



CHAPTER 29

MAKING OVER AN OLD HOUSE



*A home is always what you make it.
With love there you will ne'er forsake it.*
—Whitefoot.

Whitefoot climbed up to the old nest of Melody the Wood Thrush over the edge of which little Mrs. Whitefoot was looking down at him. It took Whitefoot hardly a moment to get up there, for the nest was only a few feet above the ground in a young tree, and you know Whitefoot is a very good climber.

He found Mrs. Whitefoot very much excited. She was delighted with that old nest and she showed it. For his part, Whitefoot couldn't see anything but a deserted old house of no use to any one. To be sure, it had been a very good home in its time. It had been made of tiny twigs, stalks of old weeds, leaves, little fine roots and mud. It was still quite solid, and was firmly fixed in a crotch of the young tree. But Whitefoot couldn't see how it could be turned into a home for a Mouse. He said as much.

Little Mrs. Whitefoot became more excited than ever. "You dear old stupid," said she, "whatever is the matter with you? Don't you see that all we need do is to put a roof on, make an entrance on the under side, and make a soft comfortable bed inside to make it a delightful home?"

"I don't see why we don't make a new home altogether," protested Whitefoot. "It seems to me that hollow stub of mine is ever so much better than this. That has good solid walls, and we won't have to do a thing to it."

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"I told you once before that it doesn't suit me for summer," replied little Mrs. Whitefoot rather sharply, because she was beginning to lose patience. "It will be all right for winter, but winter is a long way off. It may suit you for summer, but it doesn't suit me, and this place does. So this is where we are going to live."

"Certainly, my dear. Certainly," replied Whitefoot very meekly. "If you want to live here, here we will live. But I must confess it isn't clear to me yet how we are going to make a decent home out of this old nest."

"Don't you worry about that," replied Mrs. Whitefoot. "You can get the material, and I'll attend to the rest. Let us waste no time about it. I am anxious to get our home finished and to feel a little bit settled. I have already planned just what has got to be done and how we will do it. Now you go look for some nice soft, dry weed stalks and strips of soft bark, and moss and any other soft, tough material that you can find. Just get busy and don't stop to talk."

Of course Whitefoot did as he was told. He ran down to the ground and began to hunt for the things Mrs. Whitefoot wanted. He was very particular about it. He still didn't think much of her idea of making over that old home of Melody's, but if she would do it, he meant that she should have the very best of materials to do it with.

So back and forth from the ground to the old nest in the tree Whitefoot hurried, and presently there was quite a pile of weed stalks and soft grass and strips of bark in the old nest. Mrs. Whitefoot joined Whitefoot in hunting for just the right things, but she spent more time in arranging the material. Over that old nest she made a fine high roof. Down through the lower side she cut a little round doorway just big enough for them to pass through. Unless you happened to be underneath looking up, you never

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would have guessed there was an entrance at all. Inside was a snug, round room, and in this she made the softest and most comfortable of beds. As it began to look more and more like a home, Whitefoot himself became as excited and eager as Mrs. Whitefoot had been from the beginning. "It certainly is going to be a fine home," said Whitefoot.

"Didn't I tell you it would be?" retorted Mrs. Whitefoot.