

## GULL-BILLED TERN.

*Sterna Anglica, Mont.*

*Le Hirondelle de Mer Hansel of Temm.?*

THIS rare species of Tern was first made known from specimens obtained in this country by Colonel Montagu, and was described and figured by him in the Supplement to his Ornithological Dictionary. The bill is wholly black, about an inch and a half long, thick, strong, and angulated on the under mandible, at the symphysis or junction of the two portions, in which particular it resembles the Gulls, and this Tern may be considered as a link between the species of the two genera. The upper part of the head, occiput and back of the neck are black in summer; all the upper parts cinereous; outer tail-feathers and all the under parts of the body white; the first five quill-feathers are tipped with greyish black, part of the inner webs white; legs long, exceeding one inch and a half, nearly black; toes long, claws almost straight. In the winter plumage the head is white, with dusky markings about the eyes. Young birds have the head, back and wings mottled with ash colour, light brown and dusky. The sexes are alike in plumage, but the female is rather smaller than the male.

It seems to be now a very general, but not a universal opinion, that the *Sterna Anglica* of Montagu is not the same bird as the *Sterna Anglica* of Temminck's *Manuel d'Ornithologie*, but that this latter bird is identical with the *Sterna aranea* of Wilson and the Marsh Tern of Peale. We have had no opportunity of examining American specimens of this rare Tern, but examples brought from India by Colonel W. H. Sykes were compared, and found to correspond exactly with Colonel Montagu's birds in the British Museum, both in their winter and summer plumage; and that the *Sterna Anglica* of Montagu exists in the Dukhun does not therefore admit of a doubt. Colonel Sykes remarks, that with the aspect, length of wing, lazy flight, and habits of the Tern, this bird has a bill approximating to that of the Gull, and not quite identical with the bill of *Viralva*, under which genus Mr. Stephens has arranged our *Anglica* in his Ornithological portion of Shaw's Zoology, vol. xiii. p. 174.

Numerous fishes were found in the stomachs of the examples of this bird killed in the Dukhun, and this fact is in accordance with the remarks of Charles Lucian Bonaparte, Prince of Musignano, who in his Observations on the Nomenclature of Wilson's Ornithology, states that the habits of the two species of Tern, *Sterna Anglica* and *S. aranea*, are very different; the former is confined to the sea-shore, and feeds sometimes on fishes, while the latter is generally found in marshes, and feeds exclusively on insects.

The Gull-billed Tern is said to frequent, and even to be common on the eastern parts of the European continent, particularly during the summer, where it lays three or four oval-shaped olive-brown eggs, spotted with two shades of darker brown.

We have figured a bird in the summer plumage and of the natural size.