INTRODUCTION.

49. CHÆTURA CAUDACUTA.

Spine-tailed Swift.

The solitary example above alluded to was "shot about 9 p.m. on the 8th of July, 1846, by a farmer's son near Colchester, in Essex; he saw it first in the evening of the 6th. He tells me it occasionally flew to a great height, was principally engaged in hawking for flies over a small wood and neighbouring trees; being only wounded, it cried very much as it fell, and, when he took it up, clung so tightly to some clover as to draw some stalks from the ground" (T. Catchpool, jun., in the 'Zoologist' for 1846, p. 1493).

If Indian, Chinese, and Australian examples are identical, as I believe they are, then the range of the present species is wide indeed; but possessing, as it does, vast wing-powers, there is no reason why it should not pass and repass from one country to another with the greatest ease. Distance being mere child's play to a bird so largely endowed with the means of flight, its accidental occurrence in England need not excite surprise.

Family HIRUNDINIDÆ.

The members of this great family of air-frequenting birds are almost universally dispersed—so much so at least that Swallows and Martins are known to the inhabitants of most parts of the globe, except those of New Zealand and Polynesia, where, strange to say, none are to be found.

More than a hundred species are enumerated in our lists, in which large number many variations of form exist, each characterized by some peculiarity in habits, mode of life, kind of food they eat, construction of nest, or mode of nidification. Three migratory species, each pertaining to a distinct genus, make our islands a temporary resting-place during the months of summer.

Genus Hirundo.

The species of this form, of which our common Swallow is the type, inhabit Europe, India, China, and North America. They are distinguished for the elegance of their structure and the ease and buoyancy of their evolutions.

Common Swallow.

Comment upon this familiar species is quite unnecessary; we all know it arrives in spring, and, after