

**INDUSTRY OF THE RHINE. SERIES
I. AGRICULTURE: EMBRACING A
VIEW OF THE SOCIAL CONDITION
OF THE RURAL POPULATION OF
THAT DISTRICT**

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Industry of the Rhine. Series I. Agriculture: embracing a view of the social condition of the rural population of that district by T. C. Banfield

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T. C. BANFIELD

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INDUSTRY OF THE RHINE.

SERIES I.

AGRICULTURE :

EMBRACING A VIEW OF

THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE RURAL
POPULATION OF THAT DISTRICT.

BY T. C. BANFIELD.

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AGRICULTURE ON THE RHINE.

CHAPTER I.

AMONGST the many thousands who yearly flock to the banks of the Rhine there are not a few for whom the social activity, the condition, the wants and wishes, of the people they mingle with are as attractive objects as the picturesque scenery and romantic legends of the far-famed river. The figures in the landscape are its prominent feature for the deeper observer. For such travellers the following volume is written, for from such its author does not fear to be rebuked because he reads a moral in

“The noble arch in proud decay;”

where others choose only to enjoy its scenic effect. Nor does he anticipate from them the supposition that because he points to the effects of shady and sunny sites on the productions of the soil, he has no soul for the glowing tints of the sunlit stream, or the majestic gloom with which night invests the precipices that overhang it. Having himself found leisure both to enjoy the beauties with which nature has clothed this enchanting river, and to commune with those who dwell upon its banks, he deems it no superfluous task to invite any who have taste or leisure to study more than scenery as they pass along; to inquire with him respecting the account to which the

people turn the advantages of soil and climate with which they are endowed. In this volume we propose to afford the inquiring traveller, or such as are not less inquiringly disposed because they stay at home, a clue to the varied map of agricultural activity which the banks of the Rhine unfold. A greater variety of objects and modes of cultivation is assuredly presented by no other region of equal space. In no country has the well-being of the people been more intimately interwoven with its agricultural policy and prosperity than in Germany. Few tours present a larger sphere of observation to the landowner, the farmer, and the statesman, than that which, with the aid of Rhenish steamers and railroads, he can accomplish in the space of a few weeks. With these preliminary observations we enter at once upon our task of tracing the peasant to his cottage, the lord to his castle, and both to the great mart of the world, at which all are buyers and sellers, not alone of produce and manufactures, but of consideration, influence, comfort, and independence. He is but a sorry calculator who does not look beyond the money price at which he buys and sells, as we shall have frequent occasion to show in the course of this tour. We shall often have to test the value of the epithets *dear* and *cheap*; and perhaps no other district can so fully illustrate how relative the notions are that attach to those words.

The entrance into Germany by the Rhine presents nothing very attractive to the eye. Long before the traveller reaches the Prussian frontier, the neat farm-houses that in Holland line the carefully walled or fascined banks of the great stream, gay in their shutters and doors of red or green, and grouped with the coppice

or willow so familiar to us from the landscapes of the Dutch masters, give way to continued plantations of osiers and wave-washed banks, that seem to indicate a change of no pleasing kind. The transition is on both banks sudden, from a people whom trade early attracted to the banks of the river and familiarised with its utility, to one almost exclusively agricultural, which long looked wholly to the land for nourishment and power. The face of the country has also changed materially by the time the boat in which you ascend the Rhine reaches the Prussian boundary. The level of the back country has risen considerably above the stream, which may here chafe against the bank without, as in Holland, endangering the lives and property of the inhabitants of whole provinces. This change is not perceptible from the river except to the practised eye of the geographer, who recognises, in the circumstance that the stream is confined within a single bed, the existence of rocky strata in the banks, and suspects that it has eaten its way through the lower offsets of some mountain-chain. On the right bank, *i. e.* on the traveller's left as he ascends the river, the rise is trifling, and a well-cultivated strip of land flanking the river, formerly a portion of the duchy of Cleves, intervenes between the Rhine and the immense heaths which separate Holland from Germany, to whose extent, untraversed for centuries by roads, the Dutch are indebted for their independent nationality.

The want of roads in the inland German states gave an early pre-eminence to those districts that commanded water-navigation, and amongst the navigable rivers of Germany the Rhine was prominent. The Lower Rhine, as that portion of the river lying between the Seven

Hills and the sea is called, and the Middle Rhine from Mayence to the Drachenfels, formed long the virtual northern boundary of the Roman empire, beyond which few or no permanent settlements were made. The Rhine was, however, fully appreciated by the Romans as a grand road for warlike and commercial operations, and its banks teem with relics of that stirring age. The Teutonic tribes that succeeded the Romans as conquerors or immigrants found in the roads, harbours, and other constructions of their predecessors, a foundation of power far more valuable than the chivalrous daring to which they usually ascribed their success. The rise of the second line of Frankish kings has been described by M. Guizot as resulting from the conquests over the Neustrian or Western Franks achieved by the Austrasian or Eastern Fränkish tribes. To judge from the acts of Charlemagne and his favourite places of abode, that monarch knew well from what source the Austrasians and his family drew their might. The ruins of his imperial castle are now scarcely to be traced at Ingelheim on the Middle Rhine, and Aix-la-Chapelle contains but his grave and the cathedral which he founded; yet are these relics sufficient to attest the importance attributed by that discerning monarch to the great water-road that connects the Alps with the German Ocean.*

The period that marks the rise of the great vassals of the German empire shows us the Earls of Flanders, the Dukes of Brabant, the Lords of Hainault and Cleves,

* Napoleon is said to have entertained the idea of rebuilding the palace at Ingelheim, and we believe that the Royal Library at Paris contains the plans and elevations of the intended palatium, comprising even the decorations of the interior.

as potentates whose alliance is courted and whose enmity is dreaded by their reigning contemporaries. These districts all belong to the region of the Rhine, or are so contiguous to it as to be influenced by the events of which its basin was the scene. The Counts of Hapsburg, of Nassau, and of Luxemburg successively ascended the Imperial throne. Civic independence reared its banner triumphantly on the banks of the Rhine, and the Rhenish League is a no less interesting historical event than the more famous Confederacy of the Hanse Towns, in which the cities of the Lower Rhine, especially Cologne, played a conspicuous part. That the mechanical and refined arts also flourished at an early period in these cities is well known.

The portion of Prussia by which the traveller on the Rhine enters Germany from Holland was formerly the Duchy of Cleves. The high road from Nymwegen to Cologne follows the heights that recede from the left bank of the Rhine and leave a narrow strip of low land (originally marsh, and afterwards enclosed), which is occasionally inundated, or what is called *Polderland* in the language of the country. This narrow strip formed the county of Mürs. It has been already observed that a tract of land stretching along the right bank of the river from the frontier of Holland to the mouth of the Lippe also belonged formerly to Cleves. The farmer who follows other than political boundaries still distinguishes between the heights and the lowlands of Cleves. In the former tract, which is traversed by the high road from Cologne to Nymwegen, that owed its original construction in all probability to the Romans, trade has had its usual effect upon the farmer's calculations. Estates are