

cases in Great Britain of japanned birds, having suddenly appeared within recent times in flocks of the common peafowl. This variety must also have formerly appeared in Europe, for Mr. Canning has seen an old picture, and another is referred to in the 'Field,' with this variety represented. These facts seem to me to indicate that the japanned peacock is a strongly marked variety or "sport," which tends at all times and in many places to reappear. This view is supported by the young being at first white like the young of the white breed, which is undoubtedly a variation. If, on the other hand, we believe the japanned peacock to be a distinct species, we must suppose that in all the above cases the common breed had at some former period been crossed by it, but had lost every trace of the cross; yet that the offspring of these birds suddenly and completely reacquired through reversion the characters of *P. nigripennis*. I have heard of no other such case in the animal or vegetable kingdom. To perceive the full improbability of such an occurrence, we may suppose that a breed of dogs had been crossed at some former period with a wolf, but had lost every trace of the wolf-like character, yet that the breed gave birth in seven instances in the same country, within no great length of time, to a wolf perfect in every character; and we must further suppose that in two of the cases, the newly produced wolves afterwards spontaneously increased to such an extent as to lead to the extinction of the parent breed of dogs. So remarkable a bird as the *P. Nigripennis*, when first imported, would have realized a large price; it is therefore improbable that it should have been silently introduced and its history subsequently lost. On the whole the evidence seems to me, as it did to Sir R. Heron, to be decisive in favour of the japanned or black-shouldered breed being a variation, induced by some unknown cause. On this view, the case is the most remarkable one ever recorded of the abrupt appearance of a new form, which so closely resembles a true species that it has deceived one of the most experienced of living ornithologists.