

occupy the first position among the families of Grallatores. *Charadriadae* (Plovers), will stand second. *Ralliaae* (Rails, water hens and Coots) come next. *Scolopacidae* (Snipes), follow, and *Phalaropidae*, as already explained, seem to me to complete the series, nor am I acquainted with any Grallatorial birds which do not fall within one or other of these families. I shall offer a few remarks on each of them in their order, endeavouring to determine the sub-families, and noticing what is most deserving of attention in respect to their habits and mutual relations as far as the necessary limits of this article will permit.

It is very difficult to give precise and clear definitions of groups of animals or plants, even when we plainly perceive the natural relationship, probably because there are various points of resemblance, some one of which fails in one example, another in another, leaving us none which holds in every member of the groups, though considering the whole structure, there are sufficient reasons for placing each in this position rather than any other. The consequence is, that we are obliged to distinguish each natural assemblage by all its well marked characters, and we must not be too rigid in expecting exact conformity to all of them in every individual case, though we must find a preponderance of the characteristics of the group, and expect to be able to assist our judgment by other relations between the particular object and known members of the group. This is the difficulty which interferes with the good working of our systematic tables, and which making extended knowledge and experience often requisite for ascertaining the objects of natural science, is apt to discourage beginners from a pursuit in other respects most interesting and delightful. We have probably at length reached a just view of the limits of the Order Grallatores the Wading birds, and can now see how certain characters ought to have prevented mistakes which prevailed for a time; but the fact that Cuvier was led by their long necks and legs to place the Ostrich and its allies, the Bustards, and even the Flamingo among the Waders, whilst lessening our discouragement at our own difficulties, will show what various considerations carefully weighed, and studied under every possible light, gradually lead even men of the most extensive knowledge and the greatest genius to the perception of truths, which when once established meet with ready acceptance, and only excite wonder at their ever having been doubted. Perhaps the difficulty of distinct definition in natural science is no where more felt