A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM. PART I

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Trieste

A

DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE

OF THE

SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM:

BY

ANDREW SMITH, M.D. M.W.S.

SUPERINTENDENT.

PART I.

OF

MAMMALIA.

Cape Town:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. BRIDEKIRK,

AT THE CHRONICLE OFFICE,

No. 31, Heerengracht.

1826.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD CHARLES HENRY SOMERSET,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE

OF THE MUSEUM,

FOUNDED BY HIS LORDSHIP,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROSECUTING THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

If there is one spot on the surface of the globe better adapted than another for furnishing interesting objects of Natural History to a public Museum, doubtless *that spot* is Southern Africa. Nature to it has been liberal beyond all description; and if her favors had hitherto been duly appreciated, either by England or by this Colony, it would ere this have been found, that that profusion and variety of vegetable productions which occur about the Cape, and which have been so long the wonder of the world, were not out of proportion to what existed in the other kingdoms of nature. Every where, both land and water, team with beauty and novelty, and call out loudly to the *Naturalist*, to extend human knowledge, by adding to the catalogue of objects already known, those which both of them so abundantly offer.

Such, one would almost say, irresistible inducements, which for a long time *only* called forth the industry of foreigners, were lately destined to produce a more pleasing effect, by leading to the formation of a Government Esta-

blishment in Cape Town, for the purpose of exploring the natural history of one of the hitherto so grossly neglected parts of the world. That, under the designation of the "South African Museum," was instituted in June, 1825, by an order from His Excellency Lord CHARLES HENRY SOMERSET, to serve as a depository for private donations, as well as for such objects as could be purchased out of the trifling fund, recommended at the same time for the support of the establishment.

Under such circumstances the Museum commenced, and under such it now proceeds and flourishes. Scarcely has twelve months elapsed, since the Government Notice,* which announced its formation, appeared; and yet, already, several thousand objects are contained within its walls, many of which, are at this moment, quite unknown in Europe. Such nearly unexampled success must be attributed to a variety of circumstances, but particularly to the public spirit of the inhabitants, to the facilities that everywhere abound, and to the aid and support of the Colonial Government, which, there is satisfaction in saying, has always evinced a degree of readiness and anxiety to forward every object connected with the infant institution.

* See the Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, Vol. 20. No. 1013. 11th June, 1825.

Curiosity, which at first was satisfied with a simple survey of the outward appearances of different objects thus collected, is now prompting many to more interesting and useful employment, and inducing them to inquire regarding the name and nature of whatever is presented to their observation. Such rapid and laudable advancement marks the benefit of example, and such desire for improvement and information, furnishes a just claim for every assistance. These, therefore, in conjunction with the want of any work relative to the natural history of Africa, which is adapted to the general reader, has led thus early to the commencement of a Descriptive Catalogue, that will be continued in periodical numbers: and which, though it will only notice what is actually contained in the establishment, must, in time, handle most of the interesting productions of those parts of the world, to which it will principally relate. Throughout, the language employed will be suited, as much as possible, to the general reader; and scientific arrangements, both from the plan in which the details will appear, and also from choice, will in a great measure be disregarded, and left to productions, which will appear hereafter of a strictly scientific nature. Notwithstanding such intentions, it will occasionally be absolutely necessary to employ terms and expressions partaking of a