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## PREFACE.

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NATURAL HISTORY and the Sciences were not originally pursued by philosophers from a curiosity to acquire, or a desire to disseminate, the secret laws of the universe. Man is, nevertheless, an inquisitive animal, and seems, by his nature, to possess a restless solicitude about the objects with which he is surrounded, and a native desire of increasing his knowledge of things. Who can reflect on the extent of his memory, of his faculty of imagination, and of his power of communicating thought, and not suppose man constructed to enhance, by systematic inquiry, that knowledge, which, to a certain degree, must be the necessary result of sensation? And who can contemplate the variety observable in the intellectual characters of individuals, and not suppose that human pursuits would be dissimilar, and that original varieties of genius as well as accidental circumstances of situation, would direct human efforts to the