

## NATURE STUDY.—No. XXVIII.

## A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO SOME OF OUR COMMON BIRDS.

## SWALLOWS AND SWIFTS.

Rev. C. W. G. EIFRIG.

When a bird lover has solved the riddles that the identification of the members of the Finch, or Sparrow, family presents to him, of which Nature Study No. 25 treated, other birds also clamor for recognition at his hands. The Finches present themselves first and insistently for his consideration, on account of their greater abundance, variety, difficulty of separation and nearness to one's home. However, in small cities, along the outskirts of larger ones, and especially around country homes, there are certain birds just as plentiful at places, and then even more apparent than the sparrows. These are the Swallows, those welcome harbingers of spring.

Although they are swift of flight and do not settle very often, thus making it somewhat difficult to get a good view of them, yet their identification should not present any insuperable difficulties, even to the novice, on account of the small number of species belonging to this family. There are only five kinds of Swallows to be found in most parts of Eastern Canada, or at most six.

The first Swallow to arrive in spring, in fact one of the first of birds, is the lively and pretty Tree or White-bellied Swallow. The latter name, though not the most euphonious, is the better, because it gives at once the distinguishing mark, i.e., the *pure white under parts*. It arrives at Ottawa the first or second week in March, and for a month it is the only Swallow; and, as all Swallows make themselves very noticeable by their swift graceful flight, made possible by their comparatively long, sickle-shaped wings, the Tree Swallow can not long remain unnoticed. So, when you see a swallow darting around over rivers and ponds, white only below and steel-blue or green above, that is the Tree Swallow, *Tachycineta bicolor*. It is called Tree Swallow because it makes its nest in cavities, knot-holes or old woodpecker holes in trees and fences.

The second swallow to arrive from the south—the first or second week in April at Ottawa—is at the same time the largest