

excellence as architects. Their styles of nest-building are very various indesign, but there is one characteristic running through all which distinguishes their nests from those of all other birds. Owing to the extreme weakness of the feet and to the great length of the wings these birds are excessively awkward in any situation but their native element, the upper air. They cannot build of grass, feathers or hair mixed with mud as so many other birds do. To collect the materials would be difficult to weave them together impossible. Neither can they nest upon the ground—a common alternative, especially with non-perching birds. get him on a solid, level surface and the swift is almost helpless. He flounders awkwardly about until he can launch himself over the edge of a rock or bank, and spread those long wings again on the free air. But if nature has condemned this race to make bricks without straw, she has herself shown them how to provide a substitute, and that from a most unique source. The whole family are gifted with an unusual development of the salivary glands which in nesting time secrete within the mouth a thick viscous fluid. Of this material, wholly or in part, the nests of all the various species of swift are composed. On exposure to the air it soon dries into a glue-like substance, hard, light and elastic. So tenacious is it that in removing the nest of our own North American species from a chimney the very brick itself will often come away in scales before the nest will break. Thus equipped these children of the air are almost independent of the earth, and can fix their homes and rear their young in the most inaccessible places, far from the dangers of this lower world.

In Ceylon and the islands of the Indian Archipelago several species of the genus *Collocalia* fasten their little saucer-shaped egg-baskets against high over-hanging cliffs, or on the walls of caverns running in from the sea. These furnish the famous Salangane, or edible birds-nests, so dear to the heart of the Chinese epicure. The best samples, that is, the first of the season, are composed wholly of the salivary gum, and are so difficult to obtain that they are frequently sold in the Celestial Empire as high as three guineas (\$15) a pound. In general shape they resemble the nest of our own chimney swift, but are of a translucent white colour, and appear as if woven of threads of isinglass.