

THE GLEANER

AND

NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME II.]

"Nec araneorum sane texus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt nec noster vilior qui ex alienis libamus ut apes."

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THE GLEANER.

EUROPE.

DESCRIPTION OF POLAND.

Thorn, the capital of Prussian Poland, on the Vistula, is a city of very ancient date, and has within its walls nearly 8,900 souls. It is not strongly fortified, but the old works are rendered as efficient as the nature admits: the remains may be still traced of a castle once belonged to the powerful order of Teutonic knights, who had a commander resident there. The Government House is a substantial brick edifice, recently repaired, and the rooms appropriated to Prussian authorities presiding over this division of the kingdom are neatly arranged. The city has lofty storehouses on the high banks of the river for the reception of a considerable quantity of grain, which, on shipment, is poured down a sort of trough, at a trifling expense and with great despatch, into the small vessels lying at the quay. The value of land, as usual, varies; but, from the best information we could obtain, much in recent sales, brought only a sum equal to about the rents paid in England. Many of the estates are more or less embarrassed, and interest is often one per cent. per month on money borrowed.

From Thorn we crossed the Vistula in a sail boat the floating bridge formerly thrown across this broad stream having been destroyed by the French army; and on landing at the opposite shore, we entered Russian Poland. The country soon assumed a wild appearance: there were no well-defined roads, no inclosures, and the traveller may pluck from his carriage the growing corn through which he has sometimes to force a passage. Occasionally we penetrated thick forests of firs, sometimes, indeed, interspersed with magnificent oaks, but where no house nor human being was visible. Emerging from these woods, we had not infrequently beautiful and highly variegated scenery; and often the musical notes of the Polish horns would greet our ears. Our postillion's dress was a long blue coat faced with red, leather breeches, and boots to cover the knees. He drove his four small but active horses with considerable skill, guided by single reining, assisted, indeed, by the springing whip. The harness was almost entirely hempen, and, when it gave way, which often was the case, we heard no complaint from our driver; he whistled whilst he repaired the broken rope, and proceeded briskly until it again required reparation. He smoked incessantly, a custom which we afterwards found was indulged in by most of the lower orders.

During the war with Great Britain, when the usual supplies by way of Danzig were cut off, the Poles succeeded in cultivating an inferior kind of tobacco, which they dried and manufactured themselves. It is still raised in some districts, but, when smoked, the smell is exceedingly disagreeable.

The small towns* we passed through after leaving Thorn were excessively dirty, and many of the inmates bore the appearance of great misery and wretchedness; indeed, the loathsome condition of some of the labouring classes is, perhaps, scarcely to be equalled. Occasionally we met with Scotch names, probably descendants of the Scotch families who, as is well known, formerly emigrated to Danzig, and may from time to time, have removed from thence further up the river. At Brezesc, a place of 1800 inhabitants the Jews have an university. A broad and level road announced that we were now in the vicinity of the capital. On each side were posts, chequered with the national colors of red and white, and ornamented with the figure of a saint, which marked the distances at short intervals, until we reached the gates, or rather barriers, for the city is not fortified. Here we were detained nearly an hour, whilst our passports

and luggage were carefully examined by a military officer, who retained the former, (to be transmitted to the proper office) and sent with us a guard to remain at our lodging, until the 'permission to sojourn' should arrive from the police. We took up our quarters at the Hote de Witna, in Tomat sky Place, much in need of rest, having had no repose for the three previous nights.

Early the next morning we were agreeably surprised by a visit from Captain H., who, having learnt at the Police office that two Englishmen had arrived the last evening, came to pay his respects, the form of an introduction being dispensed with abroad, however particular our countrymen are at home. Indeed, there is a chord in the British heart which, in foreign countries, vibrates at the very name of Englishman.

Warsaw, it is scarcely necessary to observe, situated on the northern side of the Vistula, which is very broad, and the current extremely powerful. A bridge of boats, 1600 feet long, leads to Praga, a fortified suburb on the northern bank of the river.

The city appears to be composed of a mixture of some of the best and worst houses to be met with in Poland; and, though the churches, and many of the palaces and other public edifices, are splendid, the mean hovels near or adjoining them very much spoil the effect they would otherwise produce. The streets are for the most part wide and tolerably regular, but badly paved; they have lately been well lighted by lanterns, suspended on chains which are attached to posts on the parapets. The population is stated to be 90,000; and many of the commercial residents are Germans and native Jews. The Churches are very numerous; in the whole, forty four, of which the greater part are Roman Catholic, the established religion of the country. There is one Protestant church near the Parade, singularly built; the interior which is circular, has two galleries, and upon the pulpit which is over the communion table, is placed the organ. With all its unique character, it yet retains a very solemn effect. From the steeple, mounted by two hundred steps, there is a beautiful panoramic view of the city. Being interspersed with numerous gardens, it forms a very interesting picture, to which the Vistula, flowing in majestic grandeur, adds a powerful stimulus.

The Castle, or Royal Palace, is a large, but not handsome, structure, overhanging the river, and commanding an extensive prospect. In the interior, every thing remains nearly in the same state in which it was left by the last king of this ill-fated country. The Knight's Hall is very elegant, and the ceiling has a quotation from Virgil, *Æn. lib vi*, on the cornice. The neat concert hall is of moderate size. In it and adjoining rooms we noticed several good paintings, some historical; as, Casimir III. proclaiming the constitution, 1347; founding the University of Cracow, 1400; submission of Prussia to Poland, 1525; the junction of Poland and Lithuania, 1569; reconciliation of the Poles and Turks in 1621; eighteen splendid views of the capital; large portraits of John III., Sobieski, and of Lord Bacon; portraits of the Polish sovereigns, complete from the first king Boleslaus, 1025, to Stanislaus Augustus, in 1771; also of our Charles I, and George III. The elegant little chapel is embellished with a beautiful painting of the 'crown of thorns,' by Baccharelli. A small room is appropriated as a private chapel of the Archduke Constantine, and fitted up with the emblems appertaining to the service of the Greek church. We saw the archduke, who is the eldest brother of the Emperor, daily on parade, being a very strict disciplinarian, and constant at the drill; he certainly appears to have brought the military especially the cavalry, to great perfection in their ma-

* To this village (called erroneously, in the newspapers Prague) the Archduke Constantine recently retired with the Russian troops.

† It has been greatly improved and embellished since this was written.

nœuvres. We were much struck with the dexterity of their evolutions, particularly of the horse artillery, which were admirable. We had the pleasure of frequently meeting, at the ordinary, Colonel Schwerin, of the latter corps, in whose conversation were blended that information and amusement so frequently met with in well-educated military characters. He informed us that Constantine's private secretary, Colonel P., is an Englishman.

Count Osolenski, whose gallery is in Tomatsky place has some valuable paintings,—a Virgin and Child, by Corregio, St. Agatha, and Descent from the Cross, by Domenichino; Virgin, by Raphael; Virgin, by Guido; Landscape, by Salvata Rosa; Virgin, by Carlo Dolce; and several by Albani, Murillo, Tintoretti, Poussin, Titian, Rubens, and Gerard Dow. We experienced great politeness from M. Velani, who has the care of this fine collection.

A day was fully occupied in visiting the environs, which, on one side of the city, are provided by nature with every thing which can invite to retirement and repose from the business or the gaiety of town life. Mockatow, an English mile distant, was the seat of Field Marshal Lubomerski; it is beautifully situated, but is fast going to decay. In the principal apartment the light is partly excluded by a painted screen, which causes a dimness, very suitable to the calm sensations the little villa is fitted to excite.

Cronekarno, a little farther from town, is a Royal Palace, and once a delightful retreat of the sovereign. It is small, with extensive gardens. The floors of the rooms are exquisitely laid with oak, in square panels, without any nails; the furniture and all the ornaments exceedingly elegant and tasteful.

Willanow, another royal residence about four English miles distant, is an irregular building, forming three sides of a quadrangle, the front ornamented with eighteen figures, and over each a bust. Above the principal entrance are the words

Quod Venus urbs colvit
Nunc nova villa tenet

In the various rooms are nearly 500 paintings, some by first-rate artists, and a splendid portrait of the late estimable and revered Prince Poniatowski, by David.

The study of the late monarch has been left untouched by the express orders of Alexander. The secretaire at which he last wrote, the royal seals, (from which we could not resist taken impressions,) and the minutest trifle which he valued, are all preserved with the strictest care. It is impossible to view these interesting, though trifling, remains of a fallen monarch without commiserating the fate of the unfortunate Stanislaus. Indeed, this spot, once the seat of wit and beauty, and now totally deserted, will force melancholy reflections on all who view it. Returning to the capital, we passed the very extensive and new barracks with a handsome stone portico, inscribed

Rei militaris incremento.

There is a French and a national theatre at Warsaw. The operas, especially the instrumental parts, are extremely well formed. Indeed, the Poles, even of the lowest grade, are passionately fond of music; and it is not unusual to see poor creatures, scarcely half clothed, lying round the pot (hanging on a simple triangle of three sticks) in which they cook their victuals in the fields, delighted by the sounds of a violin, played by one of them in no mean style.

The public carriages called Droszkas, are very numerous and cheap, they convey passengers to any of the city for 6d. We were surprised to see officers drive in them daily to parade. The private carriages are very showy, generally drawn by four horses, and, owing, to the desire of imitating the Russian style,

* Sluzewo, Lowiczek, Brzesc, Kowal, Gostynia, Gombia, Sochazew, Błonie, Qizanow.