

AN AMERICAN CALIFORNIA QUAIL.

towards the tip, where it assumes a curled form and moreover inclines forwards over the bill; it is also conspicuous for the contrasted style of its markings.

Until of late years this bird was one of the greatest rarities of our collections, but is now becoming more common. As I have nothing to add to the interesting account of it given by my lamented friend the late E. T. Bennett, Esq., in the second of his admirable volumes on the Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society, I cannot do better than quote his own words.

“ For the first notice of these beautiful birds we are indebted to the editor of the Voyage of the unfortunate La Pérouse, who gave a figure of them in the Atlas to that work, merely mentioning in the text that they were plentiful in the low woods and plains of California, where they assembled in bands of two or three hundred, and became fat and well-flavoured. Preserved skins were about the same time brought to England by Mr. Archibald Menzies, who accompanied Vancouver in his expedition round the world, and who returned to Europe rich in the natural productions of the western coast of America in particular. One of these, deposited in the British Museum, was described and figured by Dr. Shaw in his ‘Zoological Miscellany,’ and again by Dr. Latham in the ‘Second Supplement to his General Synopsis’; but the bird was still very imperfectly known in this quarter of the globe, until Captain Beechey brought over with him, on his return from his voyage of discovery, a number of living specimens. Unfortunately all the females died on the passage, and of the males which were presented by that gentleman to the Society, one alone survives. Their manners seem to be identical with those of the Quails and Partridges, but they have a much more erect and graceful bearing. They are perfectly contented in captivity and bore the change of climate well; it is therefore much to be regretted that the prospect of naturalizing a bird so neat in its form and markings, and so highly spoken of as an article of food, should have been frustrated for the present, although by unavoidable contingencies.”

Specimens of this species occur in the collection formed by R. B. Hinds, Esq., during the late voyage of H.M.S. Sulphur.

Habitat, California and Mexico.

The Plate represents a male and female of the natural size.