

ASTRAPIA NIGRA.

Gorget Paradise-bird.

- Gorget Paradise Bird*, Lath. Gen. Syn. i. p. 478, pl. 20 (1782).
Paradisea nigra, Gm. S. N. i. p. 401 (1788, ex Lath.).
Paradisea gularis, Lath. Ind. Orn. ii. p. 196 (1790).—Shaw, Gen. Zool. vii. pp. 69, 70 (1809).
Le Hausse-col doré, Aud. et Vieill. Ois. Dor. ii. p. 22, pls. 8, 9 (1802).
La Pie de Paradis, ou l'Incomparable, Levaill. Hist. Nat. Ois. Parad. i. pls. 20, 22 (1806).
Astrapia gularis, Vieill. N. Dict. d'Hist. Nat. iii. p. 37 (1816).—Id. Gal. Ois. i. p. 169, pl. 107 (1825) Less.
 Traité d'Orn. p. 338 (1831).—Id. Ois. Parad. Syn. p. 18 (1835).—Id. Hist. Nat. p. 106, pls. 21-23.—
 Schleg. J. f. O. 1861, p. 386.—Beccari, Ann. Mus. Civ. Genov. vii. p. 711.—Sclater, Ibis, 1876, p. 249.
Astrapia nigra, Steph. Gen. Zool. xiv. p. 75 (1820).—Gray, Gen. B. ii. p. 263 (1846).—Bp. Consp. i. p. 414
 (1850).—Gray, P. Z. S. 1851, p. 436.—Wallace, P. Z. S. 1862, p. 154.—Finsch, Neu-Guinea, p. 173
 (1865).—Wallace, Malay Archip. ii. p. 257 (1869).—Elliot, Monogr. Parad. pl. ix. (1873).—Salvad.
 Ann. Mus. Civ. Genov. ix. p. 190 (1876).—Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. iii. p. 165 (1877).
Epimachus niger, Schlegel, Mus. P.-B., Coraces, p. 94 (1867).

VARIOUS authors have endeavoured to accomplish the difficult task of classifying and defining the limits of the family *Paradiseidae*; and I can only think of two other groups which present the same obstacles to classification, namely:—the Hornbills, where the shape of the casque is considered by some naturalists to be of generic, by others of specific importance only; and the Malkoha Cuckoos (*Phænicophainæ*), where the shape and structure of the nostril varies so much as to induce some naturalists to place each species in a separate genus, whilst by others the form of the nostril is reckoned to be only a specific character. Mr. D. G. Elliot placed the Bower-birds along with the *Paradiseidae*; but Mr. Sharpe has not included them, and I learn from him that they will be placed near the Thrushes in his arrangement of the class Aves. Professor Schlegel, again, places the present bird in the genus *Epimachus* near *E. speciosus*; but I think that its stout bill, so different from the sickle-shaped slender bills of the *Epimachi*, shows that the place of *Astrapia* is near to the true Paradise-birds, though its long tail is very different in form from that of the other stout-billed genera. I must say, however, that it seems to me impossible to keep such widely different forms of birds under one genus; and I cannot help thinking that a family which includes such widely different forms of birds as *Astrapia*, *Lophorina*, and the true *Paradiseæ*, may yet prove (strange as this may appear to most persons) to be the proper recipient for the Lyre-birds (*Menura*) of Australia.

As in the case of the other Birds of Paradise, little is known of the habits of this grand bird; but Dr. Beccari, who has shot the species in the Arfak Mountains, has given the following short account of its capture:—" *Epimachus maximus* and *Astrapia gularis* are only found on the highest and most difficult peaks of Mount Arfak, nearly always above 6000 feet elevation. Specimens in dark plumage are common enough; but those which have attained perfect plumage are rare, perhaps because they take some years to acquire it. Both of them live on the fruits of certain Pandanaceæ, and especially on those of the *Freycinetia*, which are epiphytous on the trunks of trees. The irides of the large *Epimachus* are dark brick-red, those of the *Astrapia* almost black; the neck-feathers of the latter are erectable, and expand into a magnificent collar round the head. The first day I went out at Atam, on June 23, I got both these species (two specimens of each), besides one *Drepanornis albertisi*, three *Paradigallæ*, one *Parotia*, and several other wonderful kinds of birds. It was a memorable day, because I ascended one of the peaks, and was surprised to find myself surrounded by four or five species of *Vaccinium* and *Rhododendron*, I also found an Umbellifer (a *Drymis*) and various other plants common to the mountains of Java, and there were also some mosses a foot and a half in height."

The habitat of this Bird of Paradise is the north-west of New Guinea, though it is said, on native report, to be an inhabitant of the Island of Jobi.

The following description is taken from Mr. Sharpe's Catalogue of Birds.—" *Adult male*. General colour above velvety black, with a purplish gloss; the wings black externally, glossed with purple; tail-feathers black, with wavy lines of dusky black under certain lights, the two centre feathers very long and glossed with rich purple; feathers of the head black, dense and velvety in texture, with a steel-blue gloss; from the nape a shield of golden green feathers springs; and the feathers of the hind neck are very long and tipped