

P R E F A C E.

HAVING in the summer of 1837 brought my work on the “Birds of Europe” to a successful termination, I was naturally desirous of turning my attention to the Ornithology of some other region; and a variety of concurring circumstances induced me to select that of Australia, the Birds of which, though invested with the highest degree of interest, had been almost entirely neglected. Dr. Shaw, in his “Zoology of New Holland,” had devoted a few plates to the subject, from specimens collected by Sir Joseph Banks during the first voyage of Captain Cook; the “Birds of New Holland” by Lewin comprised not more than twenty-six plates; and figures and descriptions of a few species were given in the earlier voyages of Phillip, White and Collins, and the more recent one of King. At a subsequent period the late Mr. Vigors and Dr. Horsfield commenced an elaborate memoir on the Collection of Australian Birds in the possession of the Linnean Society; but unfortunately, they did not proceed farther than the *Meliphagidæ*, and the non-completion of their labours is the more to be regretted, inasmuch as the Linnean Society’s collection of Australian birds, at that time the finest extant, comprised many species collected by Mr. Brown during his voyage with the celebrated navigator Flinders, and was moreover enriched with some interesting notes by the late Mr. George Caley, by whom the collection was chiefly formed. Descriptions of many Australian birds were also included in the works of Latham, Shaw, Cuvier and Vieillot, as well as in several of the recent French voyages of discovery; still no general work on the subject had been undertaken, and nearly all that had been recorded by the various writers above enumerated, had reference almost exclusively to the productions of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, these being almost the only explored portions of that great country. In the absence, then, of any general work on the Birds of Australia, the field was comparatively a new one, and of no ordinary degree of interest, from the circumstance of its being one of the