PHASIANUS TORQUATUS, Temm.

Chinese Ring-necked Pheasant.

Phasianus torquatus, Temm. Pig. et Gall. tom. ii. p. 326 et tom. iii. p. 670.—Gray, List of Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus. part iii. p. 23.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 497, Phasianus, sp. 2.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 245.—Gray, Ill. Ind. Zool. pl.

Albo-torquatus, Bonnat. Ency. Méth. Orn. part i. p. 184.

China is the true and probably the restricted habitat of this beautiful species of Pheasant; for although various writers have stated that it is a native of India, we have no reliable evidence of its existing in a state of nature in any part of that great country.

Of the introduction of living examples into England, numerous instances are on record. Latham, in his "General History of Birds," states that it is said to have been "first introduced by the late Duke of Northumberland, and many were bred and turned out at his Grace's seat at Alnwick. Lord Carnarvon did the same at Highclere, in Berkshire, and the late Duchess Dowager of Portland at Bulstrode, Bucks." More recently it has been introduced upon the estates of other noblemen and gentlemen, and I am told is now very numerous on that of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington. The consequence of this introduction has been a cross between the Chinese bird and its near ally the Common Pheasant (Phasianus Colchicus), producing the variety or varieties known by the name of Ringnecks, and now so commonly killed in our woods. As a matter of course, these hybrid birds do not closely accord in their markings with either of the true breeds; nor do they form a permanent variety; no two, in fact, even from the same district, exhibiting precisely the same character; some specimens having their necks adorned with a well-defined ring, while in others it is narrow and imperfect; the flank-feathers too assume an intermediate tint, and never present the pure pale buff colouring of those feathers in the P. torquatus, or the dark colouring of P. Colchicus. These details, though apparently trivial, may not be regarded as unimportant when we take into consideration the interest so generally evinced with respect to these varieties of the Pheasant; and the fact, that by the mingling of the two species a prolific offspring has been produced;—a circumstance, however, which must be regarded as an exception to the general rule, for I believe that in few instances and with few forms would such a result occur.

Some six or seven years ago, living examples of this species direct from China were added to the menagerie of the Zoological Society of London, where they bred in such abundance as to admit of a distribution of eggs and individuals to the owners of estates in various parts of England. In some situations they readily crossed with the ordinary Pheasant, the produce being birds similar to the Ringnecks of the English preserves.

Long prior to any recorded instance of the introduction of the *P. torquatus* into England, a few pairs were landed at St. Helena, where, the vegetation being congenial to the habits and economy of the bird, they throve amazingly, and in certain parts of the island they soon became and are even now very numerous. From an examination of the skins kindly forwarded to me by Lady Ross, the drawings of Major Stack, and a fine living male sent direct from the island, and now living in the Gardens of the Zoological Society, I find that these birds do not differ from Chinese examples, except in being rather larger in size and in having a more lengthened tail, which may probably be due to the abundance of berries they obtain from a kind of bramble common on the island: no trace or taint of the *P. Colchicus* being observable, it would seem that China alone has furnished the pheasants now so numerous at St. Helena. I am also indebted to the kindness of Lady Ross for the following extracts from "Brooks's History of St. Helena," respecting the introduction of the Pheasant into the island:—

"In 1513, Fernandez Lopez was left in exile with a few negroes at St. Helena, as a punishment (after being maimed) for deserting from the army of Alphonso Albuquerque at Goa, in India. These were the first inhabitants of the island. Roots and vegetables of various kinds, fruit-trees and poultry were accordingly landed for them, and partridges, pheasants, guinea-fowl, peacocks and other birds let loose. Under the fostering care of Lopez they increased abundantly, and in a few years overspread the face of the country." Captain Cavendish, who visited the island on the 8th of June 1588, found "no less plenty of pheasants,