

Interesting account and anatomical description of Claude Ambroise Seurat. Called L'anatomie vivante; or, The living skeleton, now exhibiting at the Chinese saloon, no. 94, Pall Mall, London.

Contributors

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INTERESTING ACCOUNT
AND
ANATOMICAL DESCRIPTION
OF

CLAUDE AMBROISE SEURAT.

IN this enlightened age, when science has advanced with rapid strides, and borne down before it every prejudice which ignorant and interested pretenders have attempted to oppose to its course; when the excellence of the arts, of literature, commerce, chemistry, and medicine, have arrived at great perfection, owing to fair discussion and open enquiry, every man must feel proud and conscious that he is rendering a true and important benefit to mankind in general, and to his own country in particular, whenever he is the instrument through providence, of bringing before the observation of scientific men, any object, calculated, through their enquiries and researches, to meliorate the general condition of our corporeal state, and render us more intimately acquainted with the formation of the human frame, and the extraordinary sports of nature, occasionally exhibited in its construction. Such were the views of those who brought

forward the wonderful being, who forms the subject of this interesting narrative.

It is considered, that independent of the advancement of scientific anatomy, he will prove of very high interest to the naturalist and the philosopher; for no one can contemplate the existence of such a phenomenon, without its raising within him a strong and earnest desire to see, and enquire into the causes, which may have given rise to so unusual a production in a human being, enjoying perfect tranquillity of mind and health of body.

He was brought to England at a great deal of trouble and considerable cost, for the sole purpose of gratifying the learned, and encreasing the fund of information, so eminently conspicuous in the faculty of the present period.

CLAUDE AMBROISE SEURAT was born at Troyes, in the department of Champagne, on the 10th of April, 1797, and is now therefore twenty-eight years of age. His parents were respectable, but poor, and neither of them presented any deformity, or uncommon appearance; on the contrary, they are stated to have enjoyed robust health. The child on coming into the world, presented the customary baby form, but in proportion as the infant grew, the frame gradually wasted away, and so continued to decrease, until the attainment of its full stature, which occurred at the usual

term of life, at which period, CLAUDE AMBROISE SEURAT had attained his present height, whilst his frame had dwindled to the skeleton form, which it now so decidedly presents.

In France, where he ate very little of any animal food, a penny French-roll was enough for a day's sustenance; but as he now partakes of a small quantity of animal diet, his bread is reduced accordingly.

As regards his feeding, those dishes which afford most nourishment, satisfy him the quickest; and two or three ounces a day are quite sufficient.

In France he was accustomed to drink the wine of his country; but in England he partakes of wines greatly diluted with water, finding the liquors here so much stronger; as the Champagne he usually drank, was what is denominated *vin du pays*, or small wine, of which there is none in this country. In eating, he masticates his victuals very much, taking small pieces, as the passage to the stomach would not admit of any great repletion; and in drinking the same precaution is required, otherwise suffocation would ensue. His digestion is extremely good, and the evacuations of nature regularly performed.

It is a singular fact, that such is the extreme sensitiveness of this almost non-des-

cript, or sport of nature, that when touched on the left side with the finger, the surface of the body, to a certain extent, is observed to manifest its sympathy, by an involuntary chill, which contracts the pores, and produces that roughness of surface, vulgarly known by the denomination of goose's skin. In raising either of his feet from the floor, the limb appears to be distended uselessly from the knee, and we cannot better illustrate the idea, than by that sensation we commonly experience upon allowing a limb to remain too long in one position, thereby causing a temporary strangulation of the vessels, known by the common term of the foot being asleep.

Previous to the arrival of this extraordinary creature in England, the French Physicians, who had inspected him, gave it as their opinion, that his lungs were placed in a different position to that usually occupied in the human frame.

Since his arrival, **SIR ASTLEY COOPER**, by whom he has been visited, finds that his heart is placed so much out of the common region allotted to it, that it is precisely its own length lower than if properly placed.

Many attempts were made to have **CLAUDE AMBROISE SEURAT** presented to the French King, but the father conceiving that he might be consigned to some wretched asylum, there to

subsist upon a miserable pension, uniformly objected to the idea, and indeed very justly as there is little liberality or feeling displayed in regard to such objects on the other side of the channel.

From the statements made by the father, it appears that the French gentlemen of the faculty, who visited his son, were so unfeelingly brutal in pawing and pinching him in every direction, that the son refused to see them at all afterwards, and thus imbibed such a distaste for his professional countrymen, that he determined to shew himself no more, and in consequence the Parisian *Ecole de Medicine* has never been made acquainted with his existence.

Many proposals were made to the father for the purchase of the body of his son, CLAUDE AMBROISE SEURAT, in the event of his demise; but he uniformly rejected the same. A medical gentleman, particularly in Burgundy, offered him a *carte blanche*, which the parent, with feelings highly honorable to himself, refused, stating his determination, that in the event of his son's demise, he should be peaceably consigned to the cemetery of his native city.

While at Rouen, no less than one thousand five hundred persons flocked in one day to see the living skeleton, on his road to England.

The health of this singular being has been very good. His respiration is somewhat confined, being the necessary result of a contraction of the lungs; yet, upon the whole, he does not appear to be much inconvenienced on that account, in consequence of the little exercise he takes, and the quiescent state of the animal system.

In regard to the texture of the skin, of this living wonder, it is of a dry parchment-like appearance, which, covering any other human form, would not answer the purposes of its functions, but seems calculated alone to cover the slender juiceless body of the being whom nature intended to array with it.

The ribs are not only capable of being distinguished, but may be clearly separated and counted one by one, and handled like so many pieces of cane; and, together with the skin which covers them, resemble more the hoops and outer covering of a small balloon, than anything in the ordinary course of nature.

If any thing can exceed the ghastly appearance, displayed by this wonderful phenomenon, it is that taken by profile; which, taken from the projection of the shoulder, pursuing the same down through the extreme hollow of the back, and then following the line to the front of the hip, forms a complete figure of 3. In the front appears the unnatural projection

of the chest, from the falling in of the abdomen; the prominence of the left side of the body, in consequence of the position of the heart; and the sudden protrusion of the posteriors; forming, as it were, a zig-zag human frame, scarcely recognizable by the standard rules of humanity.

We come now to the action produced by the effort of the lungs, and which, strange as it may appear, does not proceed from the chest, as in ordinary cases, but from the lower extremity of the abdomen, as though the organs of respiration, from excessive laxity, had absolutely descended from their proper sphere, and that by a tenacious effort of nature, unwilling to yield possession of her functions, they had accommodated themselves, by time, to such an unnatural and incredible a position.

The subject is presented to view in a state of nudity, save a mere covering of several inches deep round the loins, through which are cut large holes to admit the hip bones to pass through, for the purpose of keeping it in its place.

The general appearance of SEURAT is that of a person almost entirely devoid of muscular substance, and conveys to the mind the idea of a being composed of bones, cellular substance and skin only. It is true the appearances of the face, neck, fore-arm and

calves of the legs, may, in some measure, form exceptions to this general assertion ; since in these situations there is something like flesh.

His height is about 5 feet $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The length of his extremities proportionate to the height of his body. His head is small rather than otherwise. The *cranium* at the back part, over the *occipital* protuberance, is much flattened ; the cervical organs in this situation being very sparsely developed : in other respects the skull is tolerably well formed. SEURAT'S countenance is by no means displeasing ; for though the cheek bones are prominent, the cheeks themselves sunk, and the other features of the face plain, still there is a placid and contemplative expression, which indicates the presence of a serene and thoughtful mind, claiming for itself, from the spectators, feelings of pity and regret.

The neck, on being examined from before, appears short, flat, and broad. The shortness is principally owing to his inability to hold the face properly elevated, in consequence of which the chin drops down, and conceals the upper part of the neck. The flatness depends on the little muscular and cellular substance present, and on the great breadth of the neck, which takes from its natural rotundity. This great breadth is caused by the peculiar form and situation of the *scapulæ*, the upper

angles of which, instead of laying on the posterior portions of the uppermost ribs, are turned over the shoulder, and pass so far forward, as nearly to reach the middle of the *clavicles*, where their situation may be easily seen from before. Of course the muscles called *levator scapulæ*, which arise from the upper vertebræ of the neck, and usually pass downwards, and a very little outwards, in this case, pass very much outwards, in a direction towards the shoulder joint, and extend the neck considerably in a lateral direction.

The *larynx*, as far as can be judged of, from an external examination, is well formed, and that protuberance of the *thysoir* cartilage called *pomum adami*, prominent.

The formation of the upper extremities and chest, is one of the most remarkable features of this man. The left *scapula* is higher than the right; both are remarkably prominent, so much so, that when viewed sideways, there appears to be a large tumour underneath the skin, over the lower angle: this arises from the great projection of the lower angle itself from the ribs. It has been already stated, that the upper angle is placed unusually forwards; and at the bottom of the neck, from this point, the *scapula* proceeds backwards, and to permit its closer applica

tion to the upper and back part of the chest, its concave surface is remarkably curved, but still not sufficiently so to prevent the lower angle from projecting in an unseemly manner. This arrangement of the component parts of the *scapula* and its muscles, interferes very much with the freedom of its movements, particularly the rotatory ones, which in other subjects are so varied.

SEURAT can raise his hands and arms from his side, in a lateral direction, to a position nearly horizontal. He cannot, however, pass them far forwards, when thus elevated. He can throw the *scapulæ* backwards, so as to make them almost meet at their lower ends; nevertheless he is unable to lift his hands to his mouth, so as to feed himself in the ordinary way. When eating, he places his elbow on the table before him, then, by raising his hand thus supported, and passing his head downwards, so as to meet it half way as it were, he is able to put his food into his mouth.

The *humerus*, or upper arm, appears quite destitute of muscle, and as if it consisted of bone, skin, vessels, and cellular membrane only. It may be remarked, however, that at that part where the *biceps* muscle is generally, there is a trifling fulness, probably caused by a few fibres of that muscle. When compared

with the *piner* arm, the elbow joint seems considerably enlarged, but in fact is only of natural dimensions. The muscles of the fore arm, though very small, may nevertheless be traced. The hands are perfect in appearance. SEURAT, however, cannot straighten his fingers, but keeps them in a semi-bent position; with this exception, he can use them freely.

The trunk is singularly shaped. Viewed from the front, the chest is not particularly narrow; it measures from one shoulder, to the other, across the *sternum*, sixteen inches. The *sternum* is much flattened, as though it had been driven inwards, towards the *dorsal vertebræ*. In well formed people this bone is a little convex, externally, and concave internally, permitting all possible room for the *thoracic viscera*. In SEURAT however, this order of things is changed, the outer surface of the breast bone being concave, and the internal convex. It is pushed so far inwards, as scarcely to leave more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches or 2 inches between itself and the opposite *vertebræ*.

This position of the *sternum*, and of the ribs, may probably afford an explanation of the causes which produce a slight impediment to his swallowing with dispatch, or such mor-

sels as are not cut very small; and of the unnatural situation of the heart, which, instead of being placed behind the 3d, 4th, and 5th ribs, is observed pulsating very low down behind the 7th, 8th, and 9th ribs, in the situation of the left *hypochondrium*. The five or six lower ribs, called false or floating ribs, are rounder, and approach nearer to nature in their form, thereby affording sufficient space for the heart, stomach, and liver, and some other of the abdominal *viscera*. It is conceived, the upper part of the chest being formed as it is, that without this open sweep of the lower ribs, life could not have been maintained, so much would the functions of the heart, and *chylopretic viscera* have been interrupted. The false ribs descend very low down, on each side, there being scarcely $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches between them and the crest of the *ileum*. The *pelvis* is capacious, and on its front aspect presents nothing extraordinary.

There is an appearance of the abdomen, which must not be passed over. When looking at it, one might almost suppose that it consisted of two cavities, an upper and a lower one, so much is this poor fellow contracted round the loins. The following admeasurement may afford some idea of this circumstance.

	Ft.	In.
Circumference of the chest, directly		
under the armpits, - - -	2	6 $\frac{3}{4}$
Lower down and opposite the second		
false rib, - - - - -	2	2
Round the loins, - - - -	1	9
Round the <i>pelvis</i> , - - - -	2	3 $\frac{1}{2}$

The muscles of the sides of the *pelvis*, partake of the general wasting, in consequence of which the *trochanters* stand out from the *glenon* cavities in the same *gaunt* manner that they do in the true skeleton, being covered by integuments alone. The thighs are imperfect in bulk, and the knees, like the elbows appear enlarged. The calves of the legs seem to have more firm good muscle, than any other part of the body, particularly that of the right leg, which is much more fleshy than the left. The feet are well formed, a trifling overlapping of the toes is probably accidental.

The examination of the back part of SEURAT's body corresponds with the front as far as the general leanness goes. The *occiput* is flat, the neck broad, the *scapula* projecting, the spine crooked, some of the lower cervical *vertebræ* are curved backwards, and there is a curve towards the right side, formed by some of the lower *dorsal vertebræ*. All the bony points of the back part of the body are so prominent

that every individual bone may be distinctly traced by the eye, even at a considerable distance.

On first beholding SEURAT, a person experiences strange feelings of horror, awe, and pity, and might almost imagine that he saw before him, one returned from "that bourne whence no traveller returns:" the first impressions over, he begins to wonder how so frail a being exists, and is surprised, that all those functions, necessary for the continuance of his own life, are regularly and effectively performed. He eats, drinks, and sleeps—the progress of digestion, as carried on throughout the alimentary canal, is regularly executed. The secretions of the liver, kidneys, and skin are separated from the blood, in such quantities as may be deemed necessary for the economy of his frame. His heart performs its office regularly, and sends the blood to the various parts of the body, in due proportions. He can bear the effects of heat and cold, like other people accustomed to lead a sedentary life, and does not need unusual clothes. His mind is better constituted perhaps, than that of many a man better formed in body. He comprehends quickly, and his memory is good. He has learnt to read and write his own language, and is now anxious to become acquainted with ours.

Such is CLAUDE AMBROISE SEURAT, who may justly be considered as the most extraordinary *lusus naturæ*, as an object calculated to throw much and useful light on many interesting questions of the highest importance, towards the advancement of anatomical study. He was accidentally met with in a provincial town, in France, by the gentlemen who have brought him over at a great expence to England, who seeing a portrait of him, were induced to visit him in his then wretched and impoverished condition. They were so forcibly struck with his appearance, and felt convinced that in making the attempt to transport him to this country, they were conferring upon him a present as well as future blessing, and at the same time, affording the enlightened and enterprising faculty of Great Britain, an opportunity of seeing this extraordinary, and to them particularly interesting object.

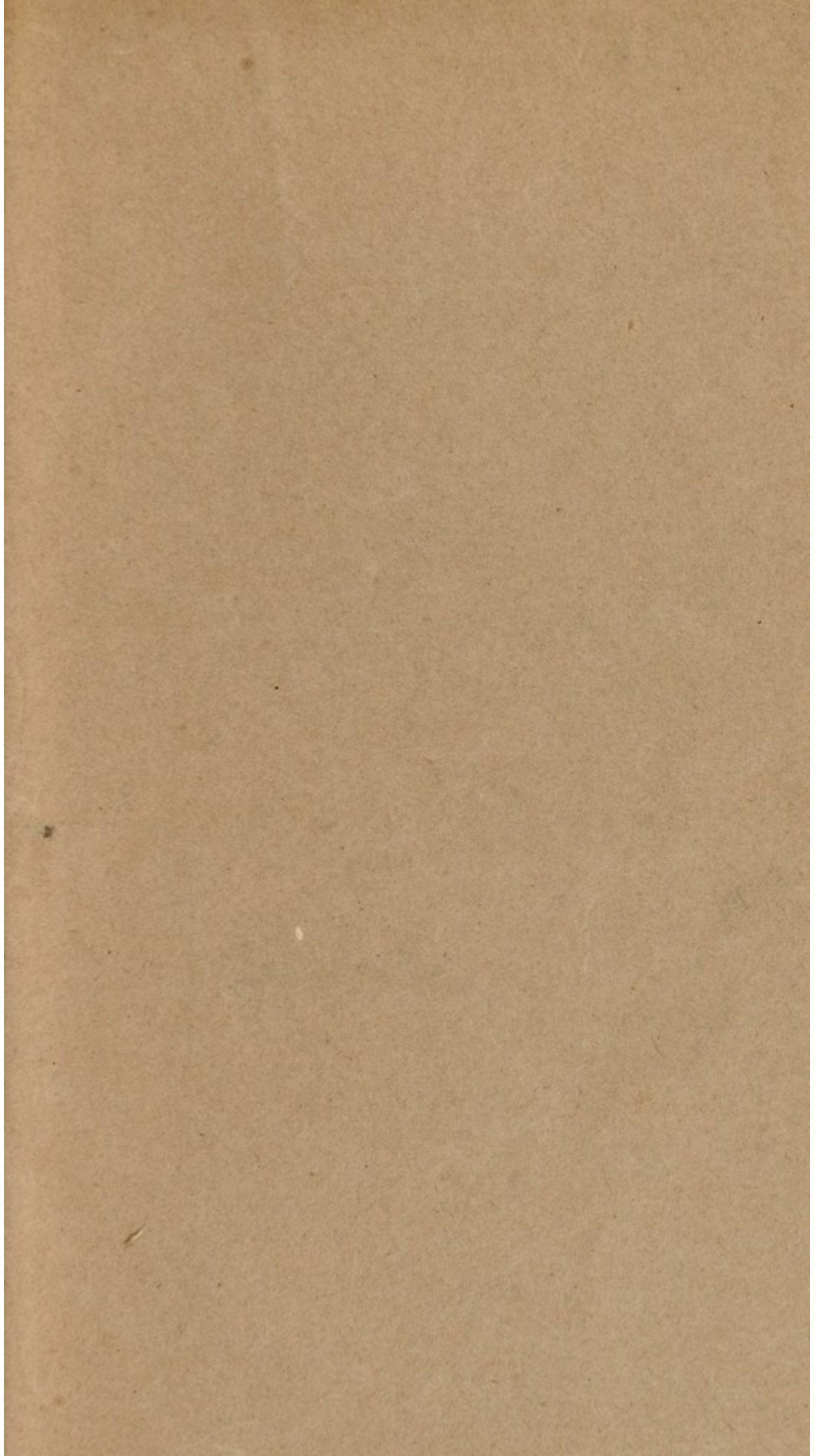
The motives of these gentlemen have been, in one particular, fully answered, in the increased happiness of the object of this memoir, who expresses himself most grateful to them for their kindness and attentions to himself and his family, who now enjoy luxuries and comforts, which they never could have had by remaining in France, and express themselves so perfectly satisfied with their al-

tered condition, as to feel a strong inclination to become naturalized subjects, and remain here for the remainder of their lives.

So far from having any disinclination to being exhibited in this country, **CLAUDE AMBROISE SEURAT** has repeatedly urged his wish to gratify the strong desire of the public, in allowing them to view him without loss of time; and hearing that some of the journals had spoken in strong terms of the bad taste and cruelty of the parties, who had taken him under their protection and care, he begged permission to contradict such statements, and accordingly addressed a letter to that effect to the Editor of the British Press, which cannot fail to satisfy every dispassionate mind as to the motives of those who have brought forward this almost supernatural being.

Trusting to the liberality of a discerning public, and at the urgent solicitations of many medical and private friends, the gentlemen who have brought him over at a very great expence, have consented to exhibit him, for a limited period, satisfied that it is the best means of refuting all the opinions and speculations that have been advanced upon the subject.

FINIS.



o/n Nov./82

