

# **ON THE NEGRO'S PLACE IN NATURE**

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On the Negro's Place in Nature by James Hunt

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**JAMES HUNT**

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PLACE IN NATURE**



Vignaud  
12-18-30

CONTENTS.

Dedication	v
Objects of the present Paper	1
Definition of the Negro, and exclusion of irrelevant topics	2
Question of species not involved	3
Speculations of Ethnologists	4
Pruner-Bey on the trunk and limbs of the Negro	5
Foot of the Negro	6
Heel of the Negro—measurements of anthropoid apes	7
Measurements of the bones of the limbs	8
Facial bones, jaws, and teeth	9
Cranial bones—testimony of Gratiolet	10
Change in the Negro at puberty—shape of the pelvis	11
Base of the cranium	12
Capacity of the cranium, according to Huschke and Tiedemann	13
Measurements of the cranium, according to Pruner-Bey	14
The Negress. Lawrence's definitions	15
Bory St. Vincent—Fischer—Brain of the Negro	16
Foramen magnum; its situation	17
Broca's observations on the brain	18
Teeth	19
Integument	20
Colour and viscera	21
Voice and hair	22
Odour, temperature, pulse, and senses	23
Developmental characters	24
Question of hybridity	25
Psychological character—"Unity of origin"	26
Negro contact with civilisation of no avail	27
"Civilised Negroes" not of pure blood	28
Uncertain paternity of some Africans	29
Historical aspect of the question	30
"Equality" of the Negro and White races	31
Improvement of Negroes in America	32
Diversity of physical type in Africa	33
Immortality of Mulattos	34
Smith and Bosman on Mulattos	35
"Intelligent Negroes" often impostors—Carlyle on philanthropy	36

Linnæus. 42-1

Precocity of Negroes . . . . .	37
Psychology of Negro . . . . .	38
Pruner-Bey on Negro mental character . . . . .	39
Negro laziness and thirst for blood—Hutchinson . . . . .	40
Negro's commercial shrewdness, and propensity to lie . . . . .	41
Bozman's testimony—Nervous development of the Negro . . . . .	42
Brehm and Görs's testimony . . . . .	43
Hamilton Smith's opinion . . . . .	44
Van Amringe and Burmeister . . . . .	45
Vogt and Winwood Beade's testimony . . . . .	46
Assumed degeneration of the Negro . . . . .	47
Van Evrie's description—Dr. Louis Büchner . . . . .	48
Pruner-Bey on the psychological character of the Negro . . . . .	49
General deductions made in the present paper . . . . .	51
"Slavery" in America . . . . .	53
Evil effects of Emancipation—Hayti . . . . .	53
Slavery in Africa . . . . .	54
Subordination of the Negro . . . . .	55
Labour, the duty of all men . . . . .	55
Domestic slaves sold in Africa . . . . .	56
Negro requires persuasion to work . . . . .	57
Demoralised condition of the Negroes at Bonny . . . . .	58
Trollope and M'Henry's testimony . . . . .	60
Conclusion . . . . .	60

TO  
CAPT. RICHARD F. BURTON,

*H.B.M. Consul at Fernando Po.*

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF LONDON, ETC., ETC., ETC.

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MY DEAR BURTON,

THE Council of the Anthropological Society of London having acceded to the general wish of the Fellows, that my Paper on the "Negro's Place in Nature" should forthwith be published in the form of a pamphlet, I had no option but to comply with their decision, although I have done so with some reluctance.

I dedicate these pages to you, not merely because you are a distinguished Fellow of our Society, but because you are one of the few men living who are capable of judging as to the exact value of the general deductions contained in this paper.

You are fully aware that it is one thing to read a paper to an intelligent scientific audience, and quite another to promulgate the same views before the general public. And yet, perhaps, it is not men of science who require to be inoculated with these sentiments, but rather those "outer barbarians" whose habit it is to sneer at any views opposed to their own, and to denounce that which they cannot understand, and are unwilling to study. You will, therefore, not be surprised to hear that when I brought the facts contained in the first part of the paper before a miscellaneous audience at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, at the recent meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, my statement of the simple facts was received with such loud hisses that you would have thought the room had nearly been filled with a quantity of Eve's tempters instead of her amiable descendants. It was not till then that I fully realised the profound ignorance which

exists in the minds of even the semi-scientific public on the Negro race, and indeed on African Anthropology generally.

You will be glad, however, to learn that, neither in the discussion which followed, nor in the comments which were made on it in the public press, was one scientific fact elicited which tended in any way to invalidate the general conclusions I had arrived at. My friend Mr. C. Carter Blake ably supported me, but the audience also favoured him with strong marks of disapprobation when he ventured to suggest that the question was one of fact, and that it was of no use to rail against the plain deductions to be made from the physical character of the Negro.

I should perhaps explain that the paper was originally written chiefly to illustrate the propositions I had laid down in a paper previously read on "The Principles of Anthropological Classification." In that paper I have explained the meaning I attach to the words "species," "race," &c., which I have occasionally used in this paper. Our Society, however, expressed a desire to hear the paper, and I then felt it my duty to introduce some general conclusions which I had not touched on at Newcastle. Here, instead of being met with hisses, I received the cordial and earnest support of our scientific brethren in the Anthropological Society. The report of the discussion which followed will appear in the February number of the *Journal of the Society*,\* and will show that scientific men will no longer accept the stereotyped opinions of the last generation on this subject.

I do not mean to assert that the views held by myself on this subject have met with universal acceptance from the Fellows of our Society; but I think we are all bound together by a firm determination to openly and fairly discuss this subject in all its varied and important ramifications.

I cheerfully commit the following observations to your mature judgment, and ask you, as an Anthropologist and a man of science, how far these views are in accordance with known facts? You are, as all Anthropologists know, one of the few

\* *Anthropological Review and Journal of the Anthropological Society of London*, February 1864. Trübner and Co.



men who are competent to give any decided opinion as to the value of my communication. We have had plenty of African travellers, but there is perhaps no other man living who, by previous education and study, is better able than yourself to paint the Negro and other African races as they exist, regardless of what we may consider should be their state.

I was necessarily confined to a limited space in my paper, but you will see that I have added notes in support of my views. I have also thought it desirable to print all the important passages in M. Pruner Bey's admirable Memoir on this subject. As Physician to the Viceroy of Egypt, he had ample opportunities of studying the anatomy and physiology of the Negro. The only part of his paper I have omitted is some descriptive matter relating to the variety of races in Africa: not the object of the present inquiry. I shall feel grateful if you will state my great obligations to the author of *Wanderings in West Africa*, should you meet with its accomplished, agreeable, and unbiassed author.

In conclusion, I am glad to inform you that the Society whose birth you witnessed only requires one thing for its complete success, viz., that you should return to England and give to Anthropology not only the benefit of your large stores of knowledge, but also that you should preside over the affairs of a Society destined under such a Presidency to accomplish the great and important objects for which it was established.

Believe me,

My dear Burton,

Yours very faithfully,

JAMES HUNT.

Ore House, Hastings, England.

December 2, 1863.

N.B.—I ought to tell you that I had a goodly number of supporters among the audience at Newcastle; and amongst numerous letters I have since received, I give the following extract from a letter, just written to me by a lady who as-

sisted in the microscopical investigations of some scientific men in the Confederate States of America. Some of the notes taken on the occasion referred to were to the following effect:—

“The skeleton of the Negro can never be placed upright. There is always a slight angle in the legs, a greater in the thigh bones and still more in the body, until in some instances it curves backwards. All the bones of the legs are flattened and wider than in the European; and the arm-bones have always a tendency to fall forward, while the head stoops from the shoulders, and not from the neck, as in other nations. To make the skeleton stand equal in its weight on all parts, you must give it these inclinations.

“The blood is vastly dissimilar,—the red corpuscles are greatly in excess, and the colourless have an extraordinary tendency to run together: the molecular movement within the discs differs in every respect, and when tried with a solution of potass, the protrusions from the cell-walls take every intermediate form, reverting with great rapidity to the normal condition. It is an attested fact, that if there is a drop of African blood in the system of a white person, it will show itself upon the scalp. The greater the proximity, the darker the hue, the larger the space: there may not be the slightest taint perceptible in any other part of the body, but this spot can never be wiped out, no intervening time will ever efface it; and it stands in the courts of law in the Southern Confederacy as a never-failing test, unimpeachable as a law of Nature.

“Their eyesight decays very early, failing generally after thirty, but very few become totally blind; and in the three instances I ever met, they were blind to light, but found their way easily through the streets and over their dwellings during the hours of darkness. The hair is very peculiar;\* three hairs, springing from different orifices, will unite into one; it is very friable, like moss, the ends splitting up.”

The above intelligent remarks, although they contain nothing new, are chiefly valuable from the fact that ladies in the Confederate States seem to be better informed on the subject than many men of science in this country.

In time the truth will come out, and then the public will have their eyes opened, and will see in its true dimensions that gigantic imposture known by the name of “Negro Emancipation.”—J. H.

\* See, also on this, the able memoir by M. Pruner-Bey, communicated to the Anthropological Society of Paris: *De la chevelure nommée caractéristique des races humaines, d'après des recherches microscopiques*. 8vo. Paris, 1863, p. 14.

OR

## THE NEGRO'S PLACE IN NATURE.

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I PROPOSE in this communication to discuss the physical and mental characters of the Negro, with a view of determining not only his position in animated nature, but also the station to be assigned to him in the genus *homo*. I shall necessarily have to go over a wide field, and cannot hope to treat the subject in an exhaustive manner. I shall be amply satisfied if I succeed in directing the attention of my scientific friends to a study of this most important and hitherto nearly neglected branch of the great science of Anthropology.

It is not a little remarkable that the subject I propose to bring before you this evening is one which has never been discussed before a scientific audience in this Metropolis. In France, in America, and in Germany, the physical and mental characters of the Negro have been frequently discussed, and England alone has neglected to pay that attention to the question which its importance demands. I shall, therefore, make no apology for bringing this subject in its entirety under your consideration, although I should have preferred discussing each point in detail. I hope, however, this evening to bring before you facts and opinions that will lay a good foundation for future inquiry and discussion. Although I shall dwell chiefly on the physical, mental, and moral characters of the Negro, I shall, at the same time, not hesitate to make such practical deductions as appear to be warranted from the facts we now have at hand, and trust that a fair and open discussion of this subject may eventually be the means of removing much of the misconception which appears to prevail on this subject both in the minds of the public, and too frequently in the minds of scientific men. While, however, I shall honestly