

SOME CANADIAN BIRDS.

THE SWALLOWS.

Swallows are not frequenters of either the fields or the groves, though strangers to neither, but they are typical birds—birds of the air. “It is little more than a drift of the air brought into form by plumes,” writes John Ruskin of a typical bird. And again, “The air is in all its quills, it breathes through its whole frame and flesh, and glows with air in flying like a blown flame; it rests upon the air, subdues it, surpasses it; is the air, conscious of itself, conquering itself, ruling itself.” We find that vivid bit of description in “Athena.” Surely Mr. Ruskin must have had a swallow in mind when he wrote it.

In almost every country swallows of some species help, in their own bountiful way, to make the summer's gladness, and thus these birds have become familiar friends to widely separated races. For whether a man be Frank or Persian, Norseman or Turk, he understands the language of the birds and is moved by the glad thoughts they put into their songs.

Six representatives of this family visit Eastern Canada every summer, but of the six, four only can be correctly classed among the “common” birds, for the purple martin, though widely distributed, is nowhere abundant, and the rough-winged swallow has not been found elsewhere than at London, where that keen observer, Mr. William E. Saunders, was fortunate enough to discover a few examples. The other four occur in numbers in all the Provinces, though restricted somewhat to localities. They are gregarious, and build their nests in colonies or “republics,” as these have been termed; and while the birds may be seen at some distance from head-quarters, there is a limit to these wanderings—swift and strong