

## NATURE STUDY—No. XXV.

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

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People desiring to become acquainted with birds, those lovable, pretty and useful friends of man, are sometimes bewildered and discouraged by the mass of material which offers itself in nature itself, or in the books which they consult. To help in overcoming these primary difficulties is the object of this paper. How elevating it is to know the birds one meets with, to recognize them by their form, color, behavior, flight and song, to become acquainted with these companions of one's work or walks! How much more beauty and satisfaction can then be got out of life! No one need be discouraged from forming at least a passing acquaintance with them. A little hard work, patience, close observation and perseverance will do it.

The families and species treated of here are loosely arranged in the relative order of abundance and probability of their being seen. The list is more especially for the Ottawa district, but many of the species are of almost continental distribution.

The Finches.—Everyone is familiar with the appearance of birds of the Finch family from our common and least desired neighbor, the English Sparrow. The chief characteristic is the thick, conical bill. A useful species of this family is the CHIPPING SPARROW, *Spisella socialis*. The English name is from its call and alarm note, chip, chip, etc.; its song is a locust-like trill, lillillillill, etc. It is smaller and more slender in shape than the English Sparrow. Its *bright chestnut crown* and grayish white line over the eye serve to identify it. Found in gardens, tree-lined streets and the borders of woods.

As common as the Chipping is the SONG SPARROW, *Melospiza cinerea melodia*. About the size of the English Sparrow, more roundish in build; much streaked with black, brown and gray, below whitish, streaked with black with a larger *blotch in centre of breast*. Its chief mark is its cheerful song beginning with usually three long notes, thus: "Olit, olit, olit, chip, chip, chip, che-char, che wiss, wiss wiss," or "Maids, maids, maids, put on your teakettles, teakettles-ettle-ettle" (Blanchan). It likes places with at