

INTRODUCTION.

THE halo of romance which for nearly a century has centred round New Guinea and its animals does not get dimmed as time speeds on: indeed it shines more brightly than ever, and all naturalists who have travelled in the Moluccas have either paid a visit to that wonderful island or are looking forward to the time when they will be able to land upon its shores. Mr. Gould was perfectly right when he alluded to the Birds of Paradise as being one of the most remarkable families of birds inhabiting the Papuan Sub-region, and their presence alone is sufficient to warrant our recognition of a zoological area distinct from that of the neighbouring Australian region. That there is a considerable affinity between the avifauna of Northern Australia and New Guinea is proved by the presence of a Cassowary in Queensland and of a *Malurus* in New Guinea; and this relationship is further accentuated by the presence in both subregions of such genera as *Ptilorhis*, *Microglossum*, *Tanysiptera*, and a large number of species of Meliphagidæ. Of the Lipotypes, or forms of birds conspicuous by their absence, in the Papuan and Australian Subregions, perhaps the non-appearance of any species of Woodpecker is the most remarkable.

No other country has produced in recent times more novelties in the way of birds than New Guinea, and every fresh expedition to the mountains of the interior appears to add to the number. Travellers of many nationalities have contributed to the disclosure of the hidden ornithological treasures which have been described during the last thirty years, as will be seen by the following brief *résumé* of the history of the subject.

In 1858, Dr. Sclater published, in the 'Proceedings' of the Linnean Society of London, a paper on the zoology of New Guinea. After visiting the museums of Paris and Leyden, and personally examining the specimens which they contained from this part of the world, he drew up a list of animals and birds known as inhabitants of the island, and he computed that of the former 10 species had been obtained, and of birds 170 species. The present extent of the described mammalian fauna I have no means of judging; but in 1865, Dr. Finsch, in his 'Neu-Guinea,' estimated the number of Mammalia at 15, and the birds at 252. Of course, as Count Salvadori's work deals with the ornithology of the Moluccas as well, no exact comparison of the avifauna of New Guinea, as known in 1858 and as at present known in 1888, is presented; but, as will be seen below, the various expeditions which have taken place have added enormously to the number of species, and we cannot suppose that the limit of our knowledge has yet been reached.

The area embraced by Count Salvadori's 'Ornitologia della Papuasias' is much the same as that admitted by Mr. Gould when he commenced the present book, as the few species from Australia which he included were only figured as a further Supplement to his 'Birds of Australia.' It may be remarked, however, that of the 1030 species enumerated by Count Salvadori, only 300 have been figured in the present volumes, and at least 700 remain to be described before a complete account of the ornithology of Papuasias will have been attained.

From Dr. Sclater's memoir before mentioned we take the following details of early exploration in New Guinea. Although Birds of Paradise were often sent, in a mutilated state, in early times, and some of them were figured in ancient books, very few other birds from this quarter of the globe were known to Linnæus, and our first real acquaintance with Papuan Ornithology is due to the French traveller Sonnerat, who went there in 1771, and procured some plants and animals, principally on the island of Jobi, in North-western New Guinea. The results of his discoveries were published in his 'Voyage à la Nouvelle Guinée,' in 1776. The French exploring-ship the 'Uranie' procured a few birds in 1824, and the 'Coquille' spent twelve days at a harbour in North-eastern New Guinea, which they named 'Havre Dorey'; about fifty species