PHASIANUS SCINTILLANS, Gould.

Sparkling Pheasant.

Phasianus (Graphophasianus) scintillans, Gould in Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. xvii. 3rd ser. p. 150.

When writing on the Humming-birds, I frequently had occasion to remark that ornamental display formed a very important feature among those ornithological gems, that it had little or no influence on their habits and economy, that it was almost universally accorded to the male sex, and that it was assigned to some particular part in all the members of a genus, that part being thus rendered more highly ornamental than the rest: thus the fine colouring is conferred upon the crown in some species, forms a rich gorget on the throat of others, is displayed in lengthened plumes on the sides of the neck, or shines conspicuously on the lower part of the back; in others, again, the tarsi and even the under tail-coverts are adorned with plumes the structure and appearance of which are totally different from those of the other parts of the body. To these remarks I may add that this law of ornamentation appears to prevail in a greater or less degree in all great families of birds, no matter whether it be the Penguins which sport on the salt seas, or the Pheasants of the flower-spangled woods. There is no one, I should suppose, who has not witnessed the display made by the gorgeous Peacock when he quivers his train before the female, and but few who have not seen the wonderfully expanded frill of the Golden Pheasant during the love-season of that bird.

Among Pheasants, the common species, Phasianus colchicus, the Ring-necked, P. torquatus, and the Green, P. versicolor, are adorned with highly coloured fleshy eye-orbits, and during the spring time, at least, with very prominent egrets; these they have the power to, and do display in a most remarkable manner. On the other hand, the bird here represented, and its near ally, the P. Sæmmerringii, have neither their egrets nor such extensive and highly coloured orbits; but these deficiencies are amply compensated by the feathers of the lower part of the back and upper tail-coverts (which are seldom covered with the wings) being perfect in their structure and most richly coloured; here, in fact, and in their singularly marked tails lies the principal beauty and attractiveness of these two remarkable birds. I have said that each of the little groups of birds which systematists designate 'genera' is marked by some special peculiarity; I may add that observation informs me that usually these genera are composed of more than one species. In Pavo (Peacocks) there are two or three; in Thaumalea (Golden Pheasant &c.) also two or three; in Gennæus (Silver Pheasant) two; in the common type of Pheasants (Phasianus) four—P. mongolicus, P. colchicus, P. torquatus and P. versicolor. Hundreds of similar instances might be quoted. Having received so fine a bird as the P. Sæmmerringii, why should we be surprised at the discovery of a second species of the same form, a form which has been separated from the true Pheasants by Dr. Reichenbach, under the name of Graphephasianus? So far from it, when we consider how limited is our knowledge of the natural productions of that comparatively sealed country Japan, we ought rather to feel surprise if this had not been the case.

Nothing, I regret to say, is known of its habits or of the locality frequented by the *P. scintillans*, further than that all the specimens which have been sent to this country are from Yokohama, while those of *P. Sæmmerringii* are from Nagasaki, parts of the country 800 miles distant from each other.

The male has the head and neck coppery brown, with a lighter border to each feather, which in some lights appear of a purple hue, and in others rich coppery red; feathers of the lower part of the neck behind and all the upper surface of the body dark brown, with a stripe of coppery red down the centre, and on each side two oblique lines, the inner one of coppery red, the outer glossy orange, between which at the tip is a spot of fiery red; on the sides of the back and upper tail-coverts the glossy orange marks are exchanged for white, and the fiery red spots more lustrous, rendering those parts most conspicuous; on the scapularies the coppery red is very apparent, and those feathers, moreover, are edged with white on each side of the tip; the greater wing-coverts are similar in their colouring, but the white is duller and less decided; primaries brown, crossed by irregular narrow bands of buff; secondaries dark brown freckled with buff, and with a large patch of rufous near the end of the outer web, fading into greyish white at the tip, those nearest the body with an irregular band of black within the white along the interior web and at the tip; tail crossed at intervals of about two inches by, first, a band of brown speckles on a buffy white ground, which, coalescing on the posterior side, form a narrow irregular line of brown; to this succeeds a narrow band of buffy white, then a band of black, and lastly a broad one of deep chestnut-red; in the interspaces between these bands the tail is pale cinnamon-brown; it is to be remarked, too, that although the bands are alike on each web, they are not quite in a line, the one on the outer vane being a little lower than the other; feathers of the under surface dark brown, with a line down the centre and the end cinnamon, bordered at the tip with creamy white, within which is a narrow line of black; under tail-coverts black, with a mark of deep chestnut-red at the tip.

The figures are about two-thirds of the size of life.