habits and the sombre style of its colouring, it is rarely visible. It is far more restless than the Nightingale, and is constantly engaged in flying and leaping among the thickest foliage of the shrubs and the leafy tops of the highest trees. The female is even more shy than her mate; and as she is generally mute, her rusty bonnet is seldom brought into view. The situation of the nest is somewhat varied; sometimes it is placed near the ground, in a small shrub interlaced with tall weeds, at others high up among the branches of trees, and not unfrequently among the Portugal laurels of the pleasure-ground. A nest taken from a tree of this kind, at the Holt, Preston Hall, Kent, on the 25th of April 1858, was a slight, round, cup-shaped structure of dried grasses, with a little moss on the exterior, and lined with exceedingly fine hair-like fibrous roots, and a few long hairs coiled round with them. The eggs were four in number, of a dull stone-white, obscurely blotched all over with umber-brown, and here and there a still darker irregular-shaped spot, and in some instances a zone of this colour near the larger end. Another nest, taken in Berkshire, May 12, 1859, was outwardly composed of fine dried grasses, thinly lined with extremely fine hair-like roots, and was so loosely put together that it might be seen through. The eggs, like those above described, were four in number, of a pale reddish stone-colour blotched with olive-brown, particularly at the larger end, where these marks formed a zone.

From the charms of its voice and its pleasing contour, few birds are more desirable for the cage than the Blackcap; and hence attempts are yearly made to render it docile, to accustom it to its artificial home, and to acclimatize it to the heated atmosphere of our rooms. When these are carried out successfully and the bird has performed it regular moult, I do not know of any sylviine species that is more interesting. That some, if not all, of these ends may be accomplished I know to be the case; for, in the month of December 1864, a pet Blackcap was shown to me by one of the daughters of Lady Mildred Beresford Hope, which was in every way entitled to admiration, being tame and docile in disposition, clean and silky in its dress, and, moreover, in the best of health. Miss Catherine Hope had evidently great love for her little charge, and it was equally evident that the feeling was reciprocated by the bird. Descanting on the value of the Blackcap as a cage-bird, the Hon. and Rev. W. Herbert has recorded some interesting details of its management in captivity, in his notes to White's 'Natural History of Selborne,' one or two of which are here transcribed:—

"This is certainly by far the most desirable of all birds for the cage, and there is none that can be more easily kept. Their general food is bruised hemp-seed and bread, with some fresh, lean, raw meat mixed up with it; they do not even refuse a bit of fat and a little yolk of egg; occasionally a few insects may be given, particularly if the birds appear not well, now and then a fly, a green or brown caterpillar from a cabbage, or a spider; they care very little for insects, if they have plenty of fruit and other changes of food, although, like other birds of this tribe, they are particularly fond of the larvæ in the wasp- and hornet-combs. The Blackcaps are very vivacious in a cage, if well taken care of. They are very fond of a boiled carrot mashed and moistened, or beet-root boiled and mashed. A boiled carrot will keep fresh for many days in a basin of cold water, and is an excellent substitute for fruit in feeding them. Boiled cabbage, cauliflower, and green peas are good for them, as well as all sorts of puddings. The standard food is hemp-seed ground in a coffee-mill, and bread-crumbs scalded and mashed up together and fresh every day. They are very fond of ripe pears, elder-berries, currants, cherries, honeysuckle, and privet-berries.

"What makes the Blackcap most desirable is that it is more hardy than any other species except the Whitethroat, which is also a delightful bird. The Blackcap sings almost the whole of the year, if kept in good health, only stopping a few weeks while moulting; and even then I have known it to break out into song. If bred up from the nest, it may be taught any tune, or the song of one or more sorts of birds."

Gilbert White says, "its common note is full, sweet, deep, loud, and wild; but that strain is of short continuance, owing to the bird's desultory motions; when, however, it sits calmly and engages in song in earnest, it pours forth a very sweet but inward melody, accompanied by a great variety of soft and gentle modulations, superior, perhaps, to those of any other of our warblers, the Nightingale excepted."

The chief food of this bird in a state of nature is insects and their larvæ; when these are not attainable, it feeds on berries, particularly those of the privet, elder, and ivy. It also readily attacks the ripening fruit of the garden, such as currants, cherries, and figs; but whatever harm it does in this way is amply compensated by the good it effects in destroying the far more damaging insects.

The sexes offer a marked difference in the colouring of their crowns, that of the male being of a ravenblack, as is also its bead-like eye, while that of the female is russet brown. In the young of the year of both sexes, I believe, a brown cap prevails, and that the black colouring is not assumed by the males until the second moult.

The figures represent the two sexes, of the natural size, on a flowering branch of the Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa).