

South American Indians. If the country glanced at in the foregoing remarks provided the naturalists of the days of Linnaeus with ample materials for study and investigation, how much greater would have been their amazement and delight had exploration made them acquainted with the hidden treasures of the great Andean ranges, which stretch along the entire country, from the Rocky Mountains on the north to near Cape Horn on the south. Along the whole line of this great backbone, as it were, of America, at remarkably short intervals, occur species of this family of birds of the greatest beauty and interest, which are not only specifically but generically distinct from each other. Whole groups of them, remarkable for their singularity, have become known to us from the inquiries and explorations of later travellers; and, abundant as the species may be towards the northern and southern portions of the great chain of mountains, they vastly increase as we approach the equator. These equatorial regions teem with species, and even genera, which are not found elsewhere. Between the snow-line of the summits of the towering volcanos and their bases, many zones of temperature occur, each of which has its own especial animal and vegetable life. The alpine region has its particular flora, accompanied by insects especially adapted to such situations; and attendant upon these are peculiar forms of Humming-Birds, which never descend to the hot valleys, and scarcely even to the cooler and more temperate paramos. Many of the highest cones of extinct and of existing volcanos have their own faunas and floras; even in the interior walls of ancient craters, wherever vegetation has gained a footing, some species of Humming-Birds have there, and there only, been as yet discovered. It is the exploration of such situations that has led to the acquisition of so many additional species of this family of birds, which now reach to more than 400 in number.

It might be thought by some persons that 400 species of birds so diminutive in size, and of one family, could scarcely be distinguished from each other; but any one who studies the subject will soon perceive that such is not the case. Even the females, which assimilate more closely to each other than the males, can be separated with perfect certainty; nay, even a tail-feather will be sufficient for a person well-versed in the subject to say to what genus and species the bird from which it has been taken belongs. I mention this fact to show that what we designate a species has really distinctive and constant characters; and in the whole of my experience, with many thousands of Humming-Birds passing through my hands, I have never observed an instance of any variation which would lead me to suppose that it was the result of a union of two species. I write this without bias, one way or the other, as to the question of the origin of species. I am desirous of representing nature in her wonderful ways as she presents herself to my attention at the close of my work, after a period of twelve years of incessant labour, and not less than twenty years of interesting study. I am, of course, here speaking of the special object of my own studies—the Humming-Birds.

It is somewhat remarkable that any persons living in the present enlightened age should persist in asserting that Humming-Birds are found in India and Africa. Yet there are many who believe that such is the case. Even in a work but recently published, it is stated that Humming-Birds and Toucans are both found in the last-mentioned country; and I was once brought into a rather stormy altercation with a gentleman who asserted that the Humming-Bird was found in England, and that he had seen it fly in Devonshire. Now the object seen in Devonshire was the insect called the Humming-Bird Moth, *Macroglossa stellarum*; and the birds supposed to belong to this family by residents and travellers in India and Africa are of a totally different group—the *Nectariniidae* or Sun-Birds. These latter birds have no relationship to the *Trochilidae*; they are not even representatives of them in the countries alluded to; and their only points of