

INTRODUCTION.

THE earliest record respecting the existence of a species of the remarkable group of birds now so well known by their common appellation of Toucans, occurs in the 28th Chapter of Belon's third book published in 1555, where a figure of the bill of *Ramphastos Toco* is given as belonging to a bird of the new world. The beak of another species also formed part of the celebrated collection of John Tradescant, and was described in the "Museum Tradescantium," published in 1656, as that of the Araçari of Brazil. The first figure of an entire bird appeared in the "Ornithologia" of Willughby under the name of *Pica Braziliensis Toucan*, but is so imperfect that we can scarcely say what species it is meant to represent; most likely, however, it is intended for the *Ramphastos Toco*: subsequently a correct but very rude figure of another species, probably the *Ramphastos erythrorhynchus*, was published in Petiver's "Gazophylacii Naturæ"; and to these meagre materials but little appears to have been added until the appearance of the "Systema Naturæ" of the celebrated Linnæus, in the twelfth edition of which he enumerates eight species; but of these *R. picatus* cannot be identified, and the *R. Momotus* has nothing whatever to do with the present family, but is a true Motmot—genus *Momotus*: six species then were all that were known to Linnæus. Gmelin, in his edition of the "Systema Naturæ," enumerates eight others, but of these *R. paroninus*, *torquatus*, *luteus*, *cæruleus*, and *albus* cannot be identified, and *R. erythrorhynchus* is probably identical with the *R. Tucanus* of Linnæus; his *R. Toco*, according to the characters detailed, is therefore the only addition made by him to the previous list. Illiger appears to have added *R. vitellinus*; at least Mr. Swainson quotes that name as having been given by him, but does not say where, nor have I been able to discover his description of the species. Dr. Shaw proposed the name of *R. Aldrovandi* for the *R. picatus* of Linnæus, which I have already mentioned cannot be identified. Vieillot merely Latinized the French names given by