

## P R E F A C E.

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THAT early impressions of the mind are vividly retained, while events of the day flit from our memory, must have been experienced by every one. How vivid, then, is my recollection of the first Humming-Bird which met my admiring gaze! with what delight did I examine its tiny body and feast my eyes on its glittering plumage! This early impression, I well remember, gradually increased into an earnest desire to attain a more intimate acquaintance with the lovely group of birds to which it pertained, and was still further strengthened when an opportunity was afforded me of inspecting the, at that time, unique collection of the *Trochilidæ* formed by the late Mr. George Loddiges, of Hackney. This gentleman and myself were imbued with a kindred spirit in the love we both entertained for this family of living gems. To describe the feeling which animated us with regard to them is impossible; it can, in fact, only be realized by those who have made Natural History a study, and who pursue the investigation of its charming mysteries with ardour and delight. That our enthusiasm and excitement with regard to most things become lessened, if not deadened, by time, particularly when we have acquired what we vainly consider a complete knowledge of the subject, is, I fear, too often the case with most of us; not so, however, I believe with those who take up the study of the Family of Humming-Birds. Certainly I can affirm that such is not the case with myself; for the pleasure which I experience on seeing a Humming-Bird is as great at the present moment as when I first saw one. During the first twenty years of my acquaintance with these wonderful works of creation, my thoughts were often directed to them in the day, and my night dreams have not unfrequently carried me to their native forests in the distant country of America.

In passing through this world I have remarked that when inquirers of a strong will really set themselves to attain a definite object, they generally accomplish it; and in my own case the time at length arrived when I was permitted to revel in the delight of seeing the Humming-Birds in a state of nature, and to observe their habits in the woods and among the great flowering trees of the United States of America and in Canada. For some time a single Humming-Bird was my