



PHAROMACHRUS AURICEPS.

Immature Male.

It is not a little surprising that, out of the multitude of skins of the members of this family of birds that have arrived in this country during the last twenty years, not more specimens of the immature, or what, perhaps, ought to be called the "second dress" of these Trogons should have come to light. That Trogons don a very peculiar and pleasing garb for a short time of their existence is very evident. We see this strikingly illustrated in the youthful bird figured in the accompanying Plate; while a specimen of about the same age, and exhibiting a similar character of markings, is figured in my Plate of *Trogon melanocephalus*. The same kind of plumage is put on by the Indian Trogons, as is evidenced by the young bird figured in the Plate of *Harpactes reinwardti*.

I have never set myself up as a systematist; but yet I have never been forgetful of the importance of small characters in the great and difficult task which lies before all ornithologists—I mean the establishment of a purely natural system of birds. To arrive at this desirable result the works of specialists are necessary, especially those which take the form of that most useful of all works, a complete monograph of a family or order of birds; but in all my writings I have endeavoured to remember that a natural system of birds can only be developed by some master mind, who will take into consideration every single aspect of the study, and blend into one harmonious whole the elements of classification contained in the science of ornithology—that is to say, oology, osteology, internal anatomy, &c. For such a study the variation of plumage, too often neglected, affords most satisfactory connecting-links between families and genera of birds; and it is for this reason that I made such a particular point of figuring all the young birds possible in my recent work on the Birds of Great Britain; and in the present volume it will be found that I have also given illustrations of the immature plumage of the Trogons wherever practicable.

The youthful dress of the Trogonidæ is perfectly unique, as far as I am aware, in the whole Avian series; and, from the rarity of immature specimens in collections, I do not doubt that it is only put on for a very short time, as is the case with the Flycatchers. And it is the more remarkable because in the case of other Fissirostral Picariæ such as the Kingfishers, Motmots, Jacamars, Rollers, &c. (birds somewhat allied to the Trogons), we do not find any such striking difference between the adult and young plumages.

The specimen figured is one in my own collection, and was sent from Merida by Mr. A. Goering.