

THE MAGPIE'S NEST

LONG ago, when the world was very young, the birds did not know how to build nests for themselves.

The Magpie was the only bird that knew how to build a nest well. His nest was covered all over, except a hole to go in and out.

The other birds talked a great deal about the wonderful little house which the Magpie could build.

They all wished they might build one just like it for their little birds. So one day two birds of every kind went to see the Magpie.

They said: "Sir Magpie, we have come to learn how to build nests for ourselves and our little birds. We will pay you well if you will show us how."

The Magpie said: "I shall be glad to show you how to build nests. But you must watch everything I do. First, I lay two sticks across each other, so."

"To be sure," said the Crow. "I knew it must begin with two sticks and they should be crossed, of course."

"Then mix some straw and some moss in this way," said the Magpie.

"Oh, yes, certainly," said the Jackdaw. "I guessed that without being taught."

"Then more moss, more straw and feathers, like this;" said the Magpie.

[327] "Yes, yes," said the Sparrow, "though no builder myself, I knew that was the way to do."

Still the Magpie went on, but the birds acted as if they knew everything he told them.

At last he would tell them no more, though the nest was built up only half way.

"If you knew all about nest-building, then why did you come here to learn it of me?"

he said. "You may go and build your own nests. I'll not tell you how I built mine."

Then away they all flew.

Each bird set to work to build himself a nest.

But when they had built up half way, they stopped, for they did not know how to go on.

So to this day, their nests all look like the Magpie's, just cut in two.