TETRAOGALLUS CASPIUS.

Caspian Snow Partridge.

Tetrao Caspius, Gmel. Edit. of Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 762.—S. G. Gmel. It., tom. iv. p. 67. tab. 10.
Perdix Caspia, Lath. Ind. Orn., tom. ii. p. 655.
Tetrao Caucasica, Pall. Zoog. Ross. Asiat., tom. ii. p. 76. pl.
Perdix (*Megaloperdix*) *Caucasica*, Brandt, Bull. Sci. de l'Acad Imp. de St. Pétersb., vol. viii. p. 190.
Lophophorus Nigelli, Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. ii. pl. 76.
Caspian Partridge, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 283.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. viii. p. 290.
Keph-e-derra, or Royal Partridge of Persia.

Valuable and interesting as are the Gallinaceous birds of India, both as objects of beauty and as supplying the human race with a great store of nutritious food, there is a group, the *Tetraogalli* or Snow Partridges, which, if I mistake not, is destined to play as important a part in the latter respect as any of the Gallinaceæ previously known. The great plateau of Asia, particularly the country of Tibet, is yearly becoming more and more accessible, and surely the time is not far distant when the introduction of some of the species into the British Islands will be attended with success. I cannot conceive localities better adapted to the habits of any one of them than the Highlands of Scotland and the hilly districts of Northumberland, and other northern counties of England; as an evidence that they will exist in far more unfavourable situations, I may mention that two individuals lived for several years in the Menagerie of the Zoological Society of London in the Regent's Park. Those who visited these Gardens during the years 1852 and 1853 cannot have failed to notice the fine bird from which the figure in the accompanying Plate was drawn. This noble specimen, the *Keph-e-derra*, or Royal Partridge of Persia, was presented to the Society by R. Stevens, Esq., H.B.M. Consul at Tabreez: on its arrival at the Gardens it was in a bad state, both of health and plumage, but it speedily recovered, and after the succeeding moult we had an opportunity of seeing the bird in as fine a state of plumage as if we were viewing it in its native wilds. A female had been previously presented to the Society (in 1842) by E. W. Bonham, Esq.; this also was from Persia. I regret to say both these interesting birds are dead; and I need scarcely add how highly a further donation of living examples from any one favourably situated for procuring them would be esteemed by the Society, or how important in an economic point of view would be the introduction of a sufficient number to ensure their naturalization.

There is but little doubt that the present bird is the oldest known species of the genus, for although Linnæus appears to have been unacquainted with it, it was described as long back as 1788–93 by Gmelin in the 13th edition of the "Systema Naturæ," under the name of *Tetrao Caspius*. By Latham, who states it inhabits Astrabad, Ghilan and other parts of Persia, it was placed among the true Partridges, genus *Perdix*; by Pallas it was associated with the Grouse under the name of *Tetrao Caucasicus*; Messrs. Jardine and Selby placed it in the genus *Lophophorus*, and lastly Mr. J. E. Gray instituted for it the separate generic title of *Tetraogallus*. Messrs. Jardine and Selby state, that for their knowledge of the species they were indebted to James Wilson, Esq., so well known for his "Illustrations of Zoology," to whom it had been transmitted from Persia by Dr. Macneil, the enlightened physician to the English Embassy at that Court, after whom it was named *Nigelli*, and who informed Mr. Wilson that "it inhabits the more secluded and mountainous parts of Persia, where it is esteemed rare even by experienced sportsmen, and is known by the name of *Keph-i-derree*, or *Mountain Partridge*."

I am indebted to J. H. Gurney, Esq. for having called my attention to the following passage in Mr. Layard's "Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon," which doubtless refers to this species:—"A covey of large birds sailed with a rapid swoop, and with the whistling sound peculiar to the Partridge kind, from an opposite height, and alighted within a few yards of me. They were the *Kabk-i-dered*, or the *Our-kak-lik*, as they are called by the Turks; a gigantic Partridge, almost the size of a small Turkey, only found in the highest regions of Armenia and Kurdistan."

The following note has been forwarded to me by Mr. G. R. Gray, which he states is an extract from one of the St. Petersburg Transactions:—

"This species builds on the highest summits of the rocky mountains of the *Caucasus*; it prefers altogether the regions of snow, which it never quits; thus, when we desire to acclimatize the young chickens of this partridge in the plains of Kahetia, they have not survived the spring. It runs on the rocks and the ledges of precipices with great agility, and rises with a great cry at the least danger, so that the most