

the same business-like industry and application. In the winter, the abundance of other flowers and the paucity of vervain-blossoms induce its attentions to the hedgerows and woods.

"I have sometimes watched, with much delight, the evolutions of this little species at a moringa-tree. When only one is present, he pursues the round of the blossoms soberly enough, sucking as he goes, and now and anon sitting quietly on the twig. But if two are about the tree, one will fly off, and suspending himself in the air a few yards distant, the other presently shoots off to him, and then, without touching each other, they mount upward with a strong rushing of wings, perhaps for five hundred feet; they then separate, and each shoots diagonally towards the ground, like a ball from a rifle, and wheeling round, comes up to the blossoms again, and sucks, and sucks, as if it had not moved away at all. Frequently one alone will mount in this manner, or dart on invisible wing diagonally upward, looking exactly like a humble-bee. Indeed the figure of the smaller Humming-Birds on the wing, their rapidity, their arrowy course, and their whole manner of flight are entirely those of an insect; and one who has watched the flight of a large beetle or bee, will have a very good idea of one of these tropic gems painted against the sky. I have observed all the three Jamaican species engaged in sucking the blossoms of a moringa-tree, and have noticed that, whereas *Polytmus* and *Mango* expand and depress the tail, when hovering before flowers, the *humilis*, on the contrary, for the most part erects the tail, but not invariably.

"The present is the only Humming-Bird which I am acquainted with that has a real song. Soon after sunrise in the spring months, it is fond of sitting on the topmost twig of a mango or orange tree, where it warbles, in a very weak but very sweet tone, a continuous melody for ten minutes at a time: it has little variety. The others have only a pertinacious chirping.

"The small bushes of *Lantana*, so common by roadsides, and always covered with orange and yellow blossom, are favourite situations for the domestic economy of this minute bird. The smooth twigs of the bamboo also are not unfrequently chosen. It is not an uncommon thing in Jamaica for a road up a mountain to be cut in zigzag terraces to diminish the steepness; and to prevent the lower side of such a road from crumbling away, stems of green bamboo are cut and laid in a shallow trench along the edge. Shoots spring from every joint, and soon a close row of palisades are growing along the margin of the road, the roots of which, as they spread, effectually bind together the mountain-side, and make the terrace perpetual; while, as they increase in height and thickness, they throw their gracefully waving tufts over the way, like gigantic ostrich plumes, affording a most refreshing screen from the heat. Such a *bamboo-walk*, as it is called, winds up the side of Grand Vale Mountain in St. Elizabeth's, and here the nests of the Vervain Humming-Bird are frequently met with. Being up this road, on a day in June, I found two nests attached to twigs of bamboo, and one just commenced. Two parallel twigs were connected together by spiders' webs, profusely but irregularly stretched across, and these held a layer of silk-cotton, which just filled up the space, about an inch square, between them. The others were complete cups of silk cotton exceedingly compact and neat, ornamented outside with bits of grey lichen stuck here and there. In neither of the other Jamaican species is the oscillation of the wings so rapid or so great in extent; and hence with this bird alone does the sound produced by the vibration of the wings acquire the sharpness of an insect's hum. The noise produced by the hovering of a *Polytmus* is a whirring sound, exactly like that caused by a wheel put into rapid revolution by machinery; that of *humilis* is a hum, like that of a large bee.

"The spirit of curiosity is manifested by this little bird as well as by the larger species. When struck at it will return in a moment, and peep into the net or hover just in one's face. The stories told of Humming-Birds attacking men, and striking at the eyes with their needle-like bills, originated, I have no doubt, in the exaggeration of fear misinterpreting this innocent curiosity."

M. Lesson remarks, that this species is certainly the smallest member of the family with which we are acquainted, and is without doubt the "very little Humming-Bird" of travellers; that it is a native of St. Domingo, where it sometimes places its nest upon the branches, at others in the fork of a branch; the exterior is covered with lichens, while the interior is woven of the cotton of the *Bombax cieba*; occasionally the filaments are interlaced among long spines, which gives to the delicate nest a solidity and firmness not otherwise attainable. The incubation of its two eggs occupies twelve days; the young emerge on the thirteenth, and remain in the nest for seventeen or eighteen days. The tree which the bird mostly frequents is the *Cytisus cajau*, Linn.

The male has the head, upper surface of the body, wing-coverts, upper tail-coverts and flanks dark shining green; wings purplish brown; tail deep black; chin and throat white speckled with black; breast white; abdomen whitish, each feather tipped with green; vent white; under tail-coverts white, faintly tipped with green; irides, bill and feet black.

In the female the green of the upper surface is of yellower tint, and extends halfway down the central tail-feathers; the whole of the under surface is pure white, and the lateral tail-feathers are largely tipped with white.

The Plate represents a male, a female, and a nest with two eggs, all of the natural size.