## Genus HIRUNDO, Linn.

Gen. Char. Bill short, much depressed, wide at the base; upper mandible bent at the tip and carinated; the gape extending as far back as the eyes. Nostrils basal, oblong, partly covered by a membrane. Tarsi short. Toes slender, three before and one behind; the outer toe united to the middle one as far as the first joint. Tail of twelve feathers, generally forked. Wings long, acuminate, the first quill-feather the longest.

## CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

Hirundo rustica, Linn.

L'Hirondelle de Cheminée ou domestique.

The migration of the Swallow and the laws which regulate its movements are now so well understood that it will scarcely be necessary to advert to them here. In the British Islands and in all other portions of the European Continent, the period of its arrival may be calculated upon with tolerable certainty, a scattered few generally appearing in all parts of the same latitude from the fifth to the tenth of April, after which period their numbers become suddenly augmented, and the work of reproduction is almost immediately proceeded with. Two broods are generally produced in the course of the season, the first being mostly able to fly before midsummer, and the second in the month of August. The young on leaving the nest are assiduously supplied with food, and carefully attended by their parents, until they are sufficiently strong to provide for themselves. The task of incubation being accomplished, the Swallows congregate in extensive flocks, and in obedience to the laws of nature retrace their steps, and pass the remainder of the year in more southern countries, where the insect food so essential to their existence is ever abundant. In this migratory movement, the adults, we are inclined to believe, always precede their progeny, which remain with us as long as the weather continues open and a sufficient supply of insects can be obtained for their subsistence.

The members of this aërial tribe are only excelled in their power of flight by the *Cypseli*, or Swifts, and are seen to the greatest advantage in the air, where their dexterity in securing their prey, the manner in which they drink while passing over the stream, and the celerity with which they feed their young while on the wing, cannot fail to call forth our admiration.

It is now generally admitted that the Barn Swallow of America is quite distinct from the British species; consequently the range of our bird is limited to the Old World. In the summer months the *Hirundo rustica* is universally dispersed over the whole of Europe, whence, as before stated, it migrates periodically into tropical regions; and as all migratory animals move from north to south, and *vice versâ*, Africa constitutes its winter residence.

In the British Islands the sites chosen for its nests are the interiors of chimneys and of coal-pits; but in many parts of the Continent, where these situations are not frequently met with, it builds on church towers, old ruins, the eaves of houses, barns, and other outbuildings. The eggs are four or five in number, their colour white, speckled with reddish brown and pale blue.

Forehead and throat rich chestnut; the remainder of the head, a band across the breast, and the whole of the upper surface black with blue reflections; tail very deeply forked, the two outer feathers extending far beyond the others; a large white spot on the inner webs of all the feathers, except the two middle ones; all the under surface white tinged with reddish brown, which is deepest on the vent and under tail-coverts; bill and feet black.

The female has rather less of the rich chestnut on the forehead, the black is less brilliant, and the outer tail-feathers much shorter than in the male.

The young is entirely destitute of the chestnut on the forehead, the throat is merely tinged with rufous; the band across the breast is but faintly indicated; all the upper surface resembles that of the adult, but the tints are much more dull; the wings are also shorter, and it is destitute of the long tail-feathers, which are not acquired till the first moult.

Our Plate represents an adult and a young bird of the natural size.