

P R E F A C E.

dictions of various authors reconciled, but many new subjects have been added, rendering it a valuable work.

There have been many authors who, from time to time, have treated on Birds, and many different systems have arisen in consequence of their labours; but it is much to be lamented, that scarce any two agree in the same opinion.

The great RAY, our countryman, may justly be esteemed the first author of *System*; and it is to him we are indebted for the valuable Ornithology of *Francis Willughby*, Esq; which, though published so far back as 1678 *, is yet reckoned the best general work of its kind in the English language.

A whole volume would scarce suffice to give an account of the various writers in Ornithology, and their works in every language; but this is not meant to be a part of our undertaking, and is indeed quite unnecessary, as we mean to draw materials for our purpose from authors of the best credit only; not condemning any of them for their attempt to communicate the knowledge of the age they lived in, as we may justly suppose it was well received in their days; and no doubt but the time will come, when our present notions of things will be held as cheap by our successors, as those of the century past are by the present age. We will therefore pass over even the names of all here, except the one to whom all future writers on Natural History must feel themselves

* The first edition was in the Latin tongue, in 1676, but not translated into English till two years after.