CISSA VENATORIA.

Hunting Cissa.

Corvus Sinensis and *C. speciosus* of the older authors ?
Kitta venatoria, Gray in Hardw. Ill. Ind. Zool., vol. i. pl. 24.
Corapica Bengalensis, Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 353.
Cissa venatoria, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 92.
Hunting-Crow, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 53.
Kitta venatoria, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 166, *Kitta*, sp. 3.
Cissa sinensis, Gray, List of Spec. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds presented to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., p. 101.

It will be seen that I have followed Prince Charles L. Bonaparte and the author of the "Catalogue of the Birds in the Museum of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta," in applying Mr. Gray's specific appellation of *venatoria* to this beautiful bird, of which I have never yet seen an example from China; if, then, it be not a native of the 'Celestial Empire,' the term *Sinensis* would surely be most inappropriate; and it is quite certain that the figures and descriptions of Brisson, Latham and the older authors do not accurately depict or describe it.

The native habitat of the Hunting Cissa is Nepaul, and the south-eastern parts of the Himalayas; it is also said to be found in Assam, Arakan and Tenasserim. The colouring of its plumage, both of the body and wings, seems to be very evanescent, the beautiful emerald-green of the body of newly-moulted birds giving place to glaucous blue, and the chestnut-red of the primaries to brown on exposure to light: on this point Mr. Blyth remarks,—"This bird, when newly moulted, is of a lovely green, with the wings bright sanguine-red, and the bill and legs deep coral; but whether alive (wild, or in confinement) or mounted as a stuffed specimen and exposed to the light, the green soon changes to verdigris-blue, and the red of the wings to dull ashy. . . . . I have had many of these birds alive," says this gentleman, "and I observe that they combine in their manners, traits both of the Jay and of the Shrike: they are very amusing, soon become tame and quite fearless, are very imitative, sing lustily a loud and screeching strain of their own with much gesticulation, and are highly carnivorous in their appetite. The Shrike-like habit, in confinement, of placing a bit of food in each interval betwixt the bars of their prison, is in no species more strongly exemplified than in this."

Dr. F. B. Hamilton informs us that it inhabits the hills of Tipperah and Sylhet; that it is said to be instructed to hunt like a hawk to catch small birds, and that, besides a kind of chattering like a Jay or Magpie, it has an agreeable note and becomes very tame.

A fine specimen of the Hunting Cissa lived for a considerable time in the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London, where it was a most attractive object, and it is to be regretted that it is not more frequently sent to Europe; for its transmission cannot be a matter of difficulty, as it bears confinement as well as any other of the Corvine birds, while at the same time it forms one of the most beautiful birds for the aviary that could be selected.

Among the numerous specimens that have come under my notice I have failed to detect any marked difference, and I am therefore led to conclude that the sexes are similarly clothed.

Plumage of the head, crest, upper and under surface of the body pale grass-green, somewhat lighter beneath than above, and with a wash of yellow on the forehead; wing-coverts grass-green; remainder of the wings rich chestnut-red, except the apical portions of the innermost quills, which are first grey, then crossed by a broad irregular band of black, and finally tipped with bluish-grey; central tail-feathers light grass-green, fading into grey at the tip, and with dark brown shafts; lateral tail-feathers green at the base, the apical half being bluish-grey, crossed near the tip by a broad band of black; a broad stripe of jet-black commences at the nostrils, surrounds the eye and, passing backwards, unites at the occiput; bill bare; skin round the eye, legs and feet fine red; irides crimson.

The Plate represents a newly-moulted male, and a bird in the faded colouring above mentioned. The plant is the *Beaumontia grandiflora* of Dr. Wallich.