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THE PURPLE MARTIN.

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None of the higher forms of our wild life have adapted themselves so readily to the changed conditions brought about by the advent of the white man to America as some of the birds. In general, the culture our ancestors brought from Europe has been destructive of almost all the indigenous animals; most of the mammals are approaching extinction, while of the birds, two or three species are already exterminated, and a number of others are fast disappearing. But in marked contrast to these, a few species of our avian fauna have known not only how to resist our deadly encroachments, but appear in some ways to have actually benefited by the new conditions. One curious illustration of this is afforded by the nest of the chipping sparrow, which nowadays is invariably lined with horsehair. No doubt the bird originally used some vegetable fibre for the purpose, but when horsehair became available it took exclusively to that superior building material.

It is, though, in the choice of a nesting site that the adaptiveness of certain birds is best seen. Besides the several species, such as the robin, the phoebe and the wren, which, while still nesting freely as of old in the fields and woods, often delight us by the confidence with which they build around our houses, there are others that have become almost wholly dependent on man for their domicile. One of these is the chimney swift. In these latter days the swift nearly always glues its curious bracket of dry twigs inside a disused chimney. Very seldom is the bird seen at any distance from a house, and when it is found ranging over the forest, its nest is almost certain to be discovered on the inner wall of a deserted shanty or shed.

Even more dependent on man is the purple martin. Its original practice is disclosed by the fact that, in the western part of its range, where human habitations are rare, it still sometimes nests in cavities in trees. But in the east it looks exclusively to man for accommodation. I have seen it occasionally rearing its brood on some shelf-like