

in the covering of birds of prey; and diversities of plumage, in various situations, are common to them with many other species of birds.

Observation alone can guide the steps of the naturalist in these yet uncertain divisions; when that is silent, error is superinduced, and attaches itself to the labours of those who rather love to write dissertations than to observe; and to whom it too often happens, nothing is left but regret for having consumed their time in fruitless occupations, that oppress the mind, and exhaust the imagination over which opinion reigns and nature disavows.

But, what an astonishing mass of observation would be necessary to arrive at a complete knowledge of birds, and to connect ourselves, as it were, to the labours of nature, in order to distinguish with certainty, and in a luminous manner, the various families of which the tribes are composed that wing the air; ages would scarcely suffice for the collection of these observations, without which, the natural history of birds must necessarily offer uncertainty and confusion. Few persons have either time or inclination to give themselves to such researches, and the zeal
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