Minot, H.D.

Birds' nests. (1+2)

(1877)

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Birds' Nests
1877

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Birds' Nests.
By H. W. Minot.

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No. 326.
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ence upon our own exertions," was the rejoinder. "We receive no salary for our work, but a given percentage on the articles which are published. If I decide favorably on a poem, and that poem is thrown out by the editor to whom Moses carries it, then the sum which was originally advanced to the author is deducted from my percentage."

"In other words," said I, "Clymer is willing to share the profits but not the losses of his business."

"It amounts to about that, and yet Peters and I are well paid for our work. You see, we are able to select from a varied assortment, and to get the kind of matter which is suited to a particular publication. It rarely happens that we make a mistake."

"Or that you advance money on verses taken from a book," observed Barry, with a smile.

"The case which Moses has laid before you is the only one of that nature which ever occurred. Sometimes we have had stolen articles brought to us—all pawnbrokers' shops must expect that—but we have invariably detected the theft. The plagiarisms are usually glaringly apparent. Some months ago, I remember, a chap presented Byron's 'Maid of Athens,' and wanted two dollars on it."

Crampton was interrupted at this point by a thumping on the partition wall, while a voice from the adjoining compartment said,

"I want a two-syllabled word that is synonymous with 'endeavor.'"

"Attempt," rejoined Crampton, after a moment's reflection. Then, addressing us, he added, "That is Peters. Suppose we step in and see him."

We found Mr. Peters hard at work polishing a poem. He was a younger man than his associate, with a prominent nose, which his biographer would probably call Roman, and with the hair and shirt front of a genius. By way of illustrating the nature of his work, he read us some verses, first as they had been received by Moses, and afterward as they came out of the polishing process. Before we left the room, I obtained permission to make a copy of these stanzas in both forms, which I have preserved up to the present time. While the lines possess little of poetic merit, I may nevertheless be pardoned for presenting them here as illustrative of Mr. Peters's manner of work.

In the original form they read as follows:

SHERRY WINE.

I will drink this amber-hued,
Ripe, and rare old sherry
To the maiden whom I loved—
Fair was she and merry—
Loved and wooed so long ago:
When it was I scarce may know.

I will drink to those old times
When to breathe was pleasure;
When my heart, like sweetest rhyme,
Beat to Love's own measure;
When the dreams of youth were mine,
Amber-hued, like this wine.

From the goblet I will drain
Time's forgotten flavor,
Taste those happy days again,
Sweetened by Love's own favor—
Days when through Love's magic hands
Life ran all in golden sands.

What if love be at an end,
Life no longer merry,
Still I'll drink and drink again,
In this rare old sherry,
To the girl I loved and wooed
When the world was amber-hued!

Polished by Peters, the verses read thus:

A SONG.

I will drink this amber-hued,
Aromatic sherry
To the girl I loved and wooed—
Modest maiden merry—
Loved and wooed so long ago:
When it was I scarce may know.

I will drink to those old times
When to breathe was pleasure;
When my pulse, in rhythmic rhymes,
Beat to Love's own measure;
When the dreams of youth were mine,
Amber-hued like sherry wine.

From the goblet I will drain
Time's forgotten flavor;
Taste those golden days again,
Sweetened by Love's favor,
While I feel the draught divine
Warming all my blood like wine.

What if love be at an end,
Life no longer merry,
Here's a true and trusty friend,
Aromatic sherry;
Truer than my love, I know,
Many, many years ago!

"You will observe," said Peters, when he had finished reading the verses, "that there is substantially little change in the second copy of the poem. One or two imperfect rhymes are corrected—as, for example, 'times' and 'rhyme' in the second stanza—and some redundant syllables are dispensed with to preserve the metre. In the main, however, the verses are alike. That couplet,

'Days when through Love's magic hands
Life ran all in golden sands.'

smacks a little too strongly of Tennyson to pass muster. I have therefore thrown it out, although I can not say the substitution is an improvement."

"Your work must be very laborious, Mr. Peters," suggested Barry.

"It is what I may term 'headachey,'" was the rejoinder. "Still, I get along tolerably well, and do not feel justified in swearing except when a parody on Poe's 'Raven' turns up, or a new version of 'The Bridge of Sighs.'"

Before Barry and I made an end of our visit, we passed around behind the counter, where Moses was engaged in assorting the numerous packages of manuscripts.

"On te top shelf, dere," said he, "vas stories, nice stories, vich ve sells very sheap. You vas never seen nicer stories any vheres. On te next shelf vas wersed—love wersed. Dey vas really beautiful, and sheap—very sheap. On dis shelf here vas wersed on 'Spring'—and dey vas sheap too. Dose pellow vas all on deaths. You could not read one of dem vidout weeping, dey vas so beautiful and so sheap! Ven somebody in your family dies, dis is te place where you can find nice poetry vat vill comfort you. And it vill cost you only a leetle. Dat large package vas all pieces on te 'Old Year.' Dat one next to it vas on vine and other drinks. Dis package here vas made up of sonnets—ve gives 'em away, almost. Every thing vat you sees vas nice and sheap!"

"And not too much of Coleridge and Wordsworth in them?" said Barry, with a smile.

"Oh my, no!" returned Moses, warmly. "Dere vas no Cooleridge, no Vadsforth, in any of 'em. Peters he vas take all dat out."

When at last we took leave of the pawnbroker, Barry announced that he would be prepared to express an opinion on the merits of Moses's case in the course of a week; and Clymer again assured us that he would cheerfully pay the whole of the two dollars and fifty cents, if by so doing he could make an example of the impostor who had obtained a loan on verses taken from a book.

I regret to say that Barry did not keep his word. Mr. Clymer was left in doubt as to whether he possessed the right to institute legal proceedings against the plagiarist. And not many weeks afterward we discovered that he had moved from the room across the hall to parts unknown. The firm of Barry and Bushnell may now be found in a more aristocratic neighborhood than of old. Yet I never pass that dingy building on Nassau Street without wondering what has become of Moses Clymer. And I never turn to the poetry in a periodical without reflecting that perhaps these self-same stanzas have secured a loan of two dollars from Moses, have been favorably passed upon by Crampton, and have had the Coleridge and Wordsworth taken out of them by Peters.

AN ORDER FOR A CAMEO.

It shall be Eve's face, carver, gleaming white
Upon the Eden-green of chrysoprase:
Child-foreheads in the morning are less bright,
And Gabriel's less serene. You know her gaze,
Unfolding from pure lids, saw Adam first,
And then a glorious, cursed Earth uncursed;
So Memory will not darken that still smile
(Laughter was born of tears), nor Love's grand pain,
Nor thorns, nor dying lilies, nor cold rain
Betray her to a glimpse of afterwhile.
Miriam and Sappho show the sorrow-stain,
And Mary's loving hath its selfish guile.
Eve knows not Hope's unrest, nor Fear's alloy,
And blesses with the sweet lost dream of Joy.

58,415. BIRDS' NESTS.

TO those of my readers who have never studied birds, let me say a few introductory words. In birds, as a class, are combined colors which vary from the plainest browns or grays to the richest metallie splendors; grace, strength, and often sublimity of action; and musical powers that other animals lack altogether. To the naturalist, or to him who loves an out-door life, their abundance and peculiar relations with man offer great advantages; to the scientist they present in a marked way the phenomena of variation and adaptation. In a limited space, such as New England, where not many more than three hundred species have been known to occur, a tolerably thorough knowledge of them may be gained. Have the plants or insects been numbered? Mammals and reptiles, on the other hand, are comparatively rare and shy, and by many of them most persons are too easily frightened.

To embryologists, birds' eggs have a peculiar interest, and in no other form are the first outward stages of animal life so attractive to the ignorant. Among their nests are the highest types of natural architecture, though many birds lay their eggs on the ground, on rocks, or in natural hollows without special preparation. Their nests may be divided into several classes—those supported from beneath, those supported from above (or pensile), those attached on one side, and those which are excavations (in earth or wood). There are many other methods of classification, but that just used is most convenient for my purposes.

Let us take up the first class, and consider the ground-nesting birds. A striking fact is their generally plain coloring, and the prevalence of browns and quiet greens among the tints of their upper parts—the back, etc. As a general rule, their eggs also are plainly colored (though rarely white), especially when found in fields, but not so strikingly as those laid in no nest, or scarcely any, by sandpipers and plover, whose eggs are so assimilated to their surroundings that it often requires a very long search to detect them in a given space ten feet square. I have flushed the common "tecter" within a yard of me, and on hands and knees have hunted fifteen minutes before finding her treasures; they were among my earliest prizes, and, thankful not to have trodden on them, I unkindly took them all. But to the amateur there is no necessity of cruelty. You can become intimate with birds without shooting them, you can examine their nests without pulling them to pieces, and can contemplate their eggs without disturbing them, or, by acting judiciously, can gratify your love of possession without destroying a mother's happiness. Birds vary in their

tendencies to desert their young if meddled with; but often, after taking one or even two eggs from a nest, I have watched the quiet return of the parent, and the successful hatching of those left. The further that the stage of motherhood progresses, the more persevering feathered mothers become; but at all times persistent visiting or intrusion annoys them.

The appeal of a brave, affectionate bird, when brooding over her young, is very touching, but it is too often disregarded. Few persons know the trials of bird life. Many hundred times have I watched the smaller birds in spring during the course of their domestic life; and I remember but very few instances in which the parents seemingly had uninterrupted success from the beginning, when the foundations of their nurseries were laid, until all their young were reared. I distinctly recall only half a dozen cases. The parents' chief enemies are the weather, snakes (especially the black-snake), various other birds, such as crows, blue jays, crow blackbirds, and cnekoos, the tree-squirrels (but not the little striped ground-squirrel or "chipmunk"), and cats. The cat, while it is always a graceful and sometimes a useful animal, is, just in the proportion that it is a good mouser, also a skillful bird-catcher, and does much mischief on a country place.

The nests which one finds in fields and pastures on the ground are generally those of the sparrows. They are all much alike—slight hollows, protected or partly concealed by a bush, hummock, or clump of grass, and in most cases lined very neatly with hairs, though dry grass, etc., almost invariably enter into their composition. If taken up for preservation, they must be dug up with a little of the earth about them, as otherwise they fall to pieces. All nests are naturally in better condition for a collection when just finished, but fine specimens may often be obtained when vacated by the young, while a few are capable of withstanding exposure to weather for a considerable time. They should be taken with their immediate surroundings, whether branches, twigs, or earth, and handled very carefully. In the house, they should be repaired, if damaged, by stitching or gluing; should be kept free from dust, for if once dirty, they can not be cleaned without injury; and if partly composed of feathers or woolly matter, should be occasionally wetted with benzine.

Among the ground-nesting birds there are in Massachusetts no less than nine species of sparrows, some of which commonly make their homes in fields or pastures; I shall therefore enter into no details. But a curious fact, which illustrates the frequent departure from types or rules in nature, is that the common chipping sparrows, or "haw-birds," have been known to build on the

ground, though they usually build several feet above it, in a bush, hedge, tree, or vine.

There is little of interest to keep us in the hot fields on a warm day in the last week of May, and I pass on to the meadows. On their borders, in the fields where the longest grass grows, is a nest which you must hunt long for before finding—that of the bobolink. In the elm-tree is the jolly male, in his summer livery of black, buff, and white, and singing as if he could not contain himself. Still caroling, he spreads his wings and drops into the grass. We can not see from here what he is doing; he may be whispering to his plainly colored mate, or he may be feeding. Long before we are near enough to surprise him, could we do so under any circumstances, he springs up, and sings as if he asked us to stand and listen. Looking for his nest in this wide field is like searching for a needle in a haymow. Should the female suddenly rise within ten feet of us, she may have wandered from her eggs for a moment, finding her mate inattentive in providing her with food, or she may have tried to deceive us by stealing from them through the grass, and flying up at a distance; but no, she has staid at the post of danger until the last minute, 'twixt hope and fear, and springs up at our feet. There, in a little hollow, which has been warmly bedded, and over which the long grass waves, lie four grayish or greenish eggs, mottled with dark brown. Look at them quickly, and then let us go to the meadows.

As we splash through the wet places, and jump the ditches, a general chatter arises, and half a dozen blackbirds with brilliant red patches on their wings present themselves. These are the males; but there is a female, who leaves her nest every minute, returning immediately, and who betrays its position by her anxiety. She is plainly colored, streaked, and much smaller than the male. Her nest, in this hummock, happens to be cup-shaped, and carefully finished with fresh-looking bits of dry stalks and grasses. The eggs in it are pale blue, with dark spots and scrawls. I have said, in the last sentence, "happens to be" so and so, because, of other swamp blackbirds' nests in the same meadow, some are probably lined with rootlets, some with hairs, and others are built in bushes. If we extended our examination to other meadows in different localities, we should find great variety in positions, structure, and material. Some specimens from bushes are composed partly of sticks; others, from the sea-shore, are made chiefly from sea-wrack or eel-grass. Mr. Maynard describes one built in a tree, fifteen feet above the ground, and pensile like that of the golden robin or hang-bird. Not only do surrounding circumstances produce an effect every where, but individual birds vary in their architectural skill or care. Moreover,

work is often begun late, and, being hurried through, is done badly; on the other hand, leisure often causes nicety, and even unnecessary labor.

That refrain of plaintive whistles which we now hear comes from the meadow-lark in that tree; he has a bright yellow breast with a black crescent on it, and some white feathers in his tail. Now he leaves the tree, and flying across the meadow with quivering wings, drops into the grass; but his nest is probably in that dry patch where the land begins to slope back toward the farms. I can not undertake to say that we

plused by the caution and cunning of the architects. You will facilitate your work by scattering cotton-wool, horse-hairs, straws, string, worsted, and cloth where they will attract the attention of the birds about you. Put them on your lawn or on the piazza vines, and watch them. A robin comes to carry off the string, and having used up what you have provided, and liking the material, attacks a long piece wound round a stake, and supporting a gladiolus. By persistent effort he frees a part of it, but the harder that he pulls at the rest, the tighter he ties the knot around the stake, and the

GOLDEN-CROWNED WREN'S NEST.

shall find it by going there, for the meadow-lark's nest is usually hidden beneath an archway of the long, dry, and tangled meadow-grass. So completely is it often concealed, that you can find it only by frightening the sitting female suddenly, and making her fly up from the archway. Then, by exploring carefully, you may catch sight of the eggs, which are white, with brown and lilac spots. Were not the birds so common, I should not in all probability have been able to present you with a description of their retreats, or, if I could, should feel very proud of doing so at first-hand; and any beginner may justly take pride in discovering one of them. The best way to find nests is to watch a bird while building; in that way, moreover, you are sure to see them in their best condition, and to know when the eggs are fresh. It requires patience; but you see the workers return again and again to the same spot, and a little closer inspection usually completes your knowledge, though you may sometimes be deceived or non-

string is becoming entangled with his legs; he fights twenty minutes, and then gives it up. Sparrows pick up hairs and straws from the lawn, and warblers come to the vines for cotton-wool, passing fearlessly within three feet of your chair; then they come back to break off little twigs and to peel off shreds of dry bark from the honeysuckle. A pair of golden robins—the male with black and orange, the female with yellow and duller black—come for string, worsted, and thread; but beware of them, for they are thieves. Leave your knitting under the tree there for five minutes, and it is gone; you will find it a week later, a part irrevocably woven into the hanging nest, and a part dangling with the needle in it. The weaving is so cleverly done that you wonder whether the orioles haven't used your needles. Not at all, madam; I defy you to produce with your implements such a piece of work as these birds have produced with their bills. Successful experiments have been made by supplying

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER'S NEST.

the orioles, in the tree where they are occupied, with bright silks and worsteds, which they employ altogether, if liberally provided, so that a very gay and party-colored nest may swing in your orchard where you can see it from the house. Wilson says that an old lady, to whom he showed an oriole's nest in which a piece of dry grass, thirteen inches long, was passed through thirty-four times, asked him, half in earnest, if the birds couldn't be taught to darn stockings.

Let us go back to the meadows, and, leaving these, enter into the adjoining swamp, where I shall show you several objects worth seeing. We might find in this swamp nests of several species, but the ground is so wet and the brambles so thick that I will only show you two that I found just completed two or three days ago. We shall come to one by following this path along the brook-side. Of the warblers there are many who build on the ground in or near wet places, but only one of these is common, at least in a large part of the United States—the little Maryland yellow-throat. The male, who is eying us saucily from that thicket, is olive-green above, with more or less bright yellow beneath, and has a black patch which covers his forehead and the sides of his head, inclosing his eyes. You will often see him on road-sides. The female is duller above, paler be-

neath, and has no black. Her nest, a few steps further on, owes its attractions to the surroundings. Beside it is the brook, on which the sunlight plays, as it breaks through the bushes on the other side. Around it are grasses to conceal it, and behind it is a cluster of tall, graceful ferns. Behind the ferns is a young tree that spreads its branches over the whole. How much mysterious life is in the group, especially in those four little eggs lying together, all white, one unmarked, one spotted with brown, one speckled with lilac, and one marked with both! Such is the variety which we often find in one nest. In the nest of a hawk I have found two eggs, one almost pure white, and another buffy, with dark brown blotches. But the mother before us asks us to pass on, and to discuss these phenomena where she shall not be disturbed.

In that open spot, bathed in sunlight, on that knoll by the bushes, sits another bird on her eggs, her soft reddish-brown back in contrast to the surrounding green. It is the Wilson thrush. The little yellow-throat, when we intruded, hopped about us, expressing her anxiety openly; but the thrush disappears quietly into the bushes, disclosing behind her a very pretty picture. Her nest, made of dead leaves, strips of grape-vine bark, and dry grasses, and lined with a few hairs, is set in a bank of rich dark green moss; in it are four light blue eggs; above it is a little plant with bright red berries. All the colors in the picture are so strong and yet delicate, all the forms

YELLOW WARBLER'S NEST.

so graceful, that I am tempted to stand here gazing much longer than I ought. Birds' homes vary in attractiveness like those of men, and before leaving the swamp I will show you another Wilson thrush's nest. Here it is, set among the dead leaves, near the foot of a tree. I need hardly point out to you its comparison with the other; the situation is quite cheerless, and the nest is coarse. You may attribute this, as you please, to laziness, indifference, want of taste, inexperience, or to necessity and difficulties. The contrast is striking, and is one of the innumerable illustrations of the infinite variety in nature.

I shall now direct your steps toward a dry, hilly tract of low oaks, birches, and bushes, which is called the "scrub"—a place where but few years ago stood a forest of pines. There we are likely to find nests of only two kinds on the ground (unless we find one of the ruffed grouse), and of these the eggs are often very closely alike. The birds belonging to them are both about the size of the robin. The brown thrushes have long tails, and are bright reddish-brown above, and beneath white, with dark streaks on the breast. There is nothing remarkable in their nests, but the conduct of the females is often surprising, particularly when their nests are in bushes (being almost always on or near the ground), for these birds are peculiarly at home in shrubbery. Though habitually rather shy, yet they are sometimes very bold when sitting. More than one young collector must have had the experience of being a little frightened when, literally hissing, they have refused to leave their nest, and much startled when, on being attacked, they have flown at him with vehemence. Such conduct, however, is rare, and of course causes no danger. Mr. Allen mentions the nest of a brown thrush found in the West at an unusual height from the ground, because built beside a river which was often flooded suddenly and heavily. The bird or its ancestors profited by experience. This perhaps illustrates how types may be lost. If birds, for instance, of any species are driven by unfavorable changes into a tract of country with very uniform characteristics, they soon adapt their habits to their surroundings, perhaps losing marked traits. This question will be considered again, in reference to the swallows.

The towhee buntings, also called che-winks and ground-robins, do not behave like the brown thrushes, but usually conceal their nests. Sometimes a place is chosen where dead leaves and switches have accumulated, and either partly under the leaves, or actually in a pile of brush, the nest is built so as to escape all notice of the passer-by. At other times the nest may be found at the foot of some bush more openly

situated. Near it stays the black and white male, with patches of chestnut red on his sides, turning over the decayed vegetation about him, and uttering his characteristic "towhee," or perching in some bush to sing his simple song. If we disturb his mate, he will make his appearance immediately, and utter his saucy cries of distress. We will leave him and go to the woods.

In the pine grove we may find several pretty nests on the ground—among others, that of the little black and white creeper, with its delicately colored eggs. The one by far of most interest is that of the oven-bird, or wagtail. You at once ask, Why called "oven-bird?" You will better understand when I show you the nest which I have found, an exceptionally fine specimen. Here it is, among the dry pine needles at the foot of a little knoll. It is built on a slope, and is roofed. This sounds strangely; but overhanging it is a net-work of pine needles and dry grasses built out from the slope, and this roof gives it the appearance of an old-fashioned oven, at the same time concealing it on three sides. It is a wrong belief that the open side (when there is any roof) is always toward the south; it is as often toward the east; and convenience of situation apparently influences the builders as much as considerations of heat and light. Without me, I fear that you would not have seen this nest, even though you had stepped within six inches of it. As you came by, you would have seen a small bird, with greenish back and tail, and an orange crown bordered by dark stripes, fluttering along the ground. Half in eagerness and half in pity, you would have followed, as she led the way, always just out of reach. Suddenly she would have disappeared or flown off, and you would have thought her conduct strange until you realized that you had been fooled by a bird. Experience will soon teach you, when you suddenly see a bird before you in seeming pain and distress, not to pay her any attention, but to look about you, without wandering three feet from the spot where you first saw her. You will then find her nest, probably, unless she has stolen from it some distance before showing herself; then the case is quite hopeless. The partridge, or ruffed grouse, is another deceiver. To be sure, she leaves her nest under the log there, with its nine brown eggs, with an honest and startling whir; but when the proud mother is with her chicks, she is cunning enough to outwit many a man who thinks himself clever. The variety of her ruses makes them doubly successful. Sometimes when surprised she feigns lameness, and tries to decoy the intruder away; sometimes she bristles up, and attacks him by pecking at his toes, then suddenly flies off. In either case the young have the good sense or instinct to hide in

the grass or dead leaves about them until they hear the whining call of their mother, when they gather about her once more. The partridge is so earnest in her efforts to distract one's attention, and her chicks so nimble in hiding, that both are likely to escape, even from a person who takes no pity on their distress.

Among those nests which are supported beneath are to be included those built on cliffs by certain birds of prey, such as the eyries of the eagles, and several kinds connected with buildings, as that of the robin sometimes is. In the bird-boxes we may find those of the martins and white-breasted swallows, with white eggs, and sometimes those of the bluebirds, with light blue eggs.

Far more pleasing than all these is the pewee's (or Phæbe-bird's) nest, which is usually placed on top of a pillar on the piazza, on a beam of a shed or bridge, or on the outside of a barn. The last which I examined was a semicircle in its outward shape, and was attached to the wall of a carriage-house, on the beam over the door. Its walls were composed of grasses, straws, etc., cemented together with mud. Inside was horse-hair, one of the commonest materials in bird architecture. The outside was the most artistic part, being thickly coated with green mosses. Another nest on a neighboring pillar was circular, and, like the first, contained white eggs.

Of the first class, the remaining nests are built in trees or bushes; and here the range is so wide that I can only present a few typical specimens. Some are saddled to a bough, others are placed in a fork, and others in a crotch.* The materials are either simply upheld, are plastered to their supports, or are wound round them. The least artistic are the nests of sticks. Many hawks and owls build these more or less clumsily, and often rudely, in evergreens, where two or three branches leave the trunk together. Crows and blue jays build very similar structures, though much neater and more carefully lined, that of the blue jay being very much smaller, and placed nearer the ground. Both the fish-hawk and bald eagle usually build enormous nests, chiefly of sticks, in the top of a tree near water. They repair these year after year by adding to them, and often get together a large cart-load of stuff. In contrast to these, the cuckoos put together a few twigs in a bush, vine, or low tree, and often lay their eggs on a platform which seems almost too frail to support them. You can easily see the bluish eggs through the bottom. So indifferent are the cuckoos to architecture that I have known one to lay

her eggs on a cotton rag which was caught in the thorns of a barberry bush. Occasionally one builds a substantial and hollow structure for her young, but such cases are very rare.

The thrushes' nests have already been spoken of in earlier numbers of this Magazine; the robin's nest is the coarsest of them, though in substance a fair type of the others, built in trees, except that the others have a greater variety of material, and most often no mud. If you are not familiar with the robin's work, I can safely leave you to study it by yourself. You can easily find a specimen in some apple-tree which will show you what "plaster-saddling" is. The other method of saddling is exhibited very perfectly in the nest of the wood-pewee and that of the humming-bird. The latter is exquisite. Inside, its diameter or width is only about three-quarters of an inch, but it now holds two white eggs, and by-and-by must be the nursery for two young. Of its shape and immediate position you may judge by the accompanying picture. I have usually found it in an oak or orchard tree within fifteen feet of the ground. The walls are composed of the finest materials which the vegetable kingdom offers—down, silk from seed wrappers, and hair-like fibres; the coarsest among them are bits of sweet-fern. Outside, it is thickly coated with lichens, which the male sometimes amuses himself by putting on after the female has laid her eggs. It is very substantial. I have had photographed for the engraver a specimen which I found in March; it has suffered surprisingly little from nine months' exposure to weather. The protective resemblance to surroundings seen in the humming-bird's nest is better exemplified in that of the wood-pewee. This nest is much larger, though shallower in proportion to its diameter (of two or three inches). It is built in a grove on a moss-covered limb, and is so coated with lichens as to resemble exactly a knot or protuberance of the limb itself. I have seen some so ingeniously made that they could not be detected as nests from the ground when the birds were not on them. The eggs in these artistic structures are very pretty, being creamy or buff, with a few large spots of brown and lilac.

Nearly all our smaller birds, excluding the swallows, build a fresh nest every year. In doing so they spend from one day to a month, a week being the average time. In many ways it is unsatisfactory to watch them at work, it being almost impossible to obtain a position where you do not disturb the birds, but can see exactly how they use their materials. The females are generally the chief, and sometimes the sole workers. The beginning of their labors is the most puzzling part to us, and perhaps to them.

* By "saddled" I mean fastened to the back or upper part of a limb. A "fork," as the term is here used, is a horizontal division; a "crotch," the point where upward branches separate.

It is sometimes accomplished by laying sticks, twigs, or straws across from branch to branch; sometimes by placing a clump of material in the bottom of a crotch or in a fork, and at other times by winding strips of bark, fibres, etc., around the neighboring twigs. What is then added is pressed or twisted into position with the bill. The inward shape is preserved, and toward the end perfected by the breast as the female turns round and round. Materials are sometimes brought a mile, but ordinarily are gathered near their destination. It is very pretty to see warblers taking fresh caterpillars' silk from the new nests; but sometimes a rather ghastly effect is produced by the caterpillars themselves being carried off with their silk, and by their corpses being left to dangle about the nest for which they have been sacrificed. A majority of our smaller birds have four or five eggs in one set, sometimes having two or three different sets in one season, and lay them from day to day. The males usually undertake a part of the incubation, feed their sitting mates, and cheer them by singing, sometimes singing at night. Even males with such dangerously bright colors as the scarlet tanagers occasionally relieve their mates during the daytime. The common period of incubation is from ten days to a fortnight.

The homes of the tree-nesting finches and fly-catchers, those of the tanagers and waxwings, I must pass over. Those warblers who build in bushes and trees excel as architects, the last artistic production of theirs which I remember to have seen being very

HUMMING-BIRD'S NEST.

neatly made of pine needles, and lined with the black fibres of a moss. I have had two photographed for the engraver, one of the common yellow warbler (*Dendroica aestiva*), built in the crotch of a barberry bush, and one of the black-throated green warbler (*D. virens*), placed in a fork near the end of a pine bough. Both were built near Boston, and were finished about the 1st of June. They are composed as follows: that of the summer yellow bird of slender shreds of grass and fibres mixed with silky and woolly materials, besides a few bits of fine string, the whole being lined with a rich dun-colored plant down; the black-throated green's, of strips of thin bark, small twigs and stalks, pine needles, a few feathers, and bits of paper, being lined with black and white hairs, and with hair-like fibres, which are glistening yellow.

Of the pensile nests, the commonest are those of the Baltimore orioles, or golden robins (also called "fire-birds" and "hang-nests"), whose long pouches, four to eight inches deep, you must have seen in an orchard-tree or in an elm, for to an observant person they are often conspicuous objects in a village street, or even in a city park. They are often placed near the end of long drooping boughs, and are not easily got at from beneath, while above they are commonly protected by a canopy of leaves. They are so common, and have been so frequently figured and described, that I shall not dwell upon them. They are variously made up of grasses, fibres, thread, wool, worsted, yarn, string, and even cloth. The nests of the vireos are much less well known. They are pensile, rather cup-shaped, from one to two inches deep, and two or three wide inside, and are usually suspended from a fork. The linings are never very soft, but are often coarse. The eggs are white generally, with a few brown spots

WHITE-EYED VIREO'S NEST.

or speckles about the larger end. The commonest, that of the red-eyed vireo, is built from five to twenty feet above the ground. It is sometimes ornamented outwardly, but two or three typical specimens before me consist merely of strips of bark, such as that from grape-vines, somewhat coated with insects' silk, and are lined with pine needles. A very pretty one is made of white birch bark, and another of greenish-gray tree-moss. In contrast to the typical forms just mentioned is the larger and substantial nest of the yellow-throated vireo, often found in the orchard, and profusely covered outside with mosses and lichens held together by silk. It is one of the finest specimens of bird architecture that we have. The white-eyed vireo (*Vireo noveboracensis*) builds near the ground, usually in a bush or sapling, and often in a very open spot. Sometimes its nest, like that of the red-eyed vireo, is largely made up of paper from wasps' nests, or of newspaper, whence both species have been called "politician-birds." A very fine specimen, found in a birch about two feet from the ground, is shown on page 96. It is composed of fine vegetable shreds, caterpillars' silk, cocoons, and bits of dead wood, ferns, and leaves. Some vireos allow you to pass under their nests, or stand near them, without exhibiting alarm, and if robbed, remain near the spot, coming within a foot or two of your person. One has been known to remain on her nest when it was carried off from the tree. I have sometimes put my hand on sitting birds. I regret that I have not enough space left to describe at length the pensile nests which are globular; those built by the marsh wrens, of rushes (or the like, and usually mud), among marsh reeds or meadow-grasses; and those built of hanging moss in evergreens by the little blue yellow-backed warblers. There is on page 92 an illustration of a nest very rarely found, that of the golden-crowned wren (*Regulus satrapa*). It is composed chiefly of hanging moss, but is warmly lined with feathers.

THE PROFESSOR'S VICTIM.

"THERE is a mystery in that woman's life," said the professor—"a mystery that when I do think upon, I get what you Americans call a erick in the brain."

"Yes, professor," I said, meekly, although I had never in my life heard an American use the expression. But the professor went into altogether different society from that in which I was allowed to mingle, and I dare say they had a language of their own. I was merely a dress-maker. To be sure, I had good customers, and as many as I could well get along with, so that I had no occasion to put out a sign. Miss Winthrop was so glad of this. She said she didn't know how she could board with me if I kept a

sign at the door. It was bad enough for her to know how hard I worked, and what a wretched life I led; it was enough for her to pity me; it would be unendurable if the whole neighborhood should be called upon to extend me their sympathy. I think Miss Winthrop was mistaken. I am confident there were many people in our vicinity who would have been glad to have fared no worse than I. But Miss Winthrop had peculiar views about labor. I never contradicted her. The professor and she were wrangling always and forever. They never agreed upon any subject. He was there almost every day of his life. Miss Winthrop was studying at the Institute; but she was not a very ardent student, and used to be at home the most of the time, so that when the professor got through at the college and conservatory, he came generally direct to the house. It would have seemed strange and sad not to have seen him at least once in the twenty-four hours.

I remember that day so well. I had been more than usually perplexed in cutting and fitting. The left side of Miss Van Coot had to be padded all the way up to the shoulder, and in some unaccountable way I had mistaken the left for the right, so that when she put on the basque, I should have laughed if I had not cried. I was nervous and worked out, I suppose; and as she stood there, poor creature! not knowing what a spectacle she was, it was all I could do to keep the tears from rolling down my cheeks.

"I shall have to take it all apart, Miss Van Coot," I said. "It will take me at least an hour. You might as well get through your shopping, and come back again."

She went off in her carriage, and I began to rip out the stitches. The morning was cloudy and overcast; and as I got near to the window to see, I could not help thinking what a miserable world it was, when all at once a big shadow loomed up beside me, and a familiar voice cried out:

"Who is it has made thee to weep? Give me their bones that I may crack them."

And then I fell to laughing. Suddenly the morning seemed to be bright and beautiful, the form of Miss Van Coot shapely enough, if only I would not be stupid, and mistake the right side for the left. As for the professor, he was like a demigod made out of flesh and blood—a great deal of fine wholesome flesh and gallons of splendid blood. I could not help thinking, in my sordid way, that the professor's tailor, whoever he might be, was a wondrous lucky man; for nobody but those whose trade it is to puzzle and design for the human anatomy can have the least idea of how fearfully and wonderfully we are made. The professor was resplendent in a new raiment of some soft gray material that suited well his fine complexion and ruddy hair. In his but-

ton-hole were some fresh violets, for it was already early spring. He pulled the gloves from his plump white hands, and went in to the piano. It was open, just as Miss Winthrop had left it.

"Will she return to luncheon?" he said, running his fingers over the keys; and I thought as he spoke how nice it was to be the one "she" in that big generous heart.

"Yes, professor," I replied.

"Then I will stay," he said, and immediately I went to prepare his favorite pudding; and while I stirred the materials together he came out into the kitchen to talk about Miss Winthrop. Never by any chance when we were alone together did he talk of any thing else.

"I saw your tears," he cried, in his tragic way. "Were they because of Miss Winthrop? I should not at all wonder. Of all women, she is the most aggravating, the most unreasonable—"

"It was not Miss Winthrop," I said; "and you do not think all these disagreeable things that you say of her."

"I do—I do," he cried. "You think, now, that I am what you Americans call 'spooney' about her; but it is not that at all. I have only the puerility to be curious;" and then the professor went on to tell me that the mystery in Miss Winthrop's life gave him a "crick in the brain."

"At times," said the professor, "she is moody. She is what the French call *distrain*—she is plunged into a melancholy profound and touching. I tell you, my gracious Fräulein, there is a burden upon that woman's soul. Now what can it be?"

I did not reply. How could I? I had also noticed these periods of sadness and abstraction upon Helen's part, but how could I speak my heart out to the professor? How could I tell him that he was unconsciously trifling with Helen, making her happy at one time, only to render her the more miserable at another; that this capricious conduct of his was the cause of Miss Winthrop's melancholy? I did not dare be thus frank with the professor, for fear that he would go straight to Helen and tell her. He was like a child in impulse, and many a time, when I had unwittingly trusted him, he had unblushingly betrayed me.

Fortunately, Miss Van Coot came in. The professor went into the parlor and began to bang upon the piano with the fervor of an enthusiast. While I was trying on Miss Van Coot's basque, he poured out his whole soul upon the keys, so that Miss Van Coot fidgeted from one foot to the other, and at last tore herself away from me and sank upon a chair near the door.

"Let the dress go," she said. "I must listen. Oh, how beautiful it is! Who is he? Where did he come from? How magnificently he plays! How do you manage

to have an instrument like that? The high notes are perfect;" and she peeped through the crack of the door.

"Pardon me," I said, respectfully, for she was the best customer I had, "but in ten minutes I shall be done. The basque fits you to perfection. He is Professor Wagner, of the Grand Conservatory. He does indeed play wonderfully well. The instrument is not mine; it belongs to the professor, and he has hired it to a young Southern lady who is boarding with me. She is a pupil of the professor's."

"A pupil?" said Miss Van Coot, who had given herself into my hands again, a warm color creeping into her murky skin, her dull eyes kindling. "Then he will teach?"

"Yes, if—if— He will teach *you*, if that is what you mean; of course he will. I only meant that the professor's terms are very high."

"So much the better," said Miss Van Coot.

It was really wonderful how well the basque fitted her. One would certainly have thought that her left side was the same as her right; and Miss Van Coot was so pleasant a lady, it would have been a thousand pities if she had not been able to afford to have a skillful dress-maker, one who made her work a continual study. I was really all of this. It is no egotism to mention it. I was quite famous in my line of business, and was particularly successful in hiding any little awkwardness or defect in shape or carriage. I began by feeling sorry for those who were afflicted in this way, and determined, as far as in me lay, to ameliorate these little disadvantages. And the professor never would have known of this inequality of Miss Van Coot's if he had not, so to speak, tortured it out of me that unlucky morning.

When I had quite finished, and had gone to the door with Miss Van Coot, it so happened that the professor also came into the corridor by the parlor way. "I shall walk out a little," he said to me, "until she returns." And at that moment he reached the top of the landing where stood my wealthy customer. Of course he lifted his hat from off his splendid ruddy hair, and bowed his handsome head, and waved his plump white hand for her to pass on before him. A lady was always honored with all this gesticulatory distinction by the professor, whosoever she might be. Miss Van Coot, with one eager, devouring look upon him, went on to her carriage, from which she looked again; but as for the professor, he went on his way unmindful, humming a little roundelay under his breath, and holding his head high in the air. But when he came back again, luncheon was not quite ready, Miss Winthrop had not come, and nothing would do but he must know why he had found those foolish tears in my eyes that morning.

fields, and deadenings. His cluck is the most familiar sound heard in our rural districts, the note of the red-headed woodpecker excepted. He is a size smaller than the chickaree, or mountain squirrel, feeds on nuts, acorns, and grain, and is by most farmers considered an irrepressible pest.

The flying-squirrel (*Pteromys volucella*) is little larger than a large mouse, light gray on the back and silver white below. It has rat-like eyes, and a singular membrane or flap at each side running from the fore to the hind legs. It seems to me of little kin to the squirrels proper—scarcely as much as the owl is to the eagle. It is strictly nocturnal in its habits, and, like the bat, spends the daytime sleeping in dark places—holes in trees, and behind loose bark in deadenings. I have seen them from the Gulf States to the Northern lake regions. In the hill country of the South, where most people live in open log-houses, the flying-squirrels are sometimes more troublesome to housewives than rats. While Will and I were sojourning in Cherokee, Georgia, the family with whom we were living became greatly annoyed by the nightly visits of a swarm of these winged rodents. They came into the house, squeaked and chattered, used their teeth on every thing they found, cut clothing and table linen to pieces, and, despite a cat or two, ran about the floors and up and down the walls all night long. Finally, thoroughly bent on putting a stop to their orgies, Will and I one bright moon-lit night watched for them, and found that most of them came from an old dead pine stump, some fifty feet high and two feet in diameter, which stood fifty yards from the house. Early the next morning our bows were strung and business commenced. We found the old stump literally honey-combed with holes made by woodpeckers. In these the flying-squirrels had taken up their abode. A heavy blow on the stump with the back of an axe brought half a dozen of the frightened little pests, each one running to the top and sailing off, falling at an angle of about fifteen or twenty

degrees, floating down gently like a dry leaf. Most of them lit on neighboring trees, from which Will and I took great delight in knocking them. We kill-

ed that morning a great number of flying-squirrels, and after that our sleep was peaceful, and our dreams uninterrupted by their clatter. Besides, we received a vote of thanks from the family we had thus relieved.

The cool green ways of our woods have no livelier or more interesting inhabitants than the squirrels, and, if we except a few game birds, the sportsman finds no animal that offers finer sport or sweeter meat. Of all the merry days spent by Will and me in our woods and fields with bow and quiver, those are about the merriest which inclose our life among the squirrels. This is, perhaps, much owing to the fact that the seasons for hunting these active little fellows fall in the two finest stretches of weather seen in our climate—the last days of spring, and the early ripening time of autumn.

BIRDS' NESTS.

II.

CLIFF SWALLOW'S NEST.

IN my first article on birds' nests, in the June number, I divided them into four classes—those supported from beneath, those supported from above (or pensive), those supported on one side, and those which are excavations in earth or wood. The first two classes I treated in that article; the last two are the subjects of this paper.

SECTION OF GOLDEN-WINGED WOODPECKER'S NEST.

The nests of certain swallows are among those supported on one side; and to the cliff or eaves swallows I shall first direct the attention of my readers. These birds have caused much interesting speculation; their past history is but little known. The question is, Have they actually migrated eastward from the Mississippi to the Atlantic since the settlement of the United States by Europeans, or have they apparently done so by gradually leaving their natural haunts for those of man? It would be improper to introduce here such evidence and scanty records as we have of their early history; but at least one fact is known—that they formerly built their nests altogether on cliffs or steep banks (still doing so in some wild parts of the country), and now build them under the eaves of barns, etc. Had they been in New England when it was first settled, and if they began to use barns sixty years ago, as they are known to have done, their change of habit would have followed civilization westward; but their appearance about man's buildings was remarked in the West first, and the recorded dates become generally later the further to the eastward that they have been

established. The observant Wilson, who ransacked Pennsylvania from 1790 to 1810, never saw them, and his successor, Bonaparte, speaks of the cliff swallow as "annually invading a new territory farther to the eastward," and says, "This induces us to conclude that a few more summers will find it sporting in this immediate vicinity, and familiarly

DOUBLE NEST.

WOODPECKERS' NESTS.

established along the Atlantic shores" (this being written in 1825). I believe, therefore, that these birds originally lived among the bluffs and cliffs of the West, were reached by the tide of advancing civilization, were attracted by the facilities which man's belongings offered to them, and, as their numbers increased, travelled toward the Atlantic, seeking and finding further accommodations. On the other hand, even in the last century the white-breasted swallows, purple martins, and chimney swifts had deserted in a great measure their nesting-places in hollow trees and stumps to occupy bird-boxes and chimneys, while the barn swallows, which were probably indigenous to the Eastern United States, were established in barns, in which, as now, they built their nests on the inside beams and rafters.

The cliff swallows show wonderfully the influence of man's progress, having not only extended their range (as I am led to believe) many hundred miles, but having modified very materially their architecture. Their nests are built chiefly of mortar or plaster, of which mud or clay is the basis, and which becomes hard, though rather brittle, when dried by the atmosphere or baked by the sun. Their strength is due to the adhesive and cohesive force of this material. When built on cliffs, as shown in the accompanying picture, they are shaped like a round flask, often with a neck, through which is the entrance. As built in New England and other parts of the Atlantic States, they are more open, and have no neck, being protected above by the projecting roof of the building, under the eaves of which they are placed. The eggs are white, with brown and lilac spots and speckles, but are not ordinarily distinguishable from those of the barn swallows, whose nests are always inside of buildings (as those of the eaves swallows seldom are).

Even more interesting are the nests of the chimney swifts, popularly known as swallows, though not such from a scientific point of view. At a distance they may easily be recognized by their nervous flight, long wings, and apparent want of tail. If examined closely, they are seen to be of a very dull brown, and to have the shafts of their tail feathers projecting beyond the web, so that they can more easily support themselves when clinging to an upright surface. They have made the bold experiment of using chimneys instead of hollow trees for nesting-places, and have succeeded admirably, having begun so early that, so far as I know, they have never been known to naturalists under any other popular name than that of chimney-swallow. Their nests are made of small sticks, which the birds break off from tree-tops while flying, and these are held together and to the wall by a sticky saliva (of which the "edible birds'

nests" of the East are altogether made). Their eggs are white, and long in proportion to their breadth.

Though several swallows retain their primitive habits of nesting to a limited extent, and in limited tracts of country, the common grayish and white bank swallows are the only ones which have retained them altogether. They continue, in settlements of various sizes, to make their burrows in banks of sand or gravel, choosing most often those near water, less often those on road-sides. The study of their excavations is quite endless, owing to the variety of circumstances which must be taken into consideration, and I shall not try here to enter into its details. The care of the birds in building is to reach a stratum of firm earth, from which pebbles can not drop upon their eggs. For this purpose they sometimes dig inward three feet. At the end of the burrow are placed a few materials, upon which the delicate white eggs are laid. The entrances are from two to three inches wide, often circular, and sometimes within a foot or two of one another. The burrows vary in construction and depth, but are usually from fifteen to twenty-four inches long.

On the shores of some lake or mill-pond a solitary burrow, much larger and deeper than those just described, may often be found—that of the kingfisher. This bird was formerly supposed to lead a most eccentric life, having power to calm the waves when he wanted to fish, and intrusting to them his nest, which was said to float about with the eggs and young. As the kingfishers can swim but very little, the young, according to the fable, must have led a very precarious life; but nowadays, since romance has given way to practical comforts, the kingfishers lay their eggs and bring up their children in dry and roomy nurseries, with water no nearer than the necessity of food requires. They feed on small fish, and capture them by plunging into water, their plumage being so oily that they have no difficulty in getting out. They may be recognized by their very short legs, their large head, with its rough crest of loose feathers, and by their peculiar cry, like a watchman's rattle. Though their feet are weak, their bill is large, sharp, and strong, and they use both in making their excavations. Any other person than an enthusiastic naturalist will do better to accept another's account of these burrows than to try to find out all about them himself, unless he prefers digging four or five feet into a sand bank. The kingfisher's eggs are white, like those of the bank swallows, but are about twice as long, and have four times as much bulk.

There are only two birds in New England which make burrows, and I therefore pass on to the woodpeckers, who are carpenters and clever architects. They gain a living for the

most part by hopping about trunks and limbs, supporting themselves with their stiff tail feathers, and picking small insects from the bark, or extracting grubs from beneath it by boring, or rather chiseling, small holes, which are not, I believe, injurious to orchard trees or others.

The golden-winged woodpeckers have a pointed and rather long bill, partly adapted to their habit of feeding on ants from the ground, but yet a very strong one. In spring they generally choose a sound, hard-wood tree in which to make their nest, and go to work on the trunk at some height from the ground. They dig inward a few inches, and then downward, sometimes more than two feet, but commonly much less than that. The passage made varies considerably in shape, but is always enlarged toward the end, as seen in one of our illustrations, drawn from the longitudinal section of a woodpecker's nest. So hard is the work that the birds can finish it only by persevering for two or three weeks; and yet very often, alarmed by being watched or found out, or dissatisfied with their first choice of a position, they abandon a begun or half-finished excavation to make another, sometimes in a different part of the same tree. They never advance, so far as I have observed, more than two inches in one day, and they rarely accomplish so much as that. They work chiefly in the morning, especially in the earlier part, and do not work at all steadily throughout the day. While making the entrance they cling to the trunk, and deliver sharp blows after drawing back the head; a chip is then broken off and dropped to the ground, where, together with its fellows, it betrays to the observant passer-by the nest above. As the hole is deepened, the birds can not be seen at work, but now and then they come out to drop the chips. It is astonishing how quickly they hear one's approach, and the ease with which they turn round to fly out or to show their heads at the entrance. Watch a woodpecker go in; throw a stone against the tree, and instantly the bird is out again. When the excavation is finished, the eggs are laid on the chips at the bottom, no lining ever being used. These eggs, like those of all woodpeckers, are smooth-shelled and pure white. On examining the nest, one is struck with its symmetry and finish. The entrance, about three inches wide, is sometimes circular, but often is an arch, as represented in the engraving.

The nest of the downy woodpecker (which has a bill blunted at the end, or "truncated") is similar, but much smaller. The entrance, which is circular, as shown in the engraving, is about two inches in diameter, sometimes so narrow as to make one doubtful as to the possibility of its owner passing through. The nest is usually made in

a partially decayed tree, and sometimes in an old post. It may most often be found in a birch, poplar, or button-wood tree, and not unfrequently in a branch instead of in the trunk. The architects choose their building site with care and instinctive skill. It is not to be supposed, however, that their loud rapping in early spring is made for the sake of testing the soundness of any wood: it is made by the male and female when calling to one another.

As the woodpeckers sometimes content themselves with a natural cavity, so the little chickadees (with black crown and throat), which almost always do so, or which are glad to find a commodious but deserted woodpecker's home, sometimes spend much time and labor in making an excavation for themselves, with a neat entrance about an inch and a half in diameter, and itself rarely more than six inches deep. At the bottom of this they make an inner nest of any warm materials which they can find—moss, wool, feathers, hairs, etc.—and lay six or more small white eggs with brown speckles. The shell is so thin that the yolk shines through, giving to the eggs before blowing a delicate blush. The same is observable in the woodpeckers' and many other eggs, which often lose much of their natural beauty when prepared for the cabinet. No birds are more tender-hearted parents than the chickadees. If you break up their nest or take their eggs, they follow you along the wood path, now silent, and now uttering such a sweet, plaintive whistle that you repent of the mischief done, and regret that it is too late to repair it.

Many birds make use of natural cavities* for nurseries, but the smaller kinds always line them at the bottom, or, in other words, build their nests in the hollows. The bluebirds are among these latter, and among the very first birds to begin housekeeping in spring. Sometimes they use a bird-box, but more often an old apple-tree or fence post. They are careful in their choice, and may be seen in March or April wandering in pairs through orchards and along fences hunting for a home. On finding one, they spend a few days in making it warm and dry; the female then lays four or five light blue eggs. In the same class are the great crested fly-catchers, which are not very common, but are well known on account of their peculiar nest. Their eggs are very handsome, being buff or creamy, streaked and "scratched" with purplish and a winy brown. The nests are nearly always composed partly of a cast-off snake-skin.

Some of our wrens also build in holes, such as the great Carolina wrens (common to the southward of New England, but extremely

* Such nests should be ranked as a fifth class. See the beginning of this article.

rare in it), the winter wrens, and the common house wrens. A nest of the winter wren which I found in the White Mountains of New Hampshire is extremely interesting from the care with which it was concealed. It was in a retired part of a swampy tract of woodland, in a spot with a confusion of fallen trunks and branches, and in a low, moss-covered stump. The stump I have still; but, without pulling it to pieces, few persons would find readily the home within, for the entrance is only an inch wide, and is covered by a piece of hanging moss. The cavity inside is thickly lined with feathers, as one finds on inserting a finger. I should not have found the nest, after being attracted to its neighborhood by the singing male, had I not seen the female at work and going in and out.

The common house wrens (small and brown, with dark transverse waves) are characterized more than any other of my feathered friends by pertinacity. Their conduct at the time of nest-building is often extraordinary. Almost as often as not they begin by a quarrel, in which they are generally to blame, but are also successful. Sometimes they wish to obtain a ready furnished house, and, finding none unoccupied, take possession of the most attractive which they can find in the absence of its owners, and on the return of the proprietors are so persistently rude as generally to drive them away. Sometimes they merely take a fancy to the situation of a neighbor's home, and, having seized upon the latter, pull it to pieces to make room for a new structure, or fill it up with rubbish of their own collecting that it may be small enough for them, for they quarrel with much larger birds than themselves. When they build their nest peaceably, though they sometimes choose a simple cavity in wood, they are addicted to choosing extraordinary situations, and, having once carried in their materials (sticks and twigs, afterward to be lined warmly), they are not disconcerted by having them removed, but persist many times in replacing them. I give below a partial list of the interesting situations in which the house wren's nest has been found, and I do not doubt that it might be extended over a page: an old hat, the sleeve of a coat, a tin spout, a broken jar, the space between two cogs of a disused mill-wheel, the "box" of a carriage, a stove, a ventilator, a wooden pump, a basket, a milk can, etc.

I shall close this article by a conundrum and its answer. What birds lay their eggs in a nest, yet build no nest nor use an old one, do not sit upon their eggs, though these are not hatched by the sun, and never feed their young? Secondly, how is all this brought about? The answer to the first question is—the cow-birds. The answer to

the second is longer. It may not seem appropriate to speak at length, in an article on bird architecture, of birds who build nothing; but closely connected with them is the subject of *two-story* birds' nests. The cow-buntings do not mate as most other wild birds do, but in spring and summer commonly form small flocks. Neither male nor female show any affection toward one another, nor toward their young. The female, when ready to lay, becomes very nervous, as is natural to a mother who has no home prepared for her offspring, and she therefore looks about anxiously for a nursery and a nurse. Finally, she sees a bird building, or finds a nest just completed, perhaps with fresh eggs in it. She waits until the poor warbler, vireo, or sparrow is gone, then steals up and lays her egg, sometimes returning soon afterward to lay another. The mother thus imposed upon soon comes back, and in consternation calls her mate. Strange to say, they very often accept the strange egg, hatch it, and care for the chick until he can care for himself. Were it not so, the race of cow-birds would no longer exist, unless those birds altered their habits very materially. Sometimes, however, they abandon their nests; less often they destroy or remove the foundling; very rarely they add a story to their nursery, leaving the strange egg on the lower floor, where it comes to nothing, and laying their own eggs in the upper chamber. Among our illustrations on page 256 is a representation of one of these double nests. When a small bird, such as the cow-bunting usually selects for the purpose, consents to become the foster-mother of the stranger deposited with her, her history for the rest of the season is a sad one. The parasite's egg is larger than her own, and consequently receives so great a share of warmth from her body that hers usually become stale, or at least it is hatched first. In the latter case the young cow-bird soon clears the nest for himself and fills it up. His foster-parents are now devoted in providing him with food. He is greedy and lazy, and seems to stay in the nest much longer than is necessary. When at last he makes up his mind to take care of himself, and shows that he is not utterly helpless, he leaves the friends to whom he owes his life without thanking them, and, joining his comrades, becomes a member of the cow-bird community. The facts just related present many interesting questions for discussion. Upon these I can not enter here, but let me say to my readers that in the study of birds they will not only find many subjects for philosophical speculation, but many sources of pure pleasure, combining healthful exercise and the study of Nature, which, if thoroughly appreciated, can not but inspire us with good sentiments and good taste.

STRONGER THAN DEATH.

Who shall tell the story
As it was?
Write it with the heart's blood?
(Pale ink, alas!)
Speak it with the soul's lips,
Or be dumb?
Tell me, singers fled and
Song to come!

No answer: like a shell the silence curls,
And far within it leans a whisper out,
Breathless and inarticulate, and whirls
And dies as dies an ailing dread or doubt.

And I—since there is found none else than I,
No stronger, sweeter voice than mine, to tell
This tale of love that can not stoop to die—
Were fain to be the whisper in the shell:

Were fain to lose and spend myself within
The sacred silence of one mighty heart,
And leaning from it, hidden there, to win
Some finer ear that, listening, bends apart:

An ear that hears the sunlight woo the snow,
Detects the fire in a lily's kiss,
And hearkens, like an untaught child, to know
How holy is the place in which love is.

"Fly for your lives!" The entrails of the earth
Trembled, resounding to the cry
That, like a chasing ghost, around the mine
Crept ghastly. "The pit's on fire! Fly!"

The shaft, a poisoned throat whose breath was death,
Like hell itself grown sick of sin,
Hurled up the men; haggard and terrible;
Leaping upon us through the din

That all our voices made; and back we shrank
From them as from the starting dead,
Recoiling, shrieked, but knew not why we shrieked,
And cried, but knew not what we said.

And still that awful mouth did toss them up.
"The last is safe! the last is sound!"
We sobbed to see them where they sunk and crawled,
Like beaten hounds, upon the ground.

Some sat with lolling idiot head and laughed;
One reached to clutch the air away
His shrunken lips refused; some cursed; and one
Knelt down—but he was old—to pray.

We huddled there together all that night,
Women and men from the wild Town;
I heard a shrill voice cry, "We all are up.
But some—ye have forgot—are down!"

"Who is forgot?" We stared from face to face,
But, answering through the dark, she said
(It was a woman): "Eh, ye need not fret;
None is forgot except the dead.

"The buried dead asleep there in the works—
Eh, Lord! it must be hot below!
Ye'll keep 'em waking all the livelong night,
To set the mine a-burning so!"

And all the night the mine did burn and burst,
As if the earth were but a shell
Through which a child had thrust a finger touch;
And, peal on dreadful peal, the bell,

The miner's 'larum, wedged and wrenched the air;
And through the flaring light we saw
The solid forehead of the eternal hill
Take on a human look of awe,

As if it were a living thing that spoke
And flung some protest to the sky,
As if it were a dying thing that saw,
But could not tell, a mystery.

The bells ran ringing by us all that night;
The bells ceased jangling with the morn.
About the blackened works, sunk, tossed, and rent,
We gathered in the foreign dawn.

Women and men, with eyes askance and strange,
Fearing, we knew not what, to see.
Against the hollowed jaws of the torn hill
Why creep the miners silently?

From man to man a whisper chills: "See, see!
The sunken shaft of Thirty-one!
The earth, a traitor to her trust, has fled,
And turned the dead unto the sun.

"And here—O God of life and death! Thy work,
Thine only, this!" With foreheads bare,
We knelt, and drew him, young and beautiful,
Thirty years dead, into the air.

Thirty years dead and buried from the day;
By the swift poison caught and slain;
By the kind poison unmarred, rendered fair
Back to the upper earth again—

Back to the breathing earth that knew him not;
And men and women wept to see—
For kindred had he none among us all—
How lonely even the dead may be.

We wept, I say, we wept who knew him not;
But sharp a tearless woman sprang
From out the crowd (that quavering voice I knew),
And terrible her cry outrang:

"I pass, I pass ye all! Make way! Stand back!
Mine is the place ye yield," she said.
"He was my lover once—my own, my own;
Oh, he was mine, and he is dead!"

Women and men, we gave her royal way;
Proud as young joy the smile she had:
We knew her for a neighbor in the town,
Unmated, solitary, sad.

Women and men, we gave her silent way.
Calm as a sigh she swept us all;
Then swiftly, as a word leans to a thought,
We saw her lean to him, and fall

Upon the happy body of the dead—
An aged woman, poor and gray.
Bright as the day, immortal as young Love,
And beautiful as life he lay.

Her shrunken hands caressed his rounded cheeks;
Her white locks on his golden hair
Fell wanly. "O love," she cried, with shriveled lips,
"O love, my love, my own, my fair!"

"See, I am old, and all my heart is gray—
They say the dead are aye forgot—
There, there, my sweet! I whisper, leaning low,
That all these women hear it not.

"Deep in the darkness there, didst think on me?
High in the heavens, have ye been true?
Since I was young, and since you called me fair,
I never loved a man but you.

"And here, my boy, you lie, so safe, so still—"
But there she hushed; and in the dim
Cool morning, timid as a bride, but calm
As a glad mother, gathered him

Unto her heart. And all the people then,
Women and men and children too,
Crept back and back, and back and on,
Still as the morning shadows do,

And left them in the lifting dawn, they two.
On her sad breast his shining head
Stirred softly, as were he the living one,
And she had been the moveless dead.

And yet we crept on, back and back and on:
The distance widened like the sky
Between our little restlessness and love
So Godlike that it can not die.

Μέγα βιβλίον μέγα κακόν.—*Callimachus.*
Μικρὸν βιβλίον μέγα ἀγαθόν.—*Converse.*

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