## IBIDORHYNCHA STRUTHERSI, Vig.

## Red-billed Erolia.

Ibidorhyncha Struthersii, Vig. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc. part i. p. 174.—Gould, Century of Birds, pl. lxxix.

Red-billed Erolia, Hodgs. Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng. vol. iv. p. 458.

or Gorgeted Chlorhynx, Hodgs. Ib. pl. liv. low. fig.

Chlorhynchus Strophiatus, Hodgs. Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng. vol. iv. p. 701.

Ibidorhynchus Struthersii, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 568.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 265.

The present curious bird was one of the novelties I had the good fortune to make known to science in my "Century of Birds from the Himalaya Mountains," on reference to which it will be found that I therein remarked, that "throughout the whole of our new discoveries in the vast district which has furnished the subject of the present work, it would be difficult to point out a more interesting species than that before us, or one which has supplied ornithological science with characters more striking and peculiar; as it forms a union between two groups generally considered as widely separated from each other; the body, the general form and the legs of the *Ibidorhyncha Struthersii* being similar to those of the members of the genus *Hæmatopus*, while the bill is strictly that of an *Ibis*. I was not so fortunate as to receive a specimen of this bird; and it is to the kindness of Dr. Scouler, of the Andersonian Museum of Glasgow, who received it from Mr. Struthers, the gentleman who collected it, and whose name forms its specific appellation, that I was indebted for the opportunity of figuring it. Its habits and manners yet remain to be discovered and recorded."

It is very much to be regretted that even now, after a lapse of five-and-twenty years, no account has been received of the habits and economy of this singular form. That its habitat is somewhat restricted is rendered pretty certain from the unfrequent occurrence of specimens in Indian collections. The southern slopes of the Himalayas from Nepaul to our western frontier are probably the only parts of the country it frequents; at least it is from there only that I have received examples.

Mr. Hodgson, writing in August 1835, says, "The only specimen I have been able to procure was shot on the banks of a sandy stream in the valley of Nepaul in October last; and it was a mere passenger here, like the majority of the *grallatorial* and *natatorial* birds which visit us, and which make only a stage of our valley on their way from the plains of Tartary to those of India and back again.

"Weight ten ounces. The intestines are twenty inches long, larger above than below, tough, frequently semi-convolved or doubled, siphon-wise, and at three inches from the anal end they have two cæca, each nearly two inches in length. The stomach is small, but very muscular and gizzard-like, and the food of the species consists chiefly of minute univalve mollusca which it picks up on the sandy margins of rivers and streams. In such sites it is usually found; nor does it appear to be gregarious."

Considerable difference is observable in the breadth of the black band which crosses the chest; as also in the colouring of the face, which in some specimens is greyish; the bill too, in certain individuals, is reddish horn-colour instead of bright coral-red; the examples thus characterized may probably be females or young male birds which have not yet assumed their full plumage.

Forehead, top of the head, lores and throat black; neck pale cinereous, separated from the black of the head and face by a conspicuous streak of white; back and wings ashy grey; across the breast, extending upwards towards the back, a band of black, between which and the grey of the neck is a narrower band of white; under surface white; tail grey, irregularly barred with brownish black; outer feather on each side white, regularly barred with brownish black; these feathers and the next two or three are also tipped with brownish black; bill coral-red; feet red.

The Plate represents the bird of the natural size, with a smaller figure in the distance.