GALLOPERDIX ZEYLONENSIS.

Ceylon Spur-Fowl.

Tetrao Zeylonensis, Gmel. Edit. Linn. Syst. Nat. tom. i. par. ii. p. 759.
Perdix bicalcaratus, Forst. Ind. Zool. p. 25. pl. 14.—Penn. Ind. Zool. p. 40. pl. 7.—Penn. Hind. vol. i. p. 212.
——— *zeylonensis*, Bonnat. et Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn. vol. i. p. 210. pl. 93. fig. 3.—Temm. Hist. Nat. des Gall. tom. iii. pp. 311 & 718.
Francolinus ceylanensis, Less. Traité d'Orn. p. 504.
Ceylon Partridge, Lath. Gen. Syn. vol. iv. p. 758.—Ib. Gen. Hist. vol. viii. p. 268.
Chitty-gong Partridge, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp. p. 222.—Ib. Supp. vol. ii. p. 278.
Galloperdix zeylonensis, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 241.

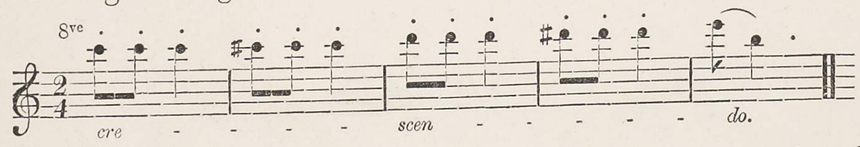
As the above list of synonyms will show, this bird has been long known to writers on natural history, yet how few collections there are which contain examples! I do not, in fact, know an Asiatic species of the Gallinacea which is more seldom seen in our museums. Mr. Edgar L. Layard, who has lately returned to England, after a residence of eight years in Ceylon, has, however, partially supplied this want by bringing with him numerous examples. Few persons write more agreeably on subjects of natural history than this gentleman, and no one has contributed so largely to our knowledge of the ornithology of Ceylon; so valuable, in fact, are his notes, that it is to be hoped that if his future years are to be spent in foreign countries, they may be passed in some interesting locality, where his leisure hours may be as usefully employed as they were in Ceylon.

I do not find on record any information whatever respecting the singular and prettily-marked bird forming the subject of the accompanying Plate; the following notes from the pen of Mr. Layard, which I have great pleasure in giving in his own words, will therefore be read with interest:—

"This species, known to Europeans under the various denominations of 'Spur-Fowl,' 'Double-spurred Partridge,' and 'Kandy Partridge,' is an inhabitant of the central, southern, and south-western provinces.

"It delights in deep tangled brakes and thick masses of canes on the sides of gentle declivities; these it finds abundantly in the localities above cited, while, in the northern and eastern provinces, the sandy soil and open jungles which prevail offer no congenial home to a bird of its shy and retiring habits. Even in localities where it does occur, it is more often heard than seen, for so extreme is its wariness that it rarely falls before the gun even of the native hunter, who creeps about unclad and as noiselessly as the denizens of the forest. It is trapped therefore by means of nooses and other snares placed in its path, for its flesh is highly valued by the natives. I think it decidedly superior in flavour to any other game which I tasted in Ceylon; it ate and looked much like grouse.

"It is most active during the mornings and evenings, roaming in small parties amid the open glades or bare towering trunks of the 'Mookalane' or high tree-jungle, but on the least alarm seeking safety in the most impenetrable underwood. After remaining concealed some time, and if nothing occurs to excite their fears, a cock-bird, bolder than the rest, will utter a few low notes, not unlike the plaintive call of a turkey-poult; if this is answered from a distance, or the birds are reassured, the call is changed for a loud piping whistle, of which the following stave gives the nearest representation which I can devise,—



and the birds once more sally out from their concealment. I am convinced that, like the Virginian Quail, these birds possess the power of ventriloquizing in an eminent degree. I have often listened to those in my aviary, and could have declared that the calls proceeded from every part of the garden save that in which the performers were located.

"They do not thrive well in confinement, but exhibit the same wild and suspicious demeanour, always hiding behind their feeding-troughs or herding in corners; if any object approaches too closely and alarms them suddenly, they rise from the ground with a spring, and unless the roof is placed at a considerable altitude, dash their heads against it and fall lifeless to the ground.

"They fly with great rapidity, but prefer to seek safety in concealment rather than maintain a lengthened flight. One which escaped from a basket in my house flew up to the roof and through the ventilating holes, but instead of continuing on the wing at the elevation it had attained, it instantly dropped into a