

appearing some time before them, but they atone for tardiness by remarkable regularity. The records of a number of years show that they may be looked for in Ottawa almost with certainty on one of the first six days of May; and when they come they come altogether. To-day, perhaps, not a swift is to be seen, or at most but a couple of pioneers; to-morrow the whole colony is with us. They take up their abode at first in what may be called the swifts' immigrant shed. I call it by that name because none of the birds have any intention of making it a home in which to bring up a family. This temporary shelter is a ventilating tower at the northeast corner of the Western Departmental Building. Here on any fine evening in May they may be seen in countless numbers, sporting and chasing each other high in air, at first extending their gambols over the whole of Parliament Hill, waiting for the stragglers to come home, perhaps from an afternoon's trip to the St. Lawrence, or far back over the Laurentian Mountains, for distance is nothing to them. As the evening advances, however, the whole flock commences to take up a circling motion round the favourite tower, though still high above it. Gradually the circle becomes narrower and a few birds will now and then dash down at the windows of the tower as if about to enter; but these are only "false offers," for the birds sheer off and rejoin the twittering stream above, which is all the while drawing lower down and closer together, until now the sun has fallen behind Chelsea Mountain, and just as the twilight comes on, the stream narrows to a living whirlpool whose vortex is the tower window. Then with the roar of many wings beating together they pour into the opening. There are four such windows within a few feet of one another, but the swifts use only one, the eastern; and as it is too narrow for the multitude of birds pressing in, many flutter against the stone work and eddying off at the sides heighten the resemblance of the whole to a whirlpool. These fall into the main current again when its force slackens, and soon the last swift has entered for the night.

The great Audubon and several other ornithologists describe the chimney swifts as prolonging these gambols after sundown far into the dusk, and Nuttall even calls them nocturnal birds; but with us they always retire with, or soon after, the setting sun, and when the last straggler has disappeared there is still light enough to read a book without