

SHORT-TOED LARK.

Alauda brachydactyla, Temm.

L'Alouette à doigts courts.

THIS species, like *Alauda Calandra* and *Alauda Tartarica*, is distinguished by the more powerful and robust form of the bill, and by the comparative shortness of the toes, circumstances which, as we have already observed, would appear to constitute the characters of a minor group of the Larks ; in neither, however, are the toes so much abbreviated as in the present instance. The members of this group would appear to be widely distributed, the largest of the genus, *Alauda Tartarica*, being a native of high northern latitudes, while the delicate species here figured makes the southern regions of Europe, and the adjacent portions of Africa, its permanent habitat. It is said to abound on the hot sandy plains of the Spanish Peninsula, and that it is no less abundant in Sicily and in some portions of Italy ; in fact it is found along the whole of the borders of the Mediterranean. It occurs occasionally in the South of France, but this appears to be the boundary of its range northwards.

Its nest is constructed on the ground like that of the Sky Lark, and the eggs are five in number, of an isabelle yellow, without any markings.

The sexes are not distinguishable by the colouring of their plumage ; the tints of the female are, however, somewhat duller than those of the male. The young during the first autumn have the outer edges of each feather margined with buff.

The male has the top of the head and all the upper parts of a yellowish or sandy brown, with the centre of each feather darker ; the quills and tail of a dusky brown, the two outer feathers of the latter having their external edges yellowish white ; a whitish yellow streak over each eye ; throat and belly white, the chest and flanks being tinged with yellowish brown ; bill and feet light brown.

The Plate represents a male and female of the natural size.