NECTARINIA IGNICAUDA.

Fiery-tailed Sun-Bird.

Cinnyris ignicauda, Hodgs. Ind. Rev. 1837, p. 273.—Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xii. p. 972.

—— rubricaudata, Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xi. p. 192.

Nectarinia phænicura, Jard. Nat. Lib. Sun-Birds, pp. 242, 270. pl. 29.

——— ignicauda, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 98.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 223.

Cinnyris epimecurus, Hodgs., G. R. Gray.

The almost interminable forests skirting the southern base of the Himalayas, and especially those of Nepaul and Sikim, are the native habitat of this lovely species, of which a fine specimen, procured in Sylhet, and probably the first sent to Europe, was presented to the Zoological Society of London by Sir Philip de Malpas Grey Egerton, Bart., M.P., as far back as the year 1836; since that period others have found their way into several of the museums and private collections of this country; among these may be especially noticed some remarkably fine examples with middle tail-feathers of unusual length, which form part of the extensive collection presented to the British Museum by B. H. Hodgson, Esq.

The female offers a striking contrast to the male, not only in her much smaller size, but in the extreme plainness of her colouring; and Mr. Hodgson speaks of a post-nuptial dress assumed by the male, a kind of plumage which I had considered to be characteristic of the young male of the year.

The male has the forehead and throat glossy steel-blue; ear-coverts brown; back of the neck, back and upper tail-coverts vermilion; across the rump a triangular mark of sulphur-yellow; two central tailfeathers vermilion; lateral tail-feathers brown margined with vermilion; wings brown margined with olive; breast fine yellow with a wash of scarlet in the centre; under surface sulphur or greenish yellow; irides dark brown; bill blackish brown; feet brown.

Much difference exists in the length of the two middle plumes of the tail, some being three and others five inches in length.

The young male has the general plumage olive, with a slight trace of red on the back; the rump, upper tail-coverts and tail as in the adult, except that the central feathers are not so long, and no trace of red on the dull yellow of the breast.

The female is uniform olive above and greenish yellow beneath, with a slight trace of the rich colouring of the opposite sex at the base of the tail.

The Plate represents two males and a female, on the Engelhardia Colebrookeana.