# CATREUS WALLICHI.

## Cheer.

*Lophophorus Wallichii*, Hardw. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 166.
*Phasianus Wallichii*, Gray & Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 497, *Phasianus*, sp. 4.—Jerd. Birds of India, vol. ii. pt. 2. p. 527.
——— *Staceii*, Vig. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part i. p. 35.—Gould, Cent. of Birds, pl. 68.
*Catreus Wallichi*, Bonap. Compt. Rend. de l'Acad. des Sci., tom. xlii. séance du 12 Mai, 1856.
*Chir*, *Cheor*, *Banchil*, and *Herril* in various parts of the Himalayas; *Kahir* in Nepaul.

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The Cheer has for the last few years been an object of great interest to those persons who have endeavoured to introduce additional species of the *Gallinaceæ* into our woods and coverts; their attempts, however, have not as yet been attended with any great degree of success; for although the present bird has bred in the Gardens of the Zoological Society, at Viscount Hill's at Hawkstone, and at the Earl of Craven's at Ashdown, it has not in either case furnished any evidence that its introduction would be beneficial for sport or for the table. Lord Craven has obtained a cross between this bird and our common Pheasant; but, as might be expected, it is a decided mule, and incapable of propagation. To all those who may not have opportunities for observing the Cheer in a state of nature, the sight of it in our menageries must be interesting; but there, in my opinion, the interest ceases.

I take the liberty of here transferring Major-General Hardwicke's original account of this species, and also a lengthened extract from the 'Bengal Sporting Magazine,' in which "Mountaineer" has given an interesting account of its habits and economy.

"The local name of this bird is *Cheer*. It is a native of the Almorah Hills, on the north-eastern boundary of Hindostan, is remarkably bold, and fights with great vigour on the least irritation, at the same time raising its feathers and prating with a noise which resembles the word *tuckraa*, *tuckraa*, several times repeated."

Mr. Jerdon informs us that "this fine though plain-coloured Pheasant is only found in the north-western Himalayas, extending into Nepaul, where, however, it is not so common as further west." "It is," says "Mountaineer," "an inhabitant of the lower and intermediate ranges, is seldom found at very great elevations, and never approaches the limits of forest. Its haunts are on grassy hills, with a scattered forest of oak and small patches of underwood, hills covered with the common pine, near the sites of deserted villages, old cow-sheds, and the long grass among precipices and broken ground. It is seldom found on hills destitute of trees or jungle, or in the opposite extreme of deep shady forest; in the lower ranges it keeps near the tops of the hills, and is rarely met with in the valleys or deep ravines. It wanders about a good deal on the particular hill on which it is located, but not beyond certain boundaries, remaining about one spot for several days or weeks, then shifting to another, but never entirely abandoning the place, and, year after year, may to a certainty be found in some quarter of it. It runs very fast, and, if the ground be open and no cover near, will run two or three hundred yards in preference to getting up. After concealing itself, it lies very close.

"The crow of this bird is loud and singular, and, when there is nothing to interrupt the sound, may be heard for at least a mile. It is something like the words *chir-a-pir*, *chir-a-pir*, *chir-chir*, *chirwa-chirwa*, but a good deal varied; it is often begun before daylight.

"The Cheer-Pheasant feeds chiefly on roots, for which it digs holes in the ground; grubs, insects, seeds, and berries, and, if near cultivated fields, several kinds of grain also form a portion of its diet. It is easy to rear in confinement, and might, without difficulty, be naturalized in England, if it would stand the long frosts and snows of severe winters, which I imagine is rather doubtful. The female makes her nest in the grass or amongst low bushes, and lays from nine to fourteen eggs, of a dull white, and rather small for so large a bird. They are hatched about the end of May or beginning of June. Both male and female keep with the young brood, and seem very solicitous for their safety.

"This bird flies rather heavily, and seldom very far. Like most others, it generally utters a few loud screeches on getting up, and spreads out the beautifully barred feathers of its long tail, both when flying and running. It does not perch much on trees, but will occasionally fly up into one near at hand when put up by dogs. It generally sleeps on the ground; and when congregated together, the whole flock huddle up in one spot. They will, however, at times roost in trees or bushes."

The male has the feathers of the head and crest dark ashy grey, with somewhat lighter edges; neck light ash-colour, slightly barred on the lower part with dusky black; neck, back, upper surface, shoulders, and wing-coverts barred with buff, ashy grey, and brownish black, with which latter hue the two former are