

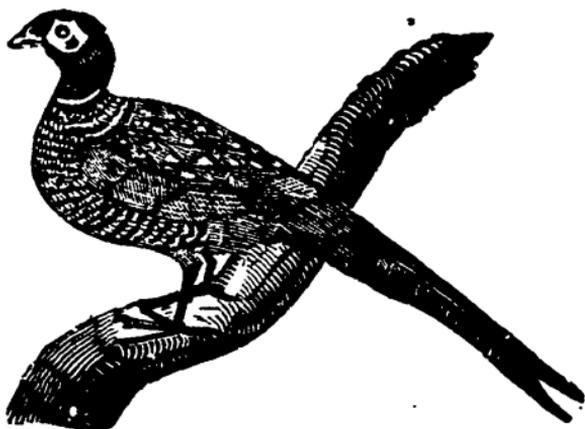
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NATURAL HISTORY



THE PHEASANT.

The name of this bird sufficiently indicates its origin. The pheasant is the bird of Phasis, a river of Colchis, in Asia Minor, whence they were first introduced into Europe.

Next to the peacock they are the most beautiful of birds, as well for the vivid colour of their plumes, as for their happy mixtures and varieties. It is far beyond the power of the pencil to draw any thing so glossy, so bright, or points so finely blending into each other. We are told that when Cræsus, king of Lydia, was seated on his throne, adorned with royal magnificence, and all the barbarous pomp of eastern splendour, he asked Solon if he had ever beheld any thing so fine! The Greek philosopher, no way moved by the objects before him, or taking a pride in his native simplicity, replied, that after having seen the beautiful plumage of the pheasant, he could be astonished at no other finery.

In fact, nothing can satisfy the eye with a greater variety and richness of ornament than

this beautiful creature. The iris of the eyes is yellow; and the eyes themselves are surrounded with a scarlet colour, sprinkled with small specks of black. On the fore part of the head there are blackish feathers mixed with a shining purple. The top of the head and the upper part of the neck are tinged with a darkish green that shines like silk. In some, the top of the head is of a shining blue, and the head itself, as well as the upper part of the neck, appears sometimes blue and sometimes green, as it is differently placed to the eye of the spectator. The feathers of the breast, the shoulder, the middle of the back, and the sides under the wings, have a blackish ground, with edges tinged of an exquisite colour, which appears sometimes black, and sometimes purple, according to the different lights it is placed in; under the purple there is a transverse streak of gold colour. The tail, from the middle feathers to the root, is about eighteen inches long; the legs, the feet, and the toes, are of