

PAROTIA SEXPENNIS.

Six-plumed Bird of Paradise.

Le Sifilet de la Nouvelle Guinée, Montb. Pl. Enl. 111, pl. 633.

L'Oiseau de Paradis à gorge dorée, Sonnerat, Voy. N. Guin. p. 158, pl. 97.

Gold-breasted Paradise-bird, Lath. Gen. Syn. ii. p. 481.

Paradisea penicillata, Scop. Del. Faun. et Flor. Insubr. ii. p. 88 (ex Sonn.).

——— *aurea*, Gm. S. N. i. p. 402 (ex Lath.).

——— *sexsetacea*, Lath. Ind. Orn. i. p. 196.—Shaw, Gen. Zool. vii. pt. 2, p. 496, pl. 66.—Wagler, Syst. Av. *Paradisea*, sp. 6.

Le Sifilet, Levaill. H. N. Ois. Parad. i. pls. 12, 13.—Audeb. et Vieill. Ois. Dor., Parad. pl. 6.

Parotia sexsetacea, Vieill. Gal. des Ois. ii. p. 148, pl. 97.—Less. Ois. Parad. Syn. p. 10, pls. 11 bis, 12.

——— *aurea*, Gray, List Gen. B. p. 39 (1840).

Paradisea sexpennis, Gray, P. Z. S. 1861, p. 436.—Schl. Mus. P.-B. *Coraces*, p. 92.—Gray, Hand-l. B. ii. p. 16.—Schl. N. T. D. iv. p. 50.

Parotia sexpennis, Wall. Malay Archip. ii. p. 251.—Elliot, Monogr. Parad. pl. 10.

It is evident, from the recent researches of travellers, that we are at last beginning to solve the ornithological mysteries of New Guinea; and if no other proof existed, the history of the present bird would furnish us with one. It is now nearly one hundred years ago since the Six-plumed Bird of Paradise was figured by Montbeillard; and until about three or four years ago we knew of this beautiful species nothing but the fact that a few specimens, of native preparation, existed in some of the great collections of Europe. Even its exact *habitat* was unknown; but the correctness of the supposition that it came from New Guinea has been amply proved by the investigations of recent travellers. The first person who procured perfect specimens of the bird was Baron von Rosenberg. He discovered the species in the mountains of the northern part of New Guinea; and after him, Signor d'Albertis obtained it in the Arfak mountains, whence also Dr. Meyer brought to Europe numerous examples. I am enabled to give an illustration of the bird from a pair of his beautiful specimens, which are now in my collection.

The female was known to Lesson, by whom it was figured in his 'Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux de Paradis' (pl. 12); and at the same time he gives a curious illustration of a male in imperfect plumage, retaining still some of the immature brown feathers on the breast. A better illustration of the female bird is given in Mr. Elliot's work. The latter gentleman has figured the male with the white feathers protruding far over the bill; and I recently saw a specimen with the feathers thus recurved, in the possession of Professor S. L. Steere, of Michigan University. On his way through London, back to America, he very kindly brought me the bird to examine; and although all the specimens which I have seen had these white feathers reflected backwards so as to form a broad frontal band as represented in my plate, it was evident that the position of the frontal plumes in Mr. Steere's specimen was quite natural; and there can be no doubt that when alive the bird raises and depresses these feathers at will.

The following remarks are from the pen of Signor d'Albertis:—

"Although this species has been known many years, it is not yet accurately understood, having only been described from birds in a mutilated condition. My observations have been made in the natural haunts of these elegant birds, from numerous specimens both living and dead. These birds are found in the north of New Guinea. I met with them about thirty miles from the coast, at an elevation of 3600 feet above the level of the sea, near Mount Arfak. I have never found the adult male in company with females or young birds, but always in the thickest parts of the forest; the females and young birds are generally found in a much lower zone. This Paradise-bird is very noisy, uttering a note like '*guaad-guaad*.' It feeds upon various kinds of fruits, more especially a species of fig which is very plentiful in the mountain-ranges; at other times I have observed it feeding on a small kind of nutmeg. To clean its rich plumage this bird is accustomed, when the ground is dry, to scrape (similarly to a gallinaceous bird) around places clear of all grass and leaves, and to roll over and over again in the dust produced by the clearing, at the same time crying out, extending and contracting its plumage, elevating the brilliant silvery crest on the upper part of its head, and also the six remarkable plumes from which it derives the specific name of *sexpennis*. On seeing its eccentric movements at this time, and hearing its cries, one would consider it to be engaged in a fight with some imaginary enemy. This bird is named 'Caran-a' by the natives. I have also a skeleton of a young male of this species, which, although not in a perfect state, may no doubt be interesting as showing the form of the cranium, on which there is an admirable muscular structure which enables the bird to elevate the feathers of the head. The feathers at the nape of the neck exhibit, when the rays of light strike upon them, a rich and brilliant metallic hue. The eyes are of a light blue, with a circle of a pale yellowish green colour."

The figures in the Plate are of the natural size.