PREFACE.

In the Preface to the 'Birds of Australia,' which has now been fifteen years before the public, I stated that, "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 opportune and concurring circumstances induced me to select that of Australia, the birds of which country, although invested with the highest degree of interest, had been almost entirely neglected." But if the Birds of Australia had not received that degree of attention from the scientific ornithologist which their interest demanded, I can assert, without fear of contradiction, that its highly curious and interesting Mammals had been still less investigated. It was not, however, until I arrived in the country, and found myself surrounded by objects as strange as if I had been transported to another planet, that I conceived the idea of devoting a portion of my attention to the mammalian class of its extraordinary fauna.

The native black, while conducting me through the forest or among the park-like trees of the open plains, would often point out the pricking of an Opossum's nails on the bark of a *Eucalyptus* or other tree, and indicate by his actions that in yonder hole, high up, was sleeping an Opossum, a *Phalangista*, or a Flying *Petaurus*. Even the objects brought to our bush-fires were enough to incite a desire for a more extended knowledge of Australia's Mammals; for numerous were the species of Kangaroos and Opossums that were nightly roasted and eaten by these children of nature. Perchance a half-charred log, or the heated hollow branch of a *Eucalyptus*, would send forth into the lap of one or other of the surrounding guests the *Acrobates pygmæus*, the white-footed *Hapalotis*, or