construction of its nest is well worthy of our attention. Think not, my readers, that the huge pile you see in yonder tree is the work of an ordinary bird; for the labours of the Crow, the Rook, the Daw, or the Jay may hide their diminished heads when brought in comparison with the skill of the Magpie. A minute description of this fabric would fill a page of this work: briefly, I may say that the foundation is composed of crossed sticks of various sizes; next follow shreds of bark, earth, clay, moss, or any similar material near at hand; then comes a lining of fine roots and tendrils; and lastly, a thick and impenetrable dome, which, with the nest, forms a spherical mass. No basket-work was ever more complete than is that part which unites the rim of the nest to the dome; and when the materials used are those of a cut quickset hedge, as is often the case, such a nest is worthy of being placed in a museum, large as it is; for it will serve to show that the bird has displayed no ordinary skill. Generally there is but one entrance to the nest; but sometimes there are two, so that the bird can take advantage of either when disturbed in the duty of incubation. The situation of the nest is most varied, sometimes on the top of a high silver fir in a plantation, on an elm or other tree on the field-side, or in a low thick thorn-bush in a hedgerow, whence the name of Hedge-Magpie is given to those that choose such situations for their nest. This name, however, should be abolished; for I am certain that no specific differences occur in the Magpies of this country. I have been looking for the supposed second species from my childhood, but have not yet found it; my opinion may, therefore, I hope, have some weight. The eggs are usually six or seven in number, of a pale-bluish white, spotted all over with ash-grey and two tints of greenish brown; they are one inch four-and-a-half lines long, by one inch broad. The young generally follow their parents during the first autumn; and it not unfrequently happens that, in those districts where they are not hunted down, several broods unite; and the little flock becomes still more ornamental than when seen singly or, as is usually the case, in pairs. The food of such assemblies consists principally of worms, grubs, and insects; but they will readily eat carrion of any kind, and a stranded sheep or sick lamb must carefully guard their eyes, or a worse calamity may befal them. To this kind of food the eggs and young of the Pheasant, the Domestic Fowl, or of almost any bird, are added, if opportunities for pilfering them be afforded: they also consume fruits of every kind, and berries of various sorts. In its disposition it is prying and most inquisitive; in actions pert and cunning; somewhat garrulous during the months of spring, if anything strange, such as the discovery of a sleeping Owl, a Fox, a wired Hare, or a nest-robbing Squirrel excites its ire; it then utters a peculiar chattering noise, betokening that something wrong or unusual has taken place. Hold council with yourselves, good keepers, and spare the Magpie for the information he has afforded you.

When taken young, the Magpie may be readily reared and domesticated. Confined, as it frequently is, in a willow cage, far too small for its comfort or the display of its agile actions, it exhibits a degree of cheerfulness and apparent happiness almost to be envied. In this limited prison it lives to amuse the humble cottager, who usually greets it with its common soubriquet of "Mag," or attempts to extend its vocabulary by more lengthened sentences, the bird sometimes acquiring the vernacular quite equal to many of the passersby. In some individuals the power of mimicry is complete and very extraordinary; the mew of the cat, the sawyer at his work, the young chanticleer, the whining dog, are each successfully imitated.

The flight of the Magpie, though apparently laboured, is easy and graceful, but, as its rounded wings would indicate, is not of long duration: if assailed, however, by a Hawk or a Falcon, it displays a quickness of movement perhaps unequalled by any other bird; and I believe I am right in saying that if a covert be gained it could not be followed; for, leaping from branch to branch, it dives about the wood with the utmost agility. A pinioned Magpie in a coppice will give half a dozen boys an appetite before they get hold of its wing or tail; and then the punishment inflicted by its sharp-pointed bill will leave a lasting remembrance of their capture of a wounded Magpie. When hawking was in vogue, this was considered one of the birds which afforded the greatest amount of sport: see an interesting note on this subject from the pen of Sir John Sebright, in Yarrell's 'British Birds,' vol. ii. p. 109.

Crown black, slightly glossed with purple; remainder of the head, neck, back, and breast black; the throat-feathers open in their texture, and terminating in a bristle; scapularies, abdomen, and flanks pure white; across the lower part of the back a band of dark grey; upper and under tail-coverts, vent, and thighs black; lesser wing-coverts black; greater coverts, spurious wing, secondaries, and tertiaries glossed with blue and green; central portion of the inner webs of the primaries pure white, their margins and the outer webs black, glossed with olive; two centre tail-feathers bronzy green nearly to the end, when that colour gradually passes into rich purple, then blue, and lastly deep green; the lateral feathers are precisely similar on their outer webs, but their inner webs are dull black, except at the tip, where they are green, like the outer ones, the iridescent colouring near the tips of the feathers forming a beautiful zone; irides dark brown; bill, legs, and feet black.

The figure is of the natural size, on a branch of the Spruce Fir (Abies excelsa).