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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Brown Birds

One fair spring morning two bonny brown birds sat on a lilac bush twittering and chirping:—

"Chee, chee, cheeree. Where shall we make our little nest?"

"Make it here in my branches," said the maple tree that grew by the garden gate. "Many a nest have I held in my arms. Make it here."

The maple tree was strong and green and beautiful. Its wide-spreading branches reached from the garden path far over the road beyond the gate; and they rocked like a cradle in the wind that fair spring morning. Oh! it was the very place to make a nest, and as soon as the brown birds had looked at it they decided to build there.

"Chee, chee, cheeree," they sang in the sunshine.

"We'll make our nest in the maple tree,
Oh! we are so happy, chee, chee, cheeree."

They twittered and chirped and trilled and sang till a cow, that was eating her breakfast of hay in the barnyard near by, put her head over the fence to ask the news. When the brown birds told her what they were going to do she did not wonder at their singing.

"If you need any hay," said she, "fly over the fence and help yourselves to some of mine. There is plenty here for you and me; and I have heard my friend the

speckled hen say that there is nothing better for a nest than hay."

"Very true," said the maple tree. "Every bird must suit himself, but I agree with the speckled hen, and I have held enough nests to know something about them."

The brown birds looked at each other wisely.

"Chee, chee, cheeree," they sang again.

"We'll weave our little nest of hay;

And we'll begin this very day

To make it in the maple tree.

Oh! we are so happy, chee, chee, cheeree,"

sang the birds as they hurried into the barnyard.



They could take only a little hay at a time in their bills, but they chose the nicest, longest pieces they could find, and were just ready to fly away with them when a horse came galloping up.

"This is no way to carry hay," he cried. "Tell me where you live, and I will bring it to your barn in a wagon."

Then the two birds laughed till they dropped the hay from their bills; the cow laughed till her bell tinkled; the maple tree laughed till its leaves shook; and the horse laughed, too, though he did not know what the joke was, till the cow told him.

"Well, well," he said to the birds, "if I cannot haul your hay for you, perhaps I may give you some hairs from my mane for your nest. I am sure I can't see what use they can be, but a bird in the pasture begged for some, and she said she was building a nest in the hedge."

"Chee, chee, cheeree. 'T is nice to line

A nest of hay with horsehair fine.

We're building in the maple tree,

And we are so happy, chee, chee, cheeree,"

chirped the birds.

By this time everybody in the barnyard knew that two brown birds were making a nest in the maple tree by the garden gate; and everybody wanted to help them.

"Take this with my love," called the pigeon; and she dropped a feather from her soft white breast, as she flew from the pigeon house.

"We, too, have feathers to spare," cried the hen and the goose.

"Every nest is the better for a bit of down," said the duck. "And I can give that."

The two birds were pleased with everything.

"Chee, chee, chee, chee, cheeree," sang they,

"With feathers soft, and hair, and hay,

How fine our little nest will be

Up in the dear old maple tree.

Oh! we are so happy, chee, chee, cheeree."

They were busy all the fair spring morning carrying the gifts to the maple tree; and as they flew back and

forth a little girl spied them, and called to her mother:

—

"Oh, mother, come and see these little birds with feathers and hay in their bills. What are they doing?"

"I know," said her mother. "They are building a nest in our maple tree. Would you like to give them a piece of cloth like your new pink dress for their nest?"

"Oh, yes, yes," said the child; and she ran and got the cloth from the scrap bag, and hung it on the lilac bush. It had not been there longer than a minute when down flew a brown bird to get it.

"Chee, chee," he sang, "what do you think?"

I've found a lovely bit of pink

To trim our nest up in the tree.

Oh! I am so happy, chee, chee, cheeree."

"Just what we needed," said the other brown bird; and she made haste to weave it into the nest, for there was no time to waste.

Over and under, in and out, twisting and pulling, they wove the cloth and the hay together, with a lining of hair and downy feathers.

The nest was finished by the time the little girl's papa came home to dinner, and he held her up in his arms to see it.

"I'm glad I gave them a piece like my new dress," she said, when she spied the bit of pink woven into the nest.

"Chee, chee, so are we," sang the brown birds in the tree top.

"We're glad we made our nest of hay.
We're glad we finished it to-day.
We're glad we built in the maple tree.
Oh! we are so happy, chee, chee, cheeree."

