

or 10,000 would not be far from the true number of the flock. There is at the bottom of the shaft a mass of droppings and feathers, evidently the accumulation of several years, but no sign of a nest anywhere. This place is not made use of by them for that purpose.

Inspection of the tower during daylight on a number of other occasions when the weather was fine showed not a single swift within. It is well known that they never rest in the open air, and as there appears to be no other roost in this neighbourhood the conclusion is almost unavoidable that these tiny creatures spend the whole 16 or 17 hours of the summer day upon the wing. What restless energy in those little pinions! And what a vast quantity of insect food, in the aggregate, must be consumed in order to sustain such untiring muscles!

In the year 1869 the late Lt.-Col. Wiley read a paper on "Swallows" before the Ottawa Literary and Scientific Society, in which he gave an interesting account of this same colony. Their favourite rendezvous was then a tower in the Eastern Block, from which they were afterwards excluded by placing a wire netting over the openings. It is to be hoped that they may long remain undisturbed in their present quarters. The good work done by such a flock in clearing the atmosphere of insects must be almost incalculable. And for this we are now more than ever dependent upon the swifts, since almost all the swallows and other insect-eating birds have been driven from their city homes by the European sparrows.

There are several other similar towers about the Government Buildings, but none of these are ever occupied by the swifts, so intensely gregarious are they in disposition. When nesting time comes, however, the case is exactly reversed. The birds are scattered over the city and probably far into the country, and seldom, I believe, is there more than one pair found nesting in any one chimney.

Amongst all the feathered tribes, at the nesting season, the males are endowed with some distinguishing mark of beauty or some accessory power of display which serves to point out to the other sex the most vigorous and desirable among many suitors. The brilliant colours, the wonderful growths of ornamental plumes, the sweet songs or extraordinary calls of many birds in spring time are all to be accounted for upon this principle. In other species the same end is served by curious