

Genus SQUATAROLA.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* rather strong, cylindrical, straight, nearly as long as the head; the tip, or horny part, about half the length of the whole bill, tumid, and arched, with the *tomia* bending inwards. *Nasal groove* wide, half the length of the bill. *Mesorhinium* depressed below the level of the tip. *Nostrils* longitudinally pierced in the membrane of the groove, linear, oblong. *Wings* rather long, acuminate, with the first quill-feather the longest. *Legs* slender, of mean length, naked above the tarsal joint. *Feet* four-toed, three before and one behind; front toes joined at their base by a membrane, that portion of it between the outer and middle toe being the longest. Hind toe very small or rudimental. *Tarsi* reticulated. *Plumage* thick, close, and adpressed.

GREY PLOVER.

Squatarola cinerea, Cuv.

Le Vanneau Pluvier.

THE Grey Plover is the only European example of the genus *Squatarola*, a genus of more than ordinary interest to the ornithologist, possessing as it does characters which seem to place it in an intermediate situation between the genus *Charadrius* on the one hand and that of *Vanellus* on the other. In its most striking peculiarities, both as regards its general form and the nature of its periodical changes of plumage, it exhibits a striking affinity to the well-known Golden Plover; in fact, in some stages of its plumage, it requires a nice attention to other points to distinguish it from that bird: for example, during the first autumn and winter of its existence, each feather has its edges spotted and margined with yellow, as the single feather in the foreground of our Plate will illustrate. The next change consists in the loss of the yellow colour, which is exchanged for grey, a style of plumage which ever after characterizes this bird, excepting in the commencement of the breeding season, and during the subsequent moult, when the greater part of the under surface is, as in the Golden Plover, of a uniform rich and glossy black. Trusting to these characteristics alone, we should be ready to assign to the bird a place in the genus *Charadrius*; but on examining the feet we should immediately discover our mistake, for although we do not find a well-developed hind toe, still we are presented with one in a rudimentary condition, indicating the fact of its departing from the typical form of the genus *Charadrius*, and its alliance to that of *Vanellus*, between which it becomes a connecting link: hence we agree with Baron Cuvier in the propriety of constituting the genus *Squatarola* for its reception.

The range of the Grey Plover is very extensive. It is found in the northern portions of the continents of Europe and America, everywhere preferring the borders of the sea and the mouths of large rivers, particularly where low, flat, muddy shores extend, abounding with food expressly adapted to it, such as worms, various kinds of insects and their larvæ. At some seasons it is very abundant on our shores; at others more sparingly diffused, but never, we believe, altogether absent: they appear in the greatest abundance while performing their periodical migrations, in the months of April and May, when their numbers are greatly augmented.

Along the coasts of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Kent, at such seasons they appear in flocks, some individuals having the breast wholly black, others mottled with black and white, while some few have not yet begun to exhibit this change; which varied appearances depend on the maturity of the bird, and on the degree of forwardness attained for the great purpose of reproduction.

But little can be correctly affirmed regarding its nidification; and it is still questionable whether it is to be deemed a bird which regularly breeds in our island. M. Temminck informs us that it is common in the regions of the arctic circle and on the confines of Asia. The eggs are four in number, of a light olive blotched with black.

The Grey Plover, like its relation the Golden Plover, is an active bird, running rapidly along the flat shores with his head depressed and his body in a horizontal position; nor is it less remarkable for its powers of flight.

In consequence of the remarks on the plumage above given, it will only be requisite for us to describe the livery which characterizes the bird during the first autumn. The whole of the upper surface, together with the sides of the chest, are beautifully bespangled with yellow and brown on a dark olive-grey ground; the under parts white; irides, beak, feet and legs, blackish olive.

The Plate represents two adult birds: one in its spring, the other in its winter plumage, both of the natural size; and it will be observed that the black chest of the bird in its spring plumage is bordered by a band of pure white.