

## THE TURKEY.

It seems fairly well established by Mr. Gould,<sup>36</sup> that the turkey, in accordance with the history of its first introduction, is descended from a wild Mexican form, which had been domesticated by the natives before the discovery of America, and which is now generally ranked as a local race, and not as a distinct species. However this may be, the case deserves notice because in the United States wild male turkeys sometimes court the domestic hens, which are descended from the Mexican form, "and are generally received by them with great pleasure."<sup>37</sup> Several accounts have likewise been published of young birds, reared in the United States from the eggs of the wild species, crossing and commingling with the common breed. In England, also, this same species has been kept in several parks; from two of which the Rev. W. D. Fox procured birds, and they crossed freely with the common domestic kind, and during many years afterwards, as he informs me, the turkeys in his neighbourhood clearly showed traces of their crossed parentage. We here have an instance of a domestic race being modified by a cross with a distinct wild race or species. F. Michaux<sup>38</sup> suspected in 1802 that the common domestic turkey was not descended from the United States species alone, but likewise from a southern form, and he went so far as to believe that English and French turkeys differed from having different proportions of the blood of the two parent-forms.

English turkeys are smaller than either wild form. They have not varied in any great degree; but there are some breeds which can be distinguished—as Norfolks, Suffolks, Whites, and Copper-coloured (or Cambridge), all of which,

<sup>36</sup> 'Proc. Zoolog. Soc.,' April 8th, 1856, p. 61. Prof. Baird believes (as quoted in Tegetmeier's 'Poultry Book,' 1866, p. 269) that our turkeys are descended from a West Indian species now extinct. But besides the improbability of a bird having long ago become extinct in these large and luxuriant islands, it appears (as we shall presently see) that the turkey

degenerates in India, and this fact indicates that it was not aboriginally an inhabitant of the lowlands of the tropics.

<sup>37</sup> Audubon's 'Ornithological Biography,' vol. i., 1831, pp. 4-13; and 'Naturalist's Library,' vol. xiv., Birds, p. 138.

<sup>38</sup> F. Michaux, 'Travels in N. America,' 1802, Eng. transl., p. 217.