PRIONOCHILUS VINCENS, Sclater.

Legge's Flower-pecker.

Prionochilus vincens, Sclater, P. Z. S. 1872, p. 730.—Holdsworth, tom. cit. p. 483.

The present species is a very interesting bird, occurring, as it does, in the island of Ceylon. In the Malayan archipelago the genus *Prionochilus* is plentifully represented; and in India it may also be said to be present, as the bird called *Piprisoma agile* is scarcely distinguishable from the genus *Prionochilus*. But it is not most resembles being in fact the Yellow-bellied Flower-pecker of Nepal, the *Pachyglossa melanoxantha* of Hodgson, which, on examination, turns out to be a true *Prionochilus*, and should stand as *Prionochilus* melanoxanthus.

The present species is named after Captain Vincent Legge, R.A., a gentleman celebrated not only for the ornithological discoveries in Ceylon, but for the very excellent and complete work on the avifauna of that country, which he is now publishing. In a letter addressed to me from Trincomalee in Nov. 1872, he writes as follows:—"As I have learnt from Dr. Sclater that you intend to figure my little bird, Prionochilus vincens, I thought it advisable to send you some leaves of the creeper which it frequents so much, and 'pecking' the flowers of which I discovered it at first. I enclose the leaves, the colour of which, when in life, is dull leaf-green; they grow on the long tendrils which encircle the trunks of the tall straight forest-trees at intervals of about an inch. The creeper itself clothes the trunk of the tree completely, much more so than ivy does, giving the appearance of a beautiful column of vegetation. The flower of the plant is of a yellowish red, and is a thick seedy substance, somewhat resembling the marigold flower. The little birds may be seen in flocks of from ten to fifteen in one tree, twisting and turning themselves about these flowers and clinging to them back downwards with the active movements peculiar to the family. I have lately traced it up to some little-known ranges of hills in the southern province, at an elevation of 2500 feet; but it is quite confined to the forests of the southern part of Ceylon, and is therefore, as regards its island distribution, extremely local. Its little note, 'tsee-tsee,' is scarcely audible when the wind is high, the noise of the moving branches almost drowning it."

The following is a copy of Captain Legge's original description:—

"Male. Length $4\frac{3}{20}$ inches; tail 1·2; wing 2·3; tarsus 0·5; mid toe with claw 0·5, hind toe $\frac{5}{20}$; bill to gape $\frac{9}{20}$, at front nearly 0·4. Third primary longest, slightly longer only than second.

"Description. Iris reddish; bill, upper mandible black, lower mandible lightish at the base; legs and feet blackish brown; entire head (except the chin and throat), hind neck, back, rump, and lesser wing-coverts dull steel-blue, palest on the rump, and with the bases of the feathers dark; quills blackish brown, the basal portion of inner webs, with the under wing-coverts, white; tertiaries, greater wing-coverts, and tail black, the former edged with the hue of the upper surface, the latter with the three outer feathers white towards the tip, the colour extending a little up the shaft on the inner web, the next two with a small terminal white spot; chin, throat, and chest white, below which the under surface is saffron-yellow, paling at the vent; under tail-coverts white, edged pale yellow.

"Female. Length 4·1 inches; wing $2\frac{5}{20}$; tail 1·1. Bill slightly lighter in hue than that of the male; legs, feet, and iris the same as in the male; head and hind neck faded bluish ashen, centres of feathers dark; back olivaceous brown; secondaries and wing-coverts brown, edged with olivaceous; quills lighter than in the male; sides of neck and chest ashy beneath, paler yellow than in the male, mingled with grey on the flanks; tail brownish black."

I am indebted to Dr. Sclater for the loan of the typical specimens of the present species, which he lent me before returning them to the owner. The Plate represents two males and a female, of the size of life; but I regret that the plant spoken of by Capt. Legge was not adapted for illustration.