

## Genus GLAREOLA.

An isolated form among the Plovers. The six or seven species known are all confined to the Old World. Their chief food consists of insects, which they capture on the wing, after the manner of the Swallow.

In speaking of an allied species (*G. melanoptera*), Mr. J. H. Gurney, in Andersson's 'Birds of Damara Land,' quotes the following from 'The Field' newspaper of February 26th, 1870:—"The principal enemy of these great swarms (of locusts), and the valued friend of the Cape farmer, is the small locust-bird, *Glareola Nordmanni* . . . . These birds come, I may say, in millions, attendant on the flying swarms of locusts; indeed the appearance of a few of them is looked upon as a sure presage of the locust-swarms being at hand. Their mode of operation, as I saw it, was as follows:—They intercept a portion of the swarm and form themselves into a ring of considerable height, regularly widening towards the top, so as to present the appearance of a revolving balloon or huge spinning-top. They thus fly one over the other, and, hawking at the locusts, gradually contract their circle and speedily demolish the locusts within its limits. As their digestion, like that of all insectivorous birds, is very rapid, the form in which they thus enclose their prey is admirably adapted to enable the lower to escape the droppings of the upper birds. When they have consumed this portion of the swarm, they follow up the main body and commence another attack, and so on, until night sets in and the birds happen to lose the swarm or the locusts are all devoured. I should not forget to mention that the beak of these birds is exactly of such a shape and such dimensions that when they seize the locusts the snap cuts off the four wings, and a passer by sees a continual shower of locusts' wings falling on the ground. At another time, when I was stationed at Fort Peddie, and the country was suffering from the effects of a long drought and was overrun with unusual quantities of ants and grasshoppers, we were visited by thousands of these birds, which remained many days devouring these pests. Though the locust-birds are excellent eating, no one ever thinks of destroying them; and they were so fearless that, though I often rode or ran amongst them to test their tameness, only a few in my immediate vicinity would rise, the rest continuing to feed; but every ten minutes or so the whole mass would rise of their own accord and fly, first a few yards to the right and then to the left, in a slanting direction, presenting alternately a black and white wave of birds some miles in length, a sight never to be forgotten by the spectator."

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COMMON PRATINCOLE.

An accidental visitor to the British Isles.