

He was not ashamed, he said, to be called a negro. If curly hair and a black face helped to make him a negro, then he was a negro, and a full-blooded one at that. He had no need to be ashamed of his type or origin. He has a good head and intelligent face—just the kind of a head which a phrenologist would tell you a man ought to have who makes natural observations and accumulates scientific facts.

The dress which the Doctor wore on the platform was a long dark-colored robe, with curious scrolls upon the neck as a collar. He said it was the wedding dress of a Chief, and that the embroidery was insignia, and had a specific meaning well understood in African high circles. He wore it because he thought it becoming, and fitting the occasion.

He wanted to say what he knew of the negro race, not on the coast of Africa, but of the interior Africans, of whom so little is known—the Africans of the Niger Valley. The audience would be surprised to hear that even the Liberians had never until lately been ten miles beyond their territory; and so nothing could be expected from them. He was sorry to say, too, that American school-books inculcated, notwithstanding recent discoveries, very erroneous notions of the country, describing it as sandy and barren, the soil unproductive, the air full of pestilence, the vegetation poisonous, the very animals unusually ferocious. All this is more or less false, so far as the interior of Africa is concerned. He had travelled three thousand miles in the country, and had seen it in all its phases of social [and animal life]. The language of a people is a good sign of its civility; and the African language is

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derived from fixed roots; it is not a jargon, but abounds in vowels, and is very melodious, and capable of expressing a wide range of feeling and sentiment. The people speak clearly and well, without hesitation. They are very polite, and make numerous salutations on all occasions, at outgoing and in-coming, at bed-time, and in the morning at meals, and generally everywhere. The stranger must not reply to each salutation, but when he takes his leave, he makes a long salaam by bowing his head and body, and by a peculiar intonation of the voice.

The Doctor produced a grammar of the language, and made quotations from it. It was written by a native African, who had also composed numerous school-books, and made translations from the Bible.

As specimens of the moral culture of the people, he read some of the African proverbs, which, though doubtless original, have a peculiar Christian flavor. One of them ran very much after the style of the Golden Rule, thus: "He who injures another, injures himself." Another reads thus: "The sword does not know the hand of the blacksmith" (who made it.

One of the poets, whilst singing the occupations of the people, has these descriptions of them: "The day dawns; the trader takes his goods; the spinner her distaff; the soldier his shield; the hunter his bow and quiver." After giving us these and other specimens of the writing talent of the Africans, the Doctor suddenly came down on Robert Bonner, his weekly *Ledger*, who said in it, awhile ago, or allow-

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ed somebody else to say it, that the African, having no poetic faculty, is incapable of civilization. He reminded his audience of the simple and beautiful extemporaneous song which the negro woman sang over poor Mungo Park, the traveller, when he sat sorrowing by her tent door, and whom she supplied, in her womanly kindness, with milk. The truth was, that the African was naturally poetic, and expressed his feelings at all times of passion and emotion in musical and rythmical words. He read some pretty verses composed by African children, which were translated by one of our missionaries on the spot. They were certainly very simple, and at the same time very hopeful products, describing the pleasure they felt at seeing the beauty and color of certain African birds, no description of which, the Doctor said, has appeared in any book on ornithology.

Alluding to the morals of the people, he said there was a mistake about it very current in these parts and elsewhere. It was thought that because polygamy was tolerated amongst them, there must be immorality also. Polygamy was an old and venerable institution, and had a genuine Oriental origin. Solomon was the arch-polygamist of the world, and the Africans who followed his example were no worse than he. It was the rich only, however, who had many wives; the poor could not afford to keep them. But women were universally respected in Africa, and the men paid them chivalrous attention. They were not allowed to do any physical labor whatever, except to draw water; and this they insisted upon as their peculiar right and privilege.

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This also was an Oriental custom of immemorial usage; and was frequently alluded to in the Scriptures. He had seen seven hundred women coming out of the gates of a city in the evening, carrying water-pots on their heads, as they did in the days of Jacob. Chastity was a sacred thing amongst them, and any one violating or insulting a woman was decapitated. These bigamists had one who was mistress of the household, and had her maids of honor, who attended her, and ministered to the wants of the guests. They loved these wives better than most civilized people often do theirs. A chief who had lost his wife was asked why he did not marry again. "Because," he said, "I shall never find a woman who will love me as she did." There was no savagery in this reply, and it might readily enough have been uttered by a white man.

The betrothal of young people is made at a very early age, and when it is consummated, the maiden wears a bracelet on her arm, which is made of some inscrutable metallic substance, of which the Doctor could give no account.

An African house, belonging to a bigwig negro, was described as an immense building, the windows and doors of which opened on the inside, looking upon the court-yards. These houses often contained hundreds of women, who were called wives by courtesy, but were not so in reality; as the custom of the country required every rich man to support as many females as he could. These were daily occupied in spinning, basket-making, weaving cotton fabrics, &c., which they sold in the markets. They often went

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far into the country, in groups, selling provisions along with their wares, and the Doctor never heard of any of them being insulted.

From what the lecturer said, the houses of the rich were a sort of factory, where the surplus women were taught to work, and where they were protected. They supported themselves. One of these houses put our own hotels, which are, nevertheless, "some pumpkins," into a complete shadow. It is owned by a chief, and covers 1200 square feet, and built of unh[e]wn brick. Another contains a thousand females, and is about the rival of Solomon's immense court of concubines.

Women are always admitted to council meetings. He was present at one, when the wife of a chief leaned her head on his shoulder, and made many suggestions. He thought the hint might be taken in countries a long way from Africa.

Another feature of manners was given which we thought very interesting. It was the respect which youth always had to age, no matter whether the person were rich or poor.

In these interior and remote regions, the people were ruled by a king, whom they elected themselves. Kings, and their sons and families, were all amenable to the law. Litigation begins always in the morning, and defendant's counsel has always the last speech.

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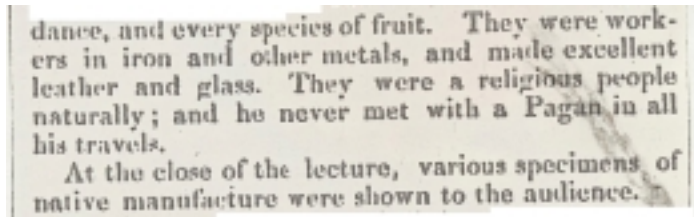
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