

P R E F A C E .

PERHAPS I cannot better express my deep sense of the generosity with which my labors in America have been supported, than by a simple narrative of the manner in which I have collected the materials for the series, of which this volume is the first, and of the growth and progress of the plan for its publication.

Since the time of my arrival in this country, now eleven years ago, I have lost no opportunity of making collections wherever my lecturing excursions led me; and, by my own efforts, and by the friendly aid of persons throughout the United States, who have shown from the beginning a warm interest in my scientific pursuits, I have succeeded in bringing together an extensive museum of purely American specimens. My opportunities for investigation were, of course, daily increased, and at the end of eight or nine years I had on hand a great quantity of materials, containing the results of my studies in this country; but the expense attending the collection and support of so large a museum more than exhausted the means which I was able to devote to it, and I felt obliged to renounce all idea of publishing the results of my labors. I had them in tangible form, not with any expectation of ever seeing them in print, but in the hope that after my death my collections and papers would be found a useful guide for others, and might be, in the end, of some service to science in America.

It is now two years since, in conversation with Mr. Francis C. Gray, of Boston,—now no longer living to see the result of his disinterested and generous efforts in behalf of science,—I mentioned to him the numerous preparations which I had made to illustrate the Natural History of North America, and my regret that the costliness of such works must prevent the publication of the materials I had collected. He entered at once into the matter with an energy and hopefulness which were most inspiring: spent some time in examining my manuscripts; and, having satisfied himself of the feasibility of their publication, set on foot a subscription, of which he took the whole direction himself, awakening attention to it by personal application to his friends and acquaintances, by his own lib-