

HELIANGELUS CLARISSÆ.

Sun Angel.

Ornismia Clarisse, De Longuem. Rev. Zool. 1841, p. 306.—Less. Mag. de Zool. 1842, Ois., pl. 26.

Mellisuga Clarissæ, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 112, *Mellisuga*, sp. 17.

Heliangelus clarisse, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 76, *Heliangelus*, sp. 1.

——— *clarissa*, Bonap. in Rev. et Mag. de Zool. 1854, p. 252.

Anactoria Clarissa, Reichenb. Aufz. der Colibris, &c., p. 12.

EVERY thousand feet of elevation from the base to the snow line of the great Cordilleran and Andean ranges, appears to be inhabited by its own peculiar species of Humming Bird, and so constantly does each keep to its own particular province, that it is the exception rather than the rule if this law be departed from; latitude also would seem to have an influence, but not in so marked a degree. This law appears to have been unknown to former naturalists, and it is only within the last twenty years that travellers and collectors have made these regions the great fields of their enterprise; but having now done so, rich indeed have been the harvests they have reaped; not only have numerous new and beautiful species been discovered, but their collection and transmission to Europe have played a part in commerce but little known to the community at large. Ordinarily the skins of birds are collected for scientific cabinets, or for the decoration of the drawing-room or other apartments; but the great beauty and glittering metallic hues of the Humming Bird have attracted the notice of the plumassier and artificial florist, and their feathers are now extensively used for the decoration of head-dresses, &c. I have known as many as two thousand examples of a single species sold at one time in Paris for such purposes alone, and the beautiful bird figured on the accompanying Plate, although not known or described until 1841, is now transmitted, particularly to France, in such abundance, that although great numbers are used for ornamental shades for the drawing-room, I believe not a few fall into the mutilating hands of the plumassiers, for the decorative purposes above mentioned.

The *Heliangelus Clarissæ* enjoys a somewhat wide range over the temperate portions of the Columbian Andes, but its head-quarters appears to be the neighbourhood of Santa Fé de Bogota, where vast multitudes are killed by the Indians with the blow-pipe, and sold to the merchants of Bogota at a very low price; by the latter they are transmitted to Europe, and, as I have before stated, principally to Paris. When seen in the full glory of its newly-moulted plumage, this bird is indeed a very beautiful object; the rich puce-colour of its throat, separated from the glittering green of the sides of the chest by a snow-white gorget, rendering it at once both attractive and conspicuous. Such, I regret to say, is the brief account that can be given of this comparatively new bird;—to other naturalists, with suitable opportunities, must pertain the pleasing task of describing its habits, manners, flight, nidification, &c., of which at present nothing is known. The bird itself was first described by M. De Longuemare, who gave it the name of *Clarissæ* in honour of Madame Parzudaki, the wife of the well-known naturalist of that name in Paris.

The male has a small spot of luminous green on the forehead; chin black; throat rich luminous violet-red or puce-colour, the blue or violaceous hue prevailing on the upper and lateral margins; below this a gorget of white, succeeded by a series of rich luminous green feathers, narrow in the centre, broad on the sides, and blending with the bronzy green of the flanks; head, upper surface and wing-coverts bronzy green, the head, however, when viewed in front, appears black; lores and sides of the neck velvety black, separating the colours of the upper and under surface of the head and neck; immediately behind the eye a very small spot of white; wings chocolate-brown; two central tail-feathers bronzy green; lateral tail-feathers dull black, becoming brown at the tip; abdomen mottled buff and bronzy green; under tail-coverts white; bill black; feet brown.

The female has a faint indication of the luminous green on the forehead; the head, upper surface and two central tail-feathers bronzy green; lateral tail-feathers black, with lighter tips; throat mottled black and brown, with, when very adult, a series of violaceous-red feathers in the centre, bounded below by a more or less defined gorget of white, and succeeded by a few luminous green feathers, far less conspicuous than in the male.

The figures are of the natural size.