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"You see, I was quoting my name-aunt, who was the dearest, coziest, most comfortable and yet most wide-awake and spirited old lady in the world. She always declared that the richest gain that came to her through age and experience was the perception of relative importance. Life is so much more easy and interesting if we never let ourselves be troubled about what need not really matter; and compared with people and actions things, our mere little possessions, are after all so trifling. She deemed it disgraceful that anything less than war, earthquake or fire, affecting things should make us unhappy.

"When a heart, a promise or a principle is broken," she used to say, "that's disaster, and one may grieve; but when a teapot is—a thing is only a thing. Laugh and take a brown pitcher, and the tea will taste just as good."

"I suppose it would," agreed Ellen's friend, reflectively, "if the laugh were genuine, but so many of us couldn't laugh. It's Emerson, isn't it, who says, 'Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind?' Only he should have said woman-kind; it's we housekeepers who are slaves to things."

"Oh, not all of us," protested Ellen, cheerfully. "Suppose you put the pink chrysanthemums in that old Dutch mug and twist the trailing fern round the handle—I'm not sure it isn't going to be prettier than the Venetian vase, after all."

Nest Babies.

By Clarence Hawkes.

The most interesting time of the whole year in bird land is the time when the fledglings are hatched and the life of the new family begins. You children could hardly know unless you have often watched the birds what patience it has taken to bring this little bird family into the world.

In the first place, it took days to build the nest. Perhaps the first nest was destroyed by the wind, so a second may have been built. After the nest was finally built, with much planning by the parent birds, the eggs had to be laid; this usually takes a day for an egg, but some birds skip a day between each egg.

After all the eggs were laid the mother bird had to sit upon them for about three weeks before her patience was rewarded by seeing a small spot pecked in each egg.

Think how hard it would be for you children who like to wriggle about to sit perfectly still, just as the mother bird has to do on the eggs, for three weeks.

After the fledglings are finally hatched there is great activity in the family for many days. Most of the little birds stay in the nest for several weeks, but little partridges are an exemption to this rule, for they are among the brightest and hardiest of chicks, and in a very few hours after being hatched they are picking up their own living just as though they had always worked for it.

But this is not the case with most young birds. Young herons stay in the nest and are fed by the old herons until they are nearly grown.

It is a pretty sight to see those wide-open mouths go up at the slightest sound near the nest. Most of these ugly, naked little birds are greedy and take a great deal of feeding. I have seen old robins carrying worms to their young nearly all day long.

Did you ever hear of a fledgling that was hatched in a hole in the ground? Well, that is where the young kingfisher is hatched.

When a pair of kingfishers want to build themselves a nest they dig a hole back into some sandy bank for several feet, and at the end of it they hollow out a round place and line it with fish bones. Here in darkness the young kingfishers are hatched.

Young kingfishers are among the hungriest of fledglings, and when there is a large family you may see the old birds fishing for these wide-open mouths all day long.

Some birds, like the kingfisher, digest the food for their young before feeding it to them. They first swallow the food themselves, and when it has become soft they gulp it up and feed it to the young birds.

Most little birds when they are first hatched are rather ugly, shapeless little things without any feathers.

Young bluebirds feather out very early, but the queer thing about them is that they are black as little crows and it is not until they have been out of the nest for some time that they put on the blue and red of their parents.

The cuckoo also has a queer family of fledglings. This shy bird is very slow about laying her eggs, for she sometimes takes a week to an egg, so that the first cuckoo is hatched out long before his brothers and sisters. So a cuckoo's nest will usually contain birds of several sizes? There will be one little naked cuckoo just hatched, another a week old, and perhaps one just ready to go out into the world and pick up his own living.

There is one bird that is quite shiftless about her young. In fact, she has nothing to do with them; this is the cowbird, she goes about laying her eggs in other birds' nests. When the other birds find a cowbird has laid an egg in their nest they usually hatch it out and take care of the young bird with their own.

The young cowbird is a greedy fellow, and it greatly surprises its foster mother, who wonders why one of her brood is so greedy and so much larger than the rest of her family.

Most old birds teach their young to fly, showing them by example how the trick is done, and often withholding food to coax them to try their wings.

An old robin will frequently sit upon a limb holding a tempting worm in its bill, while the young robin perches upon a limb near by winking and blinking and wishing so much that he had that worm but not daring for a long time to fly to his parent and get it.

When the young birds first go forth from the nest is a time of peril to the family, for there is always a chance that some luckless bird will flop down on the grass and the cat will get it. If it is not the cat sometimes thoughtless children will injure young birds, and some other birds will even kill the fledglings of their neighbors.

Hawks, shrikes, kingbirds, crows, and others often rob nests of their young birds and still more frequently steal

the eggs before they are hatched. Once the young birds leave the nest they never return, but are pushed out into the world to shift for themselves. It is surprising how quickly they learn what things are good for food and which things to let alone. They are never deceived into eating poison foods, as children often are.

Nature has given each young bird such instinct as he needs to take care of himself in the great world into which he has come. Each bird has in its little head such wisdom as will enable it to build its nest and rear its young when the time comes. Also he knows that he must fly many miles away to warmer climes when the cold comes, where he will not perish.

Little birds love the sunshine and the warmth and plenty of good things to eat. When they have all these things their songs gladden the earth and their bright feathers cheer us as they flash by.

Let us, then, feed and protect these little friends and encourage them to build about our houses, for it is a great thing to have the full confidence of even a little bird.

How Spiders Work.

Watch an old spider making a fine web. A fly will get caught in it as he goes quickly through the window if he is not careful, then the spider will eat him, and when the spider goes for a walk he must look sharply to right and left or some creature will eat him. A bird will suddenly swallow him or a wasp will kill him; the centipedes, too, are always looking for spiders.

The spider's silk, with which he makes his beautiful web, is like a piece of your mother's sewing silk—it is made of a lot of very fine strands. And in what a wonderful way the spider spins his web from bush to bush! He throws out a silken thread, and the wind carries it to a leaf, where it sticks, then he walks carefully across the thread, carrying another thread to make his tight rope stronger. He pulls the thread with his claws, as a sailor tugs at the sail ropes, and fastens it with great care; round and round he goes until the splendid web is made, and, if the wind is blowing, he fastens tiny pieces of stick to the web for fear it will blow away.

A spider often stretches a thread from the web to his home; when any

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