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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO

SIR JOSEPH BANKS.

THERE are many reasons, illustrious Sir, why I ought to offer and dedicate to you this book, whatever it may be worth.

For besides my wish to express some time or other my sense of gratitude for the innumerable favours you have conferred upon me, from the time I came to have a nearer acquaintance with you; this very edition of my book, which now comes out with fresh care bestowed upon it, owes in great part to your liberality the splendid additions and the very remarkable ornaments in which it excels the former ones. For many years past you have spared neither pains nor expense to enrich my collection of the skulls of different nations with those specimens I was so anxious above all to obtain, I mean of Americans, and the inhabitants of the islands of the Southern Ocean. And besides, when I visited London about three years ago, with the same generous liberality with which you extended the use of your nursery to our Gaertner, and other riches of your museum to others, you gave me in my turn the unrestricted use of all the collections of treasures relating to the study of Anthropology, in which your library abounds; I mean the pictures, and the drawings, &c. taken by the best artists from the life itself. So I have been able to get copies of them and to describe whatever I liked, and at last, assisted by so many new and important additions, to proceed to the recasting of my book, and am bold enough to say, now it has been amplified in

so many ways, without incurring any suspicion of boasting, that it has been polished and perfected as far as its nature permits.

Accept then graciously this little work, which is so much in fact your own; and I hope that in this way it will not be displeasing to you because it treats of a part of natural history, which though second to no other in importance, still has most surprisingly been above all others the longest neglected and uncultivated.

It is one of the merits of the immortal Linnæus, that more than sixty years ago, in the first edition of his *Systema Naturæ*, he was the first, as far as I know, of writers on natural history, who attempted to arrange mankind in certain varieties according to their external characters; and that with sufficient accuracy, considering that then only four parts of the terraqueous globe and its inhabitants were known.

But after your three-years' voyage round the world, illustrious Sir, when a more accurate knowledge of the nations who are dispersed far and wide over the islands of the Southern Ocean had been obtained by the cultivators of natural history and anthropology, it became very clear that the Linnæan division of mankind could no longer be adhered to; for which reason I, in this little work, ceased like others to follow that illustrious man, and had no hesitation in arranging the varieties of man according to the truth of nature, the knowledge of which we owe principally to your industry and most careful observation.

Indeed though the general method of Linnæus, of arranging the mammalia according to their mode of dentition, was very convenient at the time he founded it, yet now after so many and such important species of this class have been discovered, I think that it will be useful and profitable to the students of zoology, to give it up as very imperfect and liable to vast exceptions, and to substitute for that artificial system one more natural, deduced from the universal characteristics of the mammalia.

I am indeed very much opposed to the opinions of those, who, especially of late, have amused their ingenuity so much

with what they call the continuity or gradation of nature; and have sought for a proof of the wisdom of the Creator, and the perfection of the creation in the idea, as they say, that nature takes no leaps, and that the natural productions of the three kingdoms of nature, as far as regards their external conformation, follow one upon another like the steps in a scale, or like points and joinings in a chain. But those who examine the matter without prejudice, and seriously, see clearly that even in the animal kingdom there are whole classes on the one hand, as that of birds, or genera, as that of cuttle-fish, which can only be joined on to the neighbouring divisions in those kinds of plans of the gradation of natural productions but indifferently and by a kind of violence. And on the other hand, that there are genera of animals, as silkworms, in which there is so great a difference in the appearance of either sex, that if you wanted to refer them to a scale of that kind, it would be necessary to separate the males as far as possible from their females, and to place the different sexes of the same species in the most different places possible.

And in this kind of systems, so far from their being filled up, there are large gaps where the natural kingdoms are very plainly separated one from another. There are other things of this kind; and so although after due consideration of these things, I cannot altogether recognize so much weight and importance in this doctrine of the gradation of nature, as is commonly ascribed to it by the physico-theologians, still I will allow this to belong to both these metaphorical and allegorical amusements, that they do not throw any obstacle in facilitating the method of the study of natural history.

For they make as it were the basis of every natural system, the way in which things rank according to their universal condition, and the greatest number of external qualities in which they coincide with each other, whereas the artificial systems, on the contrary, recognize single characters only as the foundation of their arrangement.

And when I found it was beyond all doubt that a natural system of that kind was preferable to an artificial one, because

it is of such use in sharpening the judgment and assisting the memory, I applied myself all the more to bring the class of mammalia into the scope of a natural system of that kind, especially as that artificial one of Linnæus, deduced from comparison of the teeth, in consequence of the accession of so many recently detected species in these times, came every day to be encumbered with more troublesome anomalies and exceptions. So that, for example, just to say a few words on this point, we now are acquainted with two species of rhinoceros, in their habit as like as possible to each other, but so different in their dentition, that if we were now obliged to follow the Linnæan system, we should have to refer one species to the *Belluce*, and the other to the *Glires*. And in like manner it would be necessary to remove the Ethiopian boar, which is destitute of the primary teeth, from the other *Belluce* and place it among the *Bruta* of Linnæus. I say nothing of that African *Myrmecophaga dentata* which, according to the idea of Linnæus, would have to be separated from the genus *edentata*, or of some of the Lemures (the *indri* and *laniger*) which, on account of the anomalies of their dentition, would have to be separated from the Linnæan genus of Lemures. No one will deny that this confusion threw the greatest possible obstacles in the way of the study of zoology, and I have tried to remedy it by constructing the following ten natural orders of mammalia, a statement of which I may here subjoin, because I shall frequently make mention of them in the present work.

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| I. Bimanus. | III. Bradypoda. |
| 1. <i>Homo</i> . | 6. <i>Bradypus</i> . |
| II. Quadrumana. | 7. <i>Myrmecophaga</i> . |
| 2. <i>Simia</i> . | 8. <i>Manis</i> . |
| 3. <i>Papio</i> . | 9. <i>Tatu</i> ¹ . |
| 4. <i>Cercopithecus</i> . | IV. Chiroptera. |
| 5. <i>Lemur</i> . | 10. <i>Vespertilio</i> . |

¹ I am very far indeed from that itch for innovation which afflicts so many of the moderns, who take a wonderful delight in giving new names to the natural productions which have already received names very well known to all; for this kind of playing at onomatopoeia has been a great misfortune to the study of natural

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| v. Glires. | VII. Solidungula. |
| 11. <i>Sciurus.</i> | 32. <i>Equus.</i> |
| 12. <i>Glis.</i> | VIII. Pecora. |
| 13. <i>Mus.</i> | 33. <i>Camelus.</i> |
| 14. <i>Marmota.</i> | 34. <i>Capra.</i> |
| 15. <i>Cavia.</i> | 35. <i>Antilope.</i> |
| 16. <i>Lepus.</i> | 36. <i>Bos.</i> |
| 17. <i>Jaculus.</i> | 37. <i>Giraffa.</i> |
| 18. <i>Castor.</i> | 38. <i>Cervus.</i> |
| 19. <i>Hystrix.</i> | 39. <i>Moschus.</i> |
| VI. Feræ. | IX. Belluæ. |
| 20. <i>Erinaceus.</i> | 40. <i>Sus.</i> |
| 21. <i>Sorex.</i> | 41. <i>Tapir.</i> |
| 22. <i>Talpa.</i> | 42. <i>Elephas.</i> |
| 23. <i>Didelphis.</i> | 43. <i>Rhinoceros.</i> |
| 24. <i>Viverra.</i> | 44. <i>Hippopotamus.</i> |
| 25. <i>Mustela.</i> | 45. <i>Trichecus.</i> |
| 26. <i>Lutra.</i> | X. Cetacea. |
| 27. <i>Phoca.</i> | 46. <i>Monodon.</i> |
| 28. <i>Meles.</i> | 47. <i>Balæna.</i> |
| 29. <i>Ursus.</i> | 48. <i>Physeter.</i> |
| 30. <i>Canis.</i> | 49. <i>Delphinus.</i> |
| 31. <i>Felis.</i> | |

history. So I have very seldom deserted the terminology of Linnæus in the systematic names of the mammalia, and then most unwillingly, and only when the name adopted by that learned man evidently involved an erroneous and false notion. So, for example, I have restored to the armadilloes the native generic name of *Tatu*, for the Linnæan *Dasyppus* had nothing to justify it. We all know this name is Greek, and denotes an animal remarkable for its hairy feet, and so was given by the ancients to the hare and the rabbit, because in them above all others the palms and soles are most hairy, whereas it is scarcely necessary to mention how very different in habit the armour-bearing animals in the new world are from the rabbit. And so in the genus of bats, I think the name of *vampyre* should be restored to that species of South America which Linnæus called *spectrum*, and gave on the contrary the title of vampyre to that bat of the East Indies and of the islands of the Southern Ocean, which is commonly called the flying dog. But now it is known that the word *vampyre* means *blood-sucker*, and therefore is particularly applicable to that American bat, which is on this account very obnoxious to other animals and especially to man: but does not apply at all to the other one I mentioned, namely, the canine, which is entirely frugivorous, and never, as far as I know, sucks the blood of other animals.

These with everything else, where in the work of which this is the preface, I have on many points departed in opinion from others, I submit to your judgment, illustrious Sir, with equal respect and confidence, to you under whose most dignified and worthy presidency the Royal Society of Science rejoices to be, whose golden motto from its infancy has been, 'Nullius in verba.'

Farewell, illustrious Sir, and be gracious to your most devoted servant.

Dated from the University of the Georgia Augusta, April 11, 1795.