

that I should describe the fishes brought back by Spix from Brazil, and to this I consented the more gladly because ichthyology has always been a favorite study with me. I have not, however, been able to give them all the care I could have wished, for M. de Martius, anxious to complete the publication of these works, has urged upon me a rapid execution. I hope, nevertheless, that I have made no gross errors, and I am the less likely to have done so, because I had as my guide the observations you had kindly made for him on the plates of Spix. Several of these plates were not very exact; they have been set aside and new drawings made. I beg that you will judge this work when it reaches you with indulgence, as the first literary essay of a young man. I hope to complete it in the course of the next summer. I would beg you, in advance, to give me a paternal word of advice as to the direction my studies should then take. Ought I to devote myself to the study of medicine? I have no fortune, it is true; but I would gladly sacrifice my life if, by so doing, I could serve the cause of science. Though I have not even a presentiment of any means with which I may one day travel in distant countries, I have, nevertheless, prepared