

P R E F A C E.

THE late Mr. Gould shortly before his decease told me his wishes with regard to such of his works as should remain unfinished at the time of his death; and it is in accordance with these instructions that the 'Birds of Asia' has now been brought to a close.

The work was commenced in 1850, and during the thirty-three years that have elapsed no less than 530 species have been figured; but of course a large number of Asiatic species still remain unnoticed. The long connexion which had existed between Mr. Gould and ornithologists in all parts of the globe enabled him to obtain an early sight of rare and newly described species; and consequently many birds are figured in the present work, illustrations of which are not to be found elsewhere. Had the author lived he would doubtless have endeavoured to complete the 'Birds of Asia' in its entirety, as the subject was one in which he took the greatest personal interest. As far as the writer is concerned, he has had but a small duty to perform, as the Plates for the concluding parts of the work had nearly all been designed by Mr. Gould before his death, and have been faithfully produced on stone by his old and valued coadjutor Mr. Hart.

I have endeavoured to write the concluding articles as I believe Mr. Gould would have wished them to have been done, and as far as possible in harmony with the rest of the work. In every case the initials "R. B. S." are appended, so that any errors or omissions can be saddled on the right shoulders.

The work has been arranged according to the classifications adopted by Mr. Gould throughout his lifetime; and in giving title-pages and indexes to the species, I have added the exact dates of publication, for the benefit of ornithologists who wish to quote the work.

R. BOWDLER SHARPE.

August 1883.