

sideways by shells, and the latter never tried to nest again; but the black-caps rebuilt within 10 feet of their old nest, though the three eggs the lady laid were as white as a wood pidgeon's. The cock did quite his share of incubation, and neither bird moved when they were shelled, nor did the reed warblers even raise their heads out of their nest when there was firing. The icterine's nest, which I discovered after a search, was very beautiful, rather bulky, deep, and rounded on the outside surface, tied, I think, to a lilac bush about 5 feet from the ground; the eggs were covered with cherry-coloured spots.

#### Nightingales and Orioles

About this time I heard that a brood of nightingales was hatched on the day of the heaviest Hooze bombardment on the lip of the first-line trench. On May 13, at 3 a.m., in the garden of my chateau I hear a nightingale beginning to sing. Half an hour afterwards German shells were rained upon the garden incessantly throughout the day. The bird sang without a pause where the shells fell thickest until 12 p.m. and survived, for next morning he started as cheerily as ever. The marsh warbler's strength of song rather disappointed me. The only nest I saw was shown me in meadow-sweet by a marsh ditch, but the birds were common enough wherever the ground suited, and were almost aggressively tame.

Late in June I heard that an oriole's nest had been found in an oak wood. There was an oak wood, too, near my billet, and a fortnight later a friend and I heard a clear whistle which we agreed came from an oriole, or rather there were four orioles chasing each other round the tree tops in a state of great excitement, whistling and screeching. Two days after one pair, at any rate, seemed to have settled down to nest. I sat down to watch, and at last saw the hen oriole hopping cautiously from bough to bough to a little thin oak tree 100 yards from me. She flew to what looked like a small round ball hanging

from one of the branches. I could hardly believe I had found the nest so easily, but ten minutes later she returned to the same place, and that time I saw a blade of grass in her mouth, and there was no further doubt. I never saw the bird carry more than one blade of grass at a time in her bill, and however carefully I reached my hiding place she always approached with extreme caution and from exactly the opposite direction.

#### The Crested Lark

One of the commonest birds about the trenches is the crested lark, a tame, cheeky little creature who sings his pleasant trilly song even in January. Round Vermelles and Loos he seems to be commoner than anywhere else. I like him immensely, but not quite so much as his cousin the woodlark, whom I have not met in Northern France. The two are similar in many respects, especially in their flight; both will sing quietly to themselves on the ground when approached by a human being; both sing in the air at a regular height; both are very fast runners, and given to the most deceitful habits when nesting. On several occasions I was within an ace of finding a crested lark's nest, and success only came when I was "standing to" during the second battle of Ypres. I then came across a very lovesick cock crested lark in a hop garden. He was panting with excitement, mouth open, wings trailing, his crest and his ridiculous stump of a tail erect, altogether an absurd spectacle. He drove his wife away when I appeared, and she flipped off to a field of growing wheat, where she had her nest. I went near, but she regarded me with the greatest suspicion, and though she ran about in the dust at my feet, and both birds flew over my head to look at me from every point of view, she would not go to the nest while I was in sight. When I saw the nest it looked more like that of a skylark than a woodlark, and was not so neat or so deep as that little bird makes hers.

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