PTILOTIS PENICILLATUS, *Gould.*

White-plumed Honey-eater.

Meliphaga penicillata, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part IV. p. 143; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I.

This species, which is rarely met with in New South Wales, is very abundant in South Australia; I met with it even in the streets and gardens of Adelaide, where it strongly reminded me of the Sparrow of our own island; and it doubtless enjoys a wide range over the interior of the country. From what I observed of its habits, it appears to differ from the generality of Honey-eaters in the partiality it evinces for the ground; for although most of its time is spent among the leafy branches of the gums and wattles, where its movements are characterized by ease and grace, it is often to be seen hopping about under the trees in search of insects and seeds, which with the pollen of the flowers of the *Eucalypti* and *Acaciæ* constitute its food.

Its silvery white neck-plumes present a character by which it is at once distinguished from all other known species. The smaller size of the female is the only external difference between the sexes, for when fully adult their markings are precisely alike. Some of the specimens killed had the bill entirely black, while others had the base of that organ of a yellowish white, which is doubtless indicative of immaturity.

Its slightly-constructed nest, formed of grasses and wool, is cup-shaped, and is suspended by the rim, like those of the other Honey-eaters; I ascertained that the eggs are two in number, but unfortunately did not succeed in procuring specimens of them.

The figures in the accompanying Plate represent the birds coloured so closely after nature as to render the following description almost unnecessary. The beautiful tree upon which they are placed is one of the numerous Acacias that abound in the interior of the country.

Sides of the face and ear-coverts pale yellow; behind the ear-coverts a small tuft of white silky feathers; upper surface rich yellowish grey, the outer edges of the quill- and tail-feathers tinged with a richer colour; under surface light yellowish brown; bill black; legs purplish flesh-colour; irides very dark brown.

The figures are of the natural size.