

THE TITMOUSE FAMILY.

A small bird, with a grayish-white head, black wings, and a dull brown coat, a soft puffy little creature, may be found at all seasons hopping merrily about in the hedge-rows and orchards of England and France.

It is known as the long-tailed titmouse, and is one of the most remarkable members of the great titmouse family, which numbers more than eighty-seven varieties

Its nest is a wonderful specimen of bird-architecture. The little birds work industriously, and at the end of fifteen days the beautiful home is finished and ready to receive the small speckled eggs. The nest is fastened to twigs covered with thick foliage, and a location near a small water-course is usually selected. It is shaped like a large egg. The little round door is at one side near the top, and some nests have been found with a similar opening on the other side, lower down. As the birds cannot speak and explain this freak in the construction of their house, the reason has never been found out. Some naturalists think it is for better ventilation.

To weave its nest the bird collects bits of wood, soft moss, and the strong silken winding of certain cocoons, which it twists together in thick impenetrable walls within which its little ones may lie secure from rain and storm and cold. The exterior of the nest is artistically covered with beautiful lichens and bits of soft bark, which make it in color and outward texture so much like the tranches to which it is secured that a very sharp eye is needed to distinguish it.

When the little house is complete, it is furnished with a soft thick bed of downy feathers, and the mother begins to brood over seven or eight little rose-white eggs delicately speckled with red.

These long-tailed titmice are the most faithful of all bird-parents. They keep their children near them until they are a year old, and as two broods are born during the warm weather, with seven or eight in each brood, a whole titmouse family—papa, mamma, and as many as sixteen little ones—may often be seen hopping about together and scouring the hedges in search of food.

They are ravenous little crea-

tures, and always hunting from morning till night, and as they are very sociable, they go in large flocks, twittering and chirping gleefully as they spy a swarm of fat flies, or discover among old stone heaps or in the bark of trees the hiding-places where tiny worms are lying asleep in a chrysalis shroud. They will also eat beech-nuts, acorns, hemp, and other oily seeds.

English boys call these birds tomtits, and consider them the

species, the titmice set upon it and kill it with sharp blows from their strong little beaks. When it is dead, they pick open its skull and eat its brains.

In France titmice are often captured in snares, but unless the specimen is very young, it will make a savage attack on the hands of the hunter who takes it from the net. It is not difficult to tame them. They make very wise and amusing pets, and if allowed to fly about will quickly

hop and jump about in search of a breakfast for himself and his numerous family.

In this country ten varieties of titmice have been found, and there are no doubt more. The most familiar among them is the chickadee, which may be heard any sunny day during our long northern winter trilling its merry chickadee-dee-dee in the fields and woods. It is one of the few birds that remain with us during the entire year, and is always the same lively, blythe little creature.—*Harper's Young People.*

SIZE OF SUN-SPOTS.

A single spot has measured from 40,000 to 50,000 miles in diameter, in which, as will be readily seen, we could put our earth for a standing point of observation, and note how the vast facular waves roll and leap about the edge of the spot, and also how the metallic rain is formed from the warmer portions of the sun. In June, 1843, a solar spot remained a week visible to the naked eye, having a diameter of about 77,000 miles; and in 1837 a cluster of spots covered an area of nearly 4,000,000,000 square miles. When we call to mind that the smallest spot which can be seen with the most powerful telescope must have an area of about 50,000 miles, we can readily see how large a spot must be in order to be visible to the unaided eye. Pasteroff, in 1828, measured a spot whose umbra had an extent four times greater than the earth's surface. In August, 1858, a spot was measured by Newall, and it had a diameter of 58,000 miles—more, as you will see, than seven times the diameter of the earth. The largest spot that has ever been known to astronomy was no less in diameter than 153,500 miles, so that across this you could have placed side by side eighteen worlds.—*Popular*

Science Monthly.

Do you think of one falsity as harmless, and another as slight, and another as unintended? Cast them all aside; they may be light and accidental, but they are ugly soot from the smoke of the pit for all that.—*John Ruskin.*

MANNERS are the shadows of virtues.—*Sydney Smith.*



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most impertinent of all the feathered inhabitants of the country; for, small and graceful as they are, there are few birds which possess such a violent temper or such cruel instincts. They will fight furiously with each other for the possession of a plump insect or some other dainty morsel, and—sad to relate—they show no mercy towards a poor wounded or sick bird. No matter whether it is one of their own kind or of some other

clear a room of flies and mosquitoes. But they should never be put in a cage with other birds, for they will harass and worry them to death.

Titmice are very useful inhabitants of gardens and orchards, as they wage continual war on all kinds of saw-flies and other small insects, which do much injury to fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, and a wise gardener will allow the saucy tomtit full liberty to