

LETTERS.

HATCHLEY.

Sept. 3rd, 1894.

CUCKOO JOTTINGS.

A pair of black-billed Cuckoos built their nest two or three weeks ago in a plum tree in our garden, and I should think less than twenty yards distant from our house. Sitting began when two eggs were laid, and a week afterwards another egg was laid, and the sitting operation went on with the result that the two earliest hatched birds got fully fledged and left the nest at maturity. Last Thursday morning (Aug. 30th), the immature youngling made pitiful Cuckoo cries, at intervals, all day long, (on the 31st), and on my son examining the nest the next morning, he found the deserted bird dead and cold! Similar conduct and procedure we have noted on the part of the Cuckoo, when nesting on trees near our house in previous years. The nest is a slight, slovenly structure, of loose twigs, with a very few dried grass roots, or fibres, by way of lining. A very slight annoyance or close approach to pry into and investigate Cuckoo economy, will cause these birds to forsake their nest, even when tenanted with callow young ones. Of this we have had abundant proof in by-gone times. Cuckoos of both Ontario species have been numerous and common, during the whole of the past summer, and perhaps this is only a corollary to the fact that the tent Caterpillar has been so numerous as to be a perfect pest in orchard and forest. I may here observe that the above Cuckoo brood is the second batch of C. Nestlings raised in our orchard this year.

In parts of the forest about here, many of the young ash and hickory trees, (also many of the fruit and other shade trees around houses),

present a most unusual appearance, draped in the webs of tent Caterpillars, enveloping the twigs and branches. The appearances are as if much soiled linen of the trolls or fairies had been hung out to bleach or dry; or at a short distance many of the trees look as if enveloped in dense smoke or mist, and the included foliage is in progress of being devoured. About the 20th Aug. last, my son reached up his hand to pull to pieces one of these Caterpillar webs, that surrounded several small branches on one of our young apple trees, and was surprised by the alarmed outcries of several young Gold Finches, who were in a nest that the larval web nearly invested. Doubtless the tent-like web had been manufactured while Mrs. Fringilla Tristis was incubating, and the slight net-like investiture had been accepted and tolerated as a sort of veil of protection, or bed curtain. These same young Finches got away from the nest in safety, a few days subsequent to the date of my son's first noting the eccentric circumstance.

It is enough to excite, surprise and wonder if one watches the united instinct with which the squads or family parties of tent grubs weave and work, even when less than half an inch long. They "keep stroke" like well-drilled oarsmen, their slender bodies may be seen to contract or extend simultaneously, as if no thread of web, or webb, could be omitted without botching the united fabric; and they seem to "throw the shuttle" with the same instinct of combined effort as we may witness in the economy of the bee hive, and ants nesting work and methods. Probably the long continued drouth and heat has stimulated this form of vegetable parasitic life.

In the phalanx of working tent grubs—all helping on through all