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ASTRAPIA SPLENDIDISSIMA, *Rothsch.*

Rothschild's Bird of Paradise.

Astrapia splendidissima, Rothschild, Novit. Zool. ii. p. 59, pl. v. (1895).—Id. Novit. Zool. iii. p. 19 (1896).

THIS extraordinary bird is at present known only from the specimens in the Rothschild Museum at Tring, where there are now five examples. The first one described by the Hon. Walter Rothschild was supposed to come from the foot of the Charles Louis Mountains, in Dutch New Guinea, but the actual habitat of the species is still unknown.

Mr. Rothschild remarks :—" On comparison with *Astrapia nigra*, some of the structural characters show important differences. The feathers covering part of the nostrils are a little shorter than in *A. nigra*. The large ear-tufts of *A. nigra* are very much smaller, in fact barely indicated, in *A. splendidissima*, and not different in colour from the hind-neck. The splendid pectoral band is much broader and more patch-like, the feathers above it less velvety. The scaly feathers on the sides of the breast do not extend so far down as in *A. nigra*. The beak of the new species is actually much larger than that of the much bulkier *Astrapia nigra*."

Adult male. General colour above velvety black, glossed with beautiful purple on the mantle and back, and with steel-green on the wing-coverts, rump, and upper tail-coverts; quills and tail black, the two centre tail-feathers creamy white for more than half their length, the terminal portion black glossed with purple; the remainder of the feathers with a decreasing amount of creamy white towards the base, disappearing entirely on the outer feathers; forehead velvety black in some lights, but shot with metallic golden green, which verges into steel-green on the crown and then becomes glossed with metallic violet; the hinder crown and hind-neck metallic emerald-green, many of the feathers shot with golden green and metallic violet; anterior lores velvety black, followed by a vivid patch of golden green, continued below the eye, and contrasting with the ear-coverts, which appear velvety black, but are glossed with golden green like the forehead; entire throat metallic oily green, shot with steel-green, especially on the edges, which incline to steel-blue; the fore part of the cheeks golden green, the hinder part fiery crimson, uniting in a broad collar of the same colour on the fore-neck, and separated from the green throat by an intervening patch of velvety purplish black; remainder of under surface of body glossy green with coppery-golden reflections, the feathers of the sides of the breast ornamented with crescentic tips of metallic steel-green; sides of body and flanks washed with purplish; lower abdomen, thighs, and under tail-coverts purplish black, as also the under wing-coverts: bill and feet black. Total length 15 inches, culmen 1.45, wing 5.4, tail 7.7, tarsus 1.45.

The adult female is not known, but a young male in Mr. Rothschild's collection has a fulvous breast with dusky bars, like the female of *Astrapia nigra*, so that it is evident that the female of *A. splendidissima* will be found to have a barred plumage below.

The description is taken from a beautiful specimen in Mr. Rothschild's collection; and the Plate represents the same bird in two positions, to show the different sheen which the sides of the head present according to the positions in which the bird may be held.

P.S.—Since the above was printed, Mr. Rothschild has received the female of this species, and I have been able to add a figure of this sex.