

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
NATIVE AFRICANS
IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF
SIERRA LEONE;
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
AN ACCOUNT
OF THE
PRESENT STATE OF MEDICINE AMONG THEM.

Come fanciul ch'a pena
Volge la Lingua e snoda;
Che dir non sa, ma 'l piu tacer gli e Noia
Così 'l desir mi mena
A dire:
Mi palpita il cor! — ma forse diran
.....che un primo. Errore
Punir non si dovea; che un Ramo infermo
Subito non recide saggio Cultor.

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APPENDIX N° IV.

THE following important and valuable remarks of Professor Blumenbach upon Negroes, are taken from "Voigts Magazin für das neueste aus der Physik *," &c. and afford ample testimony to the truth of what has been asserted respecting them.

"In the picture gallery at Pommersfeld, I saw four heads of Negroes by Vandyk†, of which, two in particular had so little of the projecting facial line, that they differed but in a small degree from the European countenance.

"At that time I had met with few opportunities of obtaining any knowledge of the form of the Negro head from nature; and as it occurred to me that Mr. Camper had asserted, in a lecture delivered at the academy of painting in Amsterdam, that, "most of the great painters, and especially Rubens, Vandyk, and Jordaens, had instead of Negroes drawn only black coloured Europeans." I ascribed the agreeable forms of these Negro faces to this general error.

* Einige naturhistorische Bemerkungen bey Gelegenheit einer Schweizerreise. Vom Hrn. Prof. Blumenbach. 4. Bandes 3. Stück.

† See Verzeichn. der Schildereyen in der Gallerie des Hochgräflichen Schönbornischen Schlosses zu Pommersfelden.

“ A few months afterwards, however, I had an opportunity of convincing myself, that there are real Negroes, whose lineaments agree with those of Europeans, and that the painting at Pommersfeld at least, might be an accurate representation of nature.

“ Being about to visit Messrs. Treytorrens in Yverdun, one of whom had resided a long time in St. Domingo, as I entered the court yard of the house, I saw only a woman, standing with her back towards me, whose elegant form attracted my notice. But how much was I surprised, when on accosting her she turned round, to find a Negress, whose physiognomy perfectly corresponded with such a form, and, in my mind, completely justified the accuracy of the Negro portraits by Vandyk, which I had seen at Pommersfeld.

“ Her face was such, that even the nose, and somewhat thicker lips, had nothing peculiar, certainly nothing unpleasant in their appearance; and had the same features occurred in a white skin, they would have excited very general admiration. To this were added, the most sprightly and cheerful vivacity, a sound judgment, and as I afterwards discovered, peculiar knowledge and skill in midwifery. The pretty Negress of Yverdun is widely celebrated as the best midwife in that part of Switzerland.

“ I heard from her master (who had likewise in his service a Negro of a very elegant form) that she was a Creole from St. Domingo. Her parents

were from Congo, but not so black as the Senegambia Negroes.

“ Since that time I have had an opportunity of seeing and speaking with several Negroes, and have also procured three skulls, and a number of preparations from Negroes, for my collection. All these circumstances, together with what I have learned on the subject from books of travels, have convinced me still more of the truth of the two following positions, viz.

“ 1. Among Negroes, both with regard to colour, and still more, with respect to the facial line, as many, if not more varieties, occur, as between the most perfect Negro and the other varieties of mankind.

“ 2. Negroes with respect to their mental capacities and talents, do not appear to be in the least inferior to the other races of mankind.

“ The very striking gradation observable in three Negro skulls which I have before me, afford an evident proof of the justness of the first position.

“ The first, which was brought from New York by M. Michaelis, and which I have elsewhere exactly described *, is distinguished by so projecting an upper jaw, that if all Negroes were the same, we might be tempted to think that they sprung from an Adam different from our own.

“ The facial line of the third slopes so little, and indeed is so different from the former, and has so little exotic in its appearance, that if I had not (through the goodness of M. Michaelis) dissected

* Osteologie, p. 87.

the entire head, exactly as it was separated from the fresh subject, I should have hesitated to call it the head of a genuine Negro.

“ The second stands midway between the two others; and has in its whole form a great resemblance to the head of the Abyssinian Abbas Gregorius, of which I have a good plate, done by Heiss, in 1691, after Von Sand, and which shews the near affinity of the Abyssinians with the Negroes. It more nearly resembles the plain featured Negroes, according to European ideas of beauty, than those so finely formed as the Negress of Yverdun, or the innumerable fine negro faces to be met with which differ but little from those of Europeans.

“ What I have here said respecting the resemblance of so many Negroes to Europeans, is only a confirmation of a fact which has been long known, and which has frequently been remarked by unprejudiced and attentive travellers, a few of whom I shall quote in proof of my assertion.

“ Thus: Le Maire in his *Voyages aux Cap Verd, Senegal, et Gambie*, p. 161, says, ‘ a l’exception de la noirceur, il y a des Negresses aussi bien faites que nos dames Europeanes.’

“ Leguat in his *Travels*, vol ii. p. 136, observes, ‘ j’ai rencontré à Batavia plusieurs fort jolies Negresses. Un visage tout-a-fait formé à l’Europeene.’

“ Mr. Adanson’s description of the Senegambia Negresses has already been noticed.

“ Ulloa in the *Noticias Americanas*, vol. ii.

p. 92, says, ' among the Negroes some have thick protruded lips, a flat nose, deep seated eyes, which are commonly called getudos, and wool instead of hair. Others, whose colour is quite as black as the former, and whose features, especially the mouth, nose, and eyes, are similar to the whites, have long thick hair.

" The testimonies, and instances in proof of the second position above mentioned, namely, of the sound judgment, good natural capacity and genius of Negroes, are just as incontrovertible and numerous as those of the first.

" Their astonishing memory, their extensive commercial undertakings*, their acuteness in

* Barbot relates many curious particulars upon this subject in his excellent Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, in the 5th vol. of Churchill's Collection of Voyages.

Page 235, it is said, " The blacks are for the most part men of sense and wit enough ; of a sharp ready apprehension, and an excellent memory beyond what is easy to imagine ; for though they can neither read nor write, they are always regular in the greatest hurry of business and trade, and seldom in confusion."

A very accurate writer remarks, " it is astonishing with what facility the African brokers reckon up the exchange of European goods for slaves. One of these brokers has perhaps ten slaves to sell, and for each of these he demands ten different articles. He reduces them immediately by the head into bars, coppers, ounces, according to the part of the country in which he resides, and immediately strikes the balance."—" On those parts of the coast, which are the greatest markets for slaves, many Africans reside, who act as interpreters to the ships. These, by great industry and perseverance, have made themselves masters of two or three of the languages of the country, and of the language of those Europeans with whom they are most connected in trade."—" Several of the African traders or great men, are not unacquainted with letters. This is particularly the case at Bonny and Calibar, where they not only speak the English language with fluency, but *write* it. These traders send letters repeatedly to the merchants here,

trade, particularly with gold dust, in which the most experienced European traders cannot always be sufficiently upon their guard, are circumstances too well known to require repetition.

“ The singular facility with which slaves learn all kinds of fine hand-work, is likewise well known.

“ The same may be said of their musical talents *; we have had instances of Negroes who performed upon the violin in so masterly a manner, and gained so much money by it, as to be enabled to pay a large sum to purchase their freedom †.

“ Of the poetical genius of Negroes we have well known instances in both sexes.

“ Mons. Von Haller mentions a Negress who was a poetess.

“ A specimen of the Latin poems of the Negro, Francis Williams, an excellent schoolmaster, are contained in the History of Jamaica.

“ The Negro, Ignatius Sancho, has lately introduced himself to general notice by his interesting letters.

stating the situation of the markets, the goods which they would wish to be sent out to them the next voyage, the number of slaves which they expect to receive by that time, and such other particulars as might be expected from one merchant to another.”—
On the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, p. 125.

* This is contrary to the opinion of Mr. Bryan Edwards; but it is maintained by others equally eminent. Mr. Clarkson observes, “ they play upon a variety of instruments, without any other assistance than their own ingenuity. They have also tunes of their own composition. Some of these have been imported among us, are now in use, and are admired for their sprightliness and ease, though the ungenerous and prejudiced importer has concealed their original.” *On the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*.

† Hrn. Urlspergers Americanish Ackerwerk Gottes, S. 311.

“ To the above instances may be added two others, to shew the genius and talents of our black brethren for scientific acquirements.

“ It is well known that the protestant minister James John Eliza Capitein was a Negro, and a learned man, and a good orator. I have his portrait in an excellent plate by Tanjé, after P. Van Dyk.

“ Professor Hollman, when at Wittenberg, conferred the degree of Doctor of Philosophy upon a Negro who had greatly distinguished himself, and who afterwards went to Berlin as a privy counsellor. (Konigl. Preuss. Hofrath.) I have in my possession two of his dissertations, one of which in particular contains much unexpected and well digested erudition, drawn from the best physiological works of that time. Its title is Diss. Inaug. philosophica de humanæ Mentis ἀπαρτία, s. Sensionis ac Facultatis in Mente humana Absentia, & earum in Corpore nostro organico ac vivo Præsentia, quam Præs. D. Mart. Goth. Loeschero publice defendit auctor Ant. Guil. Amo Guinea—Afer, Phil. & A. A. L. L. Mag. & J. V. C. Wittebergæ, 1734, m. Apr.

“ The title of the other is Disp. Philosophica continens Ideam distinctam eorum quæ competent vel Menti vel Corpore nostro vivo & organico, quam Præs. M. Ant. Guil. Amo Guinea—Afro d. 29 Maii 1734, defendit Io. Theodos. Meiner Rochliz Misnic. Philos. & J. V. Cultor.

“ In an account of the life of Amo, which on this occasion was printed in the name of the

academic council, it is said among other particulars respecting his talents: "Honorem meritis ingenii partum, insigni probitatis, industriæ, eruditionis, quam publicis privatisque exercitationibus declaravit, laude auxit.—Compluribus philosophiam domi tradidit, excusissimam veterum, quam novorum, placitis; optima quæquæselegit, selecta enucleate, ac dilucide interpretatus est."

"The president, at the public defence of the first dissertation, says expressly to Amo in the following congratulatory speech: "Tuum potissimum eminet ingenium felicissimum—utpote qui istius felicitatem atque præstantiam, eruditionis ac doctrinæ soliditatem ac elegantiam multis speciminibus hactenus in nostra etiam academia magno cum applausu omnibus bonis, & in præsentī dissertatione egregie comprobasti. Reddo tibi illam proprio Marte eleganter ac erudite elaboratam, integram adhuc & plane immutatam, ut vis ingenii tui eo magis exinde elucescat."——

"Boerhaave and De Haen have given the most flattering testimonies of the uncommon progress of several negroes in the practice of medicine, and the science and skill of the midwife of Yverdon are, as has been already said, universally celebrated in that neighbourhood.

"Finally, the academy of sciences at Paris includes amongst its correspondents a Negro, Monsr. Lislet, in the Isle of France, who excels in the accuracy of his meteorological observations.

"From the instances already adduced, it is to

be hoped that my assertion will be justified respecting the equality of the Negroes to us other children of Adam.

"On the other hand, I should think many considerable provinces of Europe might be named, from which it would be difficult to produce a virtuoso, a poet, a philosopher, and correspondent of the Paris Academy."—

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