

THE PIPIRY FLYCATCHER.

†MUSCICAPA DOMINICENSIS, *Briss.*

PLATE LV.—MALE.

Having landed on one of the Florida Keys, I scarcely had time to cast a glance over the diversified vegetation which presented itself, when I observed a pair of birds mounting perpendicularly in the air, twittering with a shrill continued note new to me. The country itself was new: it was what my mind had a thousand times before conceived a tropical scene to be. As I walked over many plants, curious and highly interesting to me, my sensations were joyous in the highest degree, for I saw that in a few moments I should possess a new subject, on which I could look with delight, as one of the great Creator's marvellous works.

I was on one of those yet unknown islets, which the foot of man has seldom pressed. A Flycatcher unknown to me had already presented itself, and the cooing of a Dove never before heard came on my ear. I felt some of that pride, which doubtless pervades the breast of the discoverer of some hitherto unknown land. Although desirous of obtaining the birds before me, I had no wish to shoot them at that moment. My gun lay loosely on my arms, my eyes were rivetted on the Flycatcher, my ears open to the soft notes of the Dove. Reader, such are the moments, amid days of toil and discomfort, that compensate for every privation. It is on such occasions that the traveller feels most convinced, that the farther he proceeds, the better will be his opportunities of observing the results of the Divine conception. What else, I would ask of you, can be more gratifying to the human intellect!

Delighted and amused, I stood for awhile contemplating the beautiful world that surrounded me, and from which man would scarcely retire with willingness, had not the Almighty ordained it otherwise. But action had now to succeed, and I quickly procured some of the Flycatchers. Their habits too, I subsequently studied for weeks in succession, and the result of my observations I now lay before you.

About the 1st of April, this species reaches the Florida Keys, and spreads over the whole of them, as far as Cape Florida, or perhaps somewhat farther along the eastern coast of the Peninsula. It comes from Cuba, where the species is said to be rather abundant, as well as in the other West India Islands. Its whole demeanour so much resembles that of the Tyrant Fly-

catcher, that were it not for its greater size, and the difference of its notes, it might be mistaken for that bird, as I think it has been on former occasions by travellers less intent than I on distinguishing species. At the season when I visited the Floridas, there was not a Key ever so small without at least a pair of them.

Their flight is performed by a constant flutter of the wings, unless when the bird is in chase, or has been rendered shy, when it exhibits a power and speed equal to those of any other species of the genus. During the love season, the male and female are seen rising from a dry twig together, either perpendicularly, or in a spiral manner, crossing each other as they ascend, twittering loudly, and conducting themselves in a manner much resembling that of the Tyrant Flycatcher. When in pursuit of insects, they dart at them with great velocity. Should any large bird pass near their stand, they immediately pursue it, sometimes to a considerable distance. I have seen them, after teasing a Heron or Fish Crow, follow them nearly half a mile, and return exulting to the tree on which they had previously been perched. Yet I frequently observed that the approach of a White-headed Pigeon or Zenaida Dove, never ruffled their temper. To the Grakles they were particularly hostile, and on all occasions drove them away from their stand, or the vicinity of their nest, with unremitting perseverance. The reason in this case, and in that of the Fish Crow, was obvious, for these birds sucked their eggs or destroyed their young whenever an opportunity occurred. This was also the case with the Mangrove Cuckoo.

This species is careless of the approach of man, probably because it is seldom disturbed by him. I have been so near some of them as to see distinctly the colour of their eyes. No sooner, however, had it begun to build its nest, than it flew about me or my companions, as if much exasperated at our being near, frequently snapping its beak with force, and in various ways loudly intimating its disapprobation of our conduct. Then, as if we retired from the neighbourhood of its nest, it flew upwards, chattering notes of joy.

They fix their nest somewhat in the manner of the King Bird, that is, on horizontal branches, or in the large fork of a mangrove, or bush of any other species, without paying much attention to its position; with respect to the water, but with very singular care to place it on the western side of the tree, or of the islet. I found it sometimes not more than two feet above high water, and at other times twenty. It is composed externally of light dry sticks, internally of a thin layer of slender grasses or fibrous roots, and has some resemblance to that of the Carolina Pigeon in this respect that, from beneath, I could easily see the eggs through it. These were regularly four in all the nests that I saw, of a white colour, with many dots towards



A. T.

Pipery Flycatcher.
Agati Grandiflora

the larger end. The young I have never seen, my visit to those Keys having been in some measure abridged through lack of provisions.

On one of the Keys to which I went, although of small size, I saw several nests, and at least a dozen of these birds all peaceably enjoying themselves. The sexes present no external difference. According to report, they retire from these islands about the beginning of November, after which few land birds of any kind are seen on them.

After I had arrived at Charleston in South Carolina, on returning from my expedition to the Floridas, a son of PAUL LEE, Esq., a friend of the Rev. JOHN BACHMAN, called upon us, asserting that he had observed a pair of Flycatchers in the College yard, differing from all others with which he was acquainted. We listened, but paid little regard to the information, and deferred our visit to the trees in the College yard. A week after, young LEE returned to the charge, urging us to go to the place, and see both the birds and their nest. To please this amiable youth, Mr. BACHMAN and I soon reached the spot; but before we arrived the nest had been destroyed by some boys. The birds were not to be seen, but a Common King Bird happening to fly over us, we jeered our young observer, and returned home. Soon after the Flycatchers formed another nest, in which they reared a brood, when young LEE gave intimation to Mr. BACHMAN, who, on visiting the place, recognised them as of the species described in this article. Of this I was apprised by letter after I had left Charleston, for the purpose of visiting the northern parts of the Union. The circumstance enforced upon me the propriety of never suffering an opportunity of acquiring knowledge to pass, and of never imagining for a moment that another may not know something that has escaped your attention.

Since that time, three years have elapsed. The birds have regularly returned every spring to the College yard, and have there reared, in peace, two broods each season, having been admired and respected by the collegians, after they were apprised that the species had not previously been found in the State. It thus furnishes another of the now numerous instances of new species entering the Union from the south, to increase our Fauna.

The branch on which I have represented a male in full plumage, is that of a species rather rare on the Florida Keys, although, as I was assured, it abounds in Cuba. It blooms during the season when this bird builds its nest. The flower is destitute of scent; the fruit is a long narrow legume, containing numerous seeds, placed at equal distances.

TYRANNUS GRISEUS, Vieill., Ois. d'Amer., pl. 46.

PIPIRY FLYCATCHER, *Muscicapa dominicensis*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. ii. p. 392.

The outer six primaries attenuated at the end, the first more so, the sixth

least; the third longest, but the second almost equal; the fourth and fifth very little shorter; the first much longer than the seventh; tail emarginate. Upper parts dull ash-grey, shaded with brown posteriorly; a concealed patch of bright vermilion on the top of the head; wing-coverts, quills and tail chocolate-brown, margined with brownish-white; lower parts anteriorly ash-grey, behind greyish-white, tinged with yellow; lower wing-coverts pale sulphur-yellow. Female similar.

Male, $8\frac{7}{8}$, $14\frac{3}{8}$.

AGATI GRANDIFLORA.

This leguminous plant is one of the handsomest productions of Key-West, where I found it in full flower in the month of May. It reaches the height of twenty feet or more, and has a rather slender but elegant stem, of which the wood is as brittle as that of our common acacias. The pods are eight or nine inches in length, and of the size of a Swan's quill; the seeds, which are dark brown when ripe, glossy and globular, lie at regular intervals. The deep green of the long pendulous leaves, and the bright red of the large papilionaceous flowers, form a beautiful contrast. Many of these trees were planted near the house of my friend Dr. BENJAMIN STROBEL, under whose hospitable roof the twig was drawn. I saw no plants of the species on any other Key.

THE TYRANT FLYCATCHER.—KING BIRD.

+MUSCICAPA TYRANNUS, Linn.

PLATE LVI.—MALE AND FEMALE.

The Tyrant Flycatcher, or, as it is commonly named, the Field Martin, or King Bird, is one of the most interesting visitors of the United States, where it is to be found during spring and summer, and where, were its good qualities appreciated as they deserve to be, it would remain unmolested. But man being generally disposed to consider in his subjects a single fault sufficient to obliterate the remembrance of a thousand good qualities, even when the latter are beneficial to his interest, and tend to promote his comfort, persecutes the *King Bird* without mercy, and extends his enmity to its whole progeny. This mortal hatred is occasioned by a propensity which the Tyrant Flycatcher now and then shews to eat a honey-bee, which the farmer looks upon as exclusively his own property.



Pipery Flycatcher.
Agati Grandiflora



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