

INTRODUCTION.

THAT the Birds of Paradise and the Bower-Birds are closely related, it will be impossible for anyone to deny; and although, at first sight, it may seem easy to separate a typical Bird of Paradise, such as *Paradisea apoda*, from a typical Bower-Bird, such as *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*, the actual differences between these two apparently diverse forms are hard to define in writing. The problem is apparently solved by Mr. D. G. Elliot and the Hon. Walter Rothschild, who unite the *Paradiseidæ* and *Ptilonorhynchidæ* together as one Family, a conclusion with which, in the present state of our knowledge, no one will be inclined to disagree. On those who differ from them the task is laid of defining the characters which are to separate the Bower-Birds from the true Birds of Paradise, and this will indeed be found difficult enough. That the Bower-builders must be different from the *Paradiseidæ* seems to the eye of the practical ornithologist a foregone conclusion, and yet the characters for the separation of the two groups are hard to find. That they exist I have not the smallest doubt; but that we shall ever discover them can scarcely be expected, for the aim of every ordinary collector in the present day seems to be, not to furnish us with details of the nesting-habits of the Birds of Paradise, but to see how many of these beautiful creatures he can procure for the decoration of the hats of the women of Europe and America. "The gentlemen who represent the German New Guinea Company have shot down all the full-plumaged males of *Paradisea finschi* near the coast of German New Guinea." This is written by a German naturalist of the highest repute concerning a species so rare in museums that we may yet be compelled to study its characters by permission of our wives and daughters, whose hats are decorated with its mutilated bodies. What will be said in the future by the civilized world and its scientific investigators when they find that we had the chance of learning the habits and nidification of these extraordinary birds, and allowed them to pass out of existence for the adornment of our women-folk, with scarcely a word of protest?

These remarks, which I am sure will be endorsed by every true naturalist in the world, are occasioned by the dilemma in which I find myself placed—viz., that I cannot draw any line between the *Paradiseidæ* and *Ptilonorhynchidæ*, simply from lack of information as to the habits of many species. For instance, when a wonderful form like *Pteridophora* comes to light, the problem for naturalists to determine is whether it is a Bird of Paradise or a Bower-Bird. To judge by its wonderful train of enamel-tipped feathers, it must belong to the *Paradiseidæ*, but, stripped of these long streamers, *Pteridophora* becomes a very ordinary-looking Bower-Bird, which would be taken for an ally of *Prionodura* or *Cnemophilus*; and yet, in