

P R E F A C E

THE completion of this epoch-making work by the issue of the final part in June, 1915, has been allowed to pass unnoticed owing to the great European War, to the pursuit of which all interests have been subordinated in the Allied Countries. Nevertheless the achievement of Dr. F. Ducane Godman in bringing the work to a successful termination is one of unique interest, not only in the realm of scientific research but in the bibliological world.

During the nineteenth century a number of scientific surveys of countries and scientific voyages were undertaken by various European Governments, which have added greatly to the world-knowledge of Zoology, Botany, and Archæology. Napoleon's *Description de l'Égypte* was the first of these monumental works, which was followed by the scientific results of the voyages of such as *Erebus* and *Terror*, *Beagle*, *Novara*, *Sulphur*, *L'Astrolabe*, *L'Astrolabe* and *La Zélée*, *La Coquille*, *Blossom*, *La Bonite*, and *Challenger*, and the works of Comte Francis de Castelnau and A. d'Orbigny (South America), Ramon de la Sagra (Cuba), Claudio Gay (Chile), P. F. de Siebold (Japan), Andrew Smith (South Africa), and Sir John Richardson (Canada). But all of these publications were produced, wholly or partly, at the expense of various European Governments who were able to enlist the co-operation of the most eminent scientific men of their countries.

The two great works of this character that were undertaken by private persons were, unfortunately, never completed. They were Sibthorp's *Flora Graeca*, of which ten volumes were issued between 1806 and 1840, and Lord Kingsborough's *Antiquities of Mexico*, 9 vols., 1831-1848, on which the author is reported to have spent upward of £30,000 and ruined himself in consequence.

The 'Biologia Centrali Americana,' which ranks eminently with the above-mentioned works, was planned, initiated, and completely carried out by the authors, Dr. F. Ducane Godman and Mr. Osbert Salvin, at their own expense, between the years 1879 and 1915. It describes the Antiquities, Flora, and Fauna (with the exception of the Crustacea, Malacostraca, and one or two groups of Hymenoptera and Neuroptera) of