

that have been recorded, and still occasionally appear.

#### THE PROPORTIONS OF THE HUMAN BODY AND STRENGTH OF MAN.

The beauty of the human form depends very much on the proportions which the head, trunk, and limbs bear to each other, and artists therefore, have taken great pains to determine those, which they have in general done by measuring those celebrated ancient statues that have been esteemed the wonders of their art. But as many of these statues are colossal or diminutive in size, and, more especially, as every variety is observable in the height and proportions of men, no standard so taken can be universally applicable; indeed, no definite rule of beauty can be established, for it must depend entirely on the form or model we may choose to prefer. Hence our varieties of taste are interminable. The Greek statues are considered very beautiful, and are those generally chosen by artists; but if we go into nature, and behold man as he actually exists in all climates, what infinite variety of form and proportion shall we find, and these, too, compatible with remarkable bodily vigour! It is probable that all these differences were originally owing to the influence of external circumstances, more especially to artificial habits, which more or less prevail among all nations.

The ancient Germans were remarkably tall and well-proportioned. The ancient Britons were likewise strong well-proportioned men, capable of undergoing great fatigue and exertion. The Romans were notoriously a fine race of people, until their intermingling with the inferior Asiatic races, and their habits of luxury and effeminacy, vitiated their forms and reduced their strength. Many of the American, and also African tribes, that have not yielded to those sophisticated habits which are engendered by a high degree of civilization, present us with admirable models of symmetry; they have been poetically, but not less truly, described as the "naked Apollon of the woods." The healthy development of the human body must depend much on the nature of the food by which it is nourished; wherefore those tribes that subsist on a scanty and inferior diet have their growth checked, and become ill proportioned and enfeebled. The natives of New Holland are small in stature, with long and slender limbs, which may be attributed entirely to this cause, for we are informed that their food is always of the least nutritious kind, and very scarce; indeed the scarcity is often aggravated to all the horrors of actual famine, under which they are reduced to the appearance of spectres, and not unfrequently perish. The stature and proportions of the negro have often been compared with those of the European, by which it has been shown, that the trunk of the negro is more slender, particularly about the loins, the arm and forearm longer in proportion to the height of the body, and the calf higher up on the leg. While the savages of New Holland have their legs so extremely long, the Mongolians and Americans have their legs and thighs too short in proportion to the rest of the body. Such differences in the stature and proportions of the body necessarily occasion considerable differences in strength; for, as we have observed, it is not on the height of the body, but on the just proportions of all its parts, that physical power is dependent. The art of training men to run races, fight, lift heavy weights, &c., is founded entirely on the principle of supplying the body with just sufficient solid and nutritious aliment to support it, and to enable it to undergo additional exertion.

It has been supposed that man in a savage state possesses a superior degree of bodily strength; but this does not appear to be the fact. A French Philosopher, M. Peron, made numerous experiments on this subject, which he communicated to the French Institute; and these have been regarded as perfectly satisfactory. He took twelve natives of Van Dieman's Land, seventeen of New Holland, fifty-six of the

Island of Timor, seventeen Frenchmen, and fourteen Englishmen, and by the aid of an instrument, which indicated by a dial-plate the force of the individuals who experimented, he determined the strength of the arms and loins. The Englishmen proved the strongest; then the Frenchmen; after them the natives of Timor; then those of New Holland, and, lastly, those of Van Dieman's Land: hence it was fairly concluded that civilization, always excepting its abuse in the luxuries to which it often gives rise, does not impair bodily strength. Desagulier states, that, by means of a certain harness which he has contrived, and by which every part of the body was proportionally loaded, a person was enabled to support, in the erect posture, a weight of not less than 2000 lbs. Besides the nature of the climate and quality of the food, habits of exertion have a great influence on the development of muscular power, hence gymnastic schools were instituted by the ancients, who encouraged their children to persevere in using athletic exercises. The South Sea Islanders, by practice, are enabled to swim about in the strongest surf, which would instantly destroy a boat or vessel. Men accustomed to running will outstrip the speed of horses. The royal messengers of Ispahan, who are trained to running, go thirty-six leagues in fourteen hours. And we are assured by travellers, that Hottentots outstrip lions in the chase, and that those savages who live by hunting outrun and catch deer and other animals. In some efforts of muscular exertion there is a peculiar knack; thus in the Highland games it is observed, that the man who will throw the bar farthest often fails with the hammer, or with instruments of equal weight, but of a different shape. So, too, a porter will carry a greater weight than a sailor; but the sailor will haul a rope or drag a weight with much more ease than the porter. Both in ancient and modern times, individuals have exhibited themselves who displayed the most extraordinary feats of strength. The power of an individual named Eckeberg, a German, and the strength of another named Topham, attracted the attention of many men of science, who bear testimony to the very wonderful actions they achieved. Eckeberg, by the strength of his hand, doubled a thick piece of iron, and, taking another bar of the same hard metal, he twisted it into a corkscrew shape. Topham rolled up in his hand a pewter plate, and lifted the enormous weight of eight hundred pounds. The French philosopher to whom we have referred, Desagulier, has, from his observations, concluded the strength of very weak men to be equal to 125 lbs., that of very strong men 400 lbs. The effects of exertion in increasing the size and the power of muscles may be observed, by noticing the arm of the blacksmith, and also the arms and chests of prize fighters. We observe, too, that dancers have the calves of the legs fully and well developed, while waggoners, who are accustomed to walk without duly raising the arch of the foot, have those muscles very small and weak. Athletic exercises are at present very fashionable in this country, and the use of poles or clubs is now common in almost all schools; but it is not to be forgotten, that all inordinate muscular exercise is prejudicial to health, and tends to shorten the duration of life. When great exertion is made, the action of the heart and blood vessels becomes increased; and when this is often repeated, they become impaired. Hence blacksmiths are particularly liable to diseases of the heart: besides, when from very great and repeated exertion, the muscles are drawn out into the highest possible state of tension, the fibres that compose them are brought into the condition of over-drawn wires, which will give way on the slightest occasion. When one of these athletic men, who has devoted his whole life to the performance of feats of strength, is thrown upon a sick-bed, his whole frame becomes speedily unstrung, and reduced to a state of the most miserable debility. Prize-fighters, wrestlers, men who practise violent gymnastic exercises continually, seldom or

never arrive at old age; they concentrate, and, as it were, bring into a focus the whole vigour of their constitution; they are, for a time, all powerful and triumphant, but their victory is short-lived, their pre-eminence not enviable; they too soon find that they have exhausted the fountains of their strength, and must sink to rise no more. Exercise, moderate and healthy, and also gymnastic amusements, are not only proper, but essential to good health; but let them not be carried to excess—let not the bow be too far bent lest it become irrecoverably broken.

#### THE INHABITANTS OF ASIA.

When we consider that Asia was the cradle of the human race, it is natural, in taking a general survey of the globe, to fix our attention on this region, which, although no longer illuminated by the arts which once shined over it a glory, still retains, even amidst its ruins, sufficient vestiges of the past to excite our interest and animate our contemplations. Owing to the peculiar aspect of this country, we here find every variety of climate; spring, summer, autumn, winter, seem here to have chosen regions for their perpetual abode, and may be found co-existing beneath the same sky in the same territory. It is no wonder, then, that such varieties of character should here be impressed on the yielding and susceptible frame of man; that he in one district exhibits all the energies of the hardy, bold, and fearless mountaineer or warrior, and that he in another betrays all the effeminacy and weakness incident to excess of languor and luxury.

#### CIRCASSIANS AND GEORGIANS.

Proceeding on the principle of selection, we may perhaps with impunity begin with describing those people who are considered to exhibit the finest models of the human form, and whose surpassing beauty has become proverbial throughout Europe; we allude to those particular races living on the great chain at the foot of the Caucasus—the former the *Circassians*, the latter the *Georgians*. Blumenbach is inclined to believe they represent what was the primitive form of man; but this, of course, is a mere fancy, founded only on the fact, that the human race was created in this region, and that here the human form seems to exist in its highest state of perfection. The Circassian men, especially in the higher classes, are mostly of a tall stature; their form is thin, but Herculean in structure; they are slender about the loins, have small feet and uncommon strength in their arms. The women are distinguished by a white skin, regular features, and dark brown or black hair, which some travellers describe to be intermixed with red, constituting, perhaps, what we term an auburn colour. It is the fashion among them to compress the waist by means of straps in early infancy, considering, like the turks, that a very small waist adds to the grace or elegance of the form. Painting the face is considered to denote a want of chastity, therefore never practised; but the girls are allowed to dye their nails. At the foot of the Caucasus live the Georgians, who, like the Circassians, are considered to be the most beautiful women in the world; indeed, one traveller assures us that they are more beautiful than the Circassians, but the complexion is not so fair. Chardin describing them in the French language, says—"The Georgian race is the most beautiful in the East, I may say, in the world. I have not observed an ugly face in the country neither among the one nor the other sex; they are all angelic. Nature has spread graces over the most part of the women we find no where else. I hold it impossible to see without loving them; we can neither paint more charming countenances, nor more beautiful forms, than they possess." But while nature has thus gifted them with pre-eminence of personal beauty, she has left them, like the Turkish women, in a state of intellectual and moral degradation, inasmuch as they are deplorably ignorant, and possess no mental activity, they have no idea of commerce, but indulge in that species of traffic from which human nature recoils, viz. the sale of their own children—sometimes sold to gratify the animal passions of the purchaser, and sometimes to be converted into slaves.

(To be continued.)