the Albemarle family, but was again vested in the crown, and Edward II. bestowed it on Piers de Gaveston. In 1311 it came into the possession of the Cliffords. The castle was taken by the Parliamentary forces in 1645 and demolished in 1649.

SKITTLES. This English game, which somewhat resembles American bowls (see vol. iv. p. 180), was formerly known as *Kails* (Fr. *quilles),* and first came into vogue in England in the 14th century. Nine large oval­headed pins with flat bottoms, and made of a hard wood, are set up on a wooden frame, three pins square on each side. An angle and not an even side of the said square is presented towards the player, who stands at the distance of 21 feet. There may be one or two players a-side; and the object of each side is to knock down, or “floor,” the greatest number of pius in the least possible number of throws, which are generally two or three, though they may extend to five, according to agreement. The roundish ball used for throwing weighs from 8 to 14 lb, and in fair playing only one step forward is allowed in delivery. A firm grasp should be taken of the ball in a slightly slanting position, so as to strike the fore pin on the shoulder and then reach the back ones. A player who clears the board in two throws may be considered a good all-round one. In different localities there are minor variations in playing the game.

SKUA,@@1 the name for a long while given to certain of the *Laridse* (see Gull, vol. xi. p. 274), which sufficiently differ in structure, appearance, and habits to justify their separation as a distinct genus, *Stercorarius (Lestris* of some writers), or even Subfamily, *Stercorariinæ.* Swift of flight, powerfully armed, but above all endowed with extraordinary courage, they pursue their weaker cousins, making the latter disgorge their already-swallowed prey, which is nimbly caught before it reaches the water ; and this habit, often observed by sailors and fishermen, has made these predatory and parasitic birds locally known as “Teasers,” “Boatswains,”@@2 and, from a misconception of their intent, “Dunghunters.” On land, however, whither they resort to breed, they seek food of their own taking, whether small mammals, little birds, insects, or berries ; but even here their uncommon courage is exhibited, and they will defend their homes and offspring with the utmost spirit against any intruder, repeatedly shooting down on man or dog that invades their haunts, while every bird almost, from an Eagle downwards, is repelled by buffets or something worse.

The largest species known is the *Stercorarius catarrhactes* of ornith­ologists—the "Skooi” or “Bonxie” of the Shetlanders, a bird in size equalling a Herring-Gull, *Larus argentatus.* The sexes do not differ appreciably in colour, which is of a dark brown, somewhat lighter beneath ; but the primaries have at the base a patch of white, visible even when the wings are closed, and forming, when they are spread, a conspicuous band. The bill and feet are black. This is a species of comparatively limited range, breeding only in some two or three localities in the Shetlands, about half a dozen in the Faeroes,@@3 and hardly more in Iceland. Out of the breeding-season it shows itself in most parts of the North Atlantic, but never seems

to stray further south than Gibraltar or Morocco, and it is therefore a matter of much interest to find the Southern Ocean inhabited by a bird—the “Port Egmont Hen” of Cook’s *Voyages—*which so closely resembles the Skua as to have been for a long while regarded as specifically identical with it, but is now usually recognized as distinct under the name of *S. antarcticus.* This bird, character­ized by its stout deep bill and want of rufous tint on its lower plumage, has an extensive range, and would seem to exhibit a tendency to further differentiation, since Mr Saunders, in a mono­graph of the group (*Prοc. Zook Society,* 1876, pp. 317-332), says that it presents three local forms—one occurring from New Zealand to Norfolk Island and past Kerguelen Land to the Cape of Good Hope, another restricted to the Falklands, and the third hitherto only met with near the south-polar ice. On the western coast of South America, making its way into the Straits of Magellan, and passing along the coast so far as Rio Janeiro, is found *S. chilensis,* distinguished among other characters by the cinnamon tint of its lower plumage. Three other smaller species of the genus are known, and each is more widely distributed than those just men­tioned, but the home of all is in the more northern parts of the earth, though in winter two of them go very far south, and, crossing the equator, shew themselves on the seas that wash the Cape of Good Hope, Australia, New Zealand, and Peru. The first of them is *S. pomatorhinus* (often incorrectly spelt *pomarinus),* about the size of a common Gull, *Larus canus,* and presenting, irrespective of sex, two very distinct phases of plumage, one almost wholly sooty-brown, the other particoloured—dark above and white on the breast, the sides of the neck being of a glossy straw-colour, and the lower part of the neck and the sides of the body barred with brown ; but a singular feature in the adults of this species is that the two median tail-feathers, which are elongated, have their shaft twisted towards the tip, so that in flight the lower surfaces of their webs are pressed together vertically, giving the bird the appearance of having a disk attached to its tail. The second and third species so closely resemble each other, except in size, that their distinctness was for many years unperceived, and in consequence their nomen­clature is an almost bewildering puzzle. Mr Saunders (*loc. cit.)* thinks that the larger of them, which is about the size of a Black­headed Gull, should stand as *S. crepidatus,* and the smaller as *S. parasiticus,* though the latter name has been generally used for the larger when that is not termed, as it often is, *S. richardsoni*—a name that correctly applies only to whole-coloured examples, for this species too is dimorphic. Even its proper English name@@4 is disputable, but it has been frequently called the Arctic Gull or Arctic Skua, and it is by far the commonest of the genus in Britain, and perhaps throughout the northern hemisphere. It breeds abundantly on many of the Scottish islands, and in most countries lying to the northward. The nest is generally in long heather, and contains two eggs of a dark olive-colour, suffused with still darker brown patches. Birds of either phase of plumage pair indiscriminately, and the young shew by their earliest feathers whether they will prove whole or particoloured ; but in their immature plumage the upper surface is barred with pale reddish- brown. The smallest species, commonly known in English as the Long-tailed or Buffon’s Skua, is not known to exhibit the remark­able dimorphism to which the two preceding are subject. It breeds abundantly in some seasons on the fells of Lapland, its appearance depending chiefly on the presence of lemmings (*Lemmus norvegicus),* on which it mainly preys. All these three species occasionally visit the southern coasts of Europe in large flocks, but their visitations are highly irregular. (A. N.)

SKUNK. The existence of the animal to which this name@@5 is applied was first notified to European naturalists as long ago as 1636, in Gabriel Sagard-Theodat’s *History of Canada,* where, in commencing his quaint account of it (p. 748), he describes it as “enfans du diable, que les Hurons appelle Scangaresse, .... une beste fort puante,” &c. This fully shows in what reputa­tion the skunk was then held, a reputation which has lasted to the present time, and has become so notorious that the mere name of skunk is an opprobrious epithet and can hardly be used in polite society.

The skunks, for there are several species of these animals, are members of the Meline or badger-like sec­tion of the family *Mustelidæ,* which contains also the

@@@1 Thus written by Hoier *(circa* 1604) as that of a Færoese bird *(hodie* Skúir) an example of which he sent to Clusius *{Exotic. Auctarium,* p. 367). The word being thence copied by Willughby has been generally adopted by English authors, and applied by them to all the congeners of the species to which it was originally peculiar.

@@@2 This name in seamen’s ornithology applies to several other kinds of birds, and, though perhaps first given to those of this group, is nowadays most commonly used for the species of Tropic-bird *(q.v.),* the projecting middle feathers of the tail in each kind being generally likened to the marlinespike that is identified with the boatswain’s position ; but perhaps the authoritative character assumed by both bird and officer originally suggested the name.

@@@3 It has long been subjected to persecution in these islands, a reward being paid for its head. On the other hand, in the Shetlands a fine was exacted for its death, as it was believed to protect the sheep against Eagles. Yet for all this it would long ago have been extirpated there, and have ceased to be a British bird in all but name, but for the special protection afforded it by several members of two families

(Edmonston and Scott of Melby), whose exertions to that effect deserve the praise and recognition of all ornithologists.

@@@4 It is the “Fasgadair” of the Hebrides, the “Shooi” of the Shetlands, and the “ Scouti-allen ” of the fishermen on the east coast of Scotland.

@@@5 Probably derived from “Seecawk,” the Cree name for the skunk. Another form given is “ seganku.”