

## INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE.

## THE HISTORY OF MANKIND.

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## THE EXTERNAL FORM OF MAN—HIS STATURE.

All the productions of nature—no matter whether we contemplate the curiously constructed fabric of animal bodies, the structure of plants, or the regularly arranged particles of minerals—are in themselves perfect; and, as if it were intended that the eye of every observant being should be gratified, all we behold seems to have been moulded in a cast of beauty such as must in every instance excite admiration. In the vegetable kingdom—from the oak of the forest to the gracefully drooping willow of the valley, from the rarest flower of the foreign climes to the most common weed—we behold the most agreeable variety; so, too, in the animal kingdom—from the lions and tigers which prowl through the woods, down to the lizards and serpents that creep along the grass or desert sands—from the eagle that builds its eyrie on the loftiest cliff, down to the little humming-bird which flits about like a mote in a sunbeam—all we see excites wonder and admiration. Yet, amidst all that has been created, the human form, by universal consent, has been esteemed the most admirable; so just are all its proportions; so exquisitely do they harmonize together; and so obviously is the whole stamped with the expression of superior intelligence. Let us then proceed to examine the various peculiarities by which the human frame is distinguished in different regions of the world.

The variable stature of man first claims our attention. In this country, the average height of men is five feet eight inches;\* the average height of women five feet five inches; and all who exceed or are beneath either of these measurements, may be considered above or below the ordinary standard. In the temperate climate of Europe, the stature of the human race may be said to vary from five feet and a half to six feet; but in the high northern latitudes, where the growth of animals and vegetables is checked by the intensity of the cold, the stature of man is low. The Laplanders, Greenlanders, and Esquimaux, are all very short, measuring only from four to a little above five feet; but there is no uniformity between any particular climate and variety of human stature. It is true that the Laplander is short, but the Norwegian, living nearly in the same latitude, is tall; so, also, while the Hottentots, living in the south of Africa, are very short, the Caffres, a neighbouring tribe, are tall, robust, and muscular. In Asia, the Chinese and Japanese are nearly of the same stature as ourselves; but the Mongol, and some other tribes, are remarkably short. The inhabitants of America present us with very striking differences. In the regions north of Canada, the tribes are very tall; among the Cherokees many exceed the height of six feet, and few are below five feet eight or ten inches. The western Americans of Nootka Sound, near the Columbia, are of low stature; so also are many tribes in South America. The Patagonians, however, who occupy the north-eastern part of this country, are of prodigious stature; most of them are six feet five or six inches, and many eight feet high.

Individuals of very remarkable height have frequently existed, and among them the following examples, which we believe to be well authenticated, may be adduced:—

	Ft.	In.
Duke John Frederick, of Brunswick, Hanover, measured	8	6
One of the King of Prussia's guards	8	6
Gilly, a Swede, (exhibited as a show)	8	0
Reichardt of Frisberg, near Frankfort	8	2
Martin Salmeron, a Mexican	7	8 1-2
An Irishman (skeleton in the London College)	8	4
A Danish female, named La Pierre	7	0
Bebe, King of Poland, measured only	32	in. (French)
Bonolaski, a Polish nobleman skilled in many languages	25	do. do.
Stobern, a female in Nuremberg	3	feet.

In some instances, these varieties of stature appear to have been hereditary; thus the father and sisters of the gigantic Reichardt, above mentioned, were gigantic; the parents, brothers, and sisters of Stobern, dwarfs. It is well known that the King of Prussia had a body of gigantic guards, consisting of the tallest men who could be collected from all the neighbouring countries. A regiment of these men was stationed, during fifty years, at Potsdam. "And now," says Forster, "a great number of the present inhabitants of that place are gigantic, which is more especially striking in the numerous gigantic figures of women, and is certainly owing to the connections and intermarriages of these tall men with the females of that town."

All such cases, showing an excess or a diminution of the development of the human body, may be regarded as irregularities of nature, or as species of monstrosities. Accordingly, those men who have much exceeded the ordinary standard are generally ill proportioned, and have not possessed strength corresponding to their size, in general, in such cases, the nervous system seems as if insufficient to supply with muscular vigour, or intellectual energy, the demands of the preternaturally sized body. It may indeed be remarked, that a sort of healthy balance should exist between mind and matter; and if, therefore, from the original formation of the body, or from habits of luxury, the human frame make too great a demand on the nervous influence by which all its parts are animated, the mind itself must be enfeebled and impaired. Dwarfs are, for the most part, the victims of disease; they are in general ill-made; their heads very large, and their powers, physical and mental, very feeble. It may be concluded, then, that few healthy well-made men, having all the attributes of their race, will be found to exist who are much above or much below their fellow countrymen. The causes which produce these varieties of stature are not well understood, but, doubtless, a simple mode of life, nutritious sustenance, and a salubrious atmosphere, will be found to favour the full, healthy, and natural development of the human body. The influence, indeed, of these causes, may be well illustrated by the following observations of the traveller Barrow:—"There is perhaps no nation on earth," says he, "that can produce so fine a race of men as the Caffres, they are tall, stout, muscular, well-made, excellent figures; they are exempt, indeed, from many of those causes which in more civilized societies contribute to impede the growth of the body; their diet is simple, their exercise of a salutary nature; their body is neither cramped nor covered by clothing; the air they breathe is pure; their rest is not disturbed by violent love, nor their minds ruffled by jealousy; they are free from those licentious appetites which proceed frequently more from a depraved imagination, than a real natural want; their frame is neither shaken nor enervated by the use of intoxicating liquors, which they are not acquainted

with; they eat when hungry and sleep when nature demands it. With such a kind of life, languor and melancholy can have little to do. The countenance of a Caffre is always cheerful, and the whole of his demeanour bespeaks content and peace of mind."

The causes producing such varieties of stature are not confined to man alone, but extend through inferior races of animals; as may be observed by comparing the small Welsh cattle with the large Herefordshire cattle, or the Shetland pony with the tall-backed mares of Flanders. In the interior of Ceylon, according to Mr. Pennant, there is a small variety of the horse, not exceeding thirty inches in height; so, too, in the Island of Celebes, a race of buffaloes is found, not exceeding the size of our common sheep. The Paduan fowl, likewise, is double the size of the common fowl; and we are all aware how the Bantam breed is prized for its superior size and strength.

The human race has been supposed to have degenerated in stature; many persons, indeed, believe that men are now much shorter than they were at a former period in the history of the world. The Scriptural statement, that there were giants in those days, has indeed given rise to much useless discussion; for while some have maintained that all men before the deluge were giants, others have argued more correctly, that no giants ever existed, but that the term simply refers to men noted for their crimes and the violence they committed. There is certainly no reason to suppose that the general stature of man differed before the flood from that which we at present observe; yet, that some few very gigantic men did exist, is recorded on authentic testimony; nor, from the instances above mentioned of men of extraordinary stature, could such occurrences be regarded as marvellous, or out of the ordinary course of experience. The remains of Egyptian mummies preserved from the earliest antiquity prove satisfactorily that the stature of the Egyptians did not exceed the ordinary height of the human race; many of these being five feet six inches, five feet eight inches, &c. Besides which, from the helmets and breast-plates preserved, from the buildings designed for their accommodation, and from monuments and works of art that have escaped the vicissitudes of ages, we may be satisfied that men were not formerly any taller than they are at present. Immense bones have often been dug up, and exhibited as the bones of men, which, on inspection, have proved to be those of animals. In 1613, the bones of the great giant Teutobacus, were shown through Europe; but these, on inspection, turned out to be the bones of an elephant. It is remarkable, that even the great natural historian Buffon fell into a similar blunder, which has been corrected by Blumenbach.

It is a fashion with all poets, and with early historians, who often encroach on the land of fable, to describe giants as originally composing the nations whose praise they sing, or whose history they record; but such narratives are, for the most part, founded only on popular traditions, which have been sometimes suggested by superstition, and not unfrequently by the premeditated craft of interested and better informed persons. To excite the energies of the people, and to gild them on to war, their leaders often represented their enemies to them as gigantic beings, who would destroy them, unless they prepared themselves for the most enterprising and daring feats. Every poetic hero or heroine is yet expected to undertake some marvellous achievement—to encounter some appalling danger—to surmount some tremendous obstacle: hence, in Fletcher's introduction to the *Worthy Citizen and his Wife*, the Knight of the Burning Pestle is made to ask what the principal person of

\* The late Dr. John Gordon of this city observes that this measurement is rather above the average.