

LATE 18C ANTI-SLAVERY TEXTS

Prepared by Duncan Faherty (Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center) and Ed White (Tulane University)

In a well-known scene in the 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, a 12- or 13-year-old Douglass (then Frederick Bailey) purchased a copy of a popular school text, *The Columbian Orator*, compiled by the educator Caleb Bingham. “Among much of other interesting matter,” writes Douglass,

I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master--things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation on the slave on the part of the master. (Chapter 7)

Douglass says he read the dialogue “over and over again with unabated interest,” adding, “The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder.”

The Columbian Orator had been published first in 1797, its dialogue contributed by David Everett, a friend and associate of Bingham’s in Boston. Everett (1770-1813) was a young lawyer active in publishing in New Hampshire and in his home state of Massachusetts, and fairly consistently a radical opponent of slavery. He wrote his contributions to the *Columbian Orator*, in other words, in the print environment from which we have

drawn the following abolitionist texts, most of which appeared in Boston’s *Massachusetts Magazine* in the early 1790s.¹

Some of these materials seem to have been written locally, though many were reprinted from British, French, and other regional contexts. In many instances, the details and tropes which we associate with the later slave narrative tradition are absent or just being developed. “The Desperate Negro,” for instance, explains the use of “the cart whip” on human beings, with the resulting wounds, as if they needed explication and clarification. Institutional politics are rarely addressed, the immorality of hypocrisy being the more common object of satire, as in “A Modern Anecdote.” Still more common is the depiction of slavery through the trappings of sentimental romance, featuring princes and princesses, as with “The Wretched Taillah” or the French “Phedima and Abensar.” The African focus also speaks to a greater focus on the slave trade than on daily conditions of enslavement. Occasionally, the conditions of slavery were somewhat veiled by utilitarian or scientific concerns, as with the extremely popular “Cure for Poison” credited to “the Negro Cesar.” The rudimentary and exoticizing nature of these small narratives speaks to the state of the political and moral discourse around slavery, as well as the strength of colonization projects, seeking to “return” the enslaved to Africa. Nonetheless, recent scholarship, as we discuss below, explores how texts like these might illuminate the Atlantic world.

“The Wretched Taillah: An African Story,” appears to have originated in the *Massachusetts Magazine* (April, 1792), and

¹ We draw on David Blight’s detailed discussion of the *Orator* in his 2018 biography, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (Simon & Schuster), 43-46. For further details on Everett and the *Orator*, see Granville Ganter’s “The Active Virtue of *The Columbian Orator*” (*New England Quarterly* 70.3, 463-76).

reappeared in New York's *Weekly Museum* (July, 1792) and in the *New Hampshire Magazine* (June, 1793).

"The Desperate Negroe" appeared in the October, 1793 issue of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, but originated in James Ramsay's 1784 book-length *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (see Chapter 4, "Natural Capacity of African Slaves Vindicated," Section V, "African Capacity vindicated from Experience"). The Ramsay excerpt appeared in London's *Westminster Magazine* that same year (July, 1784) and in the influential *Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle* a month later (August, 1784); it was reprinted in the *New London Magazine* in November, 1786 (where Ramsay is credited with the anecdote) and in Philadelphia's *American Museum, or Universal Magazine* in December, 1789.

"The Negro Cesar's Cure for Poison" first appeared in *The South-Carolina Gazette* in May, 1750, and was frequently reprinted for decades after, in almanacs, newspapers and magazines. In some instances, portions of the various cures were credited to white authorities. To give just a sampling, the cure was reprinted in the *Boston News-Letter* in January, 1751, the *New-York Evening Post* in February, 1751, *American Museum* in May, 1789; the *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* in July, 1789; in the *Massachusetts Magazine* in February, 1792 (the version we reproduce here), in Walpole's *New Hampshire Journal: or, The Farmer's Weekly Museum* in May, 1793; in Poughkeepsie's *The Rural Casket* in July, 1798; in Boston's *Columbian Centinel* in April, 1815.

"A Modern Anecdote," sometimes published as "Black and White," may have first appeared in the *Massachusetts Centinel* in 1788 (Oct 25 issue); it appeared in New York and New England papers through the winter of '88-89, but reappeared in waves in 1790, 1793, 1794, 1800, and beyond.

"Phedima and Abensar: an African Tale" appeared in the September 1796 issue of the *Massachusetts Magazine*. The story originated in the novel *Lettres Africaines* by the Swiss author Jean-

François Butini, published in 1771. The story was quickly reviewed and excerpted in Paris's influential periodical, *Mercure de France*, in November of the same year. By 1772, an English-language version appeared in London (*The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, October) and Dublin (*The Hibernian Magazine, or, Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*, November), with a later appearance in the British periodical *Weekly Miscellany: or, Instructive Entertainer* (Sherborne, January of 1776). The *Village Messenger* of Amherst, MA, republished the text in July, 1797.

Suggestions for further reading. Christy L. Pottroff deftly argues that, "circulation" has long served as a key "critical category" for early American studies because "the term's capaciousness" allows scholars interested in the print public sphere "many different entry points for thinking about information exchange" (621). After tracing the critical genealogies of key methods for examining circulation in early America, Pottroff considers the racialized dimensions of early American print circulation by inspecting materials from the archive of the United States Postal Service. In so doing, Pottroff uncovers not simply "how the circulation of information in early America worked, but also" explores how scholars might "be better attuned to the ways in which circulatory systems shaped and constrained information itself" (624). Pottroff's essay explores the ramifications of an 1802 policy which "dictated," that no one other than "a free white person shall be employed in carrying the mail," a policy which Pottroff notes was adopted in response to the Haitian Revolution. For Pottroff, the policy demonstrates how the very idea of "a networked African American community bound together by mobile black postal workers" was an "inherently dangerous" idea to white politicians and civil servants (624). At the heart of Pottroff's essay resides the keen observation that "racial inequality and exclusion structured access to circulation" within the early American Republic (625); see,

Pottroff, “Circulation,” *Early American Studies* 16.4 (2018), 621-627.

These federal prohibitions against carrying mail are but one nodal point within larger systemic attempts to prohibit African American participation in the print public sphere. State and local ordinances around the early Republic prevented African Americans from literacy acquisition, and white supremacist fears likely kept many literate African American writers from having access to mainstream publication networks for much of the early national period as well. Still, as Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein have argued, “during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, African Americans also established numerous literary societies, circulating libraries, political conventions, and church organizations, all of which articulated themselves through print media. African Americans worked alongside whites as compositors in print shops, as sailors transporting both raw and printed materials, and as educators instructing with books” (2); see Cohen and Stein, “Introduction: Early African American Print Culture,” *Early African American Print Culture*, edited by Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 1–16. Complicating the matter even more is the fact that, as Leon Jackson has observed, “scholars of slave culture and print culture have rarely shared agendas, nor have, more broadly, African American social, cultural, and literary historians and those within the community of book historians;” see Jackson, “The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian: African American Cultures of Print—The State of the Discipline,” *Book History*, 13 (2010), 252. All of which is to say that while the field of early African American studies has mapped a portion of early African American literary production, much work remains to be done until we have a fuller sense of this rich and complicated literary history.

We have no direct evidence to indicate that any of the pieces in this collection were “written” by diasporic Africans, but given that all of these pieces were published anonymously and circulated widely, we have no evidence to prove definitely that there was no African American involvement in their production or dissemination. What is clear is that these pieces do indicate African American participation in the circulation of knowledge within the early Republic. In some ways, they also gesture towards possible African American participation in early abolitionist networks as well. One way to approach the question of authorship in regards to these texts would be to follow the compelling insights of Nicole Aljoe’s concept of “embedded narratives.” While Aljoe is writing about West Indian slave narratives, her injunction to change our reading practices so that we can register how many long eighteenth century white authored texts incorporate evidence of diasporic African voices and experiences has much wider ramifications as a reading methodology. Indeed, Aljoe argues that many texts which register the presence of diasporic African knowledge and cultural practices “were not separately published and were often embedded in other texts such as travel narratives, diaries, and journals or appear in records kept by legal, medical, and religious institutions” (13). Reading with Aljoe’s reframing in mind allows us to understand (for example) that while Cesar may not have prepared his cure for poison for publication, he is indeed the author of that knowledge and of that cure; see, Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709-1838* (Palgrave, 2011), 13.

Of all the texts gathered in this edition, “The Negro Cesar’s Cure for Poison” may well have the longest and most promiscuous circulation. As Keri Holt argues, texts like Cesar’s cure exemplify how publications like “the *South Carolina and Georgia* almanacs” regularly contained “domestic advice [that] was acquired from slaves” which was subsequently reprinted in other

venues; see Holt, *Reading These United States: Federal Literacy in the Early republic, 1176-1830* (The University of Georgia Press, 2019), 65. The historian Kathleen Murphy has explored how eighteenth century white physicians often positioned themselves as authenticators of “the collective know-how of peoples of Amerindian and African descent.” In so doing, she argues that cures like Cesar’s were not considered “true knowledge” but the product of “rude Experience” until reframed by western science as proven medical knowledge. Murphy demonstrates how operant racist prejudices against “remedies used” by people of color were maintained even when they were known to be effective; see Murphy, “Translating the vernacular: Indigenous and African knowledge in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic,” *Atlantic Studies*, 8.1 (2011), 39. Lisa Wood charts how Cesar’s cure was reprinted in several British domestic manuals and home medical guides. For Wood, these reprintings are evidence of a cultural interest in linking “the material practices of cooking and curing (in the medical sense)” and part of an effort to promote nutritional health; see Wood, “Wholesome Nutriment” for the Rising Generation: Food, Nationalism, and Didactic Fiction at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 21.4 (2009), 620. The geographer Judith A. Carney details the ways in which white planters both simultaneously relied on diasporic Africans knowledge of botanical cures even as they consistently feared “being poisoned” by people they enslaved. Carney argues that “enslaved medical practitioners” like Cesar often “relied upon pharmacopoeias of roots and herbs” to “treat medical problems” in ways that continued to elude white physicians; see Carney, “African Traditional Plant Knowledge in the Circum-Caribbean Region,” *Journal of Ethnobiology* 23:2 (2003), 170.

There are scattered other references to the other texts in this edition across the work of a variety of literary critics and historians of abolition and enslavement. Among these, we would

recommend John Saillant’s work on “The Desperate Negro,” which argues, “the meaning of Quashi’s narrative is that benevolence can characterize black-white relations, while slavery is essentially a violation of benevolence.” For Saillant, “Quashi’s beauty is joined to benevolence, while the violation of his beauty by the whipping his master plans is joined to slavery and its abnegation of benevolence. Quashi’s body, in his skin and even his thighs, is central to the narrative, while his master, a typical white character, hardly appears as a body;” see Saillant, “The Black Body Erotic and the Republican Body Politic, 1790-1820,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 5.3 (1995), 416. Mukhtar Ali Isani generatively examines how “antislavery writing” often constructed “literary persona” of diasporic Africans by using “a sentimental depiction of their African past;” see, Isani, “Far from “Gambia’s Golden Shore”: The Black in the Late Eighteenth-Century American Imaginative Literature,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 36.3 (1979), 353. Similarly, Jack B. Moore in writing about the “The Wretched Taillah” argues that “she was sentimentalized almost beyond recognition,” even as “her story is in several ways a paradigm of the technique and content of early American stories about” diasporic Africans; see Moore, “Images of the Negro in Early American Short Fiction,” *The Mississippi Quarterly*, 22.1 (1968-69), 47. For readers interested in the relationship between capitalism and enslavement surfaced in “A Modern Anecdote” we recommend chapter six of Cedric J. Robinson’s path-breaking *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 1983) and Ian Baucom’s “Specters of the Atlantic,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100.1 (2001), 61-82. Edward Derbyshire Seeber argues that Butini’s *Lettres Africaines, ou Histoire de Phédima et d’Abensar* was a major French anti-slavery text alongside Gabriel Mailhol’s *Philosophe Nègre* (1764) and Jean-François de Saint-Lambert’s *Ziméo* (1769): see *Anti-Slavery Opinion in France during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Johns Hopkins, 1937). Roger Mercier, in

“Les Debuts de l’Exotisme Africain en France,” notes that Aphra Behn’s short and popular novel *Oroonoko* (1688) was translated into French in 1745, inspiring a wave of anti-slavery fictions.

For those interested in more in-depth discussions of the larger abolitionist and antislavery print cultures of which these texts are a small subset, we recommend the following: Philip Gould’s *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the 18th Century Atlantic World* (Harvard University Press, 2003); chapter two of Seth Cotlar’s *Tom Paine’s America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (University of Virginia Press, 2011); James G. Basker’s “American Antislavery Literature, 1688 to 1865: An Introduction,” *Études anglaises* 70.3 (2017), 259-278; and, Paul J. Polgar’s *Standard-Bearers of Equality: America’s First Abolitionist Movement* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

THE DESPERATE NEGRO

“QUASHI was brought up in the family with his master, as his play fellow, from his childhood. Being a lad of towardly parts,² he rose to be driver, or black overseer, under his master, when the plantation fell to him by succession. He retained for his master the tenderness that he had felt in childhood for his playmate; and the respect with which the relation of master inspired him, was softened by the affection which the remembrance of their boyish intimacy kept alive in his breast. He had no separate interest of his own; and in his master’s absence redoubled his diligence, that his affairs might receive no injury from it. In short, here was the most delicate, yet most strong, and seemingly indissoluble³ tie, that could bind master and slave together.

² *Towardly parts*: a favorable disposition

³ *Indissoluble*: unbreakable

Though the master had judgment to know when he was well served, and policy to reward good behaviour, he was inexorable⁴ when a fault was committed; and when there was but an apparent cause of suspicion, he was too apt to let prejudice usurp the place of proof. Quashi could not exculpate⁵ himself to his satisfaction, for something done contrary to the discipline of the plantation; and was threatened with the ignominious⁶ punishment of the cart whip, and he knew his master too well, to doubt of the performance of his promise.

A negroe, who was grown up to manhood, without undergoing a solemn cart whipping (as some by good chance will, especially if distinguished by any accomplishment among his fellows) takes pride in what he calls the smoothness of his skin, its being unraised by the whip; and he would be at more pains, and use more diligence to escape such cart whipping, than many of our lower sort would use to shun the gallows. It is not uncommon for a sober good negroe to stab himself mortally, because some boy overseer has flogged him for what he reckoned a trifle, or for his caprice,⁷ or threatened him with a flogging, when he thought he did not deserve it. Quashi dreaded this mortal wound to his honour, and slipt away unnoticed, with a view to avoid it.

“It is usual for slaves, who expect to be punished for their own fault, or their master’s caprice, to go to some friend of their master’s, and beg him to carry them home, and mediate for them. This is found to be so useful, that humane masters are glad of the pretence of such mediation, and will secretly procure it, to avoid the necessity of punishing for trifles; it otherwise not being prudent to pass over without correction, a fault once taken notice

⁴ *Inexorable*: unyielding

⁵ *Exculpate*: vindicate

⁶ *Ignominious*: disgraceful

⁷ *Caprice*: whim

of; while, by this method, an appearance of authority and discipline is kept up, without the severity of it. Quashi therefore withdrew, resolved to shelter himself, and save the glossy honours of his skin, under favour of this custom, till he had an opportunity of applying to an advocate. He lurked among his master's negroe huts; and his fellow slaves had too much honour, and too great a regard for him, to betray to their master the place of his retreat. Indeed, it is hardly possible in any case, to get one slave to inform against another; so much more honour have they than Europeans of low condition.

“The following day a feast was kept, on account of his master's nephew then coming of age; amidst the good humour of which, Quashi hoped to succeed in his application: but before he could execute his design, perhaps just as he was setting out to go and solicit this mediation, his master, while walking about his fields, fell in with him. Quashi, on discovering him, ran off, and the master, who was a robust man, pursued him. A stone or a clod, tripped Quashi up, just as the other reached out his hand to seize him. They fell together, and wrestled for the mastery; for Quashi also was a stout man, and the elevation of his mind added vigour to his arm. At last, after a severe struggle, in which each had been several times uppermost, Quashi got firmly seated on his master's breast, now panting and out of breath; and with his weight, his thighs, and one hand, secured him motionless. He then drew out a sharp knife, and while the other lay in dreadful expectation, helpless, and shrinking into himself, he thus addressed him: “Master, I was bred up with you from a child; I was your playmate when a boy; I have loved you as myself; your interest has been my study; I am innocent of the cause of your suspicion; had I been guilty, my attachment to you might have pleaded for me. Yet, you have condemned me to a punishment, of which I must ever have borne the disgraceful marks; thus only can I avoid them.” With these words, he drew the knife with all

his strength across his own throat, and fell down dead without a groan, on his master, bathing him in his blood.

THE WRETCHED TAILLAH: AN AFRICAN STORY.

ON the banks of the Gambia⁸ was born the beautiful Taillah. Her shape was tall, regular, and elegant. Her soul seemed formed for the highest state of refinement, and had she been born of a different complexion, in this, or any civilized country, she would have been esteemed, admired and caressed. But, alas! how different her destiny! Strange that those, who call themselves civilized, without one tear of pity, can wantonly involve in misery, souls of a more dignified nature than theirs!

Taillah was the only daughter of Tantee, prince of the fertile plains stretched along the south side of the river Gambia. Of a fierce and cruel disposition, war was his only delight and employment. The northern side of the river was possessed by Fidlao, a prince less powerful, but in whose soul, although uncultivated by science, humanity and every social virtue flourished. With anguish of soul he beheld the fertile plains watered by the Gambia, still more fertilized by the heaps of his slaughtered countrymen. But overtures of peace to Tantee were in vain, while those Americans, whose traffick is the human species, gladly purchased the captives. Tantee conducted his wars with vigour, and frequently with success. To defend his subjects was Fidlao's only desire. He never could think of

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⁸ *Gambia*: The Gambia River is a major river in West Africa, running from deep in the interior to the Atlantic Ocean. It was long a major commercial artery into African markets and central to the traffic in enslaved people.

vending⁹ any of Tantee's subjects to the Americans, whom he ever considered as the prime cause of all their desolating wars, and as the scourges of the God of his ancestors on his species. In a battle, fought by the two princes, Fidlao was defeated and his son, Tildah, the inheritor of all his father's virtues, was taken, and immediately bound hands and feet, and cast into a dungeon, hung around by the curtain of darkness and despair. Not a ray of light to cheer his body, nor a faint glimmering of hope to support his drooping soul—Fidlao seeing that all was lost, in a fit of despair thrust a dagger into his breast, heaping curses on Tantee, and the inhuman purchasers of his friends and countrymen.

The next day was kept a festival by the subjects of Tantee: but to Taillah it was a day of sorrow. The generous supporters of humanity, and the defenders of liberty, were sunk into wretchedness, and oblivion; while cruel barbarity oppression and tyranny stepped forth and reaped the rewards of virtue. The ghosts of her wantonly¹⁰ butchered countrymen haunted her imagination: the thoughts of her father's vending the unfortunate captives to the Americans, tortured her soul with anguish: The misfortunes of a young, brave, humane and virtuous prince wrought so strongly on her feelings, that she determined to effect his escape or become a sacrifice for virtue in distress. She went immediately to the keeper of the dungeon, and by bribery, at last gained admission to the gloomy confinement of Tildah. The prince, perceiving a ray of light from her torch, and supposing the message was for his murder, cried out with joy—O God of the ancestors of Fidlao, I thank thee for this prospect of a speedy end to all my miseries. Death is all I desire: Tantee has seized my kingdom, and what have I left? Separate me not from my murdered friends, separate me

not from the good Fidlao. Hear my prayers, O God of the ancestors of Fidlao, for I have served thee with a pure heart. I am wretched, but, not vicious. As he thus spoke, he heard these gentle accents—"Tildah, worthy Tildah, where art thou?" What was his astonishment, when he saw before him the beautiful Taillah melting into tears of pity! She gave him some refreshment, unbound him, and retired, promising to return in the evening, and effect his escape. She took the keeper of the dungeon to her apartment, and showing him her treasures, offered them all, if he would permit the prince to depart, and report that he was dead, which was daily expected to happen. It was too tempting. He complied. She brought him from the dungeon, and they, with a trusty female servant, took a boat and fell down the river. In searching along the coast for a place of reception, they were driven to an uninhabited island. Here they resolved to fix their residence, free from the horrid scenes of war, cruelty and devastation. Their hearts beat in perfect concord, and all was harmony and love. Each revolving year, was witness of their happiness. Four years had now elapsed, since Tildah had bid adieu to misery, when, walking on the shore after a violent storm, he perceived a white person on a piece of timber. He immediately took his boat and brought him on shore. He found that he was the captain of a ship from an American port, for the express purpose of enslaving his fellow countrymen. He had ever been accustomed to consider persons of this complexion, as monsters of inhumanity, whose happiness consisted in making others miserable. But, he was in distress, and the heart of Tildah melted into pity. He led him to his cottage and treated him as a brother. The American tarried with Tildah a year, and had a son by the female servant. At length, being anxious to revisit his native country, he prevailed

⁹ *Vending*: selling

¹⁰ *Wantonly*: recklessly

on Tildah to convey him, in his boat, to the *embouchure*¹¹ of the Gambia, hoping there to find some American vessel. He promised Tildah, in the most sacred manner, that he would never make known the place of his retirement. Tildah returned safe to his anxious Taillah. The captain found a vessel, almost ready to sail for the West Indies, waiting to purchase only a few more slaves. This perjured villain, breaking through every bond of humanity and gratitude, informed the captain of Tildah's retirement. They sailed directly for the island, and seized the noble Tildah, and the beautiful Taillah with four children, together with the female servant and her infant, and cast them into the hold of the ship. O God! why slept thy thunder and crushed not the execrated¹² heads of such monsters of ingratitude and inhumanity!

¹¹ *Embouchure*: the mouth of the river, in this case where the Gambia meets the Atlantic

¹² *Execrated*: accursed

THE NEGRO CESAR'S CURE FOR POISON.

[For discovering which the Assembly of South Carolina, purchased his freedom, and gave him an annuity of one hundred pounds.]¹³

TAKE the roots of plantane¹⁴ and wild hoarhound¹⁵, fresh or dried, three ounces, boil them together in two quarts of water to one quart,¹⁶ and strain it; of this decoction¹⁷ let the patient take one third part, three mornings fasting, successively, from which, if he finds any relief, it must be continued until he is perfectly recovered: On the contrary, if he finds no alteration after the third

¹³ When this cure was first published, in the May 7-14, 1750 issue of *The South-Carolina Gazette*, it was prefaced with the following lines: "Mr. Timothy, I am commanded by the Commons House of Assembly to send you the inclosed, which you are to print in the CAROLINA GAZETTE as soon as possible: It is the Negro *Cesar's* CURE for POISON, and likewise his Cure for the Bite of a *Rattle-Snake*: For discovering of which the General Assembly hath thought fit to purchase his Freedom, and grant him an Allowance of £100 *per Ann.* during Life." This note was signed by James Irving, and dated May 9, 1750; the cure appeared on the paper's front page. The *Massachusetts Magazine* reprint, reproduced here, is faithful to the 1750 original, save for minor changes in capitalization, punctuation, and italicization, and a few words.

¹⁴ *Plantane*: any of various low-growing plants of the genus *Plantago* (family Plantaginaceae)

¹⁵ *Hoarhound*: a flowering plant long associated with curing coughs.

¹⁶ *two quarts of water to one quart*: to boil the two quarts of water until they are reduced to one quart.

¹⁷ *Decoction*: concentrate

dose, it is a sign that the patient has not been poisoned at all, or that it has been with such poison that Cesar's antidote will not remedy, so may leave off the decoction.

During the cure the patient must live on spare diet, and abstain from eating mutton, pork, butter, or any other fat or oily food.

N. B. The plantane or hoarhound will either of them cure alone, but they are most efficacious¹⁸ together.

In summer you may take one handful of the roots and branches of each, in place of three ounces of the roots each.

For drink, during the cure, let them take the following.

Take of the roots of goldenrod,¹⁹ six ounces, or in summer, two large handfuls of the roots and branches together, and boil them in two quarts of water to one quart, to which also may be added, a little hoarhound and sassafras;²⁰ to this decoction, after it is strained, add a glass of rum or brandy, and sweeten it with sugar for ordinary drink.

Sometimes an inward fever attends such as are poisoned, for which he ordered the following.

Take one pint of wood ashes and three pints of water, stir and mix them well together, let them stand all night and strain or decant the lye off in the morning, of which ten ounces may be taken six mornings following, warmed or cold according to the weather.

¹⁸ *Efficacious*: effective

¹⁹ *Goldenrod*: a flowering plant native to both Europe and North America, with yellow daisy like flowers in summer

²⁰ *Sassafras*: dried bark of the sassafras tree (native to North America), which, since its "discovery" by Spanish explorers in the 16C, was valued for its medicinal purposes

These medicines have no sensible operation, though sometimes they work on the bowels, and give a gentle stool.

The symptoms attending such as are poisoned, are as follow.

A pain of the breast, difficulty of breathing, a load at the pit of the stomach, an irregular pulse, burning and violent pains of the viscera²¹ above and below the navel, very restless at night, sometimes wandering pains over the whole body, a reaching inclination to vomit, profuse sweats, (which prove always serviceable) slimy stools, both when costive and loose, the face of a pale and yellow colour, sometimes a pain and inflammation of the throat, the appetite is generally weak, and some cannot eat any thing; those who have been long poisoned, are generally very feeble and weak in their limbs, sometimes spit a great deal, the whole skin peels, and lastly the hair falls off.

Cesar's cure for the bite of a rattle snake.

Take of the roots of plantane or hoarhound, (in summer roots and branches together) a sufficient quantity; bruise them in a mortar, and squeeze out the juice, of which give as soon as possible, one large spoonful; If the patient is swelled, you must force it down his throat; this generally will cure; but if he finds no relief in an hour after you may give another spoonful which never hath failed.

If the roots are dried, they must be moistened with a little water.

To the wound, may be applied a leaf of good tobacco, moistened with rum.

²¹ *Viscera*: internal organs, here abdominal

A MODERN ANECDOTE.

A NEGRO fellow being strongly suspected of having stolen goods in his possession, was taken before a certain justice of the peace in Philidelphia and charged with the offence. The fellow was so hardened as to acknowledge the fact, and to add to his crime the audacity to make the following speech:—‘Massa Justice, me know me got dem tings from Tem dere, and me tink Tom teal dem too—but what den, massa? dey be only a piccaninny²² corkscrew and a piccaninny knife—one cost six pence, and tudda a shilling—and me pay Tom honestly for dem massa.

‘A very pretty story truly—You know they were stolen, and yet you alledge in excuse, you paid honestly for them—I’ll teach you a better law than that, sirrah!—Dont you know Caesar, the *receiver is as bad as the thief?*²³ You must be severely whipt, you black rascal you!

‘Very well, massa!—If de black rascal be whipt for buying tolen goods, me hope white be whipt *fer same ting*, when we catch him, as well as well as Caesar,’ ‘*To be sure,*’ rejoined his worship. ‘Well den, says Caesar, he Tom’s massa—hold him fast, constable—he buy Tom as I buy de piccaninny knife and de piccaninny corkscrew. He knew very well *poor Tom* be tolen from his old fader and mudder; de knife and de corkscrew have neider.’ Whether it was that his worship, as well as Tom’s master, were smitten with the justice or the severity of Caesar’s application, we know not: but after a few minutes’ pause, Caesar was dismissed, and the action discharged.

²² *Piccaninny*: small in size or value, but also a pejorative term for black children, from a Portuguese-based pidgin

²³ *Receiver is as bad as the thief?*: A version of Proverbs 29:24, the implication being that the laws governing property are biblically justified

PHEDIMA and ABENSAR: AN AFRICAN TALE.

PHEDIMA, the daughter of an African Chief, passed her days in indifference and repose, till she became acquainted with Abensar: It was then that she knew what it was to love. She forgot her former amusements and pleasures. She even neglected her attire: Her coral and her beads were no longer interesting to her. The image of Abensar was present to her night and day: She saw him in her dreams; she saw him when she awaked: the enchanting sound of his voice ever vibrated on her ear; his conversation, his features, were engraved on her mind.—Abensar was of the same tribe with Phedima; he surpassed all the young men of his age in the majesty and comeliness²⁴ of his deportment and figure; and his countenance had a happy mixture of tenderness and vivacity. He saw Phedima, and told her that she was handsome. This compliment, which the young African had so often heard, seemed to have a peculiar propriety when it came from Abensar. For the first time, pleasure and pride made themselves known to her heart; and she scrupled not to discover to him her sentiments. She perceived no good reason why she should imitate the women of Europe, who conceal the truth, and give falsehood the name of decency.

But in delivering over her mind to the impressions of love, she also made it subject to uneasiness and inquietude. Did Abensar neglect for one day to see her? she fancied him unfaithful. Did she hear a gentle murmur in the grove? she fancied that her lover was about to surprize her. She hastened to him, while a deep silence informed her of her mistake, and plunged her into a sea of cruel reflections. She could not long have endured this state of uncertainty and trouble, if the absent Abensar had not frequently sought, by letters, to calm her

²⁴ *Comeliness*: attractiveness

chagrin;²⁵ to assure her, that she had no rival in his affections; and to renew, a thousand times, his oaths of fidelity.²⁶ ‘Is there a fair one, he said, who can enter into competition with Phedima? The countenance of other women have acquired a fine tinct, and a brilliant lustre, by the juice of shrubs and of trees:²⁷ Their faces and persons are only remarkable by the figures with which they have embellished them. They please solely by the aids of art; but you inchant by the simple gifts of nature. They admire the distinctions of rank; you are attached to my person. It is from a principle of self love that they seem devoted to me; but your affection is sincere, and founded in sentiment. My dear Phedima! It is impossible that I can love any other than you.’

It was the most earnest desire of Abensar, that the father of his mistress should approve his choice. He threw himself at his knees; but the old warrior would not consent to crown his wishes, till he had distinguished himself by his courage, and had contributed to repel the assaults of an enemy, who had incroached on the territory of his tribe. The lover told him, that the hopes of being related to him would animate his valour, that he considered himself as charged with the glory of Phedima and his own, and that he could not but prove himself the most intrepid of men. He confirmed his attestation²⁸ by oaths; but the father of Phedima knew well that war and love do not suit together. The youthful Abensar gave himself up intirely to his passion: Glory appeared to him in the character of a relentless tyrant, who opposed his happiness: He begged of his mistress,

²⁵ *Chagrin*: unease

²⁶ *Fidelity*: loyalty

²⁷ *a fine tinct, and a brilliant lustre, by the juice of shrubs and of trees*: implying the use of plant products in the production of cosmetics. Phedima in other words has a natural beauty whereas other women have enhanced theirs.

²⁸ *Attestation*: a formal swearing

that she would throw off the paternal yoke, and that she would retire with him to a distant solitude, where they might enjoy themselves, and conform to the laws of nature. But Phedima could not stifle the sentiments of filial²⁹ piety, to follow too passionate a lover. ‘What is it that you propose to me, Abensar? Whither do you wish that we should carry our guilty transports? Would you cease to be a citizen and a son to be a lover? Shall the tenderness, which gives force to honourable minds, enfeeble yours? But I will not load you with reproaches; I, who, for a moment, was your accomplice; I who, at a time, was disposed to accompany you to any climate, and blindly to precipitate³⁰ myself into an abyss of misery? Forbid it Heaven! that you—that I—should be so criminal as to yield to such an unworthy impulse. Do you not perceive that your life, your fortune, and honour appertain to society and your country, and that you cannot abandon them, without being guilty of the highest injustice? But it is not for me to lay before you your duties. It is the image of my father that has re-established order in my disturbed imagination. I thought I beheld him with a mournful aspect, and, with hair dishevelled, demanding his daughter of every passenger, and lamenting over the blasted honour of his house. I could not support this frightful spectacle: But have not you also a father, who holds out to you his arms: “Whither would you go, my son, says he: It is against the enemy that we must march. I have hardened your infancy by trials of fire and of courage; I have taught you to bear thirst, and hunger, and every inclemency of seasons; it is now your time to act. My sight has failed me, my hand trembles, and my weakness confines me at home. But you are in the prime of life. The State calls for all the vigor of your arm; and I call for it. Give me that protection which, heretofore, I have afforded to you. My son! you do not

²⁹ *Filial*: of a child to a parent

³⁰ *Precipitate*: to move suddenly with force

attend to me. You think of flying, and your unhappy loves are about to reflect a disgrace upon me—are about to tarnish all the lustre of my better days. Reflect; return to your duty; escape the bitterness of your own reflections: and give me some comfort in my last years.”

“The duty, continued Phedima, which parental authority enjoins you, love itself commands, when it has lost its first violence. By conducting ourselves according to the wishes of our fathers, our pleasure will be multiplied. We shall arrive at felicity.³¹ Enter then on the road to glory; I shall invoke every propitious power to give success to your arms; I shall crown you with laurels.”

The highest sentiments and honour of the virtuous African raised the mind of her lover. He no longer preferred the blandishments of voluptuousness³² to the fatigues of war; he became on the contrary an intrepid warrior, who, by actions of prowess and courage, was about to place himself in the rank of the protectors of his country, and to join this honourable title to that of being the husband of Phedima.—He marched under the standard of the valiant Haroun, the father of his mistress. His exploits soon distinguished him from the croud of heroes who fought around him.—His achievements delivered Haroun from his enemies; and the grateful old Chief declared him his son-in-law on the field of battle. The victorious lover, loaded with spoil, standards, and trophies, hastened to throw them at the feet of his mistress. No obstacle seemed now to offer itself to their union and happiness. The hatred, notwithstanding, of a jealous rival, who had, more than once, made known to Phedima his impetuous transports, was about to interrupt their felicity. Minds, pure and innocent, are not apt to be suspicious. Abensar and Phedima, accompanied with their friends and a priest, had

gone into a favourite grove, there to be united to each other.—Already they had joined hands, and the priest had pronounced the benediction;³³ when a confused murmur was heard, and a body of horsemen appeared in a hostile form. It was the perfidious³⁴ Alzaide, at the head of a powerful band of the enemy. Abensar had recourse to his arrows and his javelins; he flies where the danger calls him; but it was in vain that he attempted to infuse valour into his followers. They could not face such a superiority of numbers, and became the prizes of the victor. The vindictive Alzaide tore Phedima from the altar, and sold her, with her father and many of her friends, to a company of Europeans, who had touched at that coast. The unfortunate Phedima, awakening from a swoon, found herself among a multitude of strangers, who were despoiling her of coral and [bracelets], and of all the little trinkets which she had received from her lover. In the height of her despair, she called on Abensar; and her disturbed imagination represented him as pale and disfigured, at the feet of his rival. Meanwhile, the vessel moves off from the country, where, she has flattered herself, she was to pass her days in a state of felicity. It arrives at one of the islands of the west,³⁵ and is immediately crouded with a number of merchants, who regard the unfortunate Africans as objects of traffic. Phedima and her father were sold to a rich planter, named Darnley; and here the hope of one day seeing Abensar softened the severity of her toils, and made her resist the attempts of her master to subject her to his pleasures. Her virtue, which the most flattering promises could not overcome, could not but fill him with esteem and friendship. He studied her taste, and informed himself of her desires; he inquired into the usages of her country; and he granted her every thing that she could

³¹ *Felicity*: great happiness

³² *blandishments of voluptuousness*: allure of lush abundance

³³ *Benediction*: [marital] blessing

³⁴ *Perfidious*: deceitful

³⁵ *islands of the west*: one of the West Indian islands.

wish to receive from a father. Time, joined to the singular qualities of Phedima, strengthened his affections for her; he judged that she was worthy of him; and generously offered to raise her to the condition of his wife. But how great was his surprise when he found that the unfortunate African was little ambitious of that honour! Her love for Abensar, and the oaths she had taken to preserve her fidelity to him, were not to be effaced by the distance of time and of place. But what effect is there which the tears of a beloved father will not produce on a tender and affectionate daughter? In the marriage of Phedima, Haroun saw the termination of his misfortunes; and he intreated her, that she would not oppose the wishes of the most generous of masters. ‘Phedima! said he one day to her, with tears in his eyes, has love greater power over your mind than nature? Is your disposition so selfish, that you will sacrifice, to your obstinacy, all the companions of your slavery? Do you wish that your aged parent should continue to be exposed to the insults of the Europeans? Be, for once, the friend of a father, who has long protected you. My liberty will be the price of your submission to Darnley: Obey, nor let me blush at my fetters. A train of circumstances have disengaged you from your promises; and there is nothing that ought to prevent your fulfilling my wishes.’ I shall obey your orders, said this virtuous daughter; I shall espouse³⁶ Darnley.’

This submission was soon to be followed by a bitter repentance.—it happened, that while she was occupied with the cares of her new situation, that her ear was saluted with a voice the most seducing and agreeable. It was the voice of Abensar. This faithful lover would not consent to live without the society of Phedima; and, having learned the route she had been carried engaged in the enterprise of restoring her to himself and to her country. He loaded Phedima with his caresses. ‘Ah! said he; how

much have I suffered! But I shall recover to you your liberty; You shall yet be free and fortunate. Weep not, my Phedima! your calamities are at an end.’

The unfotunate mistress of Abensar told him of her new connections. ‘The constancy, said she, of your love, your looks and your sighs call back to my bosom all my former connections. But virtue requires that I do not give way to them.’ In this sad extremity, Abensar determined to destroy himself. That his death, however, might be useful to his countrymen, who groaned under a cruel oppression, he summoned them to arms. His ardour and the opinion of his valour, gave vigor to his companions. The Europeans’ unprepared, and of inferior force, were almost all put to the sword. Midst the general confusion, the noble minded Phedima, discovered the utmost anxiety to save the life of her husband and master. She dressed herself in his garments; and, being properly disguised to represent him, went out, and presented herself before the rebels.

Abensar, fancying that she was Darnley, prepared for revenge; and the father of Phedima urged him on, and added to his resentment. But, the moment, while he meant to strike, Phedima, throwing aside her disguise, flies into his arms. Possessed of the confidence of the rebels, she was able to dispose them to be more humane.—The chief article for a cessation of hostilities was the grant³⁷ of intire liberty to the Africans.

In the sacred duties of marriage, Phedima found so much employment, that she thought less and less of Abensar. But the death of Darnley allowed her soon an opportunity of returning, without blame, to her earliest love. The respect, however, which she owed to her first husband, did not permit

³⁷ *The chief article for a cessation of hostilities was the grant: the negotiated peace between rebellious enslaved people and their enslavers culminates in the emancipation of the Africans*

³⁶ *Espouse: marry*

her, for some time, to celebrate her second nuptials. At length, in a connection with her beloved Abensar, she began to experience the sweets of happiness, and continued to enjoy all that bewitching satisfaction of which two minds, formed to unite, are susceptible.