

Werk

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE Works of Blumenbach edited in this volume are the first and third or last edition of his famous Treatise *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*; which were published in 1775 and 1795 respectively: the *Contributions to Natural History*, in two parts; and a slight notice of three skulls which appeared in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* of Nov. 1833, only remarkable for being the last printed utterance of the author. Two Memoirs of Blumenbach have been prefixed, which contain together almost everything of interest concerning the circumstances of his life. I have also added an account of his once famous anthropological collection, written by his successor, now himself lately deceased, Professor Rudolph Wagner, one of the original Honorary Fellows of the Anthropological Society, London.

Blumenbach has related in the little autobiographical fragment, which has been incorporated by Marx in his memoir, the causes which led to his selection of an anthropological subject as the thesis for his doctoral dissertation. It was delivered in 1775, and reprinted word for word in 1776. A second edition, enlarged by as much as would make about

fifteen printed pages uniform with this translation, was issued in 1781; and finally a third in 1795, which in arrangement and matter was almost a new work. I hesitated some time as to which of the two first editions it would be most satisfactory to give to the public; for, on the one hand, the first is obviously most interesting for the history of the science, and the additional matter contained in the second has scarce any intrinsic value in the present day; but, on the other hand, in the first mankind is divided into four races only, and the now famous division of the Caucasian, Asiatic, American, Ethiopian, and Malay races, occurs for the first time in the edition of 1781.

To give them both in their entirety would have perhaps been less troublesome to myself, but certainly tedious to the reader, for not only are the Plates the same, but much the greater part of the second edition is a mere repetition. At last I determined to use the first as my text, and appended in a note the important pentagenist arrangement. Accordingly the translation has been made from the reprint of 1776, which differs in the title-page alone, and that I have taken from the copy in the British Museum. The preface *To the Reader* has been omitted as of no value. But this is not the case with the Letter to Sir Joseph Banks, which forms the preface to the third edition of 1795, and contains a system of natural history, with appendices giving an account of Blumenbach's Collection as it then was.

The *Contributions to Natural History* consists of two parts; the first of which went through two editions. The first in 1790, and the second, from which the translation is made, in 1806. The second part appeared in 1811. That part in the original is composed of two sections; the first upon Peter, the Wild Boy, and wild boys in general: and the second on Egyptian

mummies. This latter essay, as may be supposed, is considerably behind the knowledge of the present day, and though in it, as well as in that written by Blumenbach in English and printed in the *Philosophical Transactions* of 1794, he had observed the varieties in the national character of the Egyptian mummies and artistic representations, yet the whole essay has been pronounced lately by a competent writer to be "in some sort not worthy of that great authority¹." The fact that the incisors of the mummies resembled in shape the molar teeth was thought by Blumenbach to be a discovery of much greater importance than modern writers are willing to allow. I have therefore come to the conclusion that it is not worth while to edit this part of the *Contributions*, especially as it is quite distinct by itself, and has no immediate bearing on general anthropology.

The treatise *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* cannot be considered obsolete even at the present day. All subsequent writers, including Lawrence, Prichard, Waitz, &c., have acknowledged their obligations and proved them, especially Lawrence, by borrowing largely from it. "Blumenbach may still be considered a chief authority," says Waitz². And his classification of mankind, though avowedly neither final nor rigidly scientific, has survived a very considerable number of pretentious improvements, and still holds its ground in the latest elementary text-books of ethnology³. "The illustrious naturalist, in whom, after Buffon, we ought to acknowledge the father of anthropology, has made two important advances in

¹ Perier (J. A. N.), *Sur l'ethnogenie Egyptienne. Mém. de la Soc. de l'Anthropologie de Paris*, Tom. I. p. 443.

² p. 29. Eng. Trl. by J. F. Collingwood. 8vo. Lond. 1863.

³ See Page D. *Introductory Text Book of Physical Geography*, p. 178, Edinb. and Lond. 1863, 12mo.

that science, in his views on the classification of races. Although he continued to place at the head of all the characteristics that derived from colour, Blumenbach is the first who founded his classification in great part on those presented by the general conformation of the head, so different in different races, as to the proportion of the skull to the face, and of the encephalon to the organs of sense and the jaws. This progress led also to a second. It is because Blumenbach attributed a great importance to that order of characteristics; it is because he was the first who devoted himself to determine exactly, by the assistance of a great number of observations, the essential elements which distinguished the types of man that he was also the first who made a very clear distinction of several races in which it is impossible to fail of recognizing so many natural groups. Thus it has happened that these races, after having been once introduced into science by Blumenbach, have been retained there; and we may assert that they will always be retained, with some rectifications in their characteristics and in their several boundaries. But are the five races of Blumenbach the only ones possible to distinguish in mankind? And if all the five must be considered as natural groups, is it proper to place them in the same rank, and allow them all the same zoological value? Blumenbach himself did not think this.

“In the first place his five races are not the only ones whose existence he is disposed to admit; but what is very different, the five *principal* ones. *Varietates quinque principes*, says Blumenbach in his treatise *On the Varieties of Mankind*. He uses the same expression in his *Representations*. The unequal importance of these races in a zoological point of view, is also, at least by implication, admitted by Blumenbach. Of the five races there are three which he considers above all as the princi-

pal races; and therefore he deals with those first. These are the Caucasian, which is not only for Blumenbach the most beautiful, and that to which the pre-eminence belongs, but the primitive race; then, the Mongolian and Ethiopian, in which the author sees the extreme degenerations of the human species. As to the other races, they are only for Blumenbach, transitional: that is, the American is the passage from the Caucasian to the Mongolian; and the Malay, from the Caucasian to the Ethiopian. These two races are put off till the last, instead of being treated of intermediately, as they ought to be, if they were not considered as divisions of an inferior rank.

“It is apparent that Blumenbach was more or less aware of three truths whose importance no one can dispute in anthropological taxonomy, that is to say, The plurality of races of man; the importance of the characteristics deduced from the conformation of the head; and the necessity of not placing in the same rank all the divisions of mankind, which bear the common title of races, in spite of the unequal importance of their anatomical, physiological, and let us also add, psychological characteristics¹.”

This criticism taken from one of the latest essays of a most distinguished modern naturalist and anthropologist will relieve me from the arduous task of passing this work of Blumenbach in review. The *Contributions* as is pointed out by M. Flourens is altogether a production of a lighter kind. It contains many curious observations, and though its geological theories are long since obsolete, the chapters on anthropological collections and on the Negro may still be read with considerable interest. Lawrence has largely borrowed from the last in his lectures on

¹ Is. Geoffroy-Saint-Hilaire, *Classification Anthropologique*. *Mém. de la Soc. d'Anthrop. de Paris*, Tom. I. p. 129. sq.

the Natural History of Man. The history of Peter the Wild Boy has, so far as I know, never been translated into English in its entirety, but all that has been said of him and the other wild men there mentioned has been borrowed from Blumenbach.

I had at one time intended to edit the *Decades Craniumum*, a book now become somewhat scarce. Inquiries were made by the President and Publishing Committee of the Anthropological Society as to the probable expense which would be incurred in reproducing the 65 plates of which that work is composed. The results showed that such an undertaking would be beyond the present means of the Society; and an opinion was also expressed by some who are worthy of all attention in such a matter that more typical, characteristic, and hitherto undelineated skulls scattered about in the different English Museums should have a preference, in case such an outlay as the publication of so many crania with their descriptions should at any time be seriously contemplated. Whilst I do not for a moment doubt the wisdom of the decision, or deny the expediency of preferring hitherto inedited materials, I still think that if the present possessors of the Blumenbachian Collection could be induced to join not only in furnishing entirely fresh drawings of the skulls contained in it, but also in publishing the very minute and accurate descriptions, certificates, and documents relating to each particular one, which form by no means the least instructive portion of the inedited remains of Blumenbach, the result would not only be a great stimulus to those international exertions without which the science of Anthropology cannot hope to make the progress so much to be desired for it, but would also confer the greatest credit on the Societies which might be principally concerned in carrying out such an undertaking. With respect to the last utterance of Blumenbach, which has been extracted from the Göttingen Magazine, I am indebted to Professor

Marx for the following information. "The *Spicilegium* was not printed. It had been the intention of Blumenbach to work out in greater detail the short lecture which was read at the session of the 3rd August, 1833, but he did not fulfil it. Therefore the short notice in the 177th number of the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, for 1833, is the only communication on that point that we have of his."

The Memoir of Prof. Marx has been previously translated in the Edinburgh *New Philosophical Magazine*, but many interesting details about the life and habits of Blumenbach were omitted. It was made great use of by M. Flourens, as he acknowledges; but since his own memoir contains many original details and remarks from an independent point of view, I have thought it would be equally acceptable.

A singular mistake has however been made by M. Flourens, both in this memoir, and in his larger book¹ on Buffon, which I cannot help pointing out. The reader will probably observe that he gives as the title of Blumenbach's book *The Unity of the Human Genus*, which is obviously wrong. This would be of no importance; but in the work above referred to we have this reflexion: "Nothing promotes clearness of ideas so much as precision in the use of words. Blumenbach wrote a book to prove the unity of the human species², and entitled it *On the Unity of the Human Genus*; now, a genus is made up of species, a species only of varieties. Buffon writing on the same subject, and putting before himself the same object, said excellently, *Varieties in the Human Species*."

Blumenbach never once gave as a title, *The Unity, &c.*; and

¹ *Hist. des travaux et des idées de Buffon*, p. 169, second ed. Paris, 1850, 12mo.

² *De l'unité du genre humain et de ses variétés*, Trad. Franc. Paris, 1804.

notwithstanding the elaborate ingenuity of M. Flourens as to the word *genus*, I have preferred to translate the Latin words *humanum genus*, by the ambiguous, and as I believe correct expression, *mankind*.

I have thought the reader would prefer for many reasons to find each of the several treatises in this volume with an exact copy of its original title-page prefixed. Those which had no title-page have still one made up of that of the periodical, and the heading prefixed to each in its original form of publication.

M. Flourens had appended to his Memoir a list of some of Blumenbach's works. A much more perfect one, with notices of many of their translations, and of the different portraits and engravings taken of Blumenbach at various periods of his life, is to be found in Callisen (A. C. P. von), *Medicinisches Schriftsteller-Lexicon*, B. II. pp. 346—356. 1830. Copenhagen, 12mo. As will be observed it occupies ten pages, and therefore is far too long for insertion here, yet is still neither quite complete nor quite correct.

The treatise of John Hunter, delivered in June 1775, has been added. It will be interesting to compare it with the contemporaneous effort of Blumenbach. But to enter into the question why the study of anthropology never became popular in Edinburgh, whilst it continued to be cultivated in Göttingen, would carry us beyond the limits of a Preface.

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Jan. 1, 1865.