MYZANTHE IGNIPECTUS, Hodgs.

Fire-breasted Myzanthe.

Myzanthe ignipectus, Hodgs., Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng. vol. xii. p. 983.—Ib. Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 227.

(Micrura) ignipectus, Gray, Cat. of Spec. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds presented to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq. p. 60.

— (Micrura) inornata, Hodgs., Gray, Zool. Misc. p. 82.—Ib. Cat. of Spec. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds presented to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq. p. 60.

Dicæum ignipectus, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 100, Dicæum, sp. 21.

The Myzanthe ignipectus is one of the very least of the Indian birds, the weight of a fully adult specimen being, according to Captain Boys, only three and a half drams. It is said to be partial to the higher branches of tall trees, and to seek for its insect food among the leaves and smaller twigs. Captain Boys, who brought many specimens to England, states that he found them at Phurkla in November 1842, and Mr. Hodgson has sent numerous examples to the British Museum and to that of the Honourable East India Company, from Darjiling; I have also seen examples from other parts of Nepaul; we may infer therefore that those countries are the true habitats of the species. Like the other members of the genus, this diminutive bird presents a great difference in the colouring of the sexes, the scarlet patch which adorns the breast of the male being entirely absent in the other sex.

The male has the head, wing-coverts, upper surface of the body and upper tail-coverts dark glossy green; wings and tail black; sides of the head and neck slaty black; down the centre of the throat a mark of buff; on the breast a mark of scarlet, below which is another of black; under surface buff, deepening into olive on the flanks; under wing-coverts silky white; bill black; feet dusky.

The female has the head and all the upper surface greenish olive; throat and all the under surface buff; bill black, except the base of the under mandible, which is paler; feet dusky.

The accompanying Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.