

used instead. Who can fail to admire the persevering efforts of these little architects; what care, dexterity, and cleverness is employed in raising the frail platform on which is to be built the thick felted wall of the snug home? As the work advances, additional exertions are called forth; from the variety of materials required, longer flights become necessary for their collection, mossy stones and roots are scrutinised, and places frequented by live stock visited; fine grasses, thread-like roots, dead leaves or skeletons of leaves, hair, green tufts of moss with tiny imbricated leaves, and the down of tree ferns, are now wanted, crevices are searched, and the numerous holes before which 'the murderous spider,' lurking in the dark, has spread the treacherous net.

"It is whilst collecting cobwebs that the plumage of the fly-catchers is exhibited to the greatest advantage; hovering on the wing, the fan-like tail outspread to the utmost width, with rapid gyrations they move round the spot till enough has been secured for a load; the quantity made use of would surprise those who have not witnessed these labours; it is a most important element in felting; in fact, it is the mortar of the growing structure. Whilst building, the exterior of the wall is always kept higher than the centre of the nest, so that at an early stage of its progress it assumes a saucer-like shape; the birds (for both join in the labour, although the female appears to undertake the greatest share) try the strength of their work in every way; it is well trampled, the webs are carried from the interior to the outside in festoons from left to right, and right to left, as far down as the beak can reach; this working in of the web is persevered with throughout the entire building of the fabric, thus the materials are repeatedly braced together. As the wall rises, the bird, with tail elevated, is itself the mould by which the rounded cavity is beautifully shaped; seated in the centre of the rising structure, it turns round repeatedly, fluttering the wings, which action keeps the curving of the wall to its proper shape, the head and chin are pressed on the top or rim, the materials pulled in towards the centre; this manoeuvre is repeated at frequent intervals. So earnest are these little workers that they scarcely rest for hours; sometimes, by a sudden flutter, they obtain a few insects, or the creek is visited for water; . . .

"As the nest approaches completion, it assumes a cup-like form, a still more abundant use of cobweb may be noticed, the festoons are multiplied, the wall being finished off with numberless ties and braces; the interior is now lined with fern-down, the slender fruit stalks of moss, or other soft material other than feathers, and the structure is complete, and admirably finished; it is warm, strong, and elastic, and so well felted that it is not easily pressed out of shape; it is a marvel of construction, effected by the beaks of two small birds which have had numberless other offices to perform."