## PHASIANUS COLCHICUS, Linn.

Common Pheasant.

Phasianus Colchicus, Linnæus et Auctorum.

The generic term Phasianus has been applied to so many different forms of the Gallinaceæ that it will be desirable to indicate the species to which scientific ornithologists now restrict it. By Linnæus, the Domestic Fowl, the Golden and Silver Pheasants, and many other allied forms were characterized under this appellation; in the present work I have applied it to seven species; but other ornithologists limit it to four, namely P. Colchicus of Asia Minor, P. torquatus of China, P. Mongolicus of Tartary, and P. versicolor of Japan,—the other three species being P. Sæmmeringii and P. scintillans (for which the generic name of Graphephasianus has been proposed by Dr. Reichenbach) and P. Reevesii (the only known species of Wagler's genus Syrmaticus). That both the Asiatic and European shores of the Black Sea are the true home of the Common Pheasant, there can be, I believe, but little doubt: the ancient Colchis, from which the specific name is derived, is the Mingrelia of the present day; and there it is said to be still found wild and in unequalled beauty; neither is it improbable that it is found in equal numbers around the Caspian, and even further to the eastward. The Rev. T. Milner, in his 'Ancient and Modern History of the Crimea,' remarks, "It is singular that the Pheasant does not occur in the Peninsula, although found on the opposite side of the narrow strait of Kertch, and all over the Caucasus." The late Mr. G. T. Vigne informed me that he shot it in a wild state at the Lake of Apollonia, about thirty five miles from Broussa, to the south of the Sea of Marmora.

In a letter received from the late Mr. T. W. Atkinson, that gentlemen says:—" In answer to your inquiries about the Pheasants seen by me in Asia, I beg to inform you that I found the common species on the Kezzil-a-Gatch in considerable numbers; I have also seen several that were brought from the country to the west of the river Ilia. In all my wanderings in the Altai I did not find a single Pheasant, or any bird resembling it."

The food of the Pheasant in a wild state consists of grain, seeds, green leaves, insects, and the roots of bulbous plants.

The Pheasant makes a slight nest on the ground, in which it deposits from ten to fourteen eggs of a uniform olive-brown colour, one inch and ten lines long, by one inch and five lines in breadth.

The male has the head and nape bronzy green; neck and throat steel blue, with reflexions of brown, green, and purple, according to the incidence of the light; ear-coverts dark brown; feathers of the upper part of the back rich brownish red, with black centres, light shafts narrowly edged with a velvety black, and an oblong spot of the same on the centre of the tip; those of the back and scapularies purplish red, with black centres, within which is a pointed horseshoe-shaped mark of pale buff, and a narrow line of the same colour down the shaft; lower part of the back and upper tail-coverts deep chestnut-red, with purple reflexions; wing-coverts light greyish brown, with paler shafts; primaries dull greyish brown, crossed by interrupted bars of cream-colour; tail-feathers yellowish brown, crossed by numerous narrow transverse imperfect bars of black, and washed with chestnut and purple on their outer margins; breast and abdomen golden red, each feather margined with velvety black and reflecting tints of golden and blue; lower part of the abdomen, vent, and under tail-coverts brownish black; bill dull pea-green; legs and toes horn-colour.

The upper surface of the female is blackish brown, with each feather conspicuously margined with creamy white, a few of the feathers at the base of the neck with chestnut centres; chin brownish white; under surface brownish buff, the flank-feathers variegated with dark brown and reddish buff.

The figures, which represent the two sexes considerably less than the natural size, were taken from specimens killed in Asia Minor.