

JOHANN FRIEDRICH BLUMENBACH—1752-1840.

BY

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Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a distinguished anatomist and physiologist, was born at Gotha, 11th May, 1752. He studied medicine at Jena, and afterwards at Göttingen, where he took the degree of Doctor in 1775. Such a high opinion was entertained of his acquirements that he was appointed adjunct professor of medicine in 1776, and in 1778 he was made professor. In 1812 he was elected secretary to the Society of Royal Sciences. He was a member of nearly all the societies of Savants of the civilized world of his day. He did great service by investigations in general Anthropology of which he was, in fact, the founder.

His researches in Comparative Anatomy and the history of development rendered him famous. He collected all the facts, touching on comparative anatomy, which had been stored up in the literature of earlier observers, and added to them observations of his own.

He was the first to undertake the task of determining the anatomical differences between the various races of man, especially Europeans, Negroes and Indians. His far-famed collection of skulls, of various nationalities, had a stimulating influence upon the study of this important part of ethnology.

Amongst his discoveries was that made during the dissection of the eye of a seal :—that the axis of that organ admits of being lengthened and shortened, thus permitting the animal to see clearly in media of different densities, as, air and water. In physiology, he was of the school of Haller, and was in the habit of illustrating his theory, by a careful comparison of the animal functions of man with those of lower animals.

He was the author of many works on Medicine, Physiology and Anatomy. His thesis, on the occasion of taking his degree of doctor 1775. *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa*, was the germ of the craniological researches to which so many of his subsequent enquiries were directed.

In 1778 he began to enrich the pages of the *Medicinische Bibliothek*, of which he was editor from 1780-1794, with various contributions on medicine, anatomy, etc. In 1787 he published *Institutiones Physiologicae*, a condensed and well arranged view of the animal functions. This work went through many editions in Germany, where it was the general text-book of that science. It was translated into English, in America, by Caldwell in 1798, and in London by Elliotson in 1807.

His *Handbuch* of Comparative Anatomy, a work by which he was widely known, went through many editions. It was translated into