

INTRODUCTION.

xii

“The Creepers and Woodpeckers and others drive the insects out of their hiding-places under bark, amongst moss, and in withered leaves. The Flycatchers and Trogons sit on branches and fly after the larger insects, the Flycatchers taking them on the wing, the Trogons from the leaves on which they have settled. In the breeding-season the Trogons are continually calling out to each other, and are thus easily discovered. They are called ‘viduas’ (that is, ‘widows’) by the Spaniards.”

The habit of consorting with other species was also noticed by my late friend John Natterer, who, as recorded in my first edition, informed me that he has seen them, though very rarely, congregating together, and more than one species in company—a circumstance which he considers may be accounted for on the principle that instinct leads them by some migratory movement to abandon one district at a certain season of the year in search of another where food is more abundant. These migrations, however, cannot be extensive, inasmuch as their wings are not adapted for a lengthened flight; besides which, every new district of any great extent presents us with its peculiar species; for example, none of the species inhabiting Mexico has been found in Brazil, and *vice versa*.

The disposition of the feathers in the Trogonidæ is, according to Nitzsch, very similar to that prevalent in Passerine birds; but the neck is completely bare for a considerable space. The feathers are peculiarly soft and dense. The skin of the Trogon is perhaps thinner and more delicate than that of any other bird, and exceedingly difficult to remove, as the feathers drop out on the slightest touch; so that many a specimen is spoilt by the bird falling against a branch after being shot.

Much confusion has arisen in the synonymy of this family from a want of knowledge of the peculiarities of young and maturing birds. An examination of a very extensive series shows that the tail-feathers in young individuals are longer and more pointed; and when barred, the white bars are wider and less numerous. In the maturing bird the rectrices become squarer with successive moults, and the amount of white in the bars less in quantity. The wing-coverts, too, are subject to considerable variation in the young; these are frequently distinctly mottled with buff, as is shown in the Plates of *T. melanocephalus* and *Pharomacrus auriceps*, juv. These markings are replaced by the style of colours shown in the adult.