

ERYTHROSTERNA PARVA.

Red-breasted Flycatcher.

Muscicapa parva, Bechst. Natürg. Deutschl., tom. iii. p. 442.

Saxicola rubeculoides, Sykes, Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part ii. 1832, p. 92.

Erythrostera parva, Bonap. Geog. and Comp. List of Birds of Eur. and N. Amer., p. 25.

Muscicapa leucura, Gmel. ?

It would be very interesting could we ascertain whether the various little ornithological strangers that have of late been detected in England have crossed from the Continent, or if they are the offspring of others which have arrived at an early period of the year, bred, and again departed unnoticed; certain it is that most, if not all, of these "*rare aves*" that have been captured or shot in Britain have been birds of the year. If immature and consequently feeble-winged examples of the little Flycatcher figured in the accompanying Plate do successfully cross the ocean, the circumstance must necessarily excite surprise; but it would be by no means remarkable for mature birds with strengthened pinions to make such a transit, if blown out of their course during their spring migration, and remain here, and breed. At the autumnal movement of birds from one country to another, the young would naturally seek the most southern and western parts of England, such as Sussex, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall, until stopped by the wide ocean, which they would of course be disinclined to cross while sufficient insect-life remained for their support; and hence it doubtless arises that many rare birds are found in those counties during the autumn and winter months.

Of the *Muscicapa parva* three specimens only have been captured in Britain, namely, one near Falmouth, and two on the Scilly Islands. In the eastern and southern parts of Europe it is very numerous; and we know that its range extends thence to Asia Minor and Western India. Mr. Blyth affirms that there are two species of this form inhabiting the latter country, and that the bird found in the neighbourhood of Calcutta is different from the one described by Col. Sykes as inhabiting the Deccan; marvellously small, however,—the extent of the red colouring of the throat alone—is the difference between them, the bird from the eastern districts having less of this colour than the one from the Ghats, which Mr. Blyth writes me is "*Muscicapa parva vera*."

The first notice of the occurrence of the bird in this country was contained in a note from myself to E. Hearle Rodd, Esq., of Penzance, and which, at that gentleman's instance, was published in the 'Zoologist' for 1863, p. 8444; it is as follows:—"On the very day I visited Falmouth, one of the rarest of European birds was shot for the first time in Great Britain; and, having been killed in Cornwall, I thought you would like to know something about it. The bird in question is the *Muscicapa parva*; and you will find it figured in the second volume, pl. 62, of my 'Birds of Europe,' of which you have a copy in the Penzance Museum. The plate will at once give you an idea of this pretty species—a Robin among the Flycatchers. The proper home of the species is Western India and the eastern parts of Europe; and I certainly never expected this singular bird to have been added to our fauna. The specimen, which (thanks to your genial climate) was in good condition, was sent in the flesh to Dr. Gray, of the British Museum; and in this state I had it in my hands, so that there is no mistake about it. It was shot on the 24th of January, 1863, by Mr. Copeland, of Carwythenack House, in the parish of Constantine, near Falmouth, and is a female. Unfortunately the specimen had been placed in some insecure place, and the head had been eaten by mice or rats, so that the body alone was sent to the Museum. If you write to Mr. Copeland, ask him to look out for the male, which will have a red breast." Mr. Rodd adds:—

"I wrote at once to Mr. Copeland, whose attention to Natural History and whose especial interest in observing the ornithological rarities in our county I felt certain would ensure an accurate account of the capture of this little wanderer; and in reply I received from him the following interesting remarks on the habits of the bird:—

"The little Flycatcher alluded to we had seen some days before it was shot. We first observed it on a dead holly-tree, which, with the ground around the house, was its favourite resort. It was particularly active, skimming the grass to within about a foot, then, perching itself, darted occasionally with a toss, resting either on a shrub or the wire fencing. Its habits were interesting, partaking in a great measure of those of our summer visitor. There is another in the neighbourhood, for which a vigilant watch will be kept. I saw it a few days ago in a plantation four hundred yards from my house. Should I be so fortunate as to capture it, you shall have due notice. I believe that with attention many other interesting visitors may be found."

A young bird, killed at Scilly in October 1863, is mentioned in Mr. Rodd's 'List of British Birds;' and