

## CICONIA ALBA.

### Stork.

*Ardea ciconia*, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 57.

*Ciconia alba*, Briss. Orn., tom. v. p. 365, pl. xxxii.

——— *albescens, nivea, et candida*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., pp. 574, 575.

THE Stork is one of the most conspicuous of migratory birds, and is specially interesting from the circumstance of its arrival and departure occurring with a precision which did not escape the notice of the inspired writers; for we read in Jeremiah, viii. 7, "Yea, the Stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times." To witness the exactitude with which these movements are effected, my readers must proceed to certain parts of the neighbouring continent; for our islands are not in the direct line of the bird's migrations; indeed the Stork has probably never been more than an accidental visitor to us; still we have abundant evidence of its occurrence in Britain, from the time of Willughby and Ray to the month in which I am writing (May 1871), when Mr. J. H. Gurney, Jun., showed me a fine old male in the flesh, which had been shot either at Dungeness or Romney, in Kent. On the Continent, particularly in Germany and Holland, the arrival of the Stork is regarded as the true harbinger of spring, and is looked for with the highest interest, as will be seen from the following passage in the clever work by MM. Erckmann and Chatrian, entitled 'Contes des Bords du Rhin,' to which my attention was directed by Professor Owen. The scene is from the story called "L'ami Fritz," chap. 8, page 31.

"At two o'clock entered Professor Speck, with his great square-toed shoes at the end of his long thin legs, his long brown coat, and his epicurean nose. He took off his hat with a solemn air, and said, 'I have the honour to announce to the company that the Storks have arrived!' Forthwith was repeated from every corner of the beer-house, 'The Storks have arrived! the Storks have arrived!'

"A great tumult commenced; every one quitted his half-finished pint to go and look at the Storks. In less than a minute there were more than a hundred persons with their noses in the air in front of the 'Great Hart.' At the very top of the church a Stork, resting on her stilt-like legs, her black wings folded above her white tail, her large red beak inclined with a melancholy air, was the admiration of all the town. The male Stork whirled around, and tried to settle himself on the wheel, where still hung a few ends of straw. The Rabbi David had also arrived, and looking up, his old hat hanging at the back of his head, exclaimed 'They have come from Jerusalem! They have reposed on the Pyramids of Egypt . . . ; they have traversed the seas!' All along the street, in front of the market-house, nothing was seen but old gossips, old men, and children, their heads thrown back in a sort of extasy, some old women saying, while wiping their eyes, 'We have seen them again, once more!'

A detailed account of all the recorded instances of the occurrence of the Stork in England would be without any compensating amount of interest; I shall therefore merely remark that its visits are by no means regular, that in one year one, two, or more may appear, while in the next, or probably two or three years, none may be seen; the latest instance that has come to my knowledge is the one above mentioned, in which the bird was submitted to my inspection by Mr. Gurney.

Now what is the especial use of the Stork in the countries it regularly frequents, which renders it so great a favourite? The ridding of the low miasmatic and heated marshes of the reptiles, fishes, and insects which abound in such situations, cleansing them as it were and keeping down putridity, just as the great Adjutant and the Kites clear away the offal from the cities of the east; in performing which useful task the young of many marsh-birds, Partridges, Larks, &c. fall victims to its voracity; neither do moles, shrews, or leverets come amiss to it.

Besides being valued for its usefulness, its great size, noble and attractive bearing, and semidomestic disposition render it a general favourite with every one. In Holland and Germany it seldom breeds in the marsh or the forest, but, more familiar than the Rook, it seeks a closer association with man by resorting to high chimneys, the gable ends of houses, the towers of churches, and similar situations, an uplifted cart-wheel, &c., and thereon constructing its nest and rearing its young—each individual, if no mishap attends it during its winter sojourn elsewhere, returning in spring to the same site for the like purpose, and being greeted with a hearty welcome. How different is the reception given to any straggler to our islands! no sooner does it make its appearance than it is immediately pursued and generally shot.

Besides inhabiting Europe, Asia Minor, and Africa, the Stork frequents at one season or other the western