

its builders, tiniest and prettiest of our birds, with their pert rapid motions, the father with his bright yellow head, and the wife in her quieter dress, kept dashing in and out all day, to the great delight of the children. They are thought to be shy birds, but they choose sometimes strangely public places for their nests, and show a wonderful confidence in man.

Soon after the building of "its pendent nest and procreant cradle" was finished, some curious little fingers had probed its bottom and found that it was full of eggs. "They're hardly bigger than peas, Annie, but such lots of them; how ever will the baby birds find room to breathe?"

The mother sat on undaunted by the continual passing, or the very unwelcome attentions it received. We could see the bright glancing eyes, with an uneasy shake about the little head just peering over the edge of the nest, but she had learnt not to stir, even when we stopped close under the tree.

I looked out one balmy early morning; the smell of the honeysuckles was strong in the air, the dew sparkling on the grass. "Hallo!" I heard, as Frank, who was home for the holidays, sauntered into the garden. "Oh dear, what a pity!" cried Annie in most pitiful tones as she followed him.

And there lay twelve of the smallest and ugliest of living things, all mouth, sprawling, some alive on the grass, and some on the gravel dead, amongst a litter of feathers and moss; the bottom of the nest had burst. Whether the passing gardener's head (for it hung quite low enough to be touched) had shaken it, or whether the weight alone of the mass of little life within had broken through, no one could tell.

"I wonder whether one couldn't sew up the bottom?" said Annie, compassionately picking up those of the horrid little monsters which were still alive, and making a nest for them in her handkerchief. "I think I could do it with a laurel leaf."

"What nonsense!" replied her brother; "such a woman's notion—sew! and make the bird forsake to a dead certainty! You don't suppose she'd stand all that pulling about of her nest and her young, do you? It isn't the slightest use; you'd better try and feed the birds."

"I'm sure we never could rear them, wrens are so difficult to feed. We can but try the other way," said Annie. "May, dear, run and ask for some worsted and a worsted needle—no, I'll go myself."

Then, collecting the scattered moss, she got up on a chair, and fitted it all carefully on again to the bottom of the nest, then passing

the long cables of worsted which she had sewed to the laurel leaf round the boughs above, she drew up a little platform as it were for the pouch to rest on, and made all good and firm below.

The birds were watching us narrowly the whole time. There was an anxious twittering going on in the trees above, and two pair of tiny wings passed to and fro almost in our faces with a lamentable little cry.

"Come in to breakfast," cried Frank in vain, standing by with his hands in his pockets, while little May, sitting on the grass near, nursing the "poor babies," as she called them, rocked herself to and fro, and sung, or rather chirped to them—

"Robin Red and Jenny Wren
Are God Almighty's cock and hen,"

while she vainly presented them with offerings of deceased flies.

"You must make haste, Annie, here's one child dead already," said she, sorrowfully looking into the hollow of her fat little arms where she was trying to keep her infants warm.

As soon as the mossy house was repaired, the little morsels of life were dropped into it one by one, and we all retreated to the house to leave the coast clear.

There was a dead pause; nothing stirred but the wind and the leaves, and an unfeeling white butterfly.

"You see," cried Frank, who was watching with his mouth full at the open window.

Presently came a low despairing chirp of the deserted children out of the nest. "We're very cold and hungry," it said as plainly as if in words.

And a swoop of bright little wings from somewhere up in the air, glancing like a fire-fly down into the nest, answered them. The mother's heart was not proof against the cry, and her fears and doubts were evidently all forgotten as she darted in.

All went on well after this; the young ones were voracious little things, and very much trouble they gave their parents to feed them, but at length in their good time they were all reared and flew away.

"I think Annie makes a nest very nice and comfortable," said little May, telling the story confidentially one day to her particular friend and cousin George Markham, who had come back all the way from India on purpose to see her (at least he said so).

"Go and ask her whether she won't come and make a nest for me too," whispered George in return, with a look across the walk to where Annie was standing a little apart under the flickering shadows of the yew.