

on another chase and another tussle. I am persuaded that these were hostile encounters : for one seemed evidently afraid of the other, fleeing when the other pursued, though his indomitable spirit would prompt the chirp of defiance ; and when resting after a battle, I noticed that this one held his beak open as if panting. Sometimes they would suspend hostilities to suck a few blossoms ; but mutual proximity was sure to bring them on again, with the same result. In their tortuous and rapid evolutions, the light from their ruby necks would occasionally flash in the sun with gem-like radiance ; and, as they now and then hovered motionless, the broadly-expanded tail, the outer feathers of which are crimson-purple, but when intercepting the sun's rays transmit orange-coloured light, added much to their beauty. A little Banana Quit (*Certhiola flaveola*), that was peeping among the blossoms in his own quiet way, seemed now and then to look with surprise on the combatants ; but when the one had driven his rival to a longer distance than usual, the victor set upon the unoffending Quit, who soon yielded the point, and retired, humbly enough, to a neighbouring tree. The war (for it was a thorough campaign, a regular succession of battles) lasted fully an hour, and then I was called away from the post of observation. Both of the Humming-Birds appeared to be males."

"All the Humming-Birds have more or less the habit, when in flight, of pausing in the air, and throwing the body and tail into rapid and odd contortions. This is most observable in the *Polytmus*, from the effect that such motions have on the long feathers of the tail. That the object of these quick turns is the capture of insects I am sure, having watched one thus engaged pretty close to me. I observed it carefully, and distinctly saw the minute flies in the air which it pursued and caught, and heard repeatedly the snapping of the beak. My presence scarcely disturbed it, if at all."

In some notes on the 'Habits of the Humming-Birds of the Amazon,' kindly furnished me by Mr. Wallace, that gentleman says—

"The great number of species that frequent flowers, do so, I am convinced, for the small insects found there, and not for the nectar. In dozens, and perhaps hundreds, of common flower-frequenting species which I have examined, the crop, stomach, and intestines have been entirely filled with minute beetles, bees, ants, and spiders, which abound in most flowers in South America. Very rarely, indeed, have I found a trace of honey or of any liquid in the crop or stomach. The flowers they most frequent are the various species of *Inga*, and the papilionaceous flowers of many large forest-trees. I have never seen them at the Bignonias or any flowers but those which grow in large masses covering a whole tree or shrub, as they visit perhaps a hundred flowers in a minute and never stop at a single one. The little Emerald Hummer I have seen in gardens and at the common orange, *Asclepias*, which often covers large spaces of waste ground in the tropics. But there are many, such as *Phaethornis Eremita*, and some larger allied species, which I have never seen at flowers. These inhabit the gloomy forest-shades, where they dart about among the foliage, and I have distinctly observed them visit in rapid succession every leaf on a branch, balancing themselves vertically in the air, passing their beak closely over the under surface of each leaf, and thus capturing, no doubt, any small insects that may be upon them. While doing this the two long feathers of their tail have a vibrating motion, serving apparently as a rudder to assist them in performing the delicate operation. I have seen others searching up and down stems and dead sticks in the same manner, every now and then picking off something, exactly as a Bush-strike or a Tree-creeper does, with this exception, that the Humming-Bird is constantly on the wing. They also capture insects in the true Fissirostral manner, How often may they be seen perched on the dead twig of a lofty tree—the same station that is chosen by the tyrant Flycatchers and the Jacamars, and from which, like those birds, they dart off a short distance and, after a few whirls and balancings, return to the identical twig they had left. In the evening, too, just