

**THE HOMES OF THE
BIRDS; OR, NESTS
AND THEIR BUILDERS**

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The homes of the birds; or, Nests and their builders by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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THE HOMES OF THE BIRDS.

HE birds of the air have their nests." Yes, like all other animals, the birds have places wherein to shelter themselves and their feathered families, and these places they generally construct with a wonderful amount of skill and ingenuity. It would seem, indeed, that one of the chief objects of their brief existence is to build a home for their offspring, and for their own comfort; and in this great work they exhibit such a variety of accomplishments, and imitate so closely and so cleverly some of the principal branches of human

industry, that we have come to divide them into classes according to their special qualities. Thus, some of our birds are called *Cementers*, because they build up their nests with a kind of cement or mortar; as does, for instance, the American chimney-swallow, which fastens its twigs and bits of wood together with a strong adhesive glue or gum, secreted by glands, one on each side of the back part of its head. Others we name *Felt-making Birds*, such as the chaffinch and goldfinch, of which we shall shortly speak. Then we have the *Dome-Builders*, whose nests are surmounted by a kind of canopy, effectually preventing the rain from making its way into the interior. Nor must we forget the *Tailor-Birds* of the Tropics, which sew large leaves together until they have fashioned a most ingenious habitation. Then there are the *Weavers*, which, like



THE TAILOR-BIRD.

the Baltimore starling, interweave or manufacture a stout, firm kind of cloth, not unlike the substance of a hat in its raw state. *Basket-making Birds* display, in their own peculiar line, quite as signal a dexterity; while the *Mason-Birds*, and the *Carpenter-Birds*, and the *Platform-Builders* (like the ringdove) astonish us by the ease and accuracy with which they execute their work.

I have said that the birds "imitate several branches of human industry;"

but I am not sure whether this is the case, and whether *man* may not have imitated *them*. For, no doubt, the Mason-Birds were busy with their mortar and plaster long before any of our forefathers introduced the practice of building houses of cement and stone. However that may be, there is no doubt that we may learn much that is useful from a close examination of the Homes of the Birds. We may learn a lesson of prudence and industry and perseverance, at all events; and we may learn, too, to look beyond the Mason-Birds and the Carpenter-Birds and the Weaver-Birds to Him who created them, to Him who endowed them with their remarkable faculties of instinct and foresight, to Him who suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His knowledge.

I shall confine myself, in this little book, to a description of the Homes



A MASON-BIRD.

of British Birds and their Builders :
on future occasions, I shall hope to
speak to you respecting the brilliant
birds of the Tropics, the birds of
America, and the wild, strange birds
that haunt the iron-bound cliffs and
the gray sea-shore.

In Great Britain, the birds begin
to build their homes in the sweet and
merry spring, when the earth is re-
covering from its long winter sleep,
and the flowers and grasses are rapidly
spreading themselves over the active