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978-1-107-61273-0 - Travels in France: During the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789

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TRAVELS IN FRANCE

DURING THE YEARS

1787, 1788 & 1789

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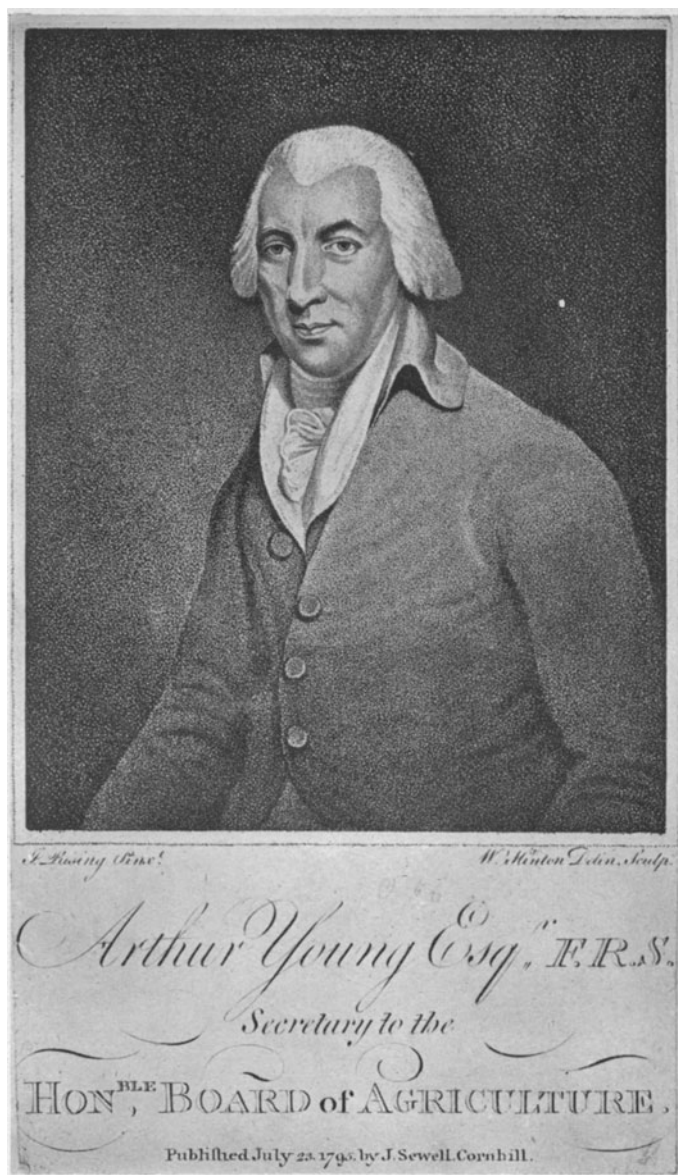
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DURING THE YEARS

1787, 1788 & 1789

by

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Edited by

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CAMBRIDGE

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1950

Cambridge University Press

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by

Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107612730

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First published 1929

First paperback edition 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-61273-0 Paperback

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/9781107612730

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Map of France to illustrate the Travels

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“L’État est un arbre, les racines sont l’agriculture, le tronc est la population, les branches sont l’industrie, les feuilles sont le commerce et les arts.”

Marquis de Mirabeau, *Traité de la Population* (ed. 1758), vol. II, p. 10.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Arthur Young's *Travels* (in France and Italy) were first published, in a quarto volume with three maps, at Bury St Edmunds in 1792. Part I of this work deals with the events of his journeys; Part II consists of general observations upon French conditions. A Dublin reprint in two octavo volumes appeared in 1793. A second edition of the *Travels* in two quarto volumes was published in 1794. The first volume, which contains Parts I and II of the original edition (Part II with certain additions) was printed in London; the second volume, containing new material (further observations upon France, together with similar notes upon Italy and Spain), at Bury St Edmunds. A selection from the second edition was printed in volume iv of Pinkerton's *Collection of Voyages* in 1809. In 1889 Miss Betham-Edwards edited the first part of the *Travels* for *Bohn's Standard Library*. In this edition the section on the Revolution from Part II is included, but all other "General Observations" from Part II, together with the account of the Italian journey in Part I, is omitted. Another edition by Mr Thomas Okey was published by J. M. Dent and Sons in the *Everyman's Library* series in 1915; this includes the Italian journey, but omits all "General Observations" with the exception of the section on the "Revolution."

The *Travels* were translated into French by F. Soulès and published in three volumes in Paris in 1793 (second edition 1794). A new translation by M. Lesage, preceded by an introduction by M. L. de Lavergne, was published in Paris in two volumes in 1860 (second edition 1882). In 1793 a German translation by E. A. W. Zimmermann was published in two volumes in Berlin.

The present edition of Young's work is a reprint of the account of the French journeys from Part I of the first edition, together with a selection from the "General Observations" in Part II and Volume II of the second edition. It is to be regretted, that, owing to the expense of printing at the present time, it has not been found possible to reproduce the "General Observations" (which have never been completely reprinted) in full; but it is hoped that the selection made

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EDITORIAL NOTE

in the present edition will meet with the requirements both of the general reader and of the student.

The spelling in the text has been modernized or corrected owing to the inconsistencies or inaccuracies of the author in this respect. Arthur Young generally wrote down the names of persons and places as he heard them pronounced. In cases where his spelling approximates to the usual form, a change has been effected without comment, but where there is a marked difference the correct form in square brackets has been added. All other editorial additions to the text are given in square brackets.

In the French passages accents have been added where these were omitted by the author, and obvious misprints have been corrected.

In view of Young's habit of writing "without breaks," which was much complained of by his contemporaries, a few changes have been made, for the sake of clearness, in the paragraphing and punctuation.

The map at the end of the volume, showing the itinerary followed by the author, has been compiled from contemporary and modern maps consulted in the Library of the Royal Geographical Society. It has been substituted for Young's own plan of his route, since in this he neglected to indicate direction, or to mark the boundaries of the old French *gouvernements*.

The frontispiece is a reproduction of the engraving published in 1795, which was made from Rising's portrait painted two years previously.

I should like to express my thanks to Professor C. F. Bastable of Dublin University, for the kindly interest that he has taken in my work, and for some valuable suggestions; and to Professor Henri Sée of Rennes, who has drawn my attention to several useful sources of information. I understand that Professor Sée is preparing a French edition of the *Travels*, and I much regret that I have not had the opportunity of consulting his editorial notes before the publication of the present edition.

C. M.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The author of the famous *Travels in France* was born in London on the 11th of September, 1741. He was the younger son of a Suffolk squire, who was rector of Bradfield near Bury St Edmunds, where the Young family had possessed a small estate for over 200 years. His father is described as an "active magistrate" and an "intelligent scholar," and it was from him presumably that Young inherited his taste for literature; while from his mother, who was of Dutch descent, he seems to have derived his energy and sensibility. He received his education at the grammar school at Lavenham near Bradfield, and being intended for trade, was apprenticed in 1758 to a counting house at Lynn. He refers later to "the unfortunate idea of making me a merchant," and tells us that from his "earliest years" he had "a thirst for learning and books." He certainly did not pay much attention to business, but before he was nineteen had read widely and had published four novels and two political pamphlets. When his father died in 1759, he threw up his business prospects and left Lynn, making his way to London where he started a periodical under the comprehensive title of the *Universal Museum*. This youthful enterprise, from which he was wisely discouraged by Dr Johnson, was a failure, and in 1763 he returned home.

While living in Norfolk, a county then recently improved by the introduction of turnip husbandry, he may possibly have become interested in agriculture; but in any case, as he was obliged to earn a living, he accepted the management of a small estate near Bradfield, which belonged to his mother, and so embarked upon his career as a farmer. Although totally inexperienced, he decided from the first with characteristic initiative upon a series of agricultural experiments. These unfortunately involved his mother in such pecuniary losses that she decided to place her farm in other hands.

In 1765 he married a Miss Martha Allen of Lynn, by whom he had three daughters and one son. When this lady died in 1815, her

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husband placed a tablet to her memory in Bradfield Church, which, while duly recording the fact that she was the great-granddaughter of the first gentleman to introduce marling into Norfolk, was conspicuously silent upon the subject of those domestic virtues to which everyone of this period was held to be entitled. This fact provides an interesting commentary upon their married life, which from all accounts was not a happy one.

In 1767 Young published the *Farmer's Letters to the People of England*, an immature work in which he advocated farming on a large scale, and in the same year he undertook a farm of his own in Essex. Here he again tried many agricultural experiments, but had to abandon the place since he was unable to raise the money to run it. In travelling about the country in search of another farm, he collected the notes for his *Six Weeks Tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales*, which he published in 1768. This was followed in 1770 by the *Six Months Tour through the North of England* and by the *Farmer's Tour through the East of England* in 1771. It was nothing new for persons with literary or topographical tastes to tour through Great Britain and offer their impressions to the public, but none before Young's time had made such a minute study of agriculture, or collected such valuable details with regard to practical husbandry. His *Tours* established his reputation as a writer upon agriculture; the observations that had gone to the making of them added considerably to his own knowledge of farming.

In 1768 Young had taken another estate in Hertfordshire, and here again he was unsuccessful. He afterwards remarked that "a nabob's fortune would sink in the attempt to raise good arable crops upon any extent in such a country," but there is no doubt that he was an incompetent manager. In December 1771, Fanny Burney, who was a connection of his wife, noted in her diary that Mr Young "whose study and dependence was agriculture" was in a pitiable situation, having destroyed his fortune by "experiments." His spirits were not easily daunted however, and at this time he was giving his attention to other matters besides practical agriculture. In 1769 he published *Letters concerning the Present State of the French Nation* which he states to have been based on "printed works of good authority," as well as

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upon "some very valuable manuscript papers." *Political Essays concerning the Present State of the British Empire* followed in 1772, and his *Political Arithmetic* in 1774. This last book, which he always regarded as his best work, was highly successful and was immediately translated into several European languages. The same year he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and was nominated a member of the Palatine Academy of Agriculture at Mannheim, and of the Royal Academy of Agriculture at Florence.

By this time Young's writings had gained for him considerable sums of money, but always extravagant, he was continually in debt, and he seems at this, as at several other periods of his life, to have seriously contemplated emigration to America. In 1776, however, his passion for agricultural information led him to visit Ireland. He toured extensively through the country and published the result of his investigations (his *Tour in Ireland*) in 1780. In this work, which Maria Edgeworth praises as the most faithful picture of the Irish peasantry which had yet appeared, he displayed the same acute powers of observation and the same democratic sympathies which were to show themselves later in the French *Travels*. Placing himself in touch with all classes of society, he entered very thoroughly into Irish agricultural conditions, and drew a depressing picture of the cottiers living in a state of misery upon the estates of absentee landlords, ground down by middlemen and rackrents. The remedies that he suggested for Irish ills are typically liberal. They were:—agricultural reform, the abolition of the Penal Laws, and the removal of all commercial restrictions. After a brief period spent as Lord Kingsborough's land agent at Mitchelstown in County Cork, Young returned to England in 1779. Shortly afterwards he took another farm in Suffolk, but when his mother died in 1785, Bradfield became his own, and he made it his home for the rest of his life.

Young now engaged in what he termed one of his "greatest speculations":—namely, the establishment of the journal known as the *Annals of Agriculture*. This periodical, which ran into 46 volumes before the appearance of the last volume in 1815, is a vast storehouse of information for the student of farming. It also provides a valuable index to Young's own life and opinions, since he not only edited the

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undertaking from start to finish but wrote at least one-third of it with his own hand. Many eminent persons of the day, including George III, were among the contributors. The King, as is well known, took a lively interest in farming, and it was said that he never travelled without a copy of the *Annals* in his coach. He had a high opinion of the editor, to whom he presented a Spanish merino ram from his own farm.

In 1785 the Duc de Liancourt, one of the few French noblemen who cultivated their own estate and took an interest in agriculture, sent his two sons on an educational tour through England in charge of their tutor, an intelligent Pole named Lazowski. Young made the acquaintance of the party, and formed a friendship with Lazowski which was to have important results. Early in 1787 the tutor wrote from Paris to say that he was going with certain members of the La Rochefoucauld family to the Pyrenees. They were to travel with their own horses, and expenses would not be high. Lazowski cordially invited his English friend to join the party. Young wrote afterwards in the *Annals* that he had "long wished for an opportunity to examine France." Lazowski's invitation was too tempting to be resisted. He crossed to Calais on the 15th May, 1787, and so commenced his first French journey. In order to carry on his investigations he made a second journey to France in 1788, on which he travelled farmer-like on horseback without a servant; and a third and last journey in 1789 when he proceeded in a hired post-chaise, in which he collected specimens of soils, plants, and manufactures. In the first two tours he devoted most of his attention to the Western and Southern part of France, in the third he visited the Centre and East. It was on the first journey that he made the excursion into Spain of which he gives an account in the *Annals*; it was on the last that he witnessed the opening scenes of the French Revolution at Paris and that he crossed the Alps in order to visit Italy.

Not only was Young at the height of his age and talent when he went to France, but the eyes of all Europe were naturally focused upon events in that country; it is not surprising to learn therefore that when the *Travels* were published in 1792 they met with universal success. Shortly after publication Young tells us in his *Autobiography*

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that he met Sir John Macpherson (Governor-General of India) who had just returned from the Continent. Macpherson told him that the King of Prussia had bestowed the highest praise upon the work, and that the Maréchal de Castries, late French Minister of the Marine, had asked him to inform the author that he was astonished by the extent, accuracy, and insight of his observations, which had made him feel how little he had known his country before reading this book. The French Government, for their part, seem to have been equally impressed with the value of the *Travels*, for when a translation appeared in 1793, the Convention ordered 20,000 copies to be specially printed and distributed gratuitously in each commune.

In the *Travels* Young had condemned the evils of the *ancien régime* in no uncertain terms, and expressed himself in favour of the new order. In 1793, however, he wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Example of France a Warning to Britain*, in which he declared that the Revolution had ruined France, and called upon Englishmen to join in associations for defence against "banditti, cut-throats, and Jacobins." This work, which was one of the most important of the anti-revolutionary publications, was hailed with great enthusiasm by all supporters of the Government, but those who sympathised with the Revolution accused him of having changed his principles. He replied to his critics in the eighteenth volume of the *Annals* (pp. 582–96), declaring that he had been "too long a farmer to be governed by anything but events." He had, he explains, approved of the doings of the first French Assembly which were "consistent with the Constitution of England," but later, when "new and unheard of measures" were taken, he considered that matters had gone too far; an odious tyranny had been established which was no better than the arbitrary government of Louis XVI. Shortly afterwards, Pitt created the Board of Agriculture, and Young was appointed Secretary with a salary of £400 a year. It was said at the time that he received the post as a reward for the *Example of France*, and it may be, as one of his critics suggested, that he preferred the prospect of a settled income to the doubtful benefits of a revolution; but dishonesty and cowardice were never among his failings, and one cannot help thinking that his revulsion of feeling was perfectly genuine.

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The new Secretary, who preferred the country, was now established "at a desk, in the smoke, the fog, and the din of Whitehall," but he made the most of his London opportunities and extended his influence among the landowning classes whom he met in society. In 1794 he founded the *Farmers' Club*, which was attended by the Duke of Bedford, Lord Sheffield and other members of the aristocracy who were interested in agriculture. The same year occurred the event which changed the colour of his life. This was the death of his youngest daughter "Bobbin," the little girl whom he mentions in the *Travels* and to whom he was passionately devoted. Although he continued to carry on his duties at the Board of Agriculture, and published a number of books and memoirs upon agricultural subjects, he gave up society, and succumbed to religious melancholia. In 1808 his sight began to fail, and in 1811 he became totally blind. He spent the last years of his life in philanthropic work among the poor at Bradfield, and died at his official residence in Sackville Street, London, on the 12th April, 1820.

Young did not find any new system of agriculture, but for all that he had more influence upon English husbandry than any other individual of his time. It was he who preached and popularized the new and improved practices of agriculture which characterized the end of the eighteenth century in England. It was due to him to a very great extent that large farming was substituted for small, that the enclosure of common fields made such rapid progress, and that new rotations of crops were substituted for periodical fallows. As a practical farmer he was a failure, and his mind was not free from political and economic prejudice. His reputation was founded on the extraordinary enthusiasm he had for farming, which he was able to pass on to others, his tireless energy in making experiments, and the unceasing flow of words which came from his vivacious pen. Never a competent artist in his own life or business, he was one of those who are a store of wisdom for others, for despite his crotchets he was possessed of an unusual fund of common sense, he accumulated an extraordinary amount of information, and he was an accurate observer. His literary style has been much criticized, and in his own day it was remarked that he wrote "too much and too fast"; but if he

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neglected the ornaments of language, he could always make his meaning plain, and drive home the point of his argument. He was a great favourite in society, owing to his high spirits and his varied stock of information; but his manner, according to the author of the obituary notice in the *Annual Biography* for 1821, was apt to become "magisterial" and his language "too dictatorial" when he was conversing upon subjects connected with his "professional avocations." The *Travels*, written as they are with complete spontaneity, sufficiently reveal his character. They show us an intelligent squire of his age and nation, clear-headed and aloof, alternating with a romantic of the school of Rousseau, and a monomaniac whose passion was agriculture.

Young was very highly thought of by his foreign contemporaries, and was an honorary member of countless Continental agricultural societies. He corresponded with many eminent people such as La Fayette and Washington, and persons of various nationalities visited Bradfield to be instructed by him in husbandry. In 1801, by order of the Directory, a selection from his agricultural works was translated into French and published in Paris in eighteen volumes under the title of *Le Cultivateur Anglois*. His principal books were also translated into German and Russian.

Though the writings of Arthur Young upon agriculture have now lost much of their former interest, the French *Travels* will never be out of date, because of their unrivalled value as an historical document. French judgements upon the book naturally have the most point. In his preface to Lesage's translation of the *Travels* in 1860, the economist Lavergne declared that there was no document in the French language that gave such a complete picture of France on the eve of the Revolution as this; while Baudrillart in his essay upon Young in his *Publicistes Modernes* confirmed Lavergne's testimony. "Of all the strangers that have described France in the 18th century," said Babeau, who wrote a critical account of travellers in France in the period, "Young is the most celebrated"; and he adds that his reputation was "well merited." More recent historians have reiterated these judgements, and there is no history of these times, nor scarcely a brochure upon any of the subjects touched upon by Young,

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in which the English agriculturist is not quoted as an accurate and penetrating observer. In order to estimate his ultimate worth as a witness of everything he describes, it would be necessary no doubt to check his facts by a careful examination of the vast evidence collected in the *cahiers* or statements of grievances drawn up by each of the Three Orders on the convocation of the States-General in 1789; to read the correspondence of the Intendants of the various *généralités*, the administrative units into which pre-revolutionary France was divided; to examine the archives of all the places that he visited; to compare his figures with the statistics collected under the Revolution and Empire; and to make a comparative study of the economic doctrines of his time with particular reference to those of the Physiocrats. This work, which would involve many years of research, has never been undertaken, and so we must be content for the present with the more general estimates of French historians, and with our own knowledge of Young's powers of observation and of the opportunities that he had of providing himself with reliable information.

As we have seen, the author of these *Travels* went to France as the friend of the La Rochefoucauld family, and he could from our point of view have gone in no more profitable capacity. The Duc de Liancourt (who became the head of his house on the murder of his cousin in 1792) was one of the most liberal peers in France, and at the same time was deeply attached to the Monarchy. He was in close touch with all the reforming movements of his day, but he was also a friend of the King, and had an intimate knowledge of the affairs of the Court. Young was entertained by the Duke at his *hôtel* in Paris and at his apartments at Versailles, where he was introduced to many of his friends; he also stayed with him at his *château* of Liancourt, for more than three weeks, and there had full opportunities of examining his agricultural improvements and industrial experiments, and listening to his views. He received the hospitality of the Duke's mother the Duchesse d'Estissac in Paris, and of the Duchesse d'Enville his aunt, who presided over a salon where she received the *philosophes*. Not the least valuable of the Rochefoucauld connection to Young, in his capacity of historian, however, was the tutor Lazowski, who as an inspector of manufactures at Soissons was in a position to give

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him much useful information upon industrial matters. Young had a genius for collecting letters of introduction, to which indeed he was entitled as one of the most celebrated agriculturists in Europe, and he met a large number of prominent persons both in Paris and the provinces who were in touch with almost every aspect of French life. He conversed with all the chief savants of the day, with Intendants and governors of Provinces, with military commanders and inspectors of industry, with ecclesiastics and heads of colleges, with parliamentary officials and secretaries of learned academies and agricultural societies; and under their skilled guidance he inspected scientific laboratories and libraries, veterinary schools and public gardens, dockyards and workshops. As a man of democratic sympathies, he was a believer in procuring as many points of view as possible, and wherever he could, he conversed also with peasants and workmen, and gained a good deal of useful information from casual "snuff-box chat" and from travellers upon the road. He must have heard a vast amount of conversation (far more probably than he could digest), and especially during those eventful days that he spent in Paris at the opening of the States-General, when the newly elected deputies, animated by the excitement of the moment, were only too willing to advertise their opinions. Young's mind was not a particularly elastic one, and he came to France with his own ideas upon French problems, which he saw little reason to change; but although he was often unimpressed by what he heard and did not spare his criticisms, he is always a faithful witness.

As one follows the course of the reactions of this English farmer to his foreign environment, the question of his proficiency in the French language inevitably presents itself. According to Fanny Burney, who was present at a dinner given at Bradfield in the autumn of 1792, in honour of the Duc de Liancourt then an exile in England, "the French of Mr Young at table was very comic." He was able, however, to pacify a threatening mob from the steps of the inn at L'Isle-sur-le-Doubs in July 1789, and this by a fairly lengthy speech in which he attempted an explanation of the English Tax system; and on several other occasions of difficulty and danger was equally able to hold his own. Like many another of his fellow-countrymen, he

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was probably much better able to understand what was said to him than to converse himself, and when we consider how large was the proportion of educated persons in France at this period who could not only speak English but translate English books, we may conjecture that Young was at no serious disadvantage from the point of view of language in collecting the information that he sought with such eagerness.

Although impatient of philosophical discussion, Young himself made some very acute criticisms upon the causes of the Revolution, and upon its early development, which Lord Morley in his *Life of Burke* declared to have been “worth a hundred times more than Burke, Paine and Mackintosh all put together.” Yet it is not as a critic or theorist that he really excels, but rather as an observer of facts. Of an eminently practical turn of mind he was not much interested in architecture or antiquities, and his aesthetic judgements are often worthless and sometimes ludicrous, but he is always ready to report upon such practical matters as the quality of the inns in which he stayed, or the state of the roads over which he passed, and he made copious notes on the spot upon the agricultural and manufacturing conditions of each district and upon local manners and peculiarities. He spent a considerable amount of time and trouble also in Paris examining maps, customs registers and other official documents, and the Duc de Liancourt permitted him to use his valuable library, which contained an immense quantity of contemporary pamphlets, as well as the *cahiers* of all “the districts and towns of France of the three orders,” from which he made a number of extracts. His book on the *Present State of the French Nation*, published as early as 1769, shows that he was already well read upon French affairs, and as he was accustomed to tabulate facts and to interpret figures, he was thoroughly qualified to make the most of his various opportunities for research.

The first part of Young's book, the “Journal” of the *Travels*, is the best known, partly because it provides the most interest and entertainment for the general reader, and partly because the second part entitled “General Observations” has never been completely reprinted since the publication of the second edition in 1794. Young himself considered the second part of his work to be the most valuable,

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for it not only was the result of a more detailed study, but contains a more definite concentration upon economic problems. He stated in the *Annals* on his return to England in 1790, that it was to study the "agriculture, manufactures, commerce and resources of France" that he had taken the trouble to cross the Channel to travel some 8000 miles, under circumstances that converted what is commonly a pleasure into labour and fatigue; and despite the interesting observations that he makes upon persons, places, political events and things in general, it is always the economic details that claim his first attention.

The framework of his picture is formed by the most glaring evils of the *ancien régime*. These were:—a despotic government which provided no satisfactory outlet for public opinion; a burdensome system of privilege by which the upper classes lived upon the community without fulfilling their obligations to the State; and an unsound system of finance which necessitated the heavy taxation of those least able to bear it. Under the covering protection of the Government, who had neither the power nor the wisdom to break with old traditions, the regulative system of industry (which was totally unsuited to the needs of a rapidly developing commerce) lingered on in the towns, as in the days of the paternal government of Colbert; while in the country, an antiquated feudalism survived that hampered the progress of agriculture and the legitimate development of the peasant towards landed proprietorship.

Young gives on the whole a gloomy picture of the French peasant, and his account is fully borne out by certain contemporary evidences collected by Tocqueville and Taine. Other historians such as Babeau, who made a special study of rural life, have considered that the peasant crushed down by misery as the result of Louis XIV's war policy, had much improved his position before the Revolution, and was indeed in some districts fairly prosperous. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, when in France in 1739, wrote of the "air of plenty and content" that pervaded the French villages "filled with fresh-coloured lusty peasants in good cloth and fine linen," while Horace Walpole in 1765 thought that the worst districts of his recollection had improved, and noted the disappearance of "wooden shoes." Dr Rigby,

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another competent witness who travelled through France from Calais to Antibes in 1789, remarked that although he had not seen so many "gentlemen's seats" as in England, far fewer of the "lower classes" appeared to him to be in "rags, idleness and misery," and he compares unfavourably the lot of the peasant in Italy, Germany and Holland with that of his fellow in France. The truth seems to be that the condition of the French peasantry differed from district to district. Young himself noted with disapproval cottages in Languedoc with "no other light than what enters at the door" (*Travels*, 2nd ed. vol. 1, p. 449), and in Brittany passed "many cabins almost as bad as the worst Irish" (*ib.* p. 450)*. He saw with admiration, however, the square white dwellings of Quercy, which added to the beauty of the country, and the solid little houses of Béarn covered with slates and surrounded with gardens. Babeau shows how the interior of the people's houses differed also according to the customs or resources of the inhabitants. The inventories of the possessions of peasants which he publishes include many household utensils and solid articles of furniture in some places, while in others the people had practically nothing. Clothing varied in the same way; some peasants were as well dressed as *bourgeois* in wool and solid stuffs, others were clothed almost in rags, especially in the North-West. In the South, many went barefoot, without shoes or sabots, a fact related by Young. Diet was dependent on the products of the soil and the industry of the inhabitants. In some provinces, Berry and Brittany for example, meat was eaten only on fête days, while in others it was never seen on the tables of the poor. Where the cultivator owned several cows, as in Champagne, a meat diet was usual, and Young describes how in the rich country of the Garonne the peasant ate four meals a day at some of which he enjoyed both meat and wine (*Travels*, 2nd ed. vol. 1, p. 449). Then as now there was a large consumption of bread, which was made of barley, wheat or rye, according to district. In Brittany the black corn was made into cakes (*galettes de sarrasin*) which were preserved for considerable periods. In Dauphiné the

* The references here and in subsequent citations from the *Travels* are to the edition of 1794. The passages referred to are taken from portions of the "General Observations" which are not included in the present edition.

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bread was kept for so long a period as six months, and Babeau relates how this had to be broken by hammers or soaked in water before it could be eaten. All black bread cannot have been equally unappetising, however, if we can believe the testimony of Rousseau, a witness biased in favour of rural life. Very few potatoes were eaten on account of the popular prejudice against them; chestnuts took their place to some extent in the Centre and South, while maize was largely employed in the making of bread and puddings. As for wine, it was naturally drunk in some places more than in others. Babeau was inclined to agree with Voltaire, who declared in the chapter on "finance" in his *Siècle de Louis XIV* published in 1751, that there was "hardly a kingdom in the Universe, England excepted, where the cultivator was more at his ease than in several of the French provinces"; but he admits that there was much misery in some districts, and that the French peasant was naturally not nearly so well off as he is to-day. It is true that the *cahiers* of 1789, which form an invaluable body of evidence as to social conditions under the *ancien régime*, complain of many hardships, but the data that they provide as to the general standard of living must be received with caution, because, as is well known, the cultivator in France sometimes exaggerated his poverty in order to escape the attentions of the tax collector.

If the miserable condition of the French peasant has been overstated by Taine and others, the agrarian troubles and the number of vagabonds that roamed through the country on the eve of the Revolution certainly point to unhealthy social conditions. The periodical rioting was caused by uncertain harvests and fear of famine, due partly to the backward state of agriculture, and partly to the well-intentioned but mistaken restrictions placed upon the grain trade by the Government. The prevalence of vagabondage was the result of unemployment in town and country, at a time when there was no systematic method of relieving poverty. Ignorance and savagery among the peasantry in certain districts was another symptom of unhealthy rural life. This was due not only to the lack of communications, the by-ways being notoriously bad, though the main roads were good, but to the fact that many of the parishes had no schools, and where these existed they were too often inadequate. Young bears

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witness to brutality and ferocity among the country populations in his account of rioting in the provinces during the opening scenes of the Revolution, while earlier Smollett had described the chronic ill-nature of the people round Boulogne, who set their neighbours' houses on fire, and committed various acts of savagery, which he attributed to the tyranny of their landlords and to their general misery. Another English witness, Philip Thicknesse, who travelled through France in 1775, remarked how frequently murders were committed upon the highroads, and advised travellers to be on their guard especially when passing through woods.

Taine described the French peasant as the "mule" of the *ancien régime*, owing to the fact that he had so many burdens to bear. He was subject in places to the *corvée*, or forced labour on the roads and other public works; his children were taken for the militia; a large part of his substance was eaten by the dues that he had to pay to the Government and the privileged classes. According to recent estimates (see *The Economic Journal*, vol. xxix (1919), p. 18), 36 per cent. of the peasant's income disappeared in direct taxes to the State; 14 per cent. went on tithes payable to the Church; while 11 or 12 per cent. was consumed by seigneurial dues. The last, although the least heavy, were the most objected to, and this apparently on account of the abuses that had crept in, in connection with the various feudal obligations. The peasant probably took it for granted that he must take his corn to be ground at the lord's mill, and that he had to bake his bread in the seigneurial oven, but he deeply resented being cheated by the miller over the weight of his grain, and the fact that he had no proper means of redress if his bread were spoiled. Other burdens were the exaction of tolls upon goods in transit, and the payment of market fees to seigneurs, both of which hampered the sale of agricultural produce. There were also the lord's rights of chase which prevented the farmer from securing his crops against the ravages of game. All these and other grievances were more bitterly felt when the movement known as the "feudal reaction" set in towards the end of the century. The seigneurs in need of increased revenue, owing to the upward tendency of prices which was a feature of the period, raised their rents wherever possible, and

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revived many old dues that had been allowed to fall into abeyance. They employed specialists (*feudistes*) to examine or remake the old *terriers* for this purpose, and tried further to restrict pastures and to increase their agricultural gains by encroaching on common lands.

Young noted most of these evils, and realized their mischievous results, but he was not nearly so much interested in the social condition of the peasant, as in the manner in which his position as landowner or tenant affected agriculture. The French peasant was in a much better position than most others in Europe in that he was generally free in his person and often the proprietor of his lands. Labour dues had been very largely commuted for money payments from the end of the mediaeval period, and on the eve of the Revolution there were not more than a million serfs in France. In an interesting memorandum which Turgot (see note 2, p. 20) addressed in 1766 to the King's Council while Intendant of the Limousin (*Mémoire sur la surcharge des impositions qu'éprouvait la généralité de Limoges*), he incidentally throws much light on the nature of tenures in France. In the richer provinces of the North, such as Normandy, Picardy, Flanders and the Ile de France (*les pays de grande culture*), there were many peasants with capital who rented their farms on leases. Turgot describes these *fermiers* as "véritables entrepreneurs de culture," for not only did they subsist on their own produce, but they were able to sell their surplus and make of farming a profitable speculation. In the other, the poorer parts of France, such as the Bourbonnais and the Limousin (*les pays de petite culture*, which, according to Turgot, comprised four-sevenths of the realm), the agricultural partnership between landlord and tenant known as *métayage* tenure prevailed. Under this tenure, which was a relic from the time of serfage, the landlord provided his tenants with cattle, implements and seed, and received in return, not a money rent, but a share (generally a half) of the produce. Although he realised that *métayage* was the inevitable outcome of economic necessity, Turgot did not approve of the system on account of its unprogressive features. The *métayer*, safe in the knowledge that his lord would support him in the event of a bad harvest, rather than allow his land to go out of cultivation, and putting nothing except his own labour into the soil,

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had little inducement to exert himself, and was generally satisfied with easy cultures such as black corn or chestnuts instead of wheat and other more advanced crops. The proprietor for his part, often far from rich, at the mercy of the thriftless tenant, bearing all the risks and being entitled to only half the produce, did not think it worth his while to invest a large capital. In this way the vicious circle of poverty, deplored by Voltaire and other writers, was maintained, to the great detriment of agriculture. Turgot speaks of yet another kind of tenure that was to be found scattered through all the provinces, which produced what he calls a *culture mitoyenne*, i.e. something between *la grande* and *la petite culture*. Under this tenure the tenants, instead of halving the produce, delivered to their landlord a fixed rent, but did not provide their own stock or agricultural implements. No further details are given, but it seems pretty certain from other evidence that there were many other variations of contract. Some of the richer and more intelligent peasants also took lands from proprietors and let them out themselves to *métayers*, taking the risks upon their own shoulders after the fashion of Irish middlemen and pocketing the gains. It should be borne in mind that in practically no case did the payment of a money rent imply full freedom from feudal exactions, and that in this way there was no real freeholding in France before the Revolution. There is no doubt that the French peasant was a proprietor of his lands, but his proprietorship was only a limited one. Ranking below the *fermiers* and *métayers* were the poorest peasants of all, who worked as day labourers upon the land of others. They were mainly employed upon those large farms which began to be formed (especially on the lands of religious houses) in various parts of the North, where a new commercial type of agriculture was coming into being as a result of the high prices given for corn. This miserable class received very poor wages and formed a large percentage of the vagabond population, for it was of course the first to suffer from the frequent famines of the period.

It would be a mistake to accept without question the statement of Michelet and some of the older French historians, that the French Revolution created the peasant proprietor in France, for more recent research has shown that the peasants were steadily increasing their