

*Alta Vera Paz*, as it is called, of which Coban is the principal town. This so differs in its contour, soil, and productions, as to render it sufficiently distinct from the last division, though also a cold district. Of birds, some are especially confined to each of these divisions, but by far the greater number are common to two or more, and many to all. They seem more distinctly defined by the botanical productions; Palms, the *Cieba*, and mahogany, being characteristic trees of the coast-forests; *Mimosæ* and *Cacti* of the second division, evergreen oaks of the table-lands, and the trees called in Coban *Pimienta*, *Liquidamber*, and *Palo Santo*, illustrating the last.

“My present collection of snakes, lizards, frogs, &c., is not large, but I intend sending what I have, also the few mammals and butterflies, so that I may clear out everything this month, ready for a fresh start, as in the beginning of February I go again to Coban, intending to collect a little on the Motagua on my way. At Coban I mean to shoot some Quesals, and go on, if possible, to Cajabon; after that, to the mines of Alotepeque and Copan, and perhaps on to Tequicalpa in Honduras.

“I cannot find any land-shells, though I have looked for them frequently; all I have in that way are some two or three species of freshwater shells from the Lake of Dueñas.”

---

Mr. Wallace's last communications are dated Amboyna, Oct. 22, 1859, whence he has sent us the valuable contributions to our pages which we have the pleasure of inserting in our present Number. He further says,—

“I have just packed up a large collection of Gilolo and Ternate birds, as well as those from Menado. The former are a much gayer lot, comprising a fine series of *Pitta maxima*, a new *Megapodius*, I think, handsomely banded on the back, and a *Semioptera*, which differs a little from the Batchian specimens in the much greater length of the breast plumes and other details. Is the *Calænas* the true *nicobarica*? If so, it is a unique case of a true land-bird ranging through the whole Archipelago, and beyond its limits from the Andamans to New Guinea. I do not know where Bonaparte got his in-

formation about its being arboreal. Here it is truly terrestrial, perching only to rest and sleep.

“It is astonishing how little care even professed naturalists have given to determining localities. The localities of species given by the ‘Dutch Scientific Commission’ are full of errors. *Ptilonopus monachus* and *P. hyogaster* are given to Celebes, whereas they are unknown there, but are abundant in Gilolo and Batchian; and exactly the same error is made with *Macropygia reinwardti*, which you will see in my collections, but not from Celebes. *Todiramphus funebris* is also unknown in Celebes, but common in Gilolo, so that the Dutch naturalists seem to have placed all their species of unknown locality in Celebes, acting as the French have done in giving to the little island of Vanikoro hundreds of insects which were never found there.

“Among the other interesting species from Gilolo are a *Ptilonopus* and a *Platycercus*—both, I think, new; the beautiful *Ianthænas halmaheira*, Bp., and several fine aquatic birds and Waders.

“In a few days I commence work in Ceram, where I hope to make a very fine collection, especially of *Psittacida*, the Lories of Ceram surpassing even those of New Guinea in variety and beauty. I live in hopes too of a new *Semioptera*, or some equally interesting form.

“I take every opportunity of purchasing live specimens of Parrots from the islands I may probably not visit, and hope to get most valuable materials for elucidating their distribution in the East, which is in the highest degree interesting. Between the *Lorius garrulus* of Gilolo and that of Batchian there is a constant difference in the size of the dorsal yellow patch: are they considered distinct species?

“The species of Ceram birds mentioned in Bonaparte’s ‘*Conspectus*’ are very few: how is it, then, that it has such a name for fine birds? I know nothing fine from it, but the Lories, which are superb. However, I hope and believe it will produce some very fine things—new Pigeons, perhaps. The Cassowary is said to be abundant in Ceram, and to be the same as the New Guinea species. The *Tanysiptera* are very puzzling: which is the true *T. dea*, Linn.? The Dorey and Ternate specimens seem

almost identical, and in G. R. Gray's list, New Guinea specimens are put as *T. dea*. If so, then the larger white-tailed species found in Amboyna and Ceram is undescribed, and is perhaps the same as the white-tailed specimens from the Kaisa Islands, sent with my Batchian collections\*. The *Carpophaga perspicillata* of Amboyna differs also from those of Gilolo and Batchian in the much lighter colour of the head. Now, I believe in all these cases, where the difference is *constant*, we must call them *distinct species*. A 'permanent local variety' is an absurdity and a contradiction; and, if we once admit it, we make species a matter of pure opinion, and shut the door to all uniformity of nomenclature."

---

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

Feb. 27, 1860.

SIR,—I wish to correct an error in my paper on Egyptian birds (*Ibis*, vol. i. p. 47), where I call the only species of Shrike I procured or saw in Egypt *Lanius excubitor*. I have since shown my specimen to Mr. H. B. Tristram, who declares that it is *Lanius dealbatus*, differing from his specimens from the Algerian Sahara only in having the white of the under parts less pure. I was unacquainted with *Lanius dealbatus* when I was in Egypt six years ago, and when I wrote the paper for 'The Ibis,' I had not my specimen by me; hence the mistake. I am surprised that Mr. Tristram found *Pterocles arenarius* and *P. alchata* so very unpalatable (*Ibis*, vol. ii. p. 70). This fact differs strikingly from my experience in Egypt of *Pterocles exustus* and *P. senegalensis*, which species we used to consider very good eating, the flesh of the thigh especially being peculiarly white and tender. However, our Dragoman was an artist of no ordinary culinary skill, which may perhaps in some degree account for the different opinion Mr. Tristram and I have formed of the esculent merits of the birds of the genus *Pterocles*.

Yours, &c.,

E. C. TAYLOR.

---

\* Mr. Gray has named the Havre Dorey bird *T. galatea* (P. Z. S. 1859, p. 154). That from Ternate must be the true *T. dea*, Ternate being the locality given for the *Alcedo dea* of the old authors. We believe that Mr. Gray refers the examples from Batchian and from the Kaisa islands to different species both undescribed.—ED.