

A HISTORY OF BRITISH REPTILES

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A history of British reptiles by Thomas Bell

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THOMAS BELL

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A
HISTORY
OF
BRITISH REPTILES.

BY
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TO

WILLIAM YARRELL, ESQ. V.P.L.S. V.P.Z.S.

THIS LITTLE VOLUME,
FORMING A HUMBLE PORTION OF THAT SERIES OF WORKS
ILLUSTRATIVE OF
BRITISH ZOOLOGY,
WHICH DERIVES ITS PRINCIPAL
ATTRACTION AND VALUE
FROM HIS EXTENSIVE INFORMATION
AND HAPPY METHOD OF COMMUNICATING IT,
IS INSCRIBED
AS A CORDIAL BUT INADEQUATE OFFERING
OF REGARD AND RESPECT,
BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

The Reptilia constitute a class of vertebrated animals of which the structural characters are as follow:—They have cold blood,—that is to say, their power of producing animal heat is so limited as scarcely to be appreciable, and not sufficient, therefore, to keep up any standard temperature of the body, nor to prevent it from following all the thermal variations of the atmosphere or water by which they are surrounded.

The integument is covered with hard and dry cuticle in various modifications of form, in some constituting broad plates, in others imbricated scales. The heart is in all cases trilobular,—that is to say, it is composed of two auricles and a single ventricle; the respiration is exclusively pulmonary throughout life, and their reproduction is oviparous. The *Amphibia*, or *Batrachia*, which are included in the Reptilia by Cuvier and many other naturalists, differ from them, however, in various essential and important characters. The heart particularly is bilobular: the integument is naked, and the respiration is carried on by means of branchiæ during the earlier period of life, changing—in some totally, and in others partially—to the pulmonary character in the adult condition.