CROSSOPTILON AURITUM.

Chinese Crossoptilon.

Phasianus auritus, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 86.
Crossoptilon mantchuricum, Swin. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1862, p. 287.
——— *auritum*, Sclat. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1863, p. 118.—Milne-Edw. Nouv. Arch. du Mus., Bull. i. p. 14. pl. 1.—Bonap. Tab. par. du Gall., Compt. Rend. de l'Acad. Sci., tom. xlii. p. 879.—Newt. Zool. Rev., vol. iii., 1866, p. 107.
Crossoptilum auritum, Newt. Zool. Rev., vol. ii., 1865, p. 125.

The knowledge of the existence of the very fine bird figured on the opposite plate may almost be regarded as one of the results of our conquests in China; for, beyond the somewhat vague description given in Pallas's celebrated 'Zoographia Rosso-Asiatica,' it was previously unknown, whereas we are now aware that it is to be met with around Pekin, and it is often exposed for sale as an article of food in the markets of the northern part of the Celestial Empire. Even the Russian naturalists must have been taken by surprise when this was discovered to be the case; for I believe that so recently as five years prior to that in which I am now writing (1870) there was not a perfect specimen in the celebrated Museum at St. Petersburg, and certainly not in those of Berlin, Leyden, or Paris. Now, however, all have been or may be supplied with skins from Northern China or of specimens from the menageries of Europe, few of which, I presume, are destitute of living examples.

So tame is the disposition of this bird, and so readily does it breed in captivity, that, in these respects, it may be fairly compared with the common Fowl. In the gardens of the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park, many may be seen, either occupying the aviaries, moving about in a semidomesticated state, or roosting at night on the large trees of the Gardens apart from the enclosures. In confirmation of these assertions, I may give the following note, obligingly furnished me by Dr. Sclater, the Society's excellent Secretary:—

"The first living Crossoptilons acquired by the Society were two males, brought by Mr. Dudley E. Saurin from Pekin in 1866, and presented by him to the Society on the 15th of July in that year. On the 10th of the following November, we purchased, from the Jardin d'Acclimatation of Paris, two females, which had been bred in that establishment during the previous summer. Our two pairs thus formed bred in the Society's Gardens the following spring; and on the 26th of May, 1867, the first hatch, of seven young ones, was produced. On the 14th of June a second brood, of nine young ones, saw the light. In the following year (1868) two broods were likewise produced—one, on the 21st of May, of ten, and the other, on the 13th of June, of eight young ones. Incubation, as in the case of most of our foreign Pheasants, was effected by hens of the domestic Fowl. We are at present rather short of males of this Pheasant, but are offering *females* for sale at the very moderate price of £15 each. Seeing that we purchased our first two females for £50 each, it will be evident that the stock of this bird in Europe must have considerably augmented during the last three years."

Mr. Saurin, to whom we were indebted for the first specimens of this fine bird received alive, kindly drew up some notes upon this species and other Pheasants occurring in the neighbourhood of Pekin, which will be found in the Zoological Society's 'Proceedings' for 1866, p. 436, in which he says:—

"Pallas's Eared Pheasant (*Crossoptilon auritum*) is rarely seen in the Pekin market. The bird is found in the mountains to the north-west of that city, within the Great Wall, and about one hundred miles distant. The place is well known for its coal-mines, and has frequently been visited by Europeans—amongst others by the French Minister, M. Berthéney, the French Missionaries, and several of our Student Interpreters. M. Berthéney, who is a sportsman and fond of natural history, thinks that, taking into consideration the comparative tameness of the bird, and the fact that, since Europeans have come to Pekin, the peasants have always found a good market for the nests, this rare bird, which, so far as we know, is only to be found at this one spot, cannot fail soon to become extinct. Chinese guides, it is true, have assured me that it is to be found in the Wei-chung or Imperial hunting-grounds; but no reliance can be placed on their statements, even if the bird were called by the same name in so very distant a part of the country.

"The Chinese name is *Ho-chi*, either 'River-fowl' or 'Fire-fowl.' The translation depends on the character; and the peasants, who give it the name, know nothing of characters, while the students, who know characters, are quite ignorant of natural history.

"Pallas's Pheasant is never brought by Mongols, or frozen; therefore "*mantchuricum*" (the name applied to it by Mr. Swinhoe) is a misnomer. The hen lays towards the end of May; the eggs are larger