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FOREWORD

Numerous diseases caused by zooparasites play an important rôle in Africa and occur likewise in the Western Hemisphere, especially in Central and South America and the West Indies. It is of considerable interest to know which of these diseases occurred in pre-Columbian America and which were introduced by the slave trade. Early documentation of parasitic diseases in Africa and the Western Hemisphere and information obtained by the study of the slave trade are means to answer this difficult question.

Africa was since antiquity a great reservoir of slaves for Greece, Rome, the Near East, India, Southeast-Asia, and even China.

The discovery of the New World and the conquests by the Spaniards started the slave trade from Africa to America, which during about 350 years brought millions of negroes to the Western Hemisphere. It was soon realized that these African slaves introduced diseases, so that comparatively soon after the Conquest quarantine regulations were introduced by the Spanish authorities.

The origin and the development of the slave trade from Africa to the Western Hemisphere in as far as it was connected with the introduction of diseases are briefly outlined in Part One of the present study.

The slaves in their great majority came from tropical Africa, especially the West coast, where parasitic diseases are wide-spread.

The author limited his subject to human diseases due to zooparasites, including *Treponema* and *Borrelia* infections.

Three main questions are discussed: Which diseases were autochthonous in each continent, which diseases were carried by the slaves from Africa to the New World where they had not occurred before the Conquest and which diseases were transmitted to America where they already existed. In each case the early documentation of the disease is given.

Two subjects which have aroused special interest and have in the past been discussed by many authors are the question whether the *Bubas* represented Syphilis or Yaws or both diseases and the question whether *Malaria* existed in America before the arrival of the Spaniards. These two subjects are dealt with in somewhat greater detail.

The writer has given a considerable number of quotations in

English in connection with early documentation. A few Spanish, French, and Latin quotations have not been translated in order to give the exact meaning of the original texts. The bibliographic references have been placed at the end of each chapter.

The aim of the author was to present the early documentation and the question of the transmission of parasitic diseases from Africa to the Western Hemisphere as a whole. He realizes that future research will probably necessitate the correction of some of his statements and by providing additional material will enable medical historians to answer hitherto unsolved questions.

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Basle, 1969

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