CERIORNIS MELANOCEPHALA.

Western Horned Pheasant.

Satyra melanocephala, Gray in Griff. Anim. King., vol. iii. p. 29.—Ib. Ill. Ind. Zool., vol. i. pls. 46, 47, 48.—Gray, Cat. of Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., part iii. p. 28.

—— Nipalensis, Gray in Griff. Anim. King., vol. iii. p. 29.—Ib. Ill. Ind. Zool., vol. ii. pl. 40.

Tragopan Hastingsii, Vig. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part i. p. 8.—Gould, Century of Birds, pls. 63, 64, 65.—Hutton, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xvii. part ii. p. 695.

Ceriornis melanocephala, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 499, Ceriornis, sp. 2.—Ib. Cat. of Spec. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds presented to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., p. 125.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 240.

Jewar, Jewari, Simla, Blyth. Jahjee, Simla, Hutton. Iwire, Mussooree, Hutton.

The only living example of this species that has come under my notice, and perhaps the only one that has ever reached this country, was the splendid adult male presented to Her Majesty by Lord Hardinge on his return from India. This fine bird lived for several years in the gardens of Buckingham Palace, and while there, I was graciously permitted to take a drawing of it for the present work; I was also allowed to examine the bird immediately after death, and by these means I have been enabled to give for the first time a correct representation of the gaily-coloured soft parts, the hues of which vanish so rapidly after death. The circumstance of this bird having lived in good health for some years, in a situation so little suited to its habits as a garden in the midst of a great city, tends to prove that if introduced into more favourable localities, the species might ere long be constantly seen in our aviaries, if not even naturalized in this country. It is to be hoped then, that with the vast facilities for transport we now possess, some steps will be taken towards promoting so praiseworthy an object. The route by which this might be most readily effected would be by way of the Indus to Kurrachee, and thence to England by the overland route, care being taken that the transit be performed during the cool season.

The bird is strictly a mountain species, and appears to be confined to the slopes of the North-western Himalayas, particularly those of the hills to the northward of Simla.

I am indebted to Major-General Hearsey for the following notes respecting this fine species:—

"The district of the Himalaya Mountains where I obtained the Horned Pheasant was Gurhwal, to the north-west of Almorah in Kumaon, where I was encamped at a village named Rammee from April to September. Immediately above this village the mountain rises in three steps of about a mile in length, east and west, and half a mile in width; these steps are cut across by rather deep and narrow khuds or small gulleys, the sides of which are covered with high brushwood, but to the north-west there is a considerable valley, which terminates at the crest of the hill, forming the third or highest step. In these khuds or gulleys, and in the valley, I was frequently successful in bagging the Dhappæa and Moonaul, the former being the Gurhwalee name of the male, and the latter of the female. At the top of the third step leading to the crest of the mountain are extensive tracts of the 'Negallee' or thin Himalayan Bamboo, which although not much thicker than a finger, grows from fifteen to twenty feet in height, and is so thick-set that you cannot force your way very far into it. A spur from the snowy range is not more than eight miles distant, and during the early winter months—October and November—the different kinds of Pheasants are driven down from the more inaccessible portions of the spur by the accumulation of snow, and are frequently taken in the strong hair-snares set for them by the natives in the places to which they resort to feed. Their principal food is the small bulb of a ground Orchis, which they scoop out of the earth with their strong hooked bills. The natives in this part of the country call them Singal Punchee, which signifies 'Horned Bird.' We kept some living examples for several months, and brought a very fine one down with us to the plains in Rohilcund. The azure-blue horns are usually pendent, but when the bird is excited they become erect, and a similar hue pervades parts of the curiously-shaped wattle attached to the under mandible and the front of the neck.