

## GRUS CINEREA.

### Common Crane.

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

*Grus cinerea*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 103.

— *cineracea*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 571.

— *communis*, Bechst. Orn. Taschenb., tom. ii. p. 271.

— *vulgaris*, Pall. Zoogr. Rosso-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 106.

THE family of *Gruidæ*, or Cranes, comprises nearly twenty known species, which have been divided by modern naturalists into many genera. Of the entire number, about fifteen are common to the Old World, and three to the northern portion of the New. The members of the former section range over various portions of the globe from China to Australia, and from Lapland to nearly the south of Africa. The Common Crane, the species here represented, enjoys perhaps a wider range than any of the others; for it is found in all suitable situations throughout North Africa, India, and China.

In Europe, it breeds in Spain and probably in most other countries in a northerly direction to the verge and even within the limits of the Arctic circle. It also forms a portion of the avifauna of India. By the earlier writers, who associated the Cranes with the Storks and Herons, we are told that it nested in Britain; but this is no longer the case, and we now only hear of an example having been captured in our islands at uncertain intervals, our country having evidently become unfitted for such fine birds as the Crane, the Ibis, and the Spoonbill, all of which are now rarely seen. Still, scarcely a year passes without one being observed, the last instance with which I am acquainted being one seen in a field of barley on the estate of A. Hamond, Esq., at Westacre, near Brandon, in Norfolk, in June 1859. Lord Lilford, when writing to me about this species, says:—"I well remember seeing two birds, which I am now convinced were Common Cranes, flying at a great height over Hyde-Park Corner many years ago—I should say, in the early spring of 1848 or 1849. I had then never seen Cranes on the wing before, and was much astonished and puzzled, as were a great many other people in Rotten Row." Thompson, speaking of the Crane in Ireland, states that although it formerly bred there, its visits are now as uncertain as in Britain.

The Crane is a bird of passage, migrating north and south according to the seasons. In winter it is more abundant in Africa and India, while in summer it goes much further north. During its migrations it becomes gregarious; and both wonderful and interesting is the appearance which the moving flocks present to the inhabitants of the regions over which they pass in spring and autumn. The accompanying illustration of a scene of this description witnessed by Mr. Wolf on the Rhine, will give a far better idea of the manner of their flight and the aspect they present on alighting than whole pages of the most careful description. Such scenes must be most interesting to every one; but to follow the bird to its northern summer retreat is an acme of pleasure reserved for few; it has, however, been enjoyed by the late Mr. Wolley and some other of our living ornithologists. For a lengthened paper on this subject I must refer my readers to 'The Ibis' of 1859, from which only a short extract can be given here.

"In common," says Mr. Wolley, "with, I believe, most people interested in such matters, I was long entirely in ignorance as to the condition in which the young Crane (*Grus cinerea*) would be found on first leaving the egg, whether helpless like a young heron, or able to run about like the young of most wading and gallinaceous birds. The late Prince Charles Bonaparte had inclined to think they would long continue nestlings; Mr. Gould, as he assured me, had always opposed the probability of this opinion.

"It was on the 15th June, 1853, that I entered the marsh which the well-known Pastor Læstadius had told me was the most northern limit in Lapland of the breeding of the Crane. It is in Swedish territory, being on the west side of the frontier river, opposite the Finnish (Russian) village of Yli Muonioniska, in about lat. 68°—that is, some distance within the Arctic circle. This great marsh, called "Iso uoma," is mostly composed of soft bog, in which, unless where the bog-bean grows, one generally sinks up to the knees, or even to the middle; but it is intersected by long strips of firmer bog-earth, slightly raised above the general level, and bearing creeping shrubs, principally of willow and dwarf birch, mixed in places with *Ledum palustre*, *Vaccinium uliginosum*, *Andromeda polifolia*, *Rubus chamæmorus*, besides grasses, *Carices*, mosses, and other plants.

"Walking along one of these strips, in a direction where the pair of Cranes was said to be often heard, I came upon a nest which I was sure must be a Crane's. I saw one bit of down. The nest was made of very small twigs mixed with long sedgy grass, altogether several inches in depth, and perhaps two feet across. In it were two lining membranes of eggs; and on searching amongst the materials of the nest, I found fragments of the shells. We had not gone many yards beyond this place when I saw a Crane stalking in a direction across us amongst some small birch trees, now appearing to stoop a little, and now holding its head and neck boldly up as it steadily advanced.