

V. *Description of a Bird from the East Indies; in a Letter to James West, Esq; President of the Royal Society; from Mr. George Edwards, F. R. S.*

S I R,

Read Jan. 17, ^{1771.} I N August last, a friend of mine carried me with him to Valentine House, near Ilford in Essex, the seat of Charles Raymond, Esq; to see some curious birds and other animals, from the East Indies; amongst these, I discovered a rare bird, not before known to me*. It is of a new genus, and the only species of the genus hitherto come to my knowledge. It is about the bigness of a heron [see TAB. II.]; and has a good deal of the appearance of birds of the heron and crane kind, except that the neck is a little shorter. On first sight, I thought the bird belonged to that genus; but, on a closer view, I judged it to be no wader in the water, for though the legs be as long or longer than in herons, &c. yet they are feathered down to the knees, which we do not find in birds who wade in shallow waters, to seek their

* This bird was described, under the name of the *Sagittarius* from the Cape of good Hope, by Mr. Vosmaer, keeper of the Statholder's Museum at the Hague, in one of his publications in low Dutch, printed at Amsterdam, 1769, in 4to, with a coloured cut of the said bird. It seems to feed equally on flesh and fish; which accounts for his uniting the characters of birds of prey, and of waders in water. M. M.

food.

food. The toes in this bird are also much shorter than they are in herons, so that I think it must be placed amongst land birds. The bill is exactly like those of hawks, and other birds of prey, which is the only instance I have discovered in any of the long legged kind of birds; the talons or claws are small and unfit for a bird of prey, and the eyes are of a dark colour placed in spaces covered with a bare skin of an orange colour, on each side of the head. It hath a beautiful crest composed of many long painted feathers tipped with black hanging backward. The beak, head, neck, back, breast, and upper covert feathers of the wings are of a blueish ash colour, rather lighter on the breast than on the back. The belly, thighs, the greater wing-feathers, and tail, are black, the tail feathers being tipped with white; the legs and feet are of a reddish flesh colour, the claws black. This bird was called a snake-eater, by those who brought it from India. I believe it may prey on small serpents, lizards, and other small reptiles. Another bird was brought with this, supposed to be the male of this species, which died soon after it was landed. Mr. Raymond's servant told me that it was something larger, and the crest longer, the head black, but that in other respects the two birds agreed.

I am, S I R,

Your most humble servant,

College of Physicians,
January, 1771.

Geo. Edwards.

