

RAMPHOMICRON HERRANI.

Herran's Thorn-bill.

Trochilus Herrani, De Latt. et Bourc. in Rev. Zool., Sept. 1846.

Calothorax herrani, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 85, *Calothorax*, sp. 3.

It is not more remarkable than it is true, that some of our most eminent ornithologists entertain a kind of antipathy to the beautiful *Trochilidæ*; while others, charmed by their elegant forms, brilliant metallic decorations and interesting habits, regard them with a feeling akin to admiration; I feel certain, however, that the course of time and a better acquaintance with the subject, will lead the former class into the ranks of the latter, and that these lovely birds will become universal favourites. The rarer species are but little known and understood, and doubtless many of great beauty yet remain to be discovered. It is but very recently that the brilliant bird figured on the accompanying Plate has been sent to Europe, and surely the discovery and acquisition of objects such as this must tend to weaken the opinions of those who regard the entire group as uninteresting: for my own part, I consider this addition to our stores to be replete with interest in every sense of the word; its elegant form, fine bold rounded purple tail, rufous crown and rump, yielding in colour only to that of its fiery beard, rendering it the finest species of the genus yet discovered.

The female was first obtained by M. Delattre at Pasto, in New Grenada, but I believe the discovery of the male is due to M. Bourcier, who procured several examples in the primæval forests of Ecuador. A fine specimen of the former sex has also been sent to me by M. Warszewicz, from the Cordillera of Quindios in Columbia; the true habitat of the species would therefore seem to be the great ranges of the Andes, near to the Equator. Its fine colours indicate that it is a native of warmer regions than those frequented by any other member of the genus. The colouring of the sexes is very similar, with the exception of the female being destitute of the beard-like appendage so conspicuous in the male.

M. Bourcier informs me that "it flies but little, and is very tranquil in its own habits, but is continually pursued and attacked by the other species of Humming-Birds frequenting the same locality. Its flight is short and easy, as it skips from branch to branch to explore the flowers of the small shrubs, from which it obtains its insect food. It remains motionless during the day, and is only to be met with in the evening or very early in the morning. I made diligent search in all the mountainous districts called *Paramos*, used for the pasturing of cattle, in the hope of finding additional examples, but in vain; I am therefore led to conclude that it does not exist beyond the chain of mountains whence the river Madelaine rises. I am inclined to think that the female is destitute of the beard."

This fine bird has been dedicated by MM. Delattre and Bourcier to General Herran, formerly President of the Republic of New Grenada, a gentleman of rare attainments, who evinced the greatest friendship for Europeans, and an ardent desire to promote in his own country the useful and natural sciences.

Down the centre of the crown from the bill to the occiput a stripe of rusty red, tinged with golden on its posterior half; sides of the head dull black; plumage of the upper and under surface dull bronzy green, with an indistinct band of buffy-white across the lower part of the abdomen; wings purplish brown; rump and upper tail-coverts deep bronzy rufous; two central tail-feathers plum-colour, the remainder purplish black, the two outer ones on each side largely, and the third on each side slightly tipped with white; feathers of the chin small, scale-like, and of a brilliant metallic green, below which is a series of larger elongated pendent feathers of a brilliant fiery metallic red, bounded on either side with deep velvety black; under tail-coverts buffy white; bill black; feet blackish brown.

In the female or young bird, the mark on the crown is broader and of a uniform dark rust-red; upper surface, wings and tail as in the male, but less brilliant, especially on the rump; throat pale buff, with a spot of shining green at the tip of each feather.

The Plate represents two males and a female, or young bird, on a plant of the country in which the bird is found.