

PARADISEA APODA, Linn.

The Greater Bird of Paradise.

The Greater Bird of Paradise, Edwards, Birds, iii. pl. 110.

L'Oiseau de Paradis, Brisson, Orn. ii. p. 130, pl. xiii.

Paradisea apoda, Linn. Syst. Nat. i. p. 166.—Wagler, Syst. Av., *Paradisea*, sp. 1.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av. i. p. 412.—Gray, P. Z. S. 1861, p. 436.—Wallace, Ibis, 1859, p. 111; 1861, p. 289.—Schlegel, Mus. Pays-Bas, Coraces, p. 78.—Wallace, Malay Archip. ii. p. 238.—Gray, Handl. B. ii. p. 16.—Elliot, Monogr. Parad. pl. i.—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. ix. p. 191.—Sharpe, Cat. B. iii. p. 167.

Paradisea major, Shaw, Gen. Zool. vii. p. 480, pl. 58.—Less. Ois. de Paradis, Synopsis, p. 6.—Id. Hist. Nat. p. 155, pl. 6.

Paradisea apoda, var. *wallaciana*, Gray, P. Z. S. 1858, p. 181.

I HAVE in my collection some skins of this splendid bird which would justify the specific name of *apoda* bestowed upon it by Linnæus; and I suspect that nearly every one of the specimens in public collections mounted before the last twenty years would be found to have other birds' feet attached to them instead of their own proper appendages. The reason is that, until very recently, all the skins of the Great Bird of Paradise which reached Europe were in a mutilated condition—generally without feet, and often without wings; and I well remember the admiration which was roused by the arrival of Mr. Wallace's beautiful perfect examples, and the interest which the exhibition of Mr. Bartlett's mounted specimen excited, when it was first exhibited in the British Museum. Now that complete skins are the rule, and badly prepared ones the exception, it is interesting to glance at the past history of the species, and to peruse the accounts of the first describers of its remarkable plumage. "When the earliest European voyagers," writes Mr. Wallace, in his 'Malay Archipelago,' "reached the Moluccas in search of cloves and nutmegs, which were then rare and precious spices, they were presented with the dried skins of birds so strange and beautiful as to excite the admiration even of those wealth-seeking rovers. The Malay traders gave them the name of 'Manuk dewater' (or God's birds); and the Portuguese, finding that they had no feet or wings, and not being able to learn any thing authentic about them, called them 'Passaros de Sol' (or Birds of the Sun); while the learned Dutchmen, who wrote in Latin, called them 'Avis paradiseus' (or Paradise-bird). John van Linschoten gives these names in 1598, and tells us that no one has seen these birds alive; for they live in the air, always turning towards the sun, and never lighting on the earth till they die; for they have neither feet nor wings, as, he adds, may be seen by the birds carried to India, and sometimes to Holland; but being very costly they are rarely seen in Europe. More than a hundred years later Mr. William Funnell, who accompanied Dampier, and wrote an account of the voyage, saw specimens at Amboyna, and was told that they came to Banda to eat nutmegs, which intoxicated them, and made them fall down senseless, when they were killed by ants. Down to 1760, when Linnæus named the largest species *Paradisea apoda* (the footless Paradise-bird), no perfect specimen had been seen in Europe, and absolutely nothing was known about them. And even now, a hundred years later, most books state that they migrate annually to Ternate, Banda, and Amboyna, whereas the fact is that they are as completely unknown in these islands in a wild state as they are in England." I may remark that Edwards had probably a complete specimen in 1750, as he mentions the figures in the older authors, such as Willughby, and remarks, "As none of these were satisfactory to me, I have given this figure and description of a *perfect bird*, which may more than answer the purposes of so many;" and again:—"It hath legs and feet of a moderate proportion and strength for its bigness, shaped much like those of Pyles or Jays, of a dark brown colour, armed with claws of middling strength." The fact remains, however, that the vast majority of skins received in Europe before Mr. Wallace's expedition, were mutilated and footless. He writes:—"The native mode of preserving them is to cut off the wings and feet, and then skin the body up to the beak, taking out the skulls. A stout stick is then run up through the specimen, coming out at the mouth. Round this some leaves are stuffed, and the whole is wrapped up in a palm-spathe and dried in the smoky hut. By this plan the head, which is really large, is shrunk up almost to nothing, the body is much reduced and shortened, and the greatest prominence is given to the flowing plumage. Some of these native skins are very clean, and often have wings and feet left on; others are dreadfully stained with smoke; and all give a most erroneous idea of the proportions of the living bird." The following notes on