

REMARKABLY EARLY ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST
MIGRANTS OF THIS SEASON.

By REV. G. EIFRIG.

The first Spring migrants among birds have come here earlier than usual. That is rather remarkable, when we consider that climatic conditions in February were severer than in most years, and that there was nothing especially tempting for birds here in March. The first robins and bluebirds looked and sounded strangely out of tune with the snow-covered fields and city-lots, and the prevailing ice and frost of the second half of March and the first half of April. What is the reason for this unusually early arrival, when there was so little here to tempt them? In my opinion it is the following: During the first half of March a wave of phenomenally warm or even hot weather struck that part of the United States which is in the latitude of Washington, D.C., New York, and westward to Chicago. The thermometer is reported at Washington to have climbed up as far as 92°, showing the highest temperature ever registered there for that part of the year, with perhaps one exception. Previous to this hot spell there would already be a great number of birds in those regions, their numerous permanent residents and the thousands of winter residents from Canada, *e.g.*, the juncos, tree sparrows, song sparrows, etc. Now this warm wave would have the effect of attracting further untold numbers of migrants from further south, which in the normal course of events would have begun their northward move somewhat later. This must have caused a great congestion in the bird life of that section, which in plant and insect life was also not yet sufficiently advanced to support this teeming bird life. This would, in my opinion, have the effect of inducing the hardiest of the northward migrants, those who would have gone northward first at any rate, to leave somewhat earlier than usual. And no doubt, the song sparrows, bluebirds and robins which came here first this year, were again in their class, in their respective species, the pioneers, the leaders, the most hardy and intrepid ones, which would at the same time be able to withstand adverse conditions most successfully. And that some of them have to suffer more or less for their bravery and pluck, there can be no doubt. Some probably, when they found weather conditions so uncongenial here, promptly returned to points further south. Thus I saw a flock of about 50 tree swallows merrily flying over the Rideau River, then full of ice, at Cumming's Bridge at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, on March 30th. Two hours later not a one was there, and I have seen no more since. And now there has been a lull in the migration for about two weeks; few, if any, new species having come in addi-