

MINERVA; or, ANTI-JACOBIN.

TWO & A HALF DOLLARS PER ANNUM. Payable half Yearly.

PUBLISHED (WEEKLY) BY WILLIAM BOYLAN.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM. Paid in Advance.

Vol. 8.]

RALEIGH, (N. C.) MONDAY, JUNE 13, 1803.

[No. 375.]

FROM ROLF'S PHILADELPHIA GAZETTE.

EXTRACTS

Of letters from an American Gentleman travelling in Europe, to the Editor of this Gazette.

PARIS, FEBRUARY 20.

"In my last, I left you at Amsterdam. I will now endeavor to give you a brief sketch of our journey from thence thro' the duchy of Cleves to the Rhine, that renowned river, alternately crossing from Germany into the French republic, as the importance of the towns visited, till we arrived at Basil; from thence thro' Switzerland to Geneva, thence to Lyons, and on to Paris.

After seeing every thing worthy of notice at Amsterdam, we proceeded to Utrecht, which is a very ancient place, and like most of the towns in Holland, extremely neat. The name of this city is rendered familiar in consequence of the important treaties that have been held at it. After leaving Utrecht, about nine miles on the road to Nimegen, we came to the river Leck, one of the branches of the Rhine, which we crossed over on what is called a flying bridge. As you probably may not be acquainted with the import of the term, I will attempt a description of it. The Leck here is about 800 feet wide, and the stream always running down. In the centre of the river, about 600 feet above the place of crossing, a boat, (about the size of a ship's jolly boat) is anchored with a chain; to the stern of this boat a second boat is fastened, but floating at about 70 feet distance down the stream—There are then six other boats, at about 70 feet apart below each other. Each of these have a mast of six feet height. Instead of these last mentioned 6 boats being fastened to the stern of each other as they lay down the stream, a light chain from the stern of the second boat runs across, and is fastened to the head of each of their masts. This always keeps the chain clear of the water, hanging in a light suspended swag from boat to boat. At about 60 feet below the eighth boat this chain is fastened to the centre of the side of a scow, such as are used in our rivers in America. Both ends being alike, the scow is equally prepared to go in either direction. Suppose this scow on one side of the river, then the eight boats to which she is attached, by the force of the current, must lay obliquely across the stream, from the centre to the opposite side. Loose the scow from the shore, and it necessarily follows, that the stream pressing upon the line of boats thus obliquely extended, will force them towards the centre in a straight line; but before they are forced to the centre, their propulsion is so great as to drive the scow to the opposite shore, and so alternately from shore to shore, the power always acting on the same principle in either course of the scow, vibrating like the pendulum of a clock, supposed to be moving in a horizontal line. This produces a great saving of manual labour; for by it one man can work the scow which otherwise would require 4 or 6 men with oars or setting poles. The scows will take over 3 or 4 carriages with their horses, and perform the crossing in less than ten minutes.

After crossing the Leck, the road lay on a very high and steep bank, not more than 30 feet wide, and at least that height above the general level of the country. In many places we were on a line with the tops of the houses which were built at the foot of the bank, on each side. By this route we reached Nimegen. This place is built on the side of a hill, and very pleasantly situated on the bank of the Waal. Here the low country terminates, and the land rises abruptly near 300 feet, and continues with a plain of that elevation above the low country. It was quite a relief to get on elevated ground once more; for by travelling between three and four hundred miles over a dead flat, we began to tire of the sameness, and of the damp which always overhangs it. After leaving Nimegen, about 9 miles, we were out of the territories of the Batavian Republic, and entered what was formerly the duchy of Cleves, on the left bank of the Rhine, but now forming a part of the French Republic. Before the late war it was under the government of the king of Prussia. Cleves is an ancient town. It gave birth to Ann of

Cleves, one of Henry VIIIth's wives. The town itself does not contain any thing very worthy of notice, but the environs are extremely pleasant. In the neighborhood there is a handsome park, hunting grounds and chateau, formerly belonging to the king of Prussia. We proceeded thro' Gelders and Crefeldt. We were now in a part of the country where the Catholic religion generally prevails, and where the people perform devotion with extraordinary zeal. On the road between Gelders and Crefeldt, our attention was drawn to two peasants who were walking on before us. They appeared to be on a journey. Each was bareheaded, and had his hat hanging to the button of his coat behind. It occurred to us that they were performing some act of devotion.—When we came to them it proved so. One of them was saying prayers, and the other made the responses as they journeyed on.—Each had a string of beads, and so intent were they on the performance of this duty, that the passage of our carriage slowly by them, neither produced a pause in their articulation, nor diverted a look from off their beads. We scarcely travelled a mile without passing a cross fixed at the side of the road, and there are frequently small brick arches along the road so constructed as to admit a figure of the Virgin Mary, at which the religious processions of the peasantry always make a halt in going from one village to another.

We stopped at a small town called Hultz, to dine. While dinner was preparing we took a walk to the church. In front was a crucifix with a figure of the Saviour, the head decorated with flowers, intermixed with a silver foil. On going into the church yard, we observed many of the graves new raised with fresh green-sods, and decorated with artificial flowers, in a variety of forms. It was a church holiday. The sight was so novel to me, that it opened a new and pleasing train of reflections which resulted in yielding a praise to the living who thus dedicate a part of their festivals to an affectionate and pious remembrance of their deceased friends—and what idea can more delicately evidence such remembrance than an occasional visit to the spot of their interment? If it should be said there is weakness in this conduct, surely it is more than counterbalanced by the exhibition of the best affections which flow from the heart.

On the arrival at Crefeldt, we found a neat, compact, well-built town, a great part of it being modern handsome structures. It is a considerable place for the manufacture of silk goods. There is a manufacturing house established here by six brothers, who it is said employ as many as six thousand looms. We were shewn a part of their manufactory, and others of ribbands, &c. It is surprising what life and spirits manufactures impart to every town where they are established.

From Crefeldt, we took the road to Dusseldorf. The country is extremely pleasant, without any inclosures, and a great deal of grain in the ground, apparently very promising. On the sides of this part of the road, there are also many crosses and crucifixes. They are generally placed under the shade of a spreading tree, which serves to shelter the pious traveller during his devotion. About three miles before we arrived at Dusseldorf, we passed by a very large building, called Cloyster Mere, which was a very celebrated convent for nuns, until suppressed, during the late revolution. Dusseldorf is situated on the right bank of the Rhine, which we again crossed in a flying bridge. This was our first entrance on the German territory.

I shall now have as a subject for description, a tract of country, and various towns and cities, so well known for ages in history, and so often described by travellers, that I could scarcely flatter myself with producing a new idea, were it not for the many political and other material changes which have been occasioned by the late war. Dusseldorf has suffered much by the bombardments of the French army. The elegant palace of the Palatine, a convent for nuns, and many large houses, are entirely destroyed. Its fortifications also exhibit nothing but a mass of ruins; but fortunately the valuable gallery of paintings attached to the Palatine's palace has escaped destruction.

These were the first objects which claimed our attention. The gallery consists of five spacious apartments, well stocked with subjects of the most masterly execution, selected with great taste and an incredible expence. Compared with these, the gallery which I had seen at the Abbey St. Pierre, at Ghent (and which I then thought a superb collection) lost much of its consequence. Amongst the best is a representation of the wise and foolish virgins, painted by Schalcken, and so imimitably fine that it is impossible to quit the sight without regret. This piece, though only three feet six inches by two feet eleven inches, cost 15,000 ducats, equal to 7,500l. sterling. The next in value as to execution, are two Flemish subjects by Gerard Dow, three feet six inches by two feet three, and cost 66,000 florins, equal to 6000l. sterling each. Then there are 25 pieces by Van der Werf, only thirty by twenty inches, which cost ten thousand florins each. To attempt a minute description of them would be futile. I can only at present say, that altogether they formed a most delectable feast to the eyes and imagination of the spectator.

From the gallery we went to see the monastery and church of St. Anthony. The monastery is occupied by 40 monks of the order of St. Francis. The church, cloisters, &c. were shewn to us by one of the monks in the habit of his order. It was the first thing of the kind we had seen, and my attention was wholly fixed on him; his hair was entirely cut off, close to his head—his tunic or upper vest was of a coarse brown cloth, with a hood hanging down behind. The garment was wrapped close round his body, and fastened by a leather belt, to which was suspended a small crucifix and a bunch of keys. The skirt of his vest reached to his ancles; he had no stockings on, and the upper leather of his shoes was cut away so as to give them the appearance of sandals. His deportment was simple, courteous, and benignant, and he seemed to derive pleasure from gratifying our curiosity and in answering our numerous enquiries.

We proceeded about two miles out of town to another monastery, of the celebrated order of La Trappe. It was with some difficulty that we obtained admission here. This monastery with the chapel adjoining, stands in the midst of a large garden, surrounded with a high stone wall. It was near four o'clock when we entered the chapel. The bell was ringing for vespers; of course we had but a short time for examination before the service began.—Exactly when the clock struck four, the monks entered the choir at a private door, ranging themselves in equal numbers on each side.—Their drels was a white woolen tunic fastened with a belt round the waist—their heads entirely bare. In their devotions they were solemn and impressive.—The order of La Trappe was formerly amongst the most severe in its discipline. One of its laws was that of eternal silence, and it was not until lately that this requisite was dispensed with. In this chapel there is a painting of the best figure of a Nun, one of the most angelic faces I ever beheld. We were told it was copied from a painting in the Vatican at Rome.

As we returned from the Abbey of La Trappe to the town; we passed a chateau belonging to the Elector, with a handsome park. The stables are built in a grand style of architecture, measuring more than 400 feet in front. Dusseldorf is pleasantly situated on the right bank of the Rhine, in the circle of Westphalia. The town itself has a dull appearance, having no manufactories in it. Neither has it any objects meriting particular notice, except a finely executed equestrian statue in bronze, of William, Elector of Bavaria—and a colonnade of excellent architecture, in stone, remaining entire and lately attached to the place. For the last forty miles of our travelling we found the Rhinish wines much in use.

After leaving Dusseldorf we travelled on the right side of the Rhine, on our way to Cologne. We arrived at Dutz, being right opposite to Cologne. It being evening we were not suffered to cross over, as the French garrisons at Cologne will not permit any boat to approach the shore after night, in order to prevent the smuggling of English or Dutch goods into the Republic. Next morning we crossed the Rhine to Cologne, and went to the hotel La Ville de Prague. I mention the name of the hotel now, because I shall have to say something more particularly of it hereafter. Our passports were demanded, and our portmanteaus examined by the French guard at the gate of entrance to the town. This is the practice of all the frontier towns of the French Republic. In addition to which, the traveller is not seated five minutes at the hotel before a book is presented to him by the host in which he is to enter his name, from whence he comes, where he is going, what is his business, and what his age.—From this Document the host makes a return to the municipality of the place. The town, which is large, is situated on the left side of the Rhine, and forms a very interesting sight in crossing over to it from Dutz; particularly the grand Cathedral of St. Dom, the Church of the Apollies, and that of St. Martin's. Besides those there are one hundred and nineteen parish and abbey Churches, and sixty nine monasteries, convents and abbeys. The town is surrounded with a deep fosse and a stone wall forty feet high, built on a raised bank, and extending four miles. This wall is connected with 83 towns, built of stone, besides 13 castles, under which are the gates leading into the city. The fortifications form a semi-circle round the city, with the points on each side joining the river. Among other evidences of the antiquity of this place is the Church of St. Gereon. It is a circular building, bearing the marks of extreme old age, and is said to have been a heathen temple, dedicated to mercury, before the christian era. There is a date of 318 over the main entrance. This was also the birth place of the mother of Nero the Roman Emperor. It was formerly a place of great trade, but has very much declined of late, for reasons which I shall hereafter have occasion to state. The grand Cathedral church was built in the 13th century, but never entirely finished. I feel incompetent to any description of its magnificence, either as to its design or execution. The whole style of the building is of the richest Gothic architecture. The platform on the altar is formed of a single piece of black marble of fifteen feet in length. Immediately adjoining it, at the back is a temple of planished copper, finished on the outside all round with a marble cornice, supported by fluted columns of white marble, with the Corinthian capitals of gilt brass, and bases of the same.—A double flight of stairs led up to the temple, composed of the finest black marble. The sides of the choir are hung with the richest tapestry. A range of fifteen lofty windows of stained glass above the lower vaulting encircling the eastern curve of this noble edifice, added to a lower range of similar windows, sheds over the whole scenery that agreeable kind of gloom which so much accords with the solemn devotions of the faithful.

Among other things particularly meriting the attention of strangers at Cologne, is a rare and extensive collection of natural, artificial and antique productions, in the cabinet of the Baron Hupich. It is arranged and exhibited in nine rooms. The infinity and value of the objects it comprizes is astonishing.—Nothing seems to have escaped him in the remotest lands, or most distant shores. The household gods of China and Japan, the richest gems of Golconda, the mummy and crocodile of Egypt, the ores, in which all the precious metals are found in America, all the wonders of nature in marine productions, all the choicest works of the arts, to the antique ages of Rome and Herculaneum, are here collected together. The Baron himself, as to figure, may also be ranked amongst the antique curiosities of his cabinet.—He is about 66 years of age, and has devoted the greater part of his life to making this collection. Strangers are admitted to view it at all times without any gratuity, and the Baron himself evinces a pleasure in exhibiting it to any one who discovers a taste in the inspection, or a desire for information. He is a tall spare man, singularly dressed, of a very cool and placid appearance, very easy and attentive, with but very little ceremony.—

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