

While the friends of humanity, in Europe and America, are weeping over their injured fellow-creatures, and directing their ingenuity and their labors to the removal of so disgraceful a monument of cruelty and avarice, there are not wanting men, who claim the title, and enjoy the privileges of American citizens, who still employ themselves in the odious traffic of human flesh.

Yes, in direct opposition to public sentiment, and a law of the land, there are ships fitted out, every year, in the ports of the United States, to transport the inhabitants of Africa, from their native shores, and consign them to all the torments of West-India oppression.

Fellow citizens! is Justice asleep? Is Humanity discouraged and silent, on account of the many injuries she has sustained? Were not this the case, methinks the pursuit of the beasts of the forest would be forgotten, and such monsters of wickedness would, in their stead, be hunted from the abodes of men.

OH AFRICA! unhappy, ill-fated region! how long shall thy savage inhabitants have reason to utter complaints, and to imprecate the vengeance of Heaven against civilization and Christianity? Is it not enough that nature's God has consigned thee to arid plains, to noxious vapours, to devouring beasts of prey, and to all the scorching influences of the torrid zone? Must rapine and violence, captivity and slavery, be superadded to thy torments; and be inflicted too by men, who wear the garb of justice and humanity; who boast the principles of a sublime morality; and who hypocritically adopt the accents of the benevolent religion of Jesus?

OH AFRICA! thou loud proclaimer of the rapacity, the treachery, and cruelty of civilized man! Thou everlasting monument of European and American disgrace! "Remember not against us our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers; be tender in the great day of inquiry; and show a Christian world, that thou canst suffer and forgive!"

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A FORENSIC DISPUTE, ON THE QUESTION, ARE THE ANGLO-AMERICANS ENDOWED WITH CAPACITY AND GENIUS EQUAL TO EUROPEANS?

A. MY opinion is decidedly on the affirmative of this question. In this opinion I am confirmed by sound argument and undeniable facts.

If nature has lavished her favours on some countries, and dealt them out with a sparing hand in others, the Western world is far from being the scene of her parsimony. From a geographical survey of our country, directly the reverse will appear.

This continent, extending through all the different climates of the earth, exhibiting on its immense surface the largest rivers and lakes, and the loftiest mountains in the known world, shews us that nature has wrought on her largest scale on this side the Atlantic.

The soil is neither so luxuriant as to indulge in sloth, nor so barren, as not to afford sufficient leisure from its own culture, to attend to that of the mind. These are facts, which existed before the migration of our ancestors from Europe. The argument I shall deduce from them, to me appears conclusive.

The soil and climate of every country is in some measure characteristic of the genius of its inhabitants. Nature is uniform in her works. Where she has stinted the productions of the earth, she also cramps her animal productions; and even the mind of man. Where she has clothed the earth with plenty, there is no deficiency in the animate creation; and man arrives to his full vigour.

In the application of these physical causes to our nature, there is an effect produced on the mind, as well as the body. The mind receives its tincture from the objects which it contemplates. This we find confirmed by the opposite sensations we feel, when viewing a beautiful and variegated landscape, and plodding our course

course over a craggy way, or uniform, barren plain. In these contrasted situations, it may almost be said, that we possess two different souls, and are not the same beings.

Those objects, which constantly surround us, must have a more permanent effect. Where man is doomed constantly to view the imperfect sketches and caricature paintings of nature, he forms a corresponding part of the group; when placed amidst her most beautiful and magnificent works, we find him elevated in thought and complete in corporal stature.

These arguments may seem far-fetched; but when it is admitted that Chimborazo is higher than Teneriffe; the Amazon and La Plata superiour to the largest rivers in the old world; and that America abounds with all the productions of nature in as great plenty as any country in Europe, premises will then be established, from which, by my reasoning, we shall draw the conclusion, that if the Aborigines of this country are inferiour to the savages of other parts of the world, nature must have contradicted her own first principles.

But the contrary must appear to every unprejudiced mind, both from reason and observation. It being granted that the savages on this continent possess genius and capacity, equal to those on the other, my argument is ended; the affirmative of the question is established; unless those who differ from me should be able to show, that, by some process, or rather paradox of nature, the mental powers of our forefathers were degenerated by being transplanted to a soil, at least, as congenial and fertile, as that which gave them birth.

Should it be any longer contended against me, I should still appeal to facts, and rely on the philosophical discoveries and miscellaneous writings of a Franklin, the heroic valour and sagacious prudence of a Washington, the political researches of an Adams, the numerous productions in polite literature, inventions and improvements in the useful arts; and especially that spirit of enterprise, which distinguishes our nation.

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On these I should rely to vindicate the honor of my country, and to combat that prejudice, which would degrade the capacity and genius of Americans.

B. I have heard your argument with patience, and shall answer it with candour. It is readily granted, that there are as large rivers, extensive lakes, and lofty mountains, in America, as in any other part of the world; but I am totally unacquainted with the art of measuring the capacity and genius of men, by the height of the mountains they gaze upon, or the breadth of the river, whose margin they chance to inhabit.

Whether the savages of our deserts possess mental powers equal to those of other countries, is as foreign to my purpose, as the Chimborazo, Amazon, or La Plata. I shall admit your premises, and look for the materials of my argument on a ground you have slightly passed over, to confute the conclusion you have drawn from them.

The question is, whether the capacity and genius of Americans is equal to that of Europeans?

Let us adopt an unexceptionable rule; "Judge the tree by its fruit." If the literary productions and works of genius of our countrymen are found superiour to those of Europeans, the affirmative of the question must be true; if inferiour, the negative, without argument, is supported by fact.

Here the balance evidently turns in my favour. Europe can boast its masters in each of the sciences, and its models of perfection in the polite arts. Few Americans pursue the path of science; none have progressed, even so far as those bold and persevering geniuses of other countries, who have removed the obstacles and smoothed the way before them.

If there chance to spring up among us one whose inclination attaches him to the fine arts, the beggar's pittance, instead of fame and profit, becomes his portion. He is an exotic plant, that must be removed to some more congenial soil, or perish at home for want of culture.

It is far from my intentions to say any thing in
derogation

derogation of those respectable characters, on whom you rely to vindicate the literary honor of our country. But what will be the result of a comparison between a few correct authors, the miscellaneous productions, and casual discoveries, which we boast of as our own, within a century past; and the long and brilliant catalogue of profound scholars, celebrated writers, and those exquisite specimens of taste and genius in the fine arts, which have adorned almost every country of Europe, within the same period?

This comparison would be disgraceful indeed to America. It is granted, that her sons are industrious, brave, and enterprising; but, if prudent, they will certainly decline the contest with most European nations, when the palm of genius is the object of dispute.

C. Different climates undoubtedly have a different effect on the bodies and minds of those who inhabit them; and local causes, in the same climate, may be favourable, or adverse to the intellectual powers.

A pure, temperate atmosphere, and romantic scenery, are productive of clear intellects and brilliant imagination. America is far from being deficient in these advantages. The oratory, councils, and sagacity of its natives, prove that their conceptions are by no means cramped by physical causes.

This being granted, which cannot be denied, it will be extremely difficult to show a reason, why the mental powers of our ancestors, or their descendants, should suffer a decay in this country, so favourable by nature to sound judgment and brilliancy of thought.

Instead of forcing ourselves into such an absurd conclusion, we shall make an obvious distinction, which will lead to a conclusion, not derogatory to the American character; a distinction between natural genius, and its improvement by art. One depends on natural causes; the other, on the state of society.

With a well supported claim to the former, it is no dishonor to acknowledge ourselves inferior to the elder nations of Europe in the latter. Considering the in-

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fant state of our country, and the nature of our government, we have more reason to boast, than be ashamed of our progress in the fine arts.

If not equal in this respect, to our mother country, we have made more rapid improvement than any other nation in the world. Our government and habits are republican; they cherish equal rights, and tend to an equal distribution of property. Our mode of education has the same tendency to promote an equal distribution of knowledge, and to make us emphatically a "republic of letters:" I would not be understood adepts in the fine arts, but participants of useful knowledge.

In the monarchical and aristocratic governments of Europe, the case is far different. A few privileged orders monopolize not only the wealth and honors, but the knowledge of their country. They produce a few profound scholars, who make study the business of their lives; we acquire a portion of science, as a necessary instrument of livelihood, and deem it absurd to devote our whole lives to the acquisition of implements, without having it in our power to make them useful to ourselves or others.

They have their thousands who are totally ignorant of letters; we have but very few, who are not instructed in the rudiments of science. They may boast a small number of masters in the fine arts; we are all scholars in the useful; and employed in improving the works of nature, rather than imitating them.

So strong is our propensity to useful employments, and so sure the reward of those who pursue them, that necessity, "the mother of invention," has reared but few professional poets, painters, or musicians among us. Those, who have occasionally pursued the imitative arts, from natural inclination, have given sufficient proof, that even in them, our capacity and genius are not inferior to those of Europeans; but the encouragement they have met shows that the spirit of our habits and government tends rather to general improvement in the useful, than partial perfection in the amusing arts.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT FROM AN ORATION, DELIVERED AT BOSTON, MARCH 5th, 1780; BY JONATHAN MASON JUN. ESQ.

THE rising glory of this western hemisphere is already announced; and she is summoned to her seat among the nations of the earth. We have publicly declared ourselves convinced of the destructive tendency of standing armies. We have acknowledged the necessity of public spirit and the love of virtue, to the happiness of any people; and we profess to be sensible of the great blessings that flow from them. Let us not then act unworthily of the reputable character we now sustain. Let integrity of heart, the spirit of freedom, and rigid virtue be seen to actuate every member of the commonwealth.

The trial of our patriotism is yet before us; and we have reason to thank Heaven, that its principles are so well known and diffused. Exercise towards each other the benevolent feelings of friendship; and let that unity of sentiment, which has shone in the field, be equally animating in our councils. Remember that prosperity is dangerous; that though successful, we are not infallible.

Let this sacred maxim receive the deepest impression upon our minds, that if avarice, if extortion, if luxury, and political corruption, are suffered to become popular among us, civil discord, and the ruin of our country will be the speedy consequence of such fatal vices. But while patriotism is the leading principle, and our laws are contrived with wisdom, and executed with vigour; while industry, frugality and temperance, are held in estimation, and we depend upon public spirit and the love of virtue for our social happiness, peace and affluence will throw their smiles upon the brow of individuals; our commonwealth will flourish, our land will become a land of liberty, and AMERICA an asylum for the oppressed.

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Handwritten notes and calculations on the right page, including numbers like 100, 20, 40, and words like 'Deer' and 'D.F.'.

