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XXX.—Horæ Zoologicæ

Sir W. Jardine Bart F.R.S.E. & F.L.S., &c.

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The petals are short, spathulate, touching at both base and point, leaving between them a heart-shaped space; they are white edged with purple, and fringed with purple hairs on their outer edge; in the middle is a large heart-shaped violet spot. The lip is hinged with the column, moveable, and consists of a channel with broad wings, white edged with purple, and of a very long process, shaped like a sword-blade hanging down, brownish and velvety with hairs."

9. *BOLBOPHYLLUM exaltatum*; pseudobulbo tetragono folio oblongo obtuso paulo brevior, scapo vaginato stricto longissimo (pedali et ultra), vaginis obtusis supremis laxioribus, spica multiflora, bracteis ovatis concavis acutis herbaceis, sepalis ovatis acuminatis, petalis oblongis ciliatis, labello obovato obtuso pubescente lamina elevata in medio, columnæ dentibus supremis cirrhosis, anthera mucronata.

Guayana, Schomburgk.

The leaf of this remarkable plant is not much more than an inch long, while the scape is more than a foot high. The flowers are purple, and half concealed by the large permanent bracts.

10. *BOLBOPHYLLUM bisetum*; pseudobulbis inverse pyriformibus, folio lanceolato basi angustato spica paulo longiore, scapi filiformis erecti vaginis 3 distantibus laxis acutis, spica densa brevi nutante, sepalis alte carinatis lateralibus connatis emiorbicularibus dorsali oblongo minore, petalis spatulatis unguiculatis, labello convexo linguiformi villosa basi cordato, columnæ dentibus setaceis, bracteis 2 filiformibus sub flore.

Khasya, Griffith.

A very singular little plant, with flowers as large as a small pea, and deeply keeled sepals. Under each flower is a pair of long filiform bracts.

XXX.—*Horæ Zoologicae*. By SIR W. JARDINE, Bart.,
F.R.S.E. & F.L.S., &c.

No. V. *Description of some Birds collected during the last expedition to the Niger.*

WHEN in London during the month of July last, Mr. Waterhouse, being aware that I was anxious to receive information regarding the family of the *Nectariniadæ*, kindly placed at my disposal for examination a small collection of birds procured by Dr. Stanger during the last expedition to the Niger, and as all the productions of a country which has been so fatal to our countrymen in the prosecution of their philanthropic schemes must be of interest, and the collection moreover presents some specimens apparently undescribed, a short notice of them has been considered as having a claim to a place in our "*Horæ*."

The entire collection contained only four species, three of which belong to the genus *Nectarinia* of Illiger; the fourth is the common green-banded cuckoo of Southern Africa.

Chrysococcyx auratus.—A single specimen only occurs, exhibiting an intermediate state of plumage. On the upper parts, although the metallic lustre of the feathers is present, nearly all the white markings of the adult bird are there of a pale orange-red: beneath, the chin, throat, and upper part of the breast are entirely of that colour, the centre of the feathers darker; while the remaining under parts are white, with the dark metallic barring of the adult, and slightly tinted with reddish.

Nectarinia cyanocephala, Shaw, 1812. (*C. chloronotus*, Swain.)—Three specimens of the male form part of the collection, not apparently differing from those obtained in other parts of Western Africa. In one the process of moulting has commenced, and shows that the dark steel-blue of the head and neck is exchanged after the breeding-season for the more sombre olive colour of the back, becoming paler on the throat and upper part of the breast.

Nectarinia Stangerii, Jard., 1842.—This bird, so far as we can ascertain, is an undescribed species; and we trust that those who are averse to the indiscriminate use of proper names as specific designations, will waive their dislike while we endeavour to place a record, alike upon an important expedition and the services of one on whom devolved the safe conduct of the party to its termination when almost worn out by disease*. This interesting species belongs to those with dark plumage, soft and velvet-like to the feel, and having a coronal and gular patch of imbricated shining feathers. *N. amethystina* and *fuliginosa* may be considered as allied to it, and represent the artificial group. The Niger bird, of which there is a single specimen apparently in complete breeding state, has the upper parts, cheeks and sides of the neck of a yellowish umber-brown, with bright reflections when looked at between the light; the under parts are dark umber-brown, and when seen across in the same manner have the reflections purple; there are no coloured axillary tufts. The coronal patch extends from the bill to the line of the eyes, dark bluish

* "From want of engineers we should have had to drop down the whole length of the river without steam, had not Dr. Stanger, the geologist, in the most spirited manner, after consulting Tredgold's work on Steam, and getting some little instruction from the convalescent engineer, undertaken to work the engine himself. The heat of the engine-room affected the engineer so much as to throw him back in his convalescence and prevent him from rendering any further assistance; but Dr. Stanger took the vessel safely below Eboe without anything going wrong with the machinery."—*Athenæum*, Jan. 29, 1842. *Letter of Capt. H. D. Trotter*.

green, varying in tint with the light, and terminating posteriorly in a narrow band of violet; the space between the eye and the rictus, with the chin, are intense black; from the base of each maxilla there is a short narrow stripe of bluish green, inside of which the throat and fore-part of the neck are bright yellowish green, terminated with a narrow band of steel-blue edged with scarlet. This is produced by the last row of brilliant steel-blue feathers, having the naked tips of the plumules produced of a bright scarlet, forming a narrow fringe on each, and appearing like a thread of that colour bounding the brilliant gular patch. Bill, legs and feet black. Length 5 inches; of the bill to the forehead, $\frac{17}{10}$; of the wing to the end of the longest quill, $2\frac{7}{10}$.

N. chloropygia, Jard., 1842.—One specimen only occurred in the collection from Mr. Waterhouse, but we compared it with another in the possession of Dr. Stanger at Manchester, which corresponded with it. Its nearest connexion is with the *N. chalybeia*, for which it was at first mistaken; and while it presents considerable variations, it may still remain a question how far local circumstances may influence varieties, and also whether the birds from that part of the African coast continue constant in the markings, &c. which seem to separate our two birds. The distinctions are, a less size, and less proportional length of the wings and tail; the want nearly of the blue collar, that being indicated by a deeper green, slightly tinted with blue; by the under parts and flanks being pale oil-green, whereas they are broccoli-brown in the other; and by the upper tail-coverts being of the same brilliant green with the head and back, and not *rich violet-blue*, as in the bird from Southern Africa. We have not seen specimens of *N. chalybeia* from the western coasts of Africa to compare with those from the Cape of Good Hope, but it is not impossible that the bird which served for the description of the one so named in the 'Birds of Western Africa' may have been that now before us; and the "greenish tinge" on the narrow blue collar, and the "tail-coverts banded with greenish blue," almost lead us to believe that this has been the case.

In Le Vaillant's description of "Sucrier à plastron rouge" (*N. Afra*, Linn.), a bird inhabiting the forests of Auteniquoi is described as almost intermediate in colouring between *N. Afra* and *chalybeia*, the crimson band being less in breadth, and having all the red feathers transversely marked with lines of a rich golden green: by referring to the following description, it will be seen that this is in part the case with the species now before us.

In the bird from the Niger, the upper parts, wings and tail

excepted, are of a very rich emerald bronzed green; the wings and tail are brownish black, on the former the edges of the feathers being dull oil-green; the chin is deep velvet-black, shading into the neck and upper parts of the breast, which are similar in colour to the upper parts, and finish on the breast by a band of deep bluish green; this is succeeded by a crimson band nearly similar in extent to the same part in the *N. chalybeia*, and having the tips of the feathers on the upper part of it narrowly edged with golden green; while the belly, flanks, vent and under tail-coverts are of a pale oil-green; the ample axillary tufts are rather paler in tint than in its ally. The comparative dimensions of the Cape and Niger birds are—

	Cape.	Niger.
Entire length	$4\frac{6}{10}$	$4\frac{1}{10}$
Bill to forehead	$0\frac{7}{10}$	$0\frac{7}{10}$
Wing to longest quill	$2\frac{2}{10}$	$1\frac{0}{10}$
Tail from extremity of upper coverts ..	$1\frac{1}{10}$	$0\frac{7}{10}$
Tarsus	$0\frac{6}{10}$	$0\frac{5}{10}$

Since the preceding notes were sent to press, that party of the Niger expedition which remained with the view of again attempting the ascent of the river have returned to Britain, and we have been obliged by the attention of Mr. Fraser, the naturalist, for the examination of some *Nectariniadæ* procured during his sojourn at Fernando Po, among which are eight specimens of the male of our *N. chloropygia*. All of them agree exactly, and maintain the distinctions of colouring and proportions which are pointed out above as separating this bird from *N. chalybeia*.

Three specimens of the female accompany them, and they exhibit even greater differences. The plumage above is olive or yellowish oil-green (not broccoli-brown as in *N. chalybeia*) underneath; the chin is yellowish white; the breast of a deeper shade tinted with olive, and the centre of the belly is nearly gamboge-yellow, shading to a paler tint on the sides, flanks and under tail-coverts. The wings are umber-brown, having the feathers edged with yellowish oil-green; tail nearly black glossed with green, and having the two outer feathers tipped with grayish white. The entire length, $4\frac{6}{10}$; bill to forehead, $\frac{7}{10}$; wing to longest quill, $1\frac{0}{10}$. The short notes which Mr. Fraser's other duties enabled him to collect are also interesting as giving us insight into its habits:—"Very common in flocks of from twenty to fifty near the houses; the note short but sweet; perch on the long grass and branches of the small

shrubs." A female was procured breeding: the nest, made of grass, was pendent from the branches of a small bush; she alone was the architect, both carrying and weaving the materials; the male was not observed to assist in any way.

October 6, 1842.

XXXI.—*Extracts from a Report on subjects connected with Afghanistan.* By Dr. GRIFFITH, F.L.S.*

General Nature of Afghan Vegetation.

BEFORE entering on a few brief notices of those vegetable productions which are not cultivated, but which administer to the wants of the people, it may be as well to premise a few popular remarks on the general nature of the Afghan vegetation. No parallel can be drawn between the Afghan flora and that of India in any part; for even in the lower parts of the country, but very little elevated above the general level of our extreme N.W. provinces, the flora of Afghanistan is decidedly peculiar.

The transition commences, as may be said, along the Sutleje: on the Ferozepoor route it is gradual, on that of Shikarpore it is much more abrupt. At Peshawur, which is in north latitude 34°, and about 1200 feet above the sea, it is tolerably mature; still there is an intermingling of Indian species, and this continues, gradually becoming less, until one ascends to Gundamuk.

In Kutch Gundava the Indian forms are less frequent; indeed it may be said that by the Ferozepoor route the Indian species encroach on the Afghan territory; in Kutch Gundava the Afghan species encroach on the Indian territory.

The Afghan transitional forms are various: *Boraginæ*, *Reseda*, *Chenopodiæ*, *Bertholletia*, *Farselia*, *Medicago*, *Buto-mus*, *Peganum Harmali*, *Nerium Oleander*, *Alhagi Marorum*? The Indian transitional forms consist of *Calotropis procera*, certain *Amaranthaceæ* and *Chenopodiæ*, certain *Saccharineous* and *Panicous* grasses, *Acacia*, *Arabica* and *pudica*, *Prosopis spiciigera* and *Dalbergia Sissoo*.

To gain a just idea of the Afghan flora, we must compare it with that of the Levant, and perhaps with the greater part of the basin of the Mediterranean, with which it may be said to correspond in latitude. With the general flora of Persia it may be regarded as continuous.

Few things can be more striking or worthy of comprehensive investigation than this vast extent of the Mediterranean

* From the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. No. 36. New Series.