

## THE TRIAL OF ALEXANDER WHISTELO FOR BASTARDY, NEW YORK CITY, 1808.

### THE NARRATIVE.

A dissolute woman in New York City charged a negro coachman with being the father of her child which he denied, and the infant, when produced, proved to be white. The question that the Court had to decide, was, could such things be? Dr. Mitchell, the great expert of the day, thought the thing quite possible, but although he fortified his opinion with much learning and much authority from history, sacred and profane, the Court decided that the woman's claim was not proved.

### THE TRIAL.<sup>1</sup>

*In the Court of General Sessions, New York City, August, 1808.*

HON. DE WITT CLINTON,<sup>2</sup> *Mayor.*

HON. PIERRE C. VAN WYCK,<sup>3</sup> *Recorder.*

MOTT, BINGHAM AND DRAKE, *Aldermen.*

<sup>1</sup>*Bibliography.* "The Commissioners of the Alms-House vs. Alexander Whistelo, a Black man, being a remarkable case of bastardy, tried and adjudged by the Mayor, Recorder and several aldermen of the City of New York. 'The wisely curious rack their brain, to solve this problem, all in vain.' New York. Published by David Longworth, at the Shakespeare Gallery, 1808."

\*Wheeler's Criminal Cases. See 1 Am. St. Tr.

\*Commissioners of the Almshouse vs. Alexander Whistelo, A Black Man: Being a Remarkable Case of Bastardy. New York, 1858.

<sup>2</sup>CLINTON, DE WITT. (1769-1828.) Born Little Britain, N. Y.; elected to New York Senate in 1799; in 1802, he fought a duel with Mr. Swartwout, on account of a political controversy over Aaron Burr; United States Senator, 1802; Mayor of New York, 1803-1815; was several times a State Senator and Lieutenant Governor, and in 1812 was the candidate of the Peace Party for the Presidency of the United States; was elected Governor of New York, 1824, and re-elected in 1826; author of several books.

<sup>3</sup>There are two lawyers of the surname Van Wyck in the New