

## Order GAVIÆ.

This Order, which includes the Gulls and Terns (Laridæ) and the Skuas (Stercorariidæ), is in some respects allied to the Limicolæ, possessing many osteological characters in common with the latter group. There is also a great similarity in the colour and markings of the eggs of several species of Plovers and Terns, another indication of their close affinity; while the young are able to run soon after they are hatched, and are covered with down of a more or less variegated pattern.

That one of the smaller Skuas (*Stercorarius*) visits Central America during the winter months may be considered certain, as Herrera\* and Villada† both record *S. parasiticus* as occurring on the lakes in the Valley of Mexico; but Mr. Howard Saunders thinks that the species may have been *S. pomatorhinus*.

The characters of the Gaviæ are given by Mr. Howard Saunders in the 'Catalogue of Birds,' and the following is a summary of them:—Palate schizognathous; nasals schizorhinal; basipterygoid processes absent; cervical vertebræ fifteen in number; coracohumeral groove distinct; furcula with hypocleidium; hypotarsus with two grooves; wing aquitocubital, with the fifth secondary wanting; ten large primaries visible, one minute and concealed; an aftershaft to the contour-feathers present; spinal feather-tract well defined on the neck by lateral bare tracts, and forked on the upper back; rectrices twelve in number; oil-gland tufted; the front toes always connected to each other by a web.

The eggs are usually three in number, though four have been found occasionally; they are double-spotted.

### Fam. LARIDÆ.

The Laridæ are distinguished from the Stercorariidæ by the absence of a cere, the presence of the two notches on each side of the posterior margin of the sternum, and their more feeble claws. Of all the families of birds they are probably the most cosmopolitan, being found from the Arctic to the Antarctic Oceans, and frequently visiting inland waters. They are divided into three subfamilies, containing the Terns (Sterninæ), the Skimmers (Rhynchopinæ), and the Gulls (Larinæ).

#### Subfam. STERNINÆ.

Between the larger Terns and the smaller species of Gulls there is considerable resemblance. The members of this subfamily have a more sharply pointed bill than the true Gulls, with paragnathous mandibles, that is to say, with these about equal in

\* La Nat. (2) i. pp. 188, 329.

† An. Mus. Mexico, i. pp. 279-280.