

Keeping very still, they gazed about in an attempt to discover where the sounds came from.

Then a tiny brown form about the size of Billie's thumb popped out of the hedge, paused a moment on the grass almost at the children's feet, and then seemed to vanish over the gate.

Billie scrambled to his feet. "I knew it was a fairy!" he said; "and I'm sure there must be another lost in the hedge! Can't you hear it crying?"

"The poor thing! Do let's help it!" and Mary hurried to the place where the brown stranger had first made its appearance.

Here the tiny voice was plain enough and in a moment more the children had discovered that it was coming from inside a beautiful little round-shaped house of moss and twigs.

"Why it's a nest!" exclaimed Billie. "I didn't know fairies lived in nests!"

"P'raps they're lost'ed," suggested Mary. "Don't you 'member how Peter Pan lived in a nest?"

"What if it 'is' Peter Pan?" said Billie, drawing back a little.

"Let's see!" answered his sister, who knew that Peter Pan and his friends were good fairies who loved children. So she pressed the leaves aside, and peeping through a round hole in the side of the nest saw four little pink throats widely opened and below them queer fat bodies covered with white down.

"Why! Why! Goodness!" she cried, "they're dear little baby birds! Oh! Billie what teeny, wee things!"

There was a flutter in the hedge above them, and there sat the daintiest little brown bird imaginable. Her little wings fluttered ceaselessly, and her bright beady eyes seemed to take in all that was happening beneath her. All her breast and throat were white, and this made her appear more fairylike than ever.

The children were enchanted. If it were not a fairy, at least it was the nearest approach to one that they had seen; and stepping back with clasped hands they watched the little bird flutter down and enter the nest.

When father came home from the city that evening, two excited children met him at the gate, and led him to the magic spot. A dainty brown head filled the doorway to the nest and the tiny voices they had heard before were silent.