

For the New York Observer.

**MEROH, A NATIVE AFRICAN.**

In the fall of 1826 I went to Wilmington, N. C., to preach a few Sabbaths in the Presbyterian church. While there I was visited by a venerable man, a native of Africa. He came to the door of my room, entered, and approached me. I rose to receive him. He took my hand between both of his, and earnestly pressed it to his bosom. Our interview was not long, but I received very deep impressions of his moral worth.

I have met him once or twice since, but was commonly hindered from learning much respecting him, as he was much more inclined to hear than to speak—to ask questions than to answer them. Yet from him and from others I have learned the following things.

Meroh was born about the year 1770. If he is still living, as he was by my last advices, he is over ninety years of age. He was born on the banks of the Senegal river, in Eastern Africa. His tribe were the Foolaahs. Their religion was Mahomedanism. Many of them had the Koran and read and wrote the Arabic language. I have now in my possession a letter written by Meroh in Arabic, bearing all the marks of expert penmanship.

I write his name Meroh. It was originally Umeroh. Some write it Moro; and some put it in the French form, Moreau. It is commonly pronounced as if spelled Moro.

Meroh's father in Africa was a man of considerable wealth. He brought up his children delicately. Meroh's fingers are rather effeminate. They are very well tapered. His whole person and gait bear marks of considerable refinement.

At about five years of age he lost his father, in one of those bloody wars that are almost constantly raging in Africa. Very soon thereafter he was taken by an uncle to the capital of the tribe. Here he learned and afterwards taught the Arabic, especially some prayers used by Mahomedans. He also learned some rules of Arithmetic, and many of the forms of business. When a young man he became a dealer in the merohandise of the country, chiefly consisting in cotton cloths. Some years since I saw in some newspaper an account of this man, which I believe to be quite correct. I make an extract:—

"While engaged in trade, some event occurred, which he is very reluctant to refer to, but which resulted in his being sold into slavery. He was brought down to the coast shipped for America, in company with only two who could speak the same language, and was landed at Charleston in 1807, just a year previous to the final abolition of the slave trade. He was soon sold to a citizen of Charleston, who treated him with great kindness, but who, unfortunately for Moreau, died in a short time. He was then sold to one who proved to be a harsh cruel master, exacting from him labor which he had not the strength to perform. From him Moreau found means to escape, and after wandering nearly over the State of South Carolina, was found near Fayetteville, in this State [North Carolina]. Here he was taken up as a runaway, and placed in the jail. Knowing nothing of the language as yet, he could not tell who he was, or where he was from, but finding some coals in the ashes, he filled the walls of his room with piteous petitions to be released, all written in the Arabic language. The strange characters, so elegantly and correctly written by a runaway slave, soon attracted attention, and many of the citizens of the town visited the jail to see him.

"Through the agency of Mr. Mumford, then sheriff of Cumberland county, the case of Moreau was brought to the notice of Gen. James Owen, of Bladen county, a gentleman well known throughout this Commonwealth, for his public services, and always known as a man of generous and humane impulses. He took Moreau out of jail, becoming security for his forthcoming, if called for, and carried him with him to his plantation in Bladen county. For a long time his wishes were baffled by the meanness and the cupidity of a man who had bought the runaway at a small price from his former master, until at last he was able to obtain legal possession of him, greatly to the joy of Moreau. Since then, for more than forty years, he has been a trusted and indulged servant.

"At the time of his purchase by General Owen, Moreau was a staunch Mahomedan, and, the first year at least, kept the fast of Rhamadan, with great strictness. Through the kindness of some friends, an English translation of the Koran was procured for him, and read to him, often with portions of the Bible. Gradually he seemed to lose his interest in the Koran, and to show more interest in the Sacred Scriptures, until he finally gave up his faith in Mahomet, and became a believer in Jesus Christ. He was baptized by Rev. Dr. Snodgrass, of the Presbyterian church, in Fayetteville, and received into the church. Since that time he has been transferred to the Presbyterian church in Wilmington, of which he has long been a consistent and worthy member. There are few Sabbaths in the year in which he is absent from the house of God.

"Uncle Moreau is an Arabic scholar, reading the language with great facility, and translating it with ease. His pronunciation of the Arabic is remarkably fine. An eminent Virginia scholar said, not long since, that he read it more beautifully than any one he ever heard, save a distinguished savant of the University of Halle. His translations are somewhat imperfect, as he never mastered the English language, but they are often very striking. We remember once hearing him read and translate the twenty-third psalm, and shall never forget the earnestness and fervor which shone in the old man's countenance, as he read of the going down into the dark valley, and using his own broken English, said, 'Me no fear, Master's with me there.' There were signs in his countenance, and in his voice, that he knew not only the words, but felt the blessed power of the truth they contained.

"Moreau has never expressed any wish to return to Africa. Indeed, he has always manifested a great aversion to it when proposed, changing the subject as soon as possible. When Dr. Jonas King, now of Greece, returned to this country from the East, he was introduced in Fayetteville to Moreau. Gen. Owen observed an evident reluctance on the part of the old man to converse with Dr. King. After some time he ascertained that the only reason of his reluctance was his fear that one who talked so well in Arabic might have been sent by his own countrymen to reclaim him, and carry him again over the sea. After his fears were removed, he conversed with Dr. King with great readiness and delight.

"He now regards his expatriation as a great Providential favor. 'His coming to this country,' as he remarked to the writer, 'was all for good.' Mahomedanism has been supplanted in his heart by the better faith in Christ Jesus, and in the midst of a Christian family, where he is kindly watched over, and in the midst of a church which honors him for his consistent piety, he is gradually going down to that dark valley, in which, his own firm hope is, that he will be supported and led by the hand of the Great Master, and from which he will emerge into the brightness of the perfect day."

This pious man is supplied with a copy of the Arabic New Testament. He says the

translation is not good. Yet with the aid of the English he has gained much knowledge of God's Word. His appearance, at any time I have seen him, was striking and venerable. His moral and Christian character are excellent. No one who knew him well doubted that he was preparing for a better world. Perhaps he has already gone to the rest of the redeemed.

A WAYFARING MAN.