

# HAPPY DAYS

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## THE USELESS KETTLE.

Some one has thrown away this rusty old kettle, probably because it has a hole in its side and is no more use for holding water. There it lies in the long grass almost hidden from sight, and it will certainly never hold boiling water again, or be of any more use in the kitchen. But, as the time passes by and the spring comes round, and the birds begin to look out for cosy and sheltered spots to build their nests in, one little bird with sharper eyes than the rest, spies out this old kettle lying half out of sight in the grass and weeds; and it thinks to itself, "Ah! What a nice warm place the inside of that kettle would be for my little ones when they come out of the eggs and have no feathers on their little bodies to protect them against the cold winds; I will call my mate and we will build a nest inside as quick as ever we can."

So the nest was built, and in the picture we can see the soft feathers inside and the mother-bird looking on and thinking to herself, with pleasure, how cosy and safe her little ones will be in so quiet and sheltered a spot.

## A BIRD CURE.

I want to tell you of the strange cure of a little girl who had been sick a long time, and whose friends had almost despaired of her being any better. A strange cure, I say, because her only medicine was her love for birds and their sweet music, her only doctor the birds themselves.

It was thought that she had overtaxed her mind and body at school in her efforts to obtain all the prizes, and when my little story begins she just lay all the bright summer days on a couch near the window; a pale, fragile little creature,

looking out so listlessly, and seeming to care nothing for the fair world about her.

But one day a canary bird, which had possibly escaped from the bars of its prison, came near, and poured forth a perfect flood of song. Nellie did not move. She was almost afraid to breathe lest her charming visitor would take flight.

Every day now she scattered crumbs, not only near the window, but on the lawn outside, at the feet of the beeches, in the shade of the lindens and larches.

And, oh, so many birds flocked to the lawn for the dainty morsels! She was wakened every morning by a concert of the sweetest bird music, too, and that made her jump up, dress quickly, and hurry out to watch her new friends. The morning air, fragrant with field flowers and new-mown hay, proved a fine tonic for the sick child, and before autumn's rainbow glory touched the stately trees, and the leaves of the silver poplar began to quiver like snowflakes in the frosty air, Nellie's cheeks were like a wild rose's heart.

And the lawn became the bird's paradise. They came in such numbers, of every name and colour, that she had a new one to study and admire every day. She dreaded the swift-coming, icy winter, that would banish all her dear bird friends, and still all their gay songs.

But what do you think? When the world was white with snow, and the trees glittered with icicles, and the north wind blew its coldest, and she could only look out of her window, she joyously counted, hopping gaily about, swallows, robin red-breasts, larks, orioles, and blue-birds.

And now, Nellie herself, as well as those who loved her, almost forgot how listless, sad and pale a child she had lately been. She had so many birds to feed and care for this cold winter! When asked "if the country cured her," she always gave the answer "No; it was not the country; it was the birds that made me well."

I have heard of some children who had a "missionary box," and sold all the eggs she laid, putting the money in their mite-boxes.



THE USELESS KETTLE.

While she lay listening and smiling, a mocking-bird set up the quaintest mimicry of various familiar sounds she had ever heard. Then he went off into a rollicking roundelay of sweet notes; he whistled, he chirped, he trilled, and "quavered." He even put the vain little canary in a tantrum by mocking him.

Nellie laughed outright, and begged her mother to live in the country always.