NECTARINIA GOULDIÆ.

Mrs. Gould's Sun-bird.

Cinnyris Gouldiæ, Vig. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part i. p. 44.—Gould, Cent. of Birds from Himal. Mount., pl. 56.

Nectarinia Gouldiæ, Jard. Nat. Lib. Nect., pp. 238–269.—Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xii. p. 974.—Id. Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 233.—Gray, Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 98, *Nectarinia*, sp. 65.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., tom. i. p. 405, *Nectarinia*, sp. 10.

Æthopyga Gouldiæ, Cab. Mus. Hein., Theil. i. p. 103 (note).—Horsf. and Moore, Cat. of Birds in Mus. East-Ind. Comp., vol. ii. p. 733.—Jerd. Birds of India, vol. i. p. 364.

"This beautiful species," says Sir William Jardine, in his 'Natural History of the Sun-birds,' "will stand as the ornithologist's record of an accomplished artist. It was dedicated to Mrs. Gould by the friend of her husband, at a time when she had shown how much could be effected by the union of taste and skill, and had produced a series of ornithological figures which could vie with the best that had preceded them, and were excelled only by those which appeared in her later works."

Although nearly forty years have passed away since Mr. Vigors characterized this species, so few specimens have been obtained, and so little information recorded respecting it, that its history is still almost a blank. In my 'Century of Birds from the Himalaya Mountains,' published in 1832, I wrote as follows:—"This very elegant little bird was received from the Himalayas, to which it is supposed to be principally confined. The delicately formed tribe to which it belongs represent in India that equally beautiful group the Humming-birds of America. Like the *Trochilidæ*, the *Cinnyridæ* subsist much upon insects of small size, which they seek for in the centre of expanded flowers, or among the leaves of plants. Little else of their habits can be stated with certainty. The *Cinnyris Gouldiæ* is an exceedingly rare species, and, as far as is yet known, the specimens now figured from are a unique addition to the treasures of science."

Since the above passage was published, Messrs. Horsfield and Moore have issued their 'Catalogue of the Birds in the Museum of the East-India Company,' and Mr. Jerdon his 'Birds of India,' in both which works detailed notices of the habits of the various species, where known, are given; but even here, I regret to say, the information respecting the *Nectarinia Gouldiæ* is extremely scanty. Still they do add a little to our knowledge of the subject; and I therefore transcribe their remarks:—

"Examples of this beautiful species were procured by Capt. Strachey, in Kumaon; and it also inhabits Sikim, Sylhet, and Arracan, and is rare at Darjeeling, where, says Mr. Blyth, it is much sought after by collectors, who have currently styled it the 'Beauty of the Hills.'"

"This Honey-sucker," says Mr. Jerdon, "is found throughout the Himalayas, from Kumaon to Sikhim, and extends to Assam, Sylhet, and Arracan. I know not at what height it occurs, as I did not procure it myself at Darjeeling; but I imagine it does not ascend to a great elevation."

Captain Stackhouse Pinwill informs me that he found the *Nectarinia Gouldiæ* somewhat numerous during the month of September near Koteghur, a few marches out of Simla, and observed them to be feeding from the tubular flowers of a parasite growing in abundance on one of the Himalayan species of *Quercus*. The females and young males were by far the most numerous, the latter frequently showing a feather or two of the more brilliant parts of the plumage, while many of the old males had lost their long tail-feathers. Their food consisted chiefly of honey, with the addition of a few very minute insects.

Although my Plate bears the generic name of *Nectarinia*, the bird really belongs to that section of the family to which the term *Æthopyga* has been assigned, and, together with *Æ. ignicauda*, *Æ. nipalensis*, and a few other species, constitutes, in my opinion, a very natural division, the members of which differ considerably from the flame-spotted *Arachnechthræ*, and equally so from those of the other genera into which the old genus *Nectarinia* is now subdivided.

The male has the crown of the head and nape, the centre of the throat, a spot on each side of the chest near the shoulder, upper tail-coverts, and the basal half of the two central tail-feathers glossy steel-blue with purple reflexions; back and sides of the neck, back, and lesser wing-coverts deep sanguineous red; lower part of the back and under surface of the body brimstone-yellow, with numerous small streaks of orange on the breast; wings pale brown, the primaries narrowly edged with yellow; tips of the central tail-feathers dark brown; lateral tail-feathers brown, with a spot of dusky white on the tip of the inner web; irides brown; bill black; legs brown.

The female is pale olive-green above; has the wings brown, margined with pale olive-green; across the lower part of the back a band of yellow as in the male, but less brilliant and not so well defined; tail dark brown, the lateral feathers tipped with dull white; under surface pale olive-yellow.

The Plate represents the two sexes, of the size of life. The plant is the *Nepenthes ampullaria*.