag floated from a miniature staff nailed to the peak in the front of the roof. This house was made of thin boards nailed together with slender brads. The balconies were ornamented by curved pieces at each end whittled out with a pocket-knife. The doors were arched. The house was divided inside into upper and lower stories. These were again divided by several partitions.

The most ornamental structure made by the boys adorned the top of a post around which clambered a vine, (fig. 3) It was a round wooden box to which they fitted a conical roof, made of wedge-

shaped pieces of shingle and securely tacked to the box. The roof was then thatched with straw, giving a picturesque effect to the house. The thatch was held in place by rows of wire concealed beneath the overlapping straw. It was further adorned with an elaborate weather-vane made of a slender rod, on the end of which was a small rubber ball. The arrow was cut from a bit of shingle. Rod, arrow and ball were all gilded. Doors were cut at regular distances around the house.

Ned's memorandum book, made in imitation of his uncle's, contained the following:—

NOTES ON BIRD-HOUSE BUILDING.

Cans are excellent and are liked by the smaller birds. It would be an improvement to their looks to place a thatched or pointed roof over them.

The ornamental top of an old pump, bits of cast-off furniture, round boxes, &c., can all be used to good advantage and fine effect in ornamental houses.

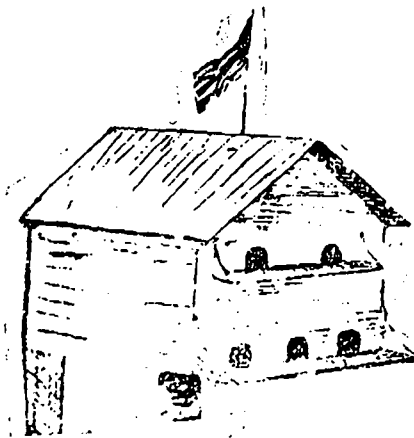


Fig. 2.

Various pieces of old brass, such as lamp tops, shade frames and old keys, work in well for making ornamental pieces and weather-vanes.

For gold paint use carriage gilding. Five cents' worth will go a long way.

For fastening up the houses different methods will have to be used, according to the places where they are to be put up. When it can be used, wire is better than string, and screws than nails.

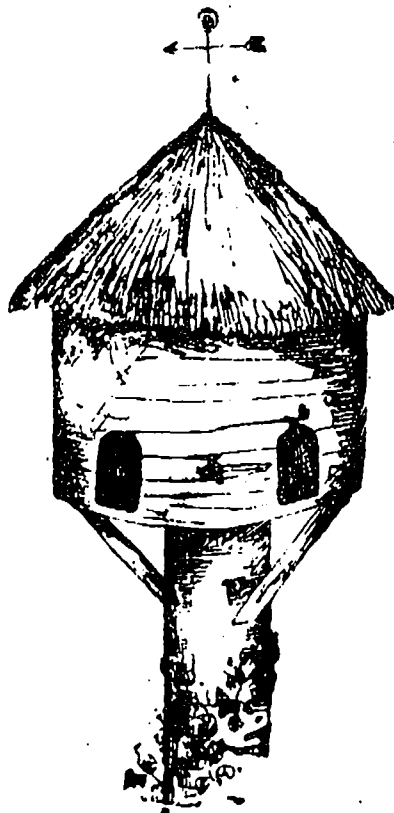


Fig. 3.

To protect the birds from the cats when the houses are on poles, pieces of discarded stove pipe can be slipped over the poles below the houses and nailed in place, then painted the color of the pole, or the post can be wrapped with barbed wire for a short distance.

Soft browns, grays or dark greens are the best colors to use for painting the houses.

Thanksgiving Games.

LET Thanksgiving be a night of rollicking fun for the children, little and big. In after years when they are away from home, its influences will linger around them still. Your son or daughter may be kept in the "straight and narrow way" by the remembrance of just one happy home night.

A simple game that even the baby can almost take part in, is called "Fish, flesh, or fowl." The leader must stand and say to one, "Fish, flesh, or fowl," then if before he has counted five that one does not give the name of some fowl, he must pay a forfeit. There is lots of fun in this game, for in his effort to think of some fowl quickly, one is likely to get confused and cry out "eels," or "elephants," forgetting that these are unlikely fowls. The leader must talk rapidly for the older folk, but more slowly for the little ones. It will incite the latter to look up all the available names of fowl when they know this game is to be played.

If there is a large party of boys and girls, it cousins or neighbors have been asked in, "The Jolly Mariners" is an enjoyable game. Have the parlor doors opened so as to pass through one door and out at the other. The boys all march round, the one who takes the lead with a handkerchief over his shoulder, and all singing:

"We are a set of jolly jolly lads,
Who've just arrived on shore;
We spend our days in many merry ways,
As we have done before.
And we will turn around and 'round
And we will turn around,
And he who finds a very pretty girl
Must kiss her kneeling down."

Having chosen his "very pretty girl," and saluted her, he spreads his handkerchief for her to kneel upon, while the girls sing:

"It's a bargain, a bargain for you, young man,
It's a bargain, a bargain for you;
You've given your word, now keep it true,
And love her all you can."

Then another lad takes the lead, and the song is repeated until all the girls have been chosen.

There isn't much to be said for the meter or rhyme of these verses, but the boys and girls will not be too critical about that, and those who object to boys and girls of tender years kissing each other, may teach the former to make a courtly bow instead.

"My father's got home from India" is an old game but it never fails to bring down the house.

Seat the children on three sides of the room, and let the leader sit so that he can be seen by all. He must then say, "My father's got home from India." "What did he bring you?" one must be instructed to ask. You reply "A fan," and then begin to fan yourself with your hand, which all must imitate. Then you repeat the remark about the return of your father, and another asks, "What did he bring you?" "Two fans," fanning with both hands, which all must imitate. To the next question the answer is, "Two fans, a boot, and a shoe," which necessitates that both hands go through the motion of fanning, while the feet tap the floor. To the next you reply, "Two fans, a boot, a shoe, and a hat," and then the head must be nodded. The first one who misses any motion must pay a forfeit, and it is needless to say that the forfeits are many. It is really good exercise, and after the little ones have been thoroughly instructed in games of this kind, they will relieve you of their care through many a busy hour by playing them among themselves.

"That's the end of my tale," as the tadpole said when he turned into a bullfrog.