

Mr. Wallace's letters from Ternate (of December 10th, 1860), enclosing the valuable paper already given (*anteà*, p. 283), contain several passages which may interest our readers:—

“ I do not like the figure of *Semioptera wallacii*: the shoulder-plumes are not sufficiently erected; neither is the contrast of colour between the pure whiteness and the dark silky ash of the back sufficiently marked.”

“ The Dutch have just sent out a collector for the Leyden Museum to the Moluccas. He is now at Ternate, and goes to spend two years in Gilolo and Batchian, and then to N. Guinea. He will, of course (having four hunters constantly employed, and not being obliged to make his collecting pay expenses), do much more than I have been able to do; but I think I have got the cream of it all. His name is Bernstein; he has resided long in Java, as doctor at a Sanatorium, and tells me he has already sent large collections to Leyden, including the nests and eggs of more than a hundred species of birds! Are these yet arranged and exhibited? They must form a most interesting collection\*.

“ Many thanks for your list of Parrots†. My collections already furnish many corrections of the localities. Allow me here to make a remark on the constant changes of specific names by yourself and Mr. Gray. It strikes me that, by forcing the law of priority to its extreme limits, you create a complicated synonymy, instead of settling it. Was not that law made to decide among several names already in use—not to introduce diversity where uniformity of nomenclature has hitherto existed? What is gained by changing *Eclectus linnæi* into *E. cardinalis*, and *Paradisea superba* into *P. atra*, when it is almost certain that such changes will not be generally adopted? I believe the synonymy of Natural History will never be settled till a tribunal shall be appointed by general assent, from whose decrees there shall be no appeal. It matters absolutely nothing whether a bird has one name or another; but it is of the utmost importance that it should not have two or three at once. A synonymical catalogue, which should be authoritative and final by the general

\* These have been described at length in two articles in Cabanis' 'Journal für Ornithologie,' which we have already noticed ('Ibis,' 1860, pp. 94 & 299).

† See P. Z. S. 1860, p. 223.

consent of naturalists in congress assembled, would be a work worthy of the century. Let ornithologists be the first in the field, and the other -ologists will soon follow."

"The Cockatoos puzzle me greatly. You make my Lombock sp. *C. æquatorialis*, which Temminck says is peculiar to N. Gilolo and N. Celebes. Do you make it a synonym of *C. sulphurea*, which you do not mention? \* You will see small specimens of a Cockatoo from Mysol, which I thought were *C. æquatorialis*. I have just received a very small specimen from Gilolo, bearing the same relation to *C. cristata* that *C. sulphurea* does to *C. triton*. It will be, I suppose, quite new."

"The larger and smaller specimens of *Megapodius* from Mysol are also curious. In colour they are exactly alike; but the size of the bill and feet is so different that they must be distinct. Between the *Trichoglossus* of Amboyna and Ceram and that of the Papuan Islands I can discover no difference, and I suspect that *T. nigrigularis* of G. R. Gray must be suppressed. You have left out *Lorius domicella* altogether from your list, giving *L. tricolor* to Amboyna in its place, which latter is wholly Papuan. *Eos cyanostriata* is a native of Timor-laut; and of *Eos reticulata* and *squamata* I saw nothing in Amboyna and Ceram, and believe they do not exist there. *Aprosmictus amboinensis* is a species strictly confined to Ceram, which you have not given. It is quite distinct from the *A. dorsalis* of New Guinea. The *Psittacidae* of the Solomon Islands seem so exactly representative of those of New Guinea and the Moluccas, as to show that they must be included in the Papuan subregion, and (if true *Lories* are not found in New Caledonia) will mark its eastern limits. New Ireland and the eastern parts of New Guinea no doubt still contain many fine things in this group."

The last letters received by Mr. S. Stevens from Mr. Wallace are dated Delli in Timor, February 6th, 1861, and state that he had been there a month, and intended waiting two more. The country was barren, and, Australia-like, poor in insects; but birds were tolerably abundant, though not of very fine species.

\* No. *C. sulphurea* is certainly separable, and it is probable that the Lombock bird belongs to this form; the Timor species being, according to Temminck, the true *C. sulphurea*.—P. L. S.