

THE HISTORY OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF GEOGRAPHY

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The History of the Rise and Progress of Geography by John Blair

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JOHN BLAIR

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BY

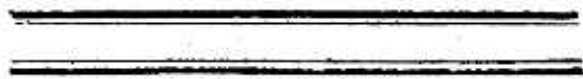
The Rev. JOHN BLAIR, LL. D.
Late Prebendary of WESTMINSTER.

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ON THE
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IT must be obvious to every one, that ARTS and SCIENCES, when represented only in their more ripened State of Improvement, can never communicate a full Degree of Information, unless at the same time the ruder Stages through which they passed, before they arrived at that Degree of Perfection,

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fection, are minutely traced and known. A young Architect would never attain to be Master of his Art, if he had only seen Buildings, however magnificent, after the Fabricks were completed. For then he could have no Opportunity of observing the Breadth or Depth of the Foundations which are necessary for carrying so great a Weight; he could know nothing of the Figure and Contrivance of the Frames by which the Arches and Vaultings were executed; the Manner of fixing those Beams which bind the different Parts of the Walls and Roof together, and all the various Application of Tools and Engines, Ladders and Scaffolding, by means of which the Efforts of Art and Labour were united to complete the Pile. For when the Superstructure

is finished, then all these various Implements of Mechanism are removed, like Rubbish, from the Spot, and many of the ablest Exertions of Skill in the Builder lie covered and out of Sight.

Geography therefore is, in this Respect, like every other Science, whose imperfect Beginnings ought to be traced, and the Time and Manner pointed out in which it received its gradual Improvements. For though it is far from my Intention to prefix any System of Geography before the few Maps which are now published by way of Illustration of my Tables of Chronology; yet having found but little Satisfaction in any one Author, though I have looked into most of them who have professedly wrote upon this Subject,

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ject, I have, for my own Amusement, collected and digested from different Writers, both ancient and modern, such Particulars as I thought most interesting for giving the Outline of this History of Geography, hoping that the Leisure and Abilities of others, more conversant in this Branch of Knowledge, may be prompted to supply more amply this *Desideratum* in the History of Learning.

It appears that the early Geographers, being destitute of mathematical instruments and of astronomical Observations, began first to determine the Situation of Places according to Climates; and they were led to fix upon those Climates from the Form and Colour of certain Animals which were

to

to be found in those different Countries. The Appearance of *Negroes*, or what they called *Æthiopians*, and of the larger sized Animals, such as the *Rhinoceros* and *Elephants*, suggested to them the Line of Division where the Limits of the Torrid Zone began towards the North, and ended towards the South. For Reason, said they, points out to us, that similar Things appear in the same Temperature of the Elements; and that whether they were Animals or Plants, they are produced according to the similar State of the Air or Climate under the same *Parallels*, or a like Situation equally distant from either Pole*.

* Ptolemæi Geogr. lib. 1. cap. 9.