

# LOPHORHINA SUPERBA.

## Superb Bird of Paradise.

- L'oiseau de Paradis de la Nouvelle Guinée, dit le Superbe*, Brisson, Orn. iii. p. 169 (1760).—D'Aubent. Planches Enluménées, iii. pl. 632 (1774).
- Oiseau de Paradis à gorge violette*, Sonn. Voy. Nouv. Guinée, p. 157, pl. 96 (1776).
- Paradisea superba*, Pennant, in Forster, Ind. Zool. p. 40 (1781).—Scopoli, Del. Faun. et Flor. Insubr. ii. p. 88 (1783).—Shaw, Gen. Zool. vii. p. 494, pls. 63-65 (1809).—Id. & Nodder, Nat. Misc. xxiv. pl. 1021 (1813).—Wagler, Syst. Av. *Paradisea*, sp. 5 (1827).—Wallace, Ibis, 1859, p. 111.
- Superb Bird of Paradise*, Lath. Gen. Syn. vol. i. part 2, p. 479 (1782).
- Paradisea atra*, Bodd. Tabl. Pl. Enl. D'Aubent. p. 38 (1783).
- Le Superbe*, Audeb. et Vieill. Ois. Dor. ii. pl. vii. (1802).—Levaill. Hist. Nat. Ois. Parad. i. pls. 14, 15 (1806).
- Paradisea furcata*, Bechst. Kurze Uebers. p. 132 (1811).
- Lophorina superba*, Vieill. N. Dict. d'Hist. Nat. xviii. p. 184 (1817).—Id. Gal. Ois. i. p. 149, pl. xcvi. (1825).—Less. Traité, p. 337 (1831).—Id. Ois. Parad. Syn. p. 12 (1835).—Id. Hist. Nat. Ois. Parad. pls. 13, 14 (1835).—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av. p. 414 (1850).—Wall. Ibis, 1861, p. 287.—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. ix. p. 190 (1876).—Sharpe, Cat. Birds, iii. p. 179 (1877).
- Epimachus ater*, Schl. Mus. Pays-Bas, Coraces, p. 96, note (1867).
- Lophorina atra*, Wallace, Malay Arch. ii. p. 249 (1869).—Elliot, Monogr. Parad. pl. xi. (1873).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. vii. p. 783 (1875).—Beccari, *tom. cit.* p. 712 (1875).—Sclater, Ibis, 1876, p. 251.

To any one studying the Paradise-birds it soon becomes evident that there are several natural groups comprising this interesting family. First of all there are the long-billed *Epimachi* and Rifle-birds, then the larger species, with their enormously long flank-plumes of red or yellow, and lastly the smaller and more fantastic kinds with decorated mantles and tails. Amongst the latter there is great diversity of form: whether it takes the shape of a bare head, as in *Schlegelia*, or of an elongated racket to the centre tail-feathers, as in *Cicinnurus*, or of an elaborated breast-shield, as in *Diphyllodes*, we find that there are scarcely any two which are alike in ornamentation. Take, for example, the subject of the present article. It stands apart from all the others in the extraordinary mantle, which it is able to elevate behind its head,—and also in its remarkable breast-shield, unlike that of any known species. And this strikes me as being one of the most curious phenomena connected with Papuan ornithology—that there should be all these isolated genera of Paradisiidæ, many represented by a single species, and each so different. There seems to be no connecting link between the genera—*Parotia* standing alone with its six ricketed plumes on the head, *Semioptera* with its streamlets on the wing, *Schlegelia* with its bare head, and so on, not one of these peculiar forms graduating into another.

The subject of our article is a native of the north of New Guinea, and it is still one of the rarest of the Paradisiidæ, specimens of it being still scarce in collections in this country.

Dr. Beccari does not give much information about the present species in his "Ornithological Letter" from North-western New Guinea. He merely observes:—" *Lophorina atra* is rather rarer than *Parotia*; but I must tell you that the abundance of fruit-eating birds in a given locality depends principally on the season at which certain kinds of fruit are ripe; therefore a species may be common in a place one month, and become rare or completely disappear in the next, when the season of the fruit on which it lives has passed."

The female of the Superb Bird of Paradise is similar in general appearance to that of *Parotia*, but is of course a smaller bird. I take the following descriptions from Mr. Sharpe's 'Catalogue of Birds':—

"*Adult male*. General colour above velvety black, somewhat glossed with bronzy purple; mantle produced into an elevated shield, composed of velvety black plumes, glossed under certain lights with bronze; wing-coverts velvety black, rather more distinctly glossed with purple than the back; quills and tail-feathers deep black, glossed with steel-blue; lores and nasal plumes forming an elevated crest of purplish black feathers; crown of head, nape, and hind neck spangled with metallic steel-coloured feathers, each of which has a sub-terminal bar of purple; sides of face, sides of neck, and entire throat deep coppery bronze; on the fore neck and breast a pectoral shield of bright metallic green plumes, most of which have a narrow edging of