

P R E F A C E.

IN this Work I have continued to carry out the same plan which has been employed in the previous volume descriptive of the Mammalia, giving to the body of the work a popular and anecdotal character, and reserving the more scientific portions for the Compendium of Generic Distinctions at the end of the volume. Much pains has been taken with that part of the work, for which I am in a great degree indebted to the invaluable "Genera of Birds" by Dr. Gray, a work which has long established itself as the standard of systematic Ornithology as at present accepted by the learned world.

The system employed, and the names that are given in this work, are those which have been sanctioned by the usage of the national collection in the British Museum; and any one who wishes to study the Birds in a systematic manner can accomplish his object by taking this volume to the Museum, and comparing the specimens with the history of the species in the body of the work, and the characteristic distinctions of the genera at its end. By means of this Table, also, any one can ascertain the approximate position which any bird holds in the system of the present day.

I must here take the opportunity of returning my best thanks to the numerous individuals who have most kindly given their aid to this work, many of whom are even now personally unknown to me.

B I R D S.

THE most conspicuous external characteristic which the BIRDS are distinguished from all other inhabitants of earth is the feathers which cover their bodies, and which serve the double purpose of clothing and propulsion. For the use of these in flight it is admirably adapted, as the long slender filaments of the feathers are not only