

T R A V E L S

THROUGH

HOLLAND,
FLANDERS,
GERMANY,
DENMARK,
SWEDEN,

LAPLAND,
RUSSIA,
The UKRAINE,
AND
POLAND,

IN THE

Years 1768, 1769, and 1770.

In which is particularly Minuted,

THE PRESENT STATE

OF

THOSE COUNTRIES,

RESPECTING THEIR

AGRICULTURE, POPULATION,

MANUFACTURES, COMMERCE,

THE ARTS, AND USEFUL UNDERTAKINGS.

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V O L. I.

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by many people retiring here under pretence of the air, but really from very different motives. It is very troublesome to the Dutch. The country is most of it sandy. Gorcum is the next stage, and is situated on the river Waal; it is pretty strongly fortified. They are famous here for fresh water fish; I had as fine tench for my dinner as ever I saw, and the price is moderate. From hence it is 20 miles to Boissleduc, through Worcum and Huesden, both which places are fortified. The country is all indifferent; but even the worst soils, and the most uninteresting natural views, are rendered pleasing by the great spirit of neatness and regularity which is every where found.

Boissleduc is one of the grand frontiers of Holland, being extremely well fortified by art, and better still by nature. It is situated on a rising ground, in the midst of an extensive marsh, through which there would be no possibility of approaching it, were there not causeways made, and these are strongly fortified by redoubts. The town is five miles in circumference, being on the confluence of the three rivers, Domel, Aa, and Drefe; and its ditches are filled by their waters, which contribute much to the strength of the place. These rivers form several very fine

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canals, which run through the heart of the city : over these there are fifty stone bridges. Ten good streets center in the principal square, which has a fine effect ; but this square is surrounded by timber buildings, which are mean. As to public buildings, the church of St. John is a very noble one ; but the clock, which they shew with much ostentation, is not so greatly striking. The Stadthouse is a handsome edifice, raised on the plan (but much smaller) of that at Amsterdam. Here are several very flourishing manufactures, particularly in the linen and woollen way ; and some of knives and other hardware, and also of needles. I made enquiries into the state of these fabrics, and the report I had was more favourable to them than usual ; most of them being in a successful state. The linen trade is not so flourishing as formerly, but, I believe, even that has no reason to complain. The country, for some miles to the South East of this town, has many extensive tracks of waste land, which would well answer cultivation : but the inhabitants do not in general seem much attentive to such business, notwithstanding the success of certain individuals, who have attempted it. Amongst these, there is a Captain Rey, of whose great undertakings I had

had read in two or three books lately published in Holland. This gentleman is settled at Tillebourg, twelve miles from Boisseduc. I took a journey thither, purposely to view his improvements: the history of which is this. In the neighbourhood of that town are very extensive heaths, that are common, the appearance of them not at all inviting, and the value to the public contemptible. M. Rey, of the regiment of Pepin, petitioned the States of Boisseduc for a grant of a part of these heaths, engaging at the same time to cultivate them. His request was refused, from that little spirit of raising difficulties, which is so often found to arm against those who ever purpose any novelties. A year elapsed after this refusal, when, by some means or other, the knowledge of this affair was so spread, that it came to be debated in the States General; where a member, sensible and worthy, I doubt not, proposed, that the Captain's petition should be complied with, as an object that tended evidently to the public good. It was at once agreed to, and Captain Rey put in possession of the lands he had desired.

It is a mistake in several writers to say, that this gentleman executed all his works merely with his pay as a Captain; for I had it from his own mouth, that he began with a

small private fortune, which was of great use to him, more in gaining him credit for the sums he wanted to borrow, than in the application of that particular amount. This fortune, however, was but inconsiderable.

Upon my arrival at this gentleman's farm, I ordered my servant to inform him, that I was an English gentleman on my travels, and having heard much of his great improvements, was come from Boisseduc purposely to desire permission to see them. The Captain came himself to my chaise, and very politely desired me to alight, telling me that he would shew me what little matters he had done with the greatest pleasure, and immediately conducted me to his house. It was about one o'clock; the Captain said, he should dine presently, and in the interim desired permission to shew me his chateau, and his farming offices.

All these, he informed me, he had built by degrees, for that not a stone was to be seen before he began his works. The house is small, but substantial, consisting of a little passage in the center, and a parlour on each side; one is the common room, and the other for company; behind these is a kitchen, and an adjoining room for his work people, with some other conveniencies; and over all four
bed-

bed-chambers. He has a large barn, two stables, three houses for cows, and some other inferior offices, surrounding a square court near the house. When he had shewed me these buildings, he returned to dinner; a slight but genteel repast provided, not expensive, but frugal. The Captain is a man of sense, and has seen enough of the world to avoid that very false politeness of apologies. I give you, Sir, said he, addressing himself to me, good bread, good beer, good wine, and good cheese; as to all the rest, I attend no further. This is certainly the sensible line of life; a man may always have these in store, so as not to be put to a nonplus if any stranger calls upon him. I have heard this language more than once in England, but never till now beheld the conduct really existing, and reduced to practice. The conversation turned upon agriculture, and the Captain's improvements. "When I came here, Sir, said he, I found all an open common, covered with bushes, fern, and other trumpery, without one inclosure, or a single advantage that I could apply to use. I first erected one half of this house, in which I resided while all the other works were going on. I began with a pair of horses and a yoke of oxen, with which I broke up a field of ten acres.

I could have managed a larger undertaking, but the fences were not completed, for I have ever made it a rule of conduct, to inclose completely the piece of land I designed to improve. I have observed some waste lands in France, attempted to be improved, without attending to this rule, but never with success. My crops upon my first inclosure were good, and gave me courage to proceed with spirit in my undertaking. I should have been better able to encounter the difficulties I met with, had I been more practised in husbandry; but for want of experience, I made blunders at the very beginning of my undertaking, for I was too eager after profit in sowing corn, whereas the first business ought to have been the raising winter food for cattle; and this, said he, ought to be the great object in all beginnings." I did not comprehend this reasoning, as it appeared to me, that raising what would buy food for cattle, was in effect raising that food; however, as M. Rey continued his observations, I did not interrupt him for an explanation. "The year following I enclosed two fields, each of ten acres, which I was forced to grub up, to bring the land into order for the plough to work in. This was a great and an expensive work; and I made it the more
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so, from trying an experiment in cutting the surface of a part for burning it, from the practice of a French nobleman, who has published a work on improvements of waste land. The soil also being sandy, I was much troubled in making the fences; my method was to cut a ditch, and plant a live hedge of hornbeam on the bank, which, you will see, has at last answered perfectly well; but the expence of defending it, while young, with the rubbish that was cut from the heath, I found considerable. I purchased this year three cows, and began to think myself a considerable farmer. In this manner, Sir, I continued a gradual increase of cultivated land for five years, making also occasional additions to my live stock, to my servants, and also to my buildings; and it pleased God to prosper my undertaking, that I then found but little difficulty in getting credit for twenty thousand florins, which enabled me to enlarge greatly my undertakings. The year following, I borrowed as much more, and the expenditure of that sum, with the annual one of my own savings, brought my works in such forwardness, that from that time I have had, not only an increasing, but a profitable farm. I have been for some time paying off gradually those incumbrances, and

shall soon be perfectly free on that head. A little experience pointed out my first errors, and the way to avoid them. I made it a point to increase my cattle, as fast as I was able, and could do that only by bringing my lands to bear grass. The common meadows require a rich soil, I therefore adopted the artificial ones. I tried Lucerne, ~~Esparcette~~, clover red and white, spurry, &c. In Lucerne, I have never done any thing, except in one small piece of rich land, that had been manured in a more ample manner than I could possibly afford, if I had extended the culture of it: the great red clover and spurry have been my principal friends; for I may truly say, I have had more assistance from them, than from any other branches of my cultivation. Turnips and carrots I have principally depended on for the winter subsistence of my cattle; and I find, that they prepare well for the grasses. By adhering to the modes which I have found most advantageous, I have no doubt of continuing to increase my profit. Nor should I forget to observe to you, Sir, that I have found no slight assistance in my undertakings from a little settlement I have on my land, of five Palatine families, by whose means, at the same time that I have been a good friend to
them,

them, they have done much in returning it ; so that we are truly the better for each other." I here remarked to him that I should suppose, the success of such undertakings, on whatever scale they are carried on, must depend very much on peopling the wastes, designed to be improved ; for without plenty of hands, how are improvements to be carried on ? " Very true, he replied, and I am convinced from my own experience, that nothing would answer so well to their High Mightinesses, as the settling poor German families on the numerous and extensive wastes which are in the provinces of Zutphen, Guelderland, Breda, and Overijssel, for they would presently make them well cultivated provinces ; but improvements of these wastes must be made by private persons, for such cannot well prosper in the hands of the public."

The Captain shewed me the principal parts of his farm which I saw very agreeably around his house ; it is a very pleasing one to view, for the fences are new made, regular, and kept in excellent order. The crops, I observed, were all free from weeds, and every field appeared in good condition. What a practical farmer would pronounce on them, I know not, but I own, M. Rey appears to
me

me to be an excellent husbandman. He was entirely hospitable, for he insisted on my staying all night, which I complied with, as I thought his conversation was uncommonly sensible and instructive. I could not leave him without reflecting on the great things, which may be executed by the force of industry and perseverance. Captain Rey's estate, on the wastes of Tillebourg, is a new creation; several families are supported by that land, which before did not yield enough to keep a sheep. This is by no means to be considered singly as a private acquisition, the State reaps probably more profit from it than the individual; for increasing the value of the earth's products, is encreasing the national wealth: and what acquisition can be more valuable than that of new industrious subjects? The States of the country, who rejected M. Rey's petition, must now be convinced of the practicability and the profit of improving these wastes, and the States General have plainly shewn their sagacity in granting it. But what is very astonishing, this bright example has had scarcely any effects, except one or two instances of improvement which I heard of, but in such a confused manner, that I could hardly make out whether it was on new or old inclosures.

Is it not amazing, that M. Rey's great success, should have no followers? I apprehend, that gentlemen, in a similar state, are afraid of attempting such undertakings, lest they should either be losers by them, or perfect slaves to the work; and indeed while persons are ignorant, it must require a certain enthusiasm in the mind to carry a man through all opposing difficulties, till success hath secured and crowned his wishes.

Tillebourg, though out of the direct road to Breda from Boisleduc, was now my nearest way to it, I therefore took my leave of the Captain, thanking him very sincerely for his hospitality, and made the best of my way to Breda the 24th. The road leads mostly through uncultivated heaths, that require such spirits as M. Rey's to improve, and would doubtless repay their attention equally as well. Breda deserves the traveller's attention. It is one of the strongest towns in Holland; the fortifications are very regular, and kept in excellent repair; the situation of the place is low, for the sea can be let into the ditches, and from thence over much of the country, which must render an army's access to it very difficult. The whole barony and town belongs to the Prince of Orange, who is the Sovereign, and has a modern built castle.

castle for his residence when here, with gardens, and a smaall park. It is a large place, populous, and well built. From Breda I went the 25th to Bergenopzoom, which is twenty miles, through amuch richer country. This city is large, and the streets regular; the church and the palace were fine buildings before the siege in 1747. The market place is very large and handsome, but the fortifications are the principal objects in it. The Dukes of Parma and Spinola, both found them too strong for all their power, which gave it the title of the Virgin fortress, and impregnable; for as such it was reckoned before Marshal Lowendahl came before it. It stands in the midst of marshes; so that every advantage of situation is united with those of Cohorn, as he was long employed to construct whatever works about it he thought necessary for making it as strong as possible. A canal keeps open a communication with the sea; and to defend this canal, there are redoubts, forts, palisadoes, &c. without number, and a village strongly fortified in the midst. In a word, nothing was spared to secure to it its pretences to being impregnable; and it is the general opinion in Holland, that it really is so; and that the French
would