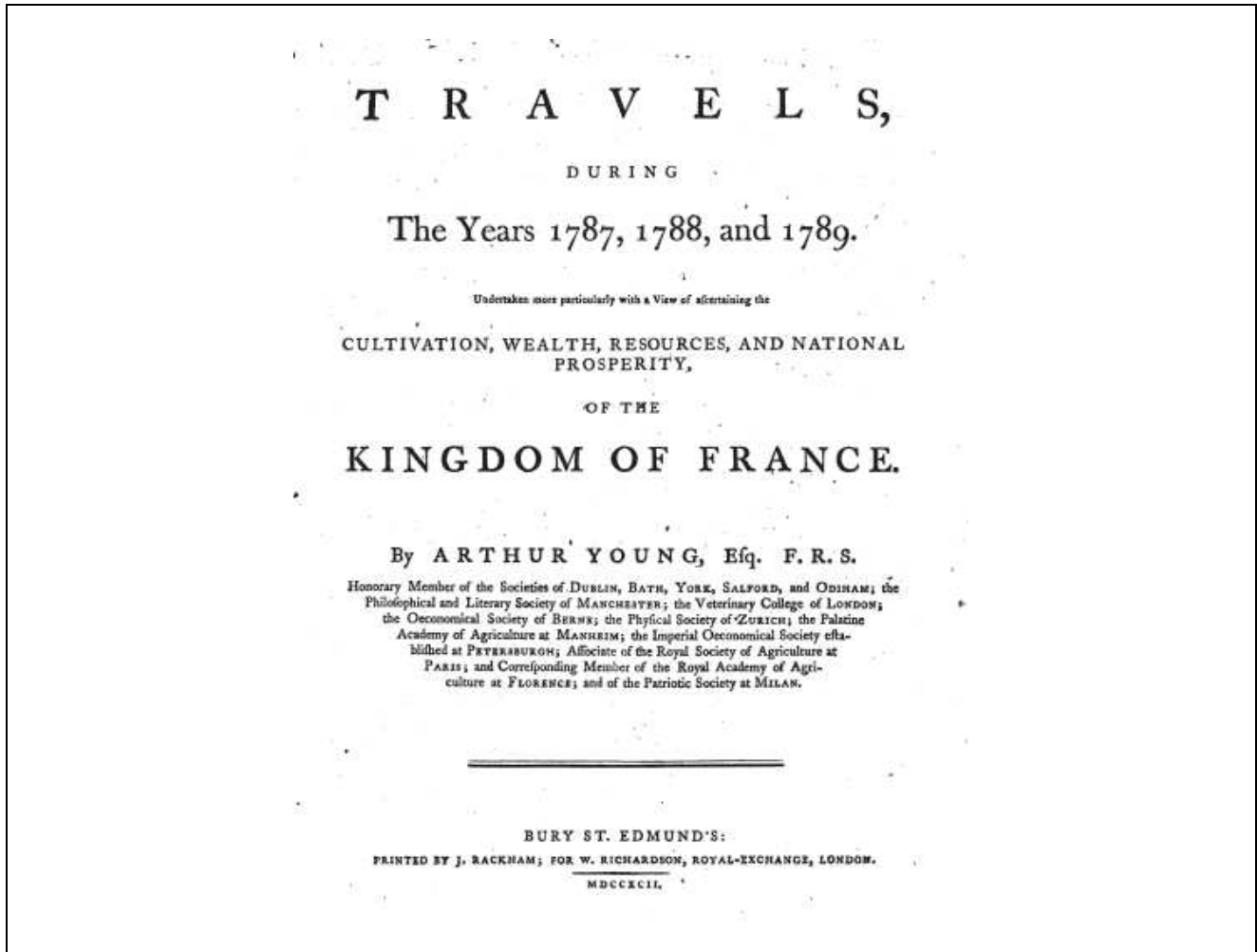


Arthur Young
TRAVELS
DURING
THE YEARS 1787, 1788, and 1789



La copertina del volume.

Testo delle pagine 190-19, il periodo è il 1789 (settembre o dicembre?).

The 19th. I have now waited two days merely for the means of getting away; can go either by a *felucca* to Genoa, or with a *vetturino* to Turin; and there is so much for and against both schemes, that priority of departure is a good a motive for a preference as any other. If I go by Genoa to Milan, I see Genoa and a part of its territory, which is much, but I lose sixty miles of superb irrigation, from Coni to Turin, and I lose the line of country between Turin and Milan, which I am told is better than that between Genoa and Milan; as so Turin is itself, I should see it in my return. But here is Luigi Tonini, a *vetturino*, from Coni, who sets out on Monday morning from Turin, which decides me; so with Mr. Green's kind assistance I have bargained with him to take me thither for seven French crowns.

He has got two officers in the Sardinian service, and is not to wait longer for filling the third place. We have every day, at the table d'hôte, a Florentine Abbé, who has been a marvellous traveller – no man names a country in which he has not travelled; and he is singular in never having made a note, making rather a boast that his memory retains every particular he would wish to know, even to numbers correctly. The height and measures of the pyramids of Egypt, of St. Peter's church at Rome, and St. Paul's at London &c. with the exact length and breadth of every fine street in Europe, he has at his tongue's end. He is a great critic in the beauty of cities; and he classes the four finest in the world thus, 1. Rome. – 2. Naples. – 3. Venice. – 4. London. Being a little inclined to the marvellous, in the idea of an old Piedmontese colonel, a knight of St. Maurice, a plain and unaffected character, and apparently a very worthy man, he pecks at the authority of Signore Abbate, and has afforded some amusement to the company.

The 20th, Sunday. Mr. Consul Green continues his friendly attentions to the last; I dined, by invitation, with him to-day; and, for the honour of Piedmontese grazing, ate as fine, sweet, and fat a piece of roast beef as I would ever wish to do in England, and such as would not be seen at the table d'hôte at the *quatre nations*, in seven years-if in seven ages. An English master and mistress of the table, with roast beef, plum pudding, and porter, made me drop for a moment the idea of the formidable distance that separated me from England. Unknown and unrecommended at Nice, I expected nothing but what could be shot flying in any town; but I found in Mr. Green both hospitality, and something too friendly to call politeness. In the evening we had another walk among gardens, and conversed with some of the proprietors on prices, products, &c. The description Mr. Green gives me of the climate of Nice in the winter is the most inviting that can be imagined; a clear blue expanse is constantly over head, and a sun warm enough to be exhilarating, but not enough to be disagreeable. *But, Sir, the vent de bise!* We are sheltered from it by the mountains; and as a proof that this climate is vastly more mild than where you have felt that wind, the oranges and lemons which we have in such profusion will not thrive either in Genoa or Provence, except in a very few spots, singularly sheltered like this. He remarked, that Dr. Smollet, in his description has done great injustice to the climate, and even against the feelings of his own crazy constitution; for he never was so well after he left Nice as he had been at it, and made much interest with Lord Shelburne to be appointed consul, who told him, and not without some foundation, that he would on no account be such an enemy to a man of genius; -that he had libelled the climate of Nice so severely, that if he were to go again thither the Nissards would certainly knock him on the head. Mr. Green has seen hay made, and well made, at Christmas.

The 21st. Commenced my first Italian journey; of my two military companions, one was as stupid as a brickbat, and the other too lively for me: -there are few things more repugnant to my nerves than the vivacity of inanity; I am not young enough for it. Here was also a friar, who made no compensation for the deficiencies of his countryman: -low, vulgar, and ignorant; could speak no French, and but little Italian: I looked in vain for so many of his Piedmontese words in my dictionary, that I was soon tired of following him. We dined at Scareno, and slept at Sospello, at both which places we joined the company of another *vetturino*, consisting of the Piedmontese colonel I had met at the table d'hôte, his brother and abbé, and another abbé a friend, all well bred polite men, who were very attentive to me as a foreigner, and had great readiness to answer all my enquiries: I reaped a good deal of information from their conversation. The three first days of this journey are employed in crossing three mountains; to-day we passed the Col de Pruss. The features in the heights are interesting, wild, and great. The descent to Sospello is picturesque. – 26 miles.

The 22^d. My friend, the old Piedmontese colonel, commends the English character greatly, when it is truly English; that is, as I guessed by his explanations, when it is not a hurrying, bustling, expensive young man of great fortune, against whom he threw out some severe reflexions. He desired my name, and where I lived in England, which he begged me to write down for him; and commended very much the object of my journey, which appeared so extraordinary to him, that he could not help putting many questions. The mountain we crossed to-day is yet more savage than that of yesterday; much of it wild, and even sublime. The little town of Saorgio and its castle are situated most romantically, stuck against the side of a mountain, like a swallow's nest against the side of a house. I had no opportunity of asking how many necks are broken in a year, in going peaceably to and fro; but the blackness of this town, and the total want of glass, make it gloomy as well as romantic, indeed the view of all these mountain-towns, where there may be so much happiness with so little appearance of it, is forbidding. Tende, which is the capital of a district, and gives name to this great ridge of mountain (*Col de Tende*), is a horrid place of this sort, with a vile inn; all black, dirty, stinking, and no glass. – 30 miles.

The 23d. Out by four in the morning, in the dark, in order to cross the Col de Tende as soon after break of day as possible, a necessary precaution they say, as the wind is then most quiet; if there is any storm, the passage is dangerous, and even impracticable; not so much from height as from situation, in a draught of wind between piedmont and the sea. The pass in the rocks, for some distance before mounting the hill, is sublime; hemmed in among such enormous mountains and rocks, that they reminded me a little of the amazing pass in the Pyrenees, but are much inferior to it. In the face of one of them is a long inscription to the honour of Victor Amadeus III. for making the road; and near it an old one, purporting that the eleventh duke of Savoy made the old road, to connect Piedmont and Nice, *a proprie spese con tutta diligenza*. This old road is passable only by mules, and is that by which Mr. Dutens passed the Col de Tende. I shall observe once for all, that the new one is a most useful and princely undertaking. From within a few miles of Nice, where it is not finished, to Limon cost 3.500.000 liv.

It winds prodiously, in order to pass the steepest mountains, in such angles as to admit carriages without difficulty. The worst part is that which goes up to the Col de Tende; this has not been made with equal attention as the rest, perhaps because they have begun to execute a vast design of perforating the mountain. At present, notwithstanding the goodness of the road in summer, it is absolutely impassable in winter for carriages, and with difficulty sometimes even with mules, owing to the immense falls of snow. They have opened a cavern like a vault of rock, about thirty *trebuchi* long, and wide enough for carriages to pass, but it soon divides into two passages, one for going and another for returning, which is found cheaper than one large enough for both; the whole will be above five hundred *trebuchi*, and will demand such an expense as leaves little hope of seeing it executed in this century. Take the new road, however, for all in all, and it is a work that does honour to the king and country. Descend into the rich and beautiful vale of Piedmont, a few miles before Coni, and between the Alps and Appenines, which here separate, one range running from hence to Calabria, I believe uninterruptedly, and the other to Constantinople. Amongst the maps never made, but much wanted, is one of the mountains of Europe, to shew at one *coup d'oeil* which are connected, and which separate: this separation of the Alps and Appenines is so kind as to meet them with the utmost willingness of explanation. *If* I have many such days as this in Italy, I shall be equally well pleased and informed. Centallo was the residence of the marquis of Suza...