exclaim, with old Izaak Walton, "Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in Heaven, when thou affordest bad men such music on earth!" Still "it is a disputed point," says the Rev. C. A. Johns in his 'British Birds in their Haunts,' "whether the Nightingale's song should be considered joyous or melancholy. This must always remain a question of taste. My own opinion is that the piteous wailing note which is its most characteristic feature casts a shade of sadness as it were over the whole song, even those portions which gush with the most exuberant gladness. I think, too, though my assertion may seem a barbarous one, that if the Nightingale's song comprised the wailing notes alone, it would be universally shunned as the most painfully melancholy sound in nature. From this, however, it is redeemed by the rapid transition, just when the anguish of the bird has arrived at such a pitch as to be no longer supportable, to a passage overflowing with joy and gladness. In the first or second week of June his cataract of sweet sounds is exhausted, and his only remaining note is a harsh croak exactly resembling that of a frog or the subdued note of a raven."

The period during which the Nightingale sings is but a short one; for after their eggs are hatched other feelings come into play, and the welfare of the young engrosses all their attention: suspicion now takes the place of the blindest confidence; and the bird becomes recluse, shy, and timorous. The task of incubation performed, all is accomplished; the old cast their feathers, and by the time the new ones are grown the young have attained the likeness of their parents, and old and young are stimulated to depart to climes where the sun still gives forth its radiant heat, and insects, so necessary to their existence, are to be found in abundance. The autumn actions of the Nightingale are quite the reverse of those of spring. The quivering wing and drooping tail of the male as it hops from branch to branch at the last-mentioned season are no longer to be seen, and the bird now bounds over the ground on stilted legs and with the tail erect; and in the middle of the covert its plaintive note or its harsh croak may be heard, significant of displeasure at the near approach of an intruder.

I cannot close this short history of the Nightingale, that makes its summer-home of our island, without a few words condemnatory of the conduct of those who gain a scanty livelihood by the capture of this bird for the purpose of sale in the bird-shops of London and other great towns,—since by this course they deprive the rural districts of one of their greatest charms, with too trifling a benefit to themselves to compensate for the injury they inflict. No bird is so easily trapped, and no one is more difficult to keep in confinement: ninetenths at least of those that are taken die within a month after their capture; while those that survive pass a miserable existence in a darkened prison, never again to chant over the drooping blue-bell or cheer the loiterer along the green lanes of our favoured island. Surely the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and country residents generally, might here interfere with advantage. To show the extent to which the practice is carried, I may cite the following passage from Mr. Harting's 'Birds of Middlesex.' "A quondam keeper of my acquaintance, an adept in the art of bird-catching, told me that at one time he rented a cottage for which he paid £10 a year. If there was what he called "a good Nightingale season," he made more than enough to pay his rent by the capture and sale of these birds! In one season alone he caught fifteen dozen, receiving eighteen shillings a dozen for them in London."

Of two nests, sent to me by Mr. Smither, of Churt, one was composed of a thick mass of skeleton leaves lined with a very few horse-hairs, and outwardly of a number of dried oak-leaves compactly inserted edgewise: the other was similarly constructed on the outside; but dried coarse grasses took the place of the skeleton leaves, and the interior was lined with very fine stems of dried grasses. The nest is generally placed on the side of a bank, and occasionally in a shrub or bush two or three feet from the ground.

The eggs, which are four or five in number, often vary from their usual olive tint: in some taken by Mr. Smither the ground-colour was obscure greenish olive, blotched with indistinct patches of a darker tint; while others had a distinct zone of a richer colour at the larger end; and Mr. Bond informs me that he has seen some quite blue.

But little difference is observable in the size of the sexes; and both are similarly coloured. When the young leave the nest, they are spotted and marked like young Robins; but they soon cast off their nestling feathers, and assume a coating like that of their parents; so that the adults and young are very similar when they depart from us in September for Morocco, where they reside until nature prompts them to return again in the spring.

The Plate represents the two sexes and nest, of the natural size; the cruciform plant is the Galium cruciatum, and the butterfly is the Polyommatus Alexis.