

P R E F A C E.

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 *Trochitide* 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

constant companion during days of toil by road and rail ; and I ultimately succeeded in bringing a living pair within the confines of the British Islands, and a single individual to London, where it lived for two days, when, from the want of proper food or the change of climate, it died.

Although so enthusiastically attached to the subject, I should not have formed a collection of the *Trochilidæ*, or attempted an account of their history, had not my late friend Mr. George Loddiges (whose many excellences are too universally known to need any comment from me) been prematurely removed from among us. Prior to his lamented death, whatever species I procured from my various correspondents were freely placed at his disposal ; and his collection was then unrivalled, and the pride of the owner as well as of his country, so far as a private collection could be considered of national importance. It was not until after Mr. Loddiges' decease that I determined upon forming the collection I myself possess, which now far surpasses every other, both in the number of species and examples. Ten years ago this collection was exhibited for a short time in the Gardens of the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park, and, I believe, afforded unmixed delight to the many thousands who visited those Gardens in the memorable year 1851. Many favourable notices of it appeared in the periodicals of the day ; and my friend Mr. Martin published a small popular work in express reference to it. During the period which has since elapsed I have been unceasing in my endeavours to obtain every species which has been discovered by the enterprising travellers of this country, of Germany, of France, and of America. It would be invidious were I to extol the exertions of one more than those of another, nor could I do so without committing injustice ; for the travellers of all these countries have shown equal intrepidity in their endeavours to bring to light the hidden treasures of the great primæval forests of the New World. Some of them, such as Azara, Spix, Bullock, DeLattre, Floresi, Dyson, Hoffmann, and Mathews (the discoverer of the wonderful *Loddigenia mirabilis*), are no longer among us : of those living who have paid especial attention to the Humming-Birds I may mention the names of Prince Maximilian of Wied, Waterton, Gosse, Warszewicz, Linden, Bridges, Jameson, Wallace, Bates, Darwin, Reeves, Hauxwell, Skinner, Bourcier, Sallé, Salvin, Fraser, Gundlach, Bryant, Montes de Oca, &c. It is to these men, living and dead, that science is indebted for a knowledge of so many of these "gems of creation ;" and it is by their exertions that such collections as Mr. Loddiges' and my own have been formed. I regret exceedingly that I have not seen so much of this lovely group of birds in a state of nature as I could have wished : the traveller and the historian are seldom united ; and in this instance it would have been impossible. The constant personal attention and care necessary for the production of such a work as 'A Monograph of the Trochilidæ' could only be given in a metropolis ; for in no other place could such a publication be accomplished without

a greatly increased expenditure both of time and money: it is only in capitals like London and Paris that undertakings of this nature can be carried out successfully; for nowhere else are the requisite talents and materials to be obtained.

I feel that I am greatly indebted to those who have honoured this work with their support for their kindness and the patience with which they have continued with me to its completion—the more especially as, owing to the discovery of so many new species since its commencement, it has extended far beyond its expected limits. I am also especially indebted to those persons connected with its production, by whose assistance I have been enabled to bring so great an undertaking to a satisfactory close. To my artist Mr. Richter, to Mr. Prince, and to Mr. Bayfield (all names connected with my former works), I owe many thanks. To the projectors and publisher of 'Curtis's Botanical Magazine' I am likewise indebted for many hints and for permission to copy parts of some of their plates of the flowering plants of those districts of South America which are frequented by Humming-Birds. In case the merits of this work should be unknown to some of my readers, I mention that it is generally acknowledged its production reflects equal credit upon its Editors Sir William Jackson Hooker and Mr. Smith, the artist Mr. Fitch, and its publisher Mr. Lovell Reeve.

Numerous attempts had been made at various times to give something like a representation of the glittering hues with which this group of birds are adorned; but all had ended in disappointment, and the subject seemed so fraught with difficulty that I at first despaired of its accomplishment. I determined, however, to make the trial, and, after a series of lengthened, troublesome, and costly experiments, I have, I trust, partially, if not completely succeeded. Similar attempts were simultaneously carried on in America by W. M. L. Baily, Esq., who with the utmost kindness and liberality explained his process to me; and although I have not adopted it, I must in fairness admit that it is fully as successful as my own. I shall always entertain a lively remembrance of the pleasant day I spent with this gentleman in Philadelphia. It was in his company that I first saw a living Humming-Bird, in a garden which has become classic ground to all true Americans, from the pleasing associations connected with its former possessor, the great and good Bartram, and from its having been one of the haunts of the celebrated Wilson, than whom no one has written more pleasingly on the only species of this family which inhabits that part of North America, the *Trochilus Colubris*.

It now becomes my pleasing duty to place on record the very valuable assistance in the production of this work with which I have been favoured by the Directors of Public Museums and private

individuals. Of these the foremost on the list must be the names of M. Jules Bourcier, of Paris, and Thomas Reeves, Esq., of Rio de Janeiro. Both these gentlemen have made extensive collections of specimens, and had numerous drawings prepared for the express purpose of publishing works on the subject, all of which with the utmost liberality have been placed at my disposal. To M. Bourcier, than whom no one possesses a more intimate acquaintance with this group of birds, I am likewise indebted for much valuable information, which has been at all times rendered with the utmost willingness and promptitude. My thanks are also due to the Trustees and the Keepers of the Zoological Department of the British Museum; to the Director of the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes at Paris; to Dr. Peters, Director of the Royal Zoological Museum of Berlin; to George Ure Skinner, Esq., long resident in Guatemala; to that intrepid traveller M. Warszewicz, now Director of the Botanic Garden at Cracow, who, during his travels in South America, brought to light more new species of Humming-Birds than any other explorer; to my friends Sir William Jardine, Bart.; W. C. L. Martin, Esq.; T. C. Eyton, Esq.; Dr. Sclater; Alfred Newton, Esq.; M. Edouard Verreaux, of Paris; G. N. Lawrence, Esq., of New York; and Dr. Baird, of Washington; to Edward Wilson, Esq., to Sigismund Rucker, Esq., F. Taylor, Esq., of Liverpool; William Tucker, Esq., of Trinidad; and to T. F. Erskine, Esq., for the readiness with which they have at all times favoured me with both information and the loan of specimens. To Miss Loddiges and her brother Mr. Conrad Loddiges, I am under considerable obligations for the facility of access they have always afforded me to the very valuable collection formed by their lamented father. Nor must the name of another valued friend—the late Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte—be omitted from the list of those who took great interest in the present work, he having at all times rendered me that scientific assistance which his vast and varied talents so well enabled him to afford.

September 1, 1861.