PREFACE.

THE question may naturally suggest itself to some of my readers, what object I had in view in publishing a work on the Birds of Great Britain, when I had already completed a similar publication on the avifauna of Europe. My reasons are simply these:—Before the latter was completed the entire edition was all or nearly all sold; and very many persons interested in this department of science were disappointed in not being able to procure a copy of a work which they saw in the hands of so many others. Consequently, on the completion of my ‘Birds of Australia,’ at the solicitation of a large number of private friends and others, and influenced by the increased taste for natural history that had sprung up in the interim, I “returned to my old love” by publishing the British Birds, excluding those of the continent, thus complying with the wishes of those persons who have especially paid attention to our native ornithology. I also felt that there was an opportunity of greatly enriching the work by giving figures of the young of many of the species of various genera—a thing hitherto almost entirely neglected by authors; and I feel assured that this infantile age of bird-life will be of much interest for science, to my subscribers, and to readers generally.

That my efforts to render this publication a standard work have been successful is evidenced by its sale being double that of any other work I have given to the public. Many of the numerous ornithologists who have arisen within the last few years have rendered me much valuable information—a kindness which I duly acknowledge, and trust that, although not specially mentioned in this short Preface, they will take it for granted they have not been forgotten, and that their names have been generally associated with the various subjects to which their communications have reference.

Many of the public are quite unaware how the colouring of these large Plates is accomplished; and not a few believe that they are produced by some mechanical process or by chromo-lithography. This, however, is not the case; every sky with its varied tints and every feather of each bird were coloured by hand; and when it is considered that nearly two hundred and eighty thousand illustrations in the present work have been so treated, it will most likely cause some astonishment to those who give the subject a thought.

P R E F A C E.

I am truly and sincerely thankful for the blessing of health which has attended me during the course of my twelve years' labour on the present work; and it was only while the Introductory matter was going through the press that a severe blight fell upon me (the untimely death of my youngest son, Dr. Franklin Gould*), and cast a gloom over my future happiness. I should not have alluded to this painful subject here did I not feel it was only doing justice to his memory, as he rendered me great assistance in the composition of the following Introduction, which, from his varied acquirements, he was well qualified to give. His loss has called forth the sympathy of many kind friends, which has in some measure assuaged the sad affliction which has befallen me. If I am spared it is my intention not to be idle; for although I do not entertain the idea of entering upon any new enterprise, I shall still pursue the subject with the same energy I have hitherto done,—at one period of the year attending to the Birds of Asia, at another to the recent discoveries in the ornithology of Australia, pursuing the subject to New Guinea and the adjacent islands, the avifaunas of these latter countries being inseparable.

It gives me great pleasure to state that my Secretary, Mr. Prince, after twelve months of very severe illness, is again able to render me his assistance, that Mr. Wolf affords me the benefit of his talented pencil, and that Mr. Richter and Mr. Hart continue their services as heretofore.

JOHN GOULD.

November 1, 1873.

* Dr. F. Gould died of fever on board the Steamship 'Behar' on the 19th of March last, during his passage from India to Suez, and was buried the same day in the Red Sea.

Gould, John. 1873. "Preface [The Birds of Great Britain]." *The birds of Great Britain* 1, -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323782>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/221495>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323782>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/323782>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries

Sponsored by

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.