

passing visit, but that the bird intended to take up its residence here and become one of our avifauna. What reception did this stranger from a distant land receive? No sooner did it arrive worn out with fatigue, than numerous guns were levelled for its destruction; the little flights were hunted to and fro until nearly the whole were killed, and the remnant driven we know not whither. What efforts have the Acclimatization Society made to avert this? At what cross purposes are we playing, when we are endeavouring to introduce creatures from the antipodes without the most remote chance of success, while we neglect and defeat the spontaneous offer of so interesting a bird as the Sandgrouse! Let those wealthy proprietors who have sanctioned this new Society, and given it their support, render as much protection to our new friend as will at least give it the chance of establishing itself among us. That our seasons would not be too rigorous for it is certain; for Mr. Swinhoe states that the bird winters on the plains between Peking and Tientsin, and that hundreds are captured after a fall of snow, the markets of Tientsin, where it is called Shá-chee, or Sand-fowl, being fairly glutted with them. Huc, in his 'Travels in Tartary,' when speaking of this bird, says:—"This singular creature is called by the Chinese *Loung-Kio*, that is, Dragon's Foot. They generally arrive in great flocks from the north, especially when much snow has fallen, flying with astonishing rapidity, so that the movement of their wings produces a noise like a shower of hail."

The question will very naturally arise, Is our island otherwise adapted to this bird? In some respects it is not; but there are certain barren tracts and sandy districts near the sea which would afford it a congenial home, where it might breed, and whence, like the Dove-cote Pigeon, it might make raids on the corn-fields, when a desire for a change of diet prompted it so to do, and by which means its flesh, as an article of diet, might be greatly improved; at present I fear it would not be much esteemed.

A species of such vast powers of flight, as we know this Sandgrouse to be possessed of, is no bird for the aviary, and we may well be surprised that any of the members of the valuable present of many living examples, by the Hon. James F. Stuart Wortley, to the Zoological Society should still be living. It is not a little amusing to hear the remarks of some of the visitors respecting these birds. Like the person who assured me he had seen a Humming-Bird in England, they think they have met with an old friend from India or Egypt. Let me assure all such persons, that neither Pallas's Sandgrouse nor the only other known species of the genus, the *Syrrhaptes Tibetanus*, is ever seen south of the great watershed which separates India and Persia from Tartary, and that the birds they have seen are the various species of the genus *Pterocles*, whose feet are differently formed, and whose wings are not so lengthened. The Indian and Egyptian birds, it is true, bear a general resemblance to each other; but they are quite distinct. The home, then, of the birds which have paid our shores a visit is in the Altaï and the Kirghis Steppes of Tartary, the country around Lake Baikal, and some parts of China. Here, on plains of grass and sandy deserts, at one season covered with snow and at another sun-burnt and parched up by drought, the Sandgrouse finds a congenial home; in these inhospitable and little-known regions it breeds, and, when necessity compels it so to do, wings its way, like the Bronze-winged Pigeon of the hot plains of Australia, over incredible distances to obtain water or food. Its diminutive bill, small head, and little feet, when compared with its lengthened wings and the very powerful pectoral muscles, clearly indicate that space is as nothing to it, and that a journey to Europe, when once willed, is easily accomplished.

The walk of the *Syrrhaptes* is as slow and feeble as its flight is rapid and powerful; it toddles over the ground with a laboured and uncertain step, like a Chinese lady in her boudoir.

The two sexes, as will be seen by the accompanying Plate, differ considerably in colour. The eggs are said to be four in number, but this is doubtful, since Mr. Newton informs me that three is the normal number laid by the members of the genus *Pterocles*, and that three was the number always found in the instances of their deposit on the Danish Islands above alluded to.

The Plate represents a male, a female, and three eggs, all of the size of nature.