

HALCYON OMNICOLOR.

Many-coloured Kingfisher.

Alcedo melanoptera, Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xiii. p. 174.

Halcyon melanopterus, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiii. p. 100.—Horsf. and Moore, Cat. of Birds in Mus. East Ind. Comp., vol. i. p. 127.

Alcedo omnicolor, Temm. Pl. Col., 135.

Dacelo omnicolor, Less. Traité d'Orn. p. 247.

Halcyon melanoptera, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 79, *Halcyon*, sp. 18.—Gray, List of Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., part ii. sec. 1, *Fissirostres*, p. 54.

——— *omnicolor*, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 155, *Halcyon*, sp. 22.

Alcedo cyanoventris, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xix. p. 412.—Cassin, Cat. of Halcyonidæ in Coll. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia.

A MORE appropriate name than *omnicolor* could scarcely have been given to this wonderfully coloured species of Kingfisher; for, on looking at the fine specimen now before me, it appears almost questionable whether it has not been manufactured by some clever taxidermist out of two or three species, instead of being as real and natural as any other member of the great family of which it forms a part. Were I strictly to follow the law of priority with regard to specific appellations, I ought, perhaps, to have retained that of *melanopterus* for this species; but, as nearly all the *Halcyonidæ* have black shoulders, I have considered it advisable, like Temminck and Bonaparte, to retain the more appropriate title of *omnicolor*. It is somewhat remarkable that there should be no recorded information respecting the habits, economy, and range of so fine a species; yet true it is that not a word has been written on the subject: we know that the island of Java is the country whence the specimens in our museums have been sent; and that is all. There appears to be little or no difference in the colouring of the sexes; some specimens, however, have the brown of the throat, particularly that part of it nearest the bill, of a much lighter colour than others,—a feature which may be sexual or a mark of immaturity.

Nothing can be more lovely than the colours of this bird, or more delicately white than the inner webs of its primaries, which mark is of course most conspicuous when the wing is spread, and then offers a striking contrast to the green and black of the other part of the wings and tail; the upper surface is further varied by the entire back and rump being of a smalt-blue, while the back of the neck is chestnut, with a narrow band of blue separating that colour from the brownish-black of the head.

The following is a more minute description of this fine bird:—

Head and face dark umber-brown, deepening into blackish brown on the nape, below which is a narrow crescentic band of deep glossy blue; this is succeeded by a broad band of rich chestnut, which passes round the sides of the neck, and unites with the lighter chestnut of the throat and front of the neck; back, scapularies, upper tail-coverts, abdomen, and flanks smalt-blue; breast-feathers chestnut, bordered with smalt-blue; greater wing-coverts black; lesser wing-coverts verditer blue, edged with smalt blue; basal three-fourths of the primaries white on their inner webs, verditer green on their outer webs, deepening into dark green near the tips, which are black; this latter colour decreases in extent as the feathers approach the body; secondaries black on their inner webs above, and on both webs beneath, the upper surface of the outer web being verditer green, passing into bluer green as the feathers approach the body; these bluer feathers are crossed by indistinct bars of a deeper hue; there is also a line of dark green on the inner webs parallel with the shaft, which is black; tail-feathers bluish emerald-green, glossed with verditer green on their outer webs; shafts and under surface black; irides dark brown; bill coral-red; feet red.

The plate represents the bird (in flight) of the natural size, and a miniature figure in the distance.