

ous and an audacious wooer. The main point is, however, that in operations of this kind he has to deal with no shrinking, terrified Lark or Sparrow, glad to make any terms with the tyrant, but with a bird who proves to be his match in every particular. Set a Shrike to tame a shrew—pit a pirate against a virago—and the whole neighborhood may be congratulated when the stormy scene is over. About the time the courtship grows a little monotonous, you may look through the convenient thicket, where the saplings, bushes, and weeds are grown up close together, or along yonder hedgerow, with its lattice-work of creepers and greenbrier, to find the nesting-place of the redoubtable couple. It will not be hard to find, for the birds build low, and make a structure as bulky in proportion to their size as a Hawk's nest. It is commonly built in a bush or sapling, within arms' reach from the ground, the nest proper resting upon an extensive basement of stout twigs, rather loosely laid together and bristling in all directions. Upon such a support, the inner nest is built, of an endless variety of soft, fibrous, vegetable substances, such as grass-stems, weed-tops, bark-strips, cutkins, leaves, mosses, lichens, &c., all matted together in such quantity that the cavity within is greatly reduced by the thickness of the walls. Some nests, also, contain feathers or fur telted in with the rest of the materials. There seems to be a good deal of difference in the structure of the nest, not so much according to the species, as to the climate. The northern-built nests are usually found to be more compactly built, with a greater quantity of soft, warm material, than those of the Loggerhead in the Southern States, which are smaller, more open, and rather loosely woven than closely felted. In such a bulky and rather rude receptacle, though a very substantial one, no fewer than five or six eggs may be deposited, for a Shrike is as much in earnest in these matters as in the other affairs of life. These vary in size, of course, according to the species, the eggs of the Northern Shrike being about 1.10 by 0.80 inches, while those of the White-rumped, or Loggerhead, only measure, on an average, little if any over an inch in length by three-fourths as much in breadth. They are shaped and colored exactly alike, however, being of rounded oval form, quite blunt at the smaller end, and so profusely speckled or marbled all over with various brownish, reddish, and

purplish shades that the greenish-gray ground-color is scarcely perceptible. Should nothing go amiss, it is not long (Audubon says fifteen days in the case of the *lucolis*) before the nest is crowded with a clamorous and voracious brood, whose wants are an incessant tax upon the energy and devotion of the parent birds. The care of the youngsters would seem to give them all they can attend to, leaving no time for house-cleaning; for, should you come upon a family of Shrikes, well grown and soon to leave the nest, you would find things in an extremely untidy condition.

One nestful after another being thus turned loose upon the world, the tribe of Shrikes waxes. Being prolific, and having few enemies besides men, they are common birds in most portions of the country, and we readily perceive that they play an important *role* in nature's economy. I must confess that I have not drawn altogether the most flattering picture, even though I have given the dauntless warriors full credit for their military operations; and I am therefore the more anxious to show what extremely useful birds they are, from the most practical standpoint possible. So far as the Shrike's relations with ourselves are concerned, the balance is entirely on one side of the ledger. We are enormously in debt to these efficient destroyers of noxious insects and injurious quadrupeds. Though they kill many a bird we should wish to live, the whole result in this regard is practically nothing to offset the check they put in the aggregate upon grasshoppers and other undesirable forms of insect life. Nay, more, the Shrike is entitled to our special thanks and most favorable consideration, for his interference in our behalf against the bird-pest of this country—the European Sparrow. In taking counsel with herself, that she might right the balance of her forces, which we so fantastically interfered with when the Sparrow madness seized us, she bethought herself of the Shrikes, and in her own mysterious way she summoned these trusty allies to her aid. The Shrikes, nothing loth, went right to work, and were abating the nuisance very perceptibly, when Bostonese idiocy confronted them and cut short their righteous warfare. Men shot them down in the very acts of destroying Sparrow after Sparrow; at each murderous discharge of the gun, a noble Shrike was martyred in doing his best for the good of the community."