

persecuted by any enemies, the reduction of their wings had probably been caused by gradual disuse. Hence, during the earlier stages of the process of reduction, such birds would probably have resembled our domesticated ducks in the state of their organs of flight. This is the case with the water-hen (*Gallinula nesiotis*) of Tristan d'Acunha, which "can flutter a little, but obviously uses its legs, and not its wings, as a mode of escape." Now Mr. Sclater¹⁹ finds in this bird that the wings, sternum, and coracoids are all reduced in length, and the crest of the sternum in depth, in comparison with the same bones in the European water-hen (*G. chloropus*). On the other hand, the thigh-bones and pelvis are increased in length, the former by four lines, relatively to the same bones in the common water-hen. Hence in the skeleton of this natural species nearly the same changes have occurred, only carried a little further, as with our domestic ducks, and in this latter case I presume no one will dispute that they have resulted from the lessened use of the wings and the increased use of the legs.

THE GOOSE.

THIS bird deserves some notice, as hardly any other anciently domesticated bird or quadruped has varied so little. That geese were anciently domesticated we know from certain verses in Homer; and from these birds having been kept (388 B.C.) in the Capitol at Rome as sacred to Juno, which sacredness implies great antiquity.²⁰ That the goose has varied in some degree, we may infer from naturalists not being unanimous with respect to its wild parent-form; though the difficulty is chiefly due to the existence of three or four closely allied wild European species.²¹ A large majority of capable judges are convinced that our geese are descended from the wild Grey-leg goose (*A. ferus*); the

¹⁹ 'Proc. Zoolog. Soc.,' 1861, p. 261.

²⁰ 'Ceylon,' by Sir J. E. Tennent, 1859, vol. i. p. 485; also J. Crawford on the 'Relation of Domest. Animals to Civilisation,' read before Brit. Assoc. 1860. See also 'Ornamental

Poultry,' by Rev. E. S. Dixon, 1848, p. 132. The goose figured on the Egyptian monuments seems to have been the Red goose of Egypt.

²¹ Macgillivray's 'British Birds,' vol. iv. p. 593.