

**THE NEGRO SLAVES, A
DRAMATIC-HISTORICAL
PIECE, IN THREE ACTS**

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The Negro Slaves, a Dramatic-Historical Piece, in Three Acts by August von Kotzebue

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AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

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PIECE, IN THREE ACTS**

THE
NEGRO SLAVES,
A
DRAMATIC-HISTORICAL PIECE,
IN THREE ACTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
OF
THE PRESIDENT DE KOTZEBUE.

*Form'd with the same capacity of pain,
The same desire of pleasure and of ease,
Why feels not man for man?*

THE WRONGS OF AFRICA.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, JUNIOR, AND W. DAVIES,
(SUCCESSORS TO MR. CADELL) IN THE STRAND;
AND J. EDWARDS, IN PALL-MALL.

1796.

Fiedler J 2018

DEDICATION,

BY THE TRANSLATOR,

TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

FRIEND OF NEGROES!

ALLOW me to introduce myself as having long been an attentive observer of your active zeal for the abolishment of slavery, and establishing so large a portion of mankind in the natural rights of humanity: it is therefore under such an impression, that an unknown humble Translator ventures to make a first offering to you of these endeavors to bring the English reader acquainted with the following little piece.—The histories, the foundations of which you have traced, and know to be too genuine, are there wrought up into a highly interesting little plot, to serve the same cause, in which you have been working so many years past; and you will there see that the Germans have a just ve-

have addressed your monarch, I might have graced these pages with the exalted name of Bernstoff—too great for the application of an epithet; but the ingenuous overflowings of philanthropy would most probably have been mistaken for cold flattery. And I prefer speaking at once to the honest Danes, who understand me, and who know that I never sell my praises.—Here in rural solitude, at a distance from all that can be justly or unjustly called great, surrounded only by the charms of nature; here, where love, friendship, independence crown my head daily with fresh flowers; from hence will I stretch out my hand to my brave friend, and intreat him in the midst of his more public walk, sometimes to cast an eye on the peaceful shore, where his friend has raised himself a cottage under shady elms.

July 13th, 1795.

P R E F A C E

BY THE AUTHOR.

THE Author entreats his readers, spectators, and critics, not to consider this piece merely as a drama. It is intended to represent at one view all the horrible cruelties which are practised towards our black brethren. The poet has given them a simple cloathing, without any of the embellishments of invention. Raynal's *Histoire Philosophique*, Selle's *History of the Negro-trade*, Sprengel on *Negro-trade*, Ifert's *Travels into Guinea*, the famous *Black Code*, and several scattered Tracts in periodical works, have fully supplied him with the materials. It is with a deep sigh that he is forced to acknowledge that not one melancholy fact is

brought forth in this piece, which was not strictly founded in truth. Even the catastrophe itself is known to have taken place, and Ada's last narration is borrowed from Raynal.* The prayer of the Slaves over the grave of their master is an affecting anecdote which is related by the great and good Albuquerque. † The Author is not ashamed to confess that while he was writing this piece he shed a thousand tears. Should his readers or spectators mix their tears with his, his labor would then have some reward.

A few words for Negroes in general. There are philosophers who believe that nature has made as much difference between the Negroes and Europeans in their intellectual capacities as between the cur-dog and the hound. I will relate two authentic anecdotes, after the reading of which, each may himself judge of the justice of this idea.

* Hist. Philosophique & Politique, tom. 5. liv. 14. chap. 44. p. 212.

† Alphonse Albuquerque, nommé par la cour de Lisbonne vice-roi de l'Inde; le plus éclairé des Portugais qui fussent passés en Asie. En 1515, Il mourut à Goa, adoré des Indiens.—Raynal's Hist. Philos. tom. 1. p. 61—94.

Murray * was left sick upon the African coast. A Negro took him to his home, and nursed him. A Dutch ship appeared, stole some men on the banks, and escaped. The father and brother of the stolen were enraged, they hastened down to the cottage where Murray lay, and wanted to sacrifice him to their revenge. His charitable host came forth to the door; "You must first kill me, he cried, before you touch a hair of my guest. Kill the robber wherever you find him, but not an innocent sick man, whom sacred hospitality protects.—Would you for ever stamp such a disgrace on my cottage that no stranger should again ask of me a draught of palm-wine?" The Negroes at this took shame to themselves, and returned, and wept over their lost brethren, but refrained from exercising any revenge on the innocent White; they even acknowledged to Murray himself how happy they were at having been deterred from executing a crime, which would have caused them eternal remorse.

Louis Defrouleaux sold his plantation and returned to his own country. The charms of the

* Raynal's Hist. Philos. tom. 4. liv. 11. chap. 28. p. 155.

metropolis soon absorbed his whole fortune, and he found himself obliged to fly a beggar to America. There, where his European friends coldly withdrew from him, a Negro threw himself at his feet, (whom he had formerly loaded with acts of generosity, and to whom, at last, he had given his freedom.) The diligent honest man had in the mean time gained himself a little independency, and was in possession of a house and garden, a wife, and a child. He embraced the knees of his old master, and would not quit him, till with prayers he had prevailed upon him to consent to partake his dwelling, and to accept an annuity from him of 1500 livres.— Both these men were living in the year 1774.

Many traits in this piece are too horrible, and therefore, in the representation, several of them were omitted. This might be attended with advantage on the theatre; but in the publication, the author has been obliged to restore all the omissions, otherwise his piece would not have had any claim to the title of an Historical Piece.