perfect insects; they also descend to the ground, search among the grass, and fill their beaks with the creatures peculiar to such localities, and occasionally take insects in the air for the hungry and chirruping inmates of the nest in the water-spout or between the tiles of the house. Incessantly is this capturing going on, from April until August; for as soon as the first brood is able to fly, the male is again coquetting with the female; and who is there that has not seen this Sparrow-courtship, and the eternal bickering fights between the males, when two or more are engaged in a furious struggle, ending, after all, in but little harm to either of them? At the moment I am writing, August 15, 1863, some young Sparrows are chirruping in a hole near my bedroom window, in Charlotte Street, Bedford Square—a circumstance which rather militates against the assertion made by some persons that the Sparrows leave London for the corn-fields in summer; still they may do so to a certain extent, just as many of the poor of this great city seek a change of air and employment in the great hop-fields of Kent—a measure equally beneficial to man and bird. It is not a little amusing to watch closely the ways and doings of our constant attendant the Sparrow, who, as if presuming on our friendship, sets no bounds to his impudence towards his feathered brethren, and with great effrontery frequently seizes upon the hole selected by the Starling wherein to form its nest, and continues to hold possession until the Starling, loosing all patience, takes him by the neck and with main force draws him from the hole. This little altercation ended, and the stronger bird in possession, matters go on more amicably. It not unfrequently happens that the fairy Martin, which constructs her mud nest under the eaves of our houses, has scarcely finished her labours ere the Sparrow seizes on the building. The Martin is said to revenge itself upon the intruder in a curious way. To fight so powerful a bird would answer no end; she therefore plasters up the entrance to the nest with mud, and thus keeps him a prisoner. The Sparrow will also frequently attempt to lord it over the Robin, by descending to the grass-plat and interfering with his avocations; in this courageous bird, however, he finds his match; for it would be beneath the dignity of the Robin to refuse a tilt with the Sparrow, in which he is sure to be victorious. When the Sparrow keeps to his own place of breeding, whether he may domicile under the roof of a house, in the hole of a pollard, or among the branches of the trees of the garden (which he frequently does, and which is doubtless the most natural situation), none of these strifes take place.

It is a vexed question, in the thinking minds of the present day, whether we are not wrong in destroying those of our native birds which are supposed to subsist upon grain and otherwise injure our crops. Generally speaking, it is undoubtedly wrong to do so; but I consider it would be quite as unwise to allow so prolific a bird as the Sparrow to increase and multiply to the extent it would do, without a check of some kind. If we destroy every Hawk that would daily carry six or eight Sparrows to its nest for the sustenance of its young, and kill every Weasel, Stoat, and Martin that enters the holes in the pollard and other trees, where the bird often makes its nest, and destroys as many more, we must act the part hitherto performed by these natural enemies of the bird. A little judgment, tempered with mercy, is, in my opinion, all that is required to keep a proper check upon the undue increase of the Sparrow, the Rook, and other birds. How shy and vigilant, however, does the Sparrow become, the moment he is watched! how well does he know, after the first shot, that the gun is a weapon of destruction to him! It is amusing to see the cunning with which he keeps out of harm's way; how superior, in this respect, he is to all other birds: his intelligence amazes us, and we say to ourselves, Can this have been brought about by a lengthened and close proximity to man?

The Sparrow is not an elegant bird, neither is he so gaily attired as the Goldfinch; yet he is adorned with many pleasing and harmonized colours, particularly in the seasons of spring and summer. In his nuptial dress, and with a coal-black bill, the Sparrow is no mean-looking bird; and when the male, with exuberant manifestations of love, displays himself before the female, the silvery grey of the lower part of the back contrasts strongly with the chestnut of his drooping wings, and the grey of his crown looks like a coronet, surrounded as it is with streaks of chestnut and black. In summer the Sparrow is in his best; and the London birds would be equal in every respect, were it not for the smoke and other impurities with which they are surrounded. In winter the males have lighter-coloured heads, and the tints of the plumage are not so conspicuous and contrasted. The females differ less at the opposite seasons than the males; and the young of the year, of both sexes,

are like their maternal parent.

The nest, when placed among the open branches of the trees, is a very large, warm, and dome-shaped structure, composed of grasses wound round and round with the greatest ingenuity, and lined with feathers, bits of rag, and other warm materials; when constructed in the hollow of a tree or under the eaves of the house, its not so elegant or complete. The nest represented in the accompanying Plate was taken in a garden at Ray Mead; it is now under a glass shade in the British Museum, and is well worthy of the inspection of all persons interested in bird-architecture. The eggs, which are five or six in number, are stone-white, spotted and streaked with ash-colour and dark-brown.

The Plate represents a male, a female, and a nest on a branch of the Plane-tree, all of the natural size.