

NATURAL HISTORY FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

ADAPTED FROM JULIA MCNAIR WRIGHT.

MORE ABOUT BIRDS.

When the little nest is built, when her house is ready, the bird lays a few, a very few, eggs in it, rarely more than five. Every bird has her own kind of nest, and her own colour of egg. Some eggs are white. Some are blueish-green. Some are yellow. Some are brown. Some have small spots all over. The bird sits upon her eggs for many days to keep them warm. She is very patient, and loves her eggs very much. When her wings and legs are stiff from sitting, she takes a fly about. The father bird then takes her place on the eggs. If the eggs are allowed to grow cold, the little ones inside will die. When she comes back, the father sits on a branch beside her and sings her a song. Sometimes he brings her something nice to eat.

When the baby birds arrive, the father feeds them. He is very busy and very fussy all day. He is proud. He flies here and everywhere searching for worms for his little children. Then he teaches them to fly, and by-and-by to sing. Birds are very neat and tidy. You have seen them take their bath, and dress their feathers after. They bring their little ones to the bath. They like it.

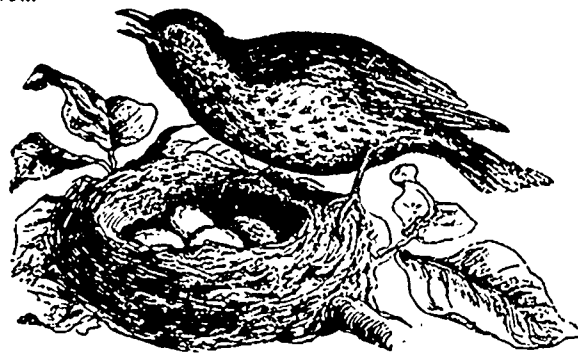
When a bird goes off for food, sometimes another bird, who is too lazy to build a nest for her own eggs, lays an egg in the empty nest. When the bird comes back she sees it. She knows it. She will be very angry. But it is no use. The egg is there. Very soon she will forgive the naughty bird, and take care of the egg as if it were her own. The little bird in this egg is the first to come out of its shell. The mother seems now to love the strange child so much that when her own birds arrive she does not care for them so well. By-and-by the stranger pushes the other children out of the nest, and the poor mother goes on feeding her one little baby that is not her own, but only a borrowed one. Is it not too bad?

One summer, a pair of wood-peckers built in a tall flag-pole near my house. They had cut out a nice round hole in the pole, and dug a deep place for a nest. Several times each day the father-bird took his turn on the nest, while the mother-bird went off to a swamp to get food.

It was curious to watch the nest-cleaning each night. The birds took up refuse from the nest in their claws, and flew off some distance before they dropped it. When the little birds came from the shell, the old ones were very busy, going and coming several times each hour, with food.

It was funny to see them at night-fall. The father-bird took his place, clinging high up on the pole, like a

watchman on a tower, to take a final look, and see if all was right. The mother-bird, at the same time, put her handsome head out of the hole, and stretched her neck, as if to take a look from her window before she went to bed.



When the birds were fledged, there was a grand time teaching them to fly. They were taken to a roof near by, where they sprawled about. Then they would be coaxed to make a little flight. The parents flew low and slowly before them. Great was the joy if one of the little things flew a few yards. The old birds seemed to think that they had never before seen quite such nice flying! Then the father-bird stood proudly before them, to give them a lesson in drumming, that is, in pecking at wood, to break it up, to find grubs or insects hidden in it. He seemed to say—"Look at me!" Then he braced his feet and tail, held his head on one side, and gave a number of swift, strong blows on my porch roof. He would drum, and then look at the little ones to imitate him.

Then they flew over the way, and the father seemed to say—"Now for another lesson in drumming!" At it he went. But that house had a *tin roof*. He could not make the splinters fly! He tried again. It was of no use. Then he looked much surprised. He eyed the roof, and tried once more. The little birds looked on.

But the father-bird failed again. Instead of a long, deep roll of sound, there was only a sharp rattle: no chips, no grubs! He seemed much ashamed. His wings and his tail drooped. Away he flew to the pole, and sat there very sad. He seemed to be thinking how much better houses grew when he was young! The hole of these birds, in the pole, was tinned over after they left. They returned next year, and cut a hole lower down. That was covered with tin in the fall. Next spring they came back, and cut a hole higher up. They did this for five years.

Finally the pole had to be taken down as dangerous, it was so cut up.

SO TRUE.

An old farmer, returning from the wedding of a niece in a distant town, was eagerly questioned by his family as to the bride's costume. "Well," said he, "she had on some kind of a dress, with a lot of flubdubbbery of some sort or 'nother down the front of it, and a thing-amajig on the back of it, with a long tail of some stuff

I don't know what it was — dragging out behind, and a lot of slip-flop flounces over the whole thing. There wan't no arms to it, and she had a lot of white truck, soft and floppy like, on her head, and that's jist all I know about it."