

value, and for its prolificness and tameness. In all these points the goose differs from the wild parent-form; and these are the points which have been selected. Even in ancient times the Roman gourmands valued the liver of the *white* goose; and Pierre Belon,<sup>32</sup> in 1555 speaks of two varieties, one of which was larger, more fecund, and of a better colour than the other; and he expressly states that good managers attended to the colour of their goslings, so that they might know which to preserve and select for breeding.

#### THE PEACOCK.

THIS is another bird which has hardly varied under domestication, except in sometimes being white or piebald. Mr. Waterhouse carefully compared, as he informs me, skins of the wild Indian and domestic bird, and they were identical in every respect, except that the plumage of the latter was perhaps rather thicker. Whether our birds are descended from those introduced into Europe in the time of Alexander, or have been subsequently imported, is doubtful. They do not breed very freely with us, and are seldom kept in large numbers,—circumstances which would greatly interfere with the gradual selection and formation of new breeds.

There is one strange fact with respect to the peacock, namely, the occasional appearance in England of the “japanned” or “black-shouldered” kind. This form has lately been named on the high authority of Mr. Sciator as a distinct species, viz. *Pavo nigripennis*, which he believes will hereafter be found wild in some country, but not in India, where it is certainly unknown. The males of these japanned birds differ conspicuously from the common peacock in the colour of their secondary wing-feathers, scapulars, wing-coverts, and thighs, and are I think more beautiful; they are rather smaller than the common sort, and are always beaten by them in their battles, as I hear from the Hon. A. S. G. Canning. The females are much paler coloured than those of the common kind. Both sexes, as Mr. Canning

<sup>32</sup> ‘L’Hist. de la Nature des Oiseaux,’ par P. Belon, 1555, p. 156. With respect to the livers of white geese

being preferred by the Romans, see Isid. Geoffroy St.-Hilaire, ‘Hist. Nat. Gén.’ tom. iii. p. 58.