

dwelling-place of dead oak-leaves with just a few scraps of hay or straw at the bottom. Others—such as the skylark—make a point of never ascending from or descending to the nest itself, but always rise and alight at some little distance. Others again—such as the partridge and the reed bunting—attempt to lure an intruder away by pretending to have broken a wing, fluttering along a few feet in front of him with every appearance of being hopelessly crippled, but always keeping just out of reach of his grasp. And skuas, with a depth of craft which is almost incredible, have been known in moments of danger to turn gulls off their eggs and sit upon them, advertising their presence by various pretended attempts to avoid observation, and evidently hoping, as they fly off at last with a loud squall, that their victim's eggs will be taken instead of their own.

It is largely by arts such as these, no doubt, that birds which build on the ground or in low bushes have been enabled to hold their own, notwithstanding the army of foxes, weasels, stoats, and snakes which are forever prowling about in search of victims. And it is remarkable that intelligence which is manifested so strongly in one direction should have remained so undeveloped in another.

A great many birds, however, have had the sense to realize that it is safer to build in trees than on or near the ground. But even amongst these we find very wide divergence of opinion as to what is desirable in the structure of the nest. Wood-pigeons, for example, are perfectly satisfied with a mere platform of interwoven twigs, so loosely put together that if you look up from below, when the mother-bird is not sitting, you can see the two white eggs resting upon them. The nests of rooks and of carrion crows are much more elaborate, and are kept in repair, more or less, all the year round, so that they may be able to withstand the violence of the winter storms. The magpie, who really has some idea of architecture, goes farther still, and not only builds a

nest of sticks, plastered together with earth, and lined with roots and hair, but erects a dome of twigs above it. For some reason or other—possibly from pride in its work, or it may be from sheer stupidity—this bird scorns concealment, and usually chooses a site for its abode in full view of every passer-by. And the thrush often does the same. You may see its great untidy nest in the leafless branches of a low tree, perhaps with a streamer of straw hanging down and waving in the breeze, as though to attract attention.

Not so the long-tailed titmouse, which has learned the art of rendering its nest practically invisible, even when it is placed in a most conspicuous situation. You may see it, sometimes, in the fork of a tree, some twelve or fifteen feet from the ground. But if you do so, in nine cases out of ten you will take it for the broken stump of a dead branch. For it is so accurately shaped, so smoothly rounded, and so cleverly covered with bits of mosses and lichen, that unless you happen to see the birds passing in and out, you will almost certainly be deceived as to its real nature. Even when it is built in the midst of a bush it is almost equally difficult to see. The stems of the bush itself are built into the fabric. And of all the nests that are built by British birds, not one is of more exquisite workmanship or more beautiful texture. It is really almost impossible to believe that it is the production of the beak of one small bird—for the male long-tailed titmouse, like the cock wren, is restricted by his mate to the humble task of fetching and carrying materials. In shape like a large cocoon, broader at the base than the apex, and in size out of all proportion to that of the builder, the walls are of moss, densely lined with feathers, and coated with a rainproof covering of lichens and wool, felted together with spiders' webs. It is impossible to imagine a softer or cosier bed for the eggs and the callow young. The entrance, always situated about an inch below the top, is scarcely large enough to admit a man's thumb. Yet the par-