

surface of the intermaxillaries retreats backward from its upper to its lower edge; their inner edges separate about half way down from the nasal opening, and slant outward to the suture with the maxillaries, so that a deep, angular depression is included by their lower edges; the maxillaries too have a deep depression near the suture with the intermaxillaries, so that near this suture the alveolar margin forms a long, sharp, tooth-like projection. The alveolar margin of the upper jaw is sharp all round, except the lateral notches in front, which have a rounded edge. The horizontal part of the alveolar surface is narrow, forming a mere ridge at the front part, but it grows wider backwards. At the front end it rises steeply and high up. The palatines do not project over the vomer so as to form a broad roof below the palate proper, as in the Chelonioidæ, and on that account the passages from the nasal cavity to the mouth open directly downward. For the same reason, the fleshy part of the tongue, which closes these openings when the animal is breathing, is placed further forward than in the Chelonioidæ. The lower jaw is thin, and its margin sharp; its front end terminates in a sharp, strong, prominent point.

The size is greater than that of any other family of the order. I have seen specimens weighing over a ton. It remains to be ascertained whether this family is carnivorous, as the form of the jaws seems to indicate. Though I have seen several specimens upon the coasts of Florida, I could learn nothing respecting their habits. Like the Chelonioidæ, they lay a large number of eggs, as I infer from the condition of the ovary; but I have never seen mature eggs.

SECTION III.

THE FAMILY OF CHELONIOIDÆ.

The family of Chelonioidæ was first distinguished by J. E. Gray, and has been adopted by all modern herpetologists, though not exactly with the same limits which were first assigned to it, since it is now generally made to embrace also the Sphargididæ.¹ But, as we have already seen that the Sphargididæ constitute a

¹ With this wider extension, the Chelonioidæ of modern writers answer exactly to the sub-order of Chelonii, *Opp.*, or to the family of Carettoides of Fitzinger, (*Neue Classif.*, etc., 1826.) See above, p. 242. But, as characterized here, this family is strictly circumscribed within the same limits which Gray at

first assigned to it, (*Ann. of Philos.*, 1825.) It corresponds also exactly to the sub-family Chelonina of Cuvino, (*Sagg. An. Vert.* 1831.) and to the genus *Caretta* of Merrem, which is identical with the genus *Chelonia* of Wagler, of Duméril and Bibron, and of most modern writers.