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The Rhine

Or, A Journey From Utrecht To Francfort; Chiefly By The Borders Of The Rhine, And The Passage Down The River, From Mentz to Bonn : described in a series of letters, written from Holland, to a Friend in England, in the years 1791 and 1792 : In two volumes : Embellished with Twenty-Four Views in Aqua ...

Cogan, T.

London, 1794

Letter XXXI

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-421315](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-421315)



View of Bonn & the Seven Mountains ascending the Rhine.

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LETTER XXXI.

Bonn.

THERE is something in the *tout ensemble* of *Bonn*, which renders it peculiarly agreeable: and were I destined to reside in any spot along the *Rhine*, which I have visited, perhaps I should give this the preference. As you have already seen how charmed I was with *Cleves*, you may suspect me of being an inconstant lover, and changeable as the objects before me. But this is not the case. It is one thing, to admire as a visitor, and another to prefer as a constant companion. *Cleves* excels in richness, wildness, and extent of prospect: It treats the eye from different points of view with numberless scenes of the romantic kind: but *Bonn* is more agreeably situated for a perpetual residence. It is better adapted to the solitary evening walk; or to little excursions either on horse-back, or in a carriage; and much better supplied with agreeable society, if the general report be true. To the north and west of this
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small city, the country is fine and open, and very fruitful in various kinds of grain. Towards the south, a majestic range of hills presents itself to view; upon the declivity of which commences the cultivation of the grape; and whose feet are bathed by the *Rhine*.—In general the ground is not so elevated nor depressed in every direction, as in the country surrounding *Cleves*, but it has that kind of undulatory surface, which makes some of the inland provinces of England so agreeable; by softening the sublime into the beautiful, and changing the horrors of rough craggy roads, where every step must be taken with a degree of caution, in many parts at least, into the ideas of safety, ease, and expedition.

This city is also the favourite residence of the Elector of *Cologne*, and of consequence is the resort of persons of fashion, which renders the manners more polite, conversation more free and interesting, and raises the people above abject poverty. These are the sentiments I have been taught to entertain, by what I have seen, and by what I have heard from those who were well acquainted with both cities. From this cause, although it is destitute of commerce or of any considerable manufactures, it appears much more above want, than either *Cleves*

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or *Cologne*. It is infinitely more gay than the latter city. Heavens forgive my mundane ideas, but I acknowledge that the sight of ladies and gentlemen who set off to advantage the beauties of a fine person, by elegance of dress, is far more refreshing to my Opticks, than it is to behold swarms of ecclesiasticks, and herds of those *Ourang Outangs* of the true Catholic faith, mendicant Friars.

The superior riches of this town are manifested before you enter it, by the appearance of the Saints and Crucifixes, which it is usual in Roman Catholic countries to place by the way-side, and principally adjacent to the gates of their cities; in order to seize every opportunity to excite flagging devotion.—These we perceived were kept in neat repair. Nay, some of them were painted and gilt with a degree of splendour. Whereas in every other place, through which we had passed, and particularly at *Cologne*, they all appeared in a deep decline; so that, if it were a principle with these holy personages, that Charity begins at home, they would commence their miracles by repairing a rotten leg, setting a dislocated arm, and giving the whole of their
bodies

bodies a new cloathing of paint, to preserve them from the inclemency of winter.

Documents are before me, by means of which I could give you a complete history of *Bonn*, from its origin, through its troubles, to its present more prosperous state. But as the incidents which have befallen this city, are not essentially different from those to which every other city has been exposed, in turbulent times, I shall not detain you. It is said, that the original name was *Verona*, but that it was afterwards called *Bonn*, from the appellation *Castra Bona*, given by the sixth Roman Legion, that was encamped here a considerable time. The town is supposed to contain twelve thousand inhabitants; the greater number of which are, in one capacity or other, dependant upon the court. The town itself has nothing very pleasing; the streets are small; and the fortifications are in a ruinous state; but the houses in general manifest a desirable equality; and, exclusive of the Electoral palace, there are very few stately mansions to insult the dwellings of their neighbours, on the one hand; nor are there on the other, strong marks of extreme poverty among the inhabitants in general.

The University begins to flourish under the auspices of the present Elector. Dissatisfied
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with the wretched state of science at *Cologne*, and with the conduct of the inhabitants, he has declared that those students who shall distinguish themselves by their assiduity and capacities, in the University of *Bonn*, shall be preferred to vacant charges in Church or State, while every student in Law, Physic, or Divinity, at the University of *Cologne*, shall be for ever excluded from employment in every part of his domains. This declaration was made in the year 1789; and it will in all probability be the total ruin of the *Colognian* Academy.

Another institution favourable to Science, is a Literary Society, of which the Elector is also member. Their object is, to purchase different literary Journals and other publications, and to read dissertations given in occasionally, by any of their own body. They assemble in an apartment at the *Maison de Ville*. Their number amounts to about one hundred.

The present Elector is much esteemed as a man of sense, moderation, and beneficence. He shews pomp and parade as little as his elevated station will permit. Although a Bishop, nay, an *Archbishop*, he has nothing of the *Churchman*, and prefers the virtues which spring up in a liberal, well-cultivated mind, to the weeds and nettles of an ecclesiastical enclosure. I

need not tell you, he is of the Austrian house, and brother to the present Emperor *Leopold*.*

But to my journal.

We arrived at our inn, *The Imperial Court*, about three o'clock in the afternoon, and consequently too late for a seat at the public table. But a good substitute was served up, with due expedition, in our own apartment; and not having any other to pay us the compliment, we drank our own welcome to *Bonn*, in a glass of choice Rhenish wine. After a short repose, and taking our coffee *a-la Française*, we enquired for a guide, under whose convoy we might safely reconnoitre the town. This, as I have already hinted, has nothing very remarkable. The Market-place is a spacious irregular square. The Town-house is a large and a showy building, though in the high Gothic stile. The other parts of the town furnish little for either praise or censure, to a man disposed to either the one or the other.

We wandered till we came to the palace of the Elector, which is a very large, extensive, and elegant building. The palace, with the stables, offices, &c. stretch out to an amazing

* This Letter was written before the death of the late Emperor.

length.

length. They form, in appearance, the largest portion of the eastern side of the city, which is proximate to the river. The gardens belonging to this Palace are open to the inhabitants, and the terrace before the grand Façade, is the fashionable walk in summer evenings. These are frequented by a larger number of the *beau monde* of each sex, than the city, judging both from its size and appearance, could have been supposed to contain. The gardens are ill-planned, nor is there much care conspicuous to keep them in due order; but the advantage of situation renders them very pleasant. They command a view towards the river, of the adjacent hills mantled with vines; and are in full contemplation of those lofty mountains, which, from the appearance of their peaks at a certain distance, have acquired the name of *Seven-bergen*, i. e. Seven-hills; and the eye is also able to penetrate a considerable extent up the channel of the river towards *Coblentz*, through the range of lofty hills already mentioned.

From the right wing of the Palace, sideways, is a lovely walk, shaded with lime-trees, which leads from this *Rus in Urbe*, to another seat belonging to the Elector; at a distance of a mile from the town, and consequently still more rural. This also serves as an elegant promenade for the polite world. Beyond this country seat

exhibits itself to view the village of *Poppeldorff*, i. e. People-village, situate at the foot of a hill, on the summit of which is the Monastery of *Cruizberg*, so called from its alleys being shaped in the form of crosses. The Monastery is placed in such a connection, as at once to enjoy and afford a pleasing prospect. Beyond *Cruizberg*, still more towards the south, is the hill distinguished by the name of *Godesberg*, God's-hill. Some ascribe the appellation to a temple of the God *Mercury*, that was formerly placed upon it;—others, to the healing virtues of the mineral springs, which were formerly in some repute, and are again recovering their reputation.

I am so captivated with rural scenes, bubbling fountains, shady walks, and extensive prospects, that I have not the least inclination to step into this palace with you, or conduct you to the apartment, where the state bed, covered with a profusion of gold, reserves dignified repose for Kings and Princes; or to the *Grande Salle* destined for the Grand Mistress of the Teutonic Order; or to the Electoral Library; or the Room destined to Experimental Philosophy; or the Theatre, to which, notwithstanding it is a part of the Palace, the public have free access. For although these are worthy of the possessor, and do honour to the present
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sent Elector, who has considerably improved the scientific department, yet the most minute description would not convey to you one jot of interesting information.

Therefore you had better accompany us in our ramble.

Allured by the beauty of the scenes, we determined to walk towards the country-seat, within our view : But the attendant not being able to accompany us so far, consigned us over to a young lad, who became his *vice-gérant valet de place*. The change did not appear to our advantage, and rather touched our pride. The new attendant was without stockings or shoes, and his tattered coat seemed to threaten leaving him in a tattered waistcoat. However, as we wanted nothing more than to be re-conducted to our inn, in case of *aberrations*, we took him into our service. Notwithstanding the poverty of his appearance, his countenance was open, contented, and cheary. He answered all our questions with vivacity and smartness ; employing the intermediate time in picking up of stones, and jirking them before him. Upon enquiring who and what he was, he said, that " he was the only son of a widow, and she was very poor ; subsisting in part by spinning, in

part by donations from the parish, and in part by *myself*." This thought most certainly gave energy to his arm, for we observed that he jirked a stone just as he was uttering it, much farther than any of the preceding.

But what are *your* means of subsisting?

"Partly by spinning," said he, "partly by going of errands, and attending such gentlemen as you, and partly by *begging*."

Mendicity never appeared so reputable in my eyes; and from that moment I have found my resolutions strengthened, never to speak harshly or reproachfully, to the most common beggar, if I should neither have the means or the disposition to relieve him.

Is this so poor a place?

"Poor enough, God knows! we are all starving, excepting the great folks," answered he, with as broad a smile as his jolly cheeks would permit, and springing over a ditch with the most careless indifference as he spoke.

With one question he was puzzled. Perceiving several ruins on the top and sides of the *Sevenbergen*, that were some few miles before us, my companion enquired what they were or had been?

"They are *old stone walls*," answered he; "what they are good for, I know not," throwing a stone

a stone towards them, as if resolved to demolish them at a blow.

This answer by no means satisfied us, and a wiser inhabitant advancing, informed us, that the town of *Bonn* had formerly extended so far, as to be under the immediate protection of those fortresses. But in the Swedish wars, the city was nearly demolished by a victorious enemy, and reduced to its present diminutive size.

The country seat of the Elector is a neat elegant building, but it has nothing *externally* to demand a particular description; and *internally*, it is rendered invisible by the presence of the Elector's sister, Regentess of the Austrian Netherlands; to whom it is an asylum during the civil commotions of that distracted country.

Passing by this mansion, we walked through the village of *Poppeldorff*, and ascended the hill on which the Monastery of *Cruizberg* is situated. The view from its summit as well as from *Godeßberg*, already mentioned, to which it is contiguous, is very extensive and sublime. On the east and north-east, it is *semicircled* by a hanging wood that projects towards the bed of the *Rhine*. It faces *Sevenberg*, which is on the opposite side of the river, with apparent humility, as if unworthy to be called a mountain.

tain. But in the direction of *Bonn*, it is much more bold, assumes a majestic appearance, commands a full view of the city, and extends the prospect to an immense distance in the direction of *Brühl* and *Cologne*.

Thus you see, my friend, with what address these pious sons of the holy Church, reconcile contradictions ! While they renounce the world, they have found means to inherit the earth. Their retirement to this delightful spot, they set down to the Lord, on the score of *self-denial*, and manifest their attachment to the Cross, by planting their lovely shady walks in that particular *form*.

Upon our return, as we approached the city, we dismissed our incipient Cicerone, by giving him a piece of money, in value about *eight-pence*. It was highly entertaining to see his emotions upon the unexpected possession of so large a treasure. He looked at *it*, then at *us*,—first with an astonishment, which prevented him from thanking us ;—then with a smile that was more expressive than words !—he turned it—looked at it again—once more grinned a thanksgiving,—bid adieu with a nod of his head, and ran towards the town with the utmost swiftness,—stopt short on a sudden, to look back upon us,

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with another silent God blefs you,—and then flew out of fight.

When we returned to the Market-place, our spark saw us at a distance, and immediately held up towards us, in the attitude of a priest at the altar, a little leaden *Virgin Mary*, to the purchase of which he might have devoted about two-pence of his cash. Perhaps it being market-day, he had seized the opportunity of manifesting his devotion and gratitude.—Perhaps it was to repair some loss which his mother might have sustained by breaking one of earth, and this pious youth was resolved to surprise her with a penate of a less fragile, and more pliable substance.

Since our visit to *Bonn*, the spring at *Godesberg* has been rising considerably in renown. The Elector has employed physicians to analyse the waters, and they are found to be in no respect inferior to those of *Schwalbach*, or *Spa*. In the course of the last year, large quantities have been exported to foreign countries. Encouraged by these circumstances, the Elector is making the most vigorous efforts to render the spot popular. He has granted an exclusive right to a society of gentlemen, to build an assembly-room, and also a room for the purposes of gaming,

without which he is well assured, that few persons of distinction will frequent the place. A limited number of lodging houses are to be built, or rather are actually building, without the village of *Godesberg*, on ground contiguous to gardens, entitled the *New Vauxhall*. Each of these dwellings are to enjoy the same prospect towards the *Rhine*, the *Sevenbergen*, and the public road. A visting, about two hundred paces in length, is to conduct to the springs, which have the name of *Draisch Brunnen*. To animate *Entrepreneurs*, the ground is given gratis, and the houses will be exempt from every tax. The buildings are to be divided into two classes, that the gentry and persons in more private stations, may each be suitably accommodated. The man who shall have finished and furnished the first house, in a manner proper for the reception of strangers, is to receive a premium of fifteen hundred florins, about 140l. Nine hundred are promised for the second, and six hundred for the third. The houses may be built either of brick, wood, or stone, as the adventurer pleases, but according to a determinate size and form. No alteration may be arbitrarily made in the Façade; but if any person prefers a plan of his own, he may submit it to the inspection of the *Superintendent-general*; and
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if approved, build according to it.—Could the multitudinous buildings about your metropolis have been subjected to similar regulations, what a paradise might have been formed! No offensive trade or buildings that could be deemed a nuisance will be allowed.

As I delight to see private interest, and public benefit united, I cannot suppress a wish, that in this undertaking the Elector may have an advantage over *Apollo* himself, and that we may hereafter be entitled to exclaim,

Sic profunt Domino, quæ profunt omnibus artes!

LETTER