GENNÆUS NYCTHEMERUS.

Pencilled Pheasant.

Phasianus nycthemerus, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 272.—Ib. Gmel. edit., tom. i. p. 743.—Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 631.—Temm. Hist. Nat. Gen. des Pig. et Gall., tom. ii. p. 281, et tom. iii. p. 665, pl. anat. 2. figs. 6, 7.—Ib. Man. d'Orn., 2nd edit. tom. i. p. 90.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 495.—Jard. Nat. Lib. Gallinaceous Birds, p. 207, pl. 18.—Bonnat. Ency. Méth. Orn., part i. p. 187, pl. 89. fig. 1. male, and fig. 1. no. 2. female.

——— *albus Sinensis*, Briss. Orn., tom. i. p. 276.—Id. 8vo, tom. i. p. 77.

Le Faisan noir et blanc de la Chine, Buff. Hist. Nat. des Ois., tom. ii. p. 359.—Ib. Pl. Enl. 123, 124.

The Black and White Chinese Pheasant, Edw. Nat. Hist., vol. ii. pl. 66.—Albin, Hist. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 35.

Pencilled Pheasant, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. iv. p. 719.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. viii. p. 199.

Nycthemerus argentatus, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 34.

Gallophasis Nycthemerus, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 498.

Euplocomus nycthemerus, Gray, List of Birds in Brit. Mus., part iii. p. 25.

Gennæus, Wagl., Bonap. Tab. par. des Gall. in Compt. Rend. de l'Acad. des Sci., tom. xlii., Mai 12, 1856.

Grammatoptilos, Reichenb.

Spicifer, Kaup.

This familiar and ornamental species will be found described in the early works of Linnæus, Brisson, and Latham, the first of whom assigned to it the specific appellation of *nycthemerus*, an appellation which it has retained to the present day, although attempts have been made to set it aside; its generic name too, as will be seen on reference to the list of synonyms, has been subject to much mutation, each of the modern authors who have considered it desirable to separate it from the true Pheasants (genus *Phasianus*) having proposed a separate title; of these, that of *Gennæus*, instituted by Wagler, having the priority, is necessarily and very properly the one retained. It is somewhat astonishing, however, to find that although so many authors have noticed this bird, not one of them has recorded anything of its habits, manners, and economy in a state of nature; most of them content themselves with simply stating that it is an inhabitant of China; but Sir William Jardine, in the volume on the *Gallinaceæ* in his "Naturalist's Library," gives the northern parts of that great country as its habitat.

From the date of its first introduction to Europe it has been regarded as a bird more fitted for the aviary than for a denizen of our woods; and it is one of the birds which, so treated, has rewarded us for our pains; it may indeed be said to be completely naturalized in a domesticated state, and it could doubtless be established in our woods were such a measure desirable; but to effect this with success, no other species of Pheasant must be kept within its precincts, the pugnacious nature of this tribe of birds not admitting of the near proximity of two species, as the certain result would be a constant succession of battles, ending, as is known to be the case when the common domestic Cock and Pheasant meet, in the death of the weaker bird.

Our country is not perhaps, after all, well adapted either for this bird or its near allies the *Euplocomi*, recently brought to this country, and so successfully bred in the gardens of the Zoological Society of London. Few birds can be more interesting as ornaments for our aviaries, and as such I pray they may be kept, or at least confined to some limited area; for no good can result if they should hybridize with our Common Pheasant.

"The Birds of Asia" is not the place wherein to describe in detail the breeding and domestic habits of this bird in the aviary; but I may state that it bears confinement well, and, with but ordinary care, its propagation is attended with success. It is both a noble and a graceful bird, and were it less common, would be more highly esteemed. After the autumn moult, its pencilled markings are exceedingly delicate and graceful; and as spring advances, its rich comb and wattles become enlarged and of a most vivid scarlet, offering a striking contrast to its delicate pea-green bill. The colouring of the female is altogether as sombre; and a greater contrast cannot well be imagined.

I am indebted to Edward L. Betts, Esq., of Preston Hall near Maidstone, for the splendid specimen from which my figure was taken, that gentleman having, with the greatest kindness and liberality, permitted me to select the finest male from his aviary for the furtherance of this work.

The male has the crown of the head, the lengthened crest, and the whole of the under surface deep black glossed with blue; the remainder of the plumage white, each feather with three dusky lines, one within another, parallel to the margin, but meeting in a point towards the tip—these markings being conspicuous on the sides of the body and wings, and faint and delicate on the sides of the neck and upper surface of the body; tail obliquely striated with black, except the two middle feathers, which are entirely white; irides dark brown; wattles and face vivid scarlet; bill pea-green; legs lake-red.

The female is brown, freckled with darker brown; orbits smaller and less brilliant than in the male.

The front figure is as near the natural size as possible.