

P R E F A C E.



IN presenting to the public a treatise like the present, it would naturally be expected that the author should state the grounds upon which he rests his claim to attention. With this expectation he most cordially complies. Soon after the publication of his "*Sylva Americana*," in 1832, at the solicitation, not only of personal friends, but with the expressed wishes of numerous individuals to whom he was comparatively a stranger, he undertook the preparation of a work on the trees of this country, more complete and extensive in its character than had hitherto been published. With this view, in connection with other pursuits, he extended his researches by travelling and residing for a time in various parts of North and South America, the West Indies, Europe, and Western Africa, where he availed himself of the advantage of not only verifying or correcting the observations which had been made by others on the trees of these countries, but examined them under various conditions in a state of nature, as well as in nurseries and collections of the curious.

In the year 1838, he announced to the public, through a "Memorial praying Congress to adopt measures for procuring and preserving a supply of timber for naval purposes," [*Doc. 241, 25th Congress, 2d Session, Senate*], that he had commenced the preparation of a treatise on this subject, setting forth the course he was pursuing and the chief objects of inquiry; but owing to the party strife and political warfare which existed at that period, he regrets to say that no action was taken in the matter beyond referring said memorial to the Committee on Naval Affairs, and ordering it to be printed.

In 1843, at the request of his friends, definite proposals were issued by the author for publishing the work in a popular form, and a large number of wealthy and public-spirited citizens proffered him their aid, to whom he can not here omit to acknowledge his lasting obligations; but, owing to various causes which have unavoidably retarded the publication, it could not with propriety be issued before the present time.

While complying with this request, he has read or consulted the works of all the most judicious authors on the subject, both ancient and modern, with the view of giving a concise account of such trees and shrubs as are cultivated or growing in America, as would interest the general reader, and, at the same time, would prove economical and useful to the artisan, the planter, and to those interested in arboriculture, in a more extended sense.

The pictorial illustrations of this work have either been made directly from drawings after nature, or from accurate delineations already in existence, one figure representing the general appearance of each tree, and another of the leaf, flower, fruit, &c., in order that the descriptions may be better and more clearly understood, and to render their identity more certain.

The classification he has preferred to adopt is the *Natural System*, chiefly for the sake of aiding in generalizing on the species and varieties contained in each family or tribe, which is in accordance with the plan adopted by Professor Don, in "*Miller's*