

ful, prospect: A naked brown country during great part of the year. If I could chuse my party, I believe I should like better to examine these wild and romantic mountains than those half-peopled plains: All their mountains are full of interesting objects, and of sublime and beautiful scenes; but they are few and distant from each other.

I do not find much that is worth copying and considering from the *memoranda* of several journeys through the now naked plains of Old Castile and Leon; where there is, indeed, so little to be seen, besides some scattered flocks of sheep, and a few clay towns and villages, very thinly scattered, full of dirt, poverty and ruins, appearing as if lately burnt down: Scarce a tree, or anything green, to be seen during most of the year; often in want of water, of timber, and of every thing comfortable; only straw for fuel, beds, seats, &c. In some of the wool towns, *i. e.* where the wool is washed, we saw some houses with a few glass windows, as a very rare sight.

We found that those large flocks of sheep belong mostly to a few great proprietors, chiefly nobility, who live in Madrid, while their wretched and neglected country seems given up to waste, or to those few scattered flocks, and ragged solitary shepherds: But their management of wool and sheep, Spain has retained perhaps better than any other art; and in its present state, is probably one of the fittest for producing wool, and if it must want water, there is much of it that can hardly be turned to any other use: for which reason I think it is not the country fittest for working up the wool, nor for many other operations that require great population and industry. The producing and the working up of materials, are not necessary, nay are often incompatible, in the same country: A country of shepherds cannot be full of manufactures: Some countries we find fit for one thing, and some for another: some to produce materials, others to fabricate them: And if each nation would be wise enough to keep to its own natural staple, it would doubtless be much better for the world at large. Yet they might, and would probably have some manufactories in their towns here, if their government had any wisdom or goodness to refrain from taxing them, and to give sufficient security, liberty, toleration: Or rather if they were to abolish this government, and create a new one. Of the present state of Spain, I hope you begin to form some general ideas, which I think are sufficient, and always the best, to begin with: A general notion of its

natural history you may acquire from *Boules*, and our good friend *D. Ign. Asa*, may shew you his subterraneous or mineralogic map of it. These extensive plains consist of other lesser ones, of different heights or levels, sinking suddenly by steep precipices, where two or three different strata appear, of several yards thickness each, all horizontal: the upper stratum visibly forms the surrounding mountains, though at a great distance: Such is the make, and I think, a tolerable short description of this, and of several other great plains in the world.

Their chief towns lie among the skirts of the different mountains that almost surround this great plain, as Segovia, Valladolid, Burgos, Leon, Astorga, (for accounts of which see Pontz). There, the country generally begins to be more varied, more interspersed with villages and cultivation, and we can see that it has formerly been still more so: ruins of villages, castles, and cultivation, may be yet traced; and in those cities, some melancholy remains of ancient magnificence still appear through their present ruins, filth and poverty. Burgos I think one of the most interesting of these towns; it was formerly the residence of their Princes. Some streets, consisting of old palaces of former nobility, appeared to be scarcely habitable, but we were told that they are still occupied by genteel families; poor gentry, of which this country has still some remains, too proud and too lazy to work.

There is scarcely any thing in tolerable order in Spain but their churches: The old cathedral here is one of their finest Gothic structures. Though the parts are of very different and capricious styles of architecture; the whole is noble without being heavy: But the Greek and the Gothic never join well, in my opinion, though the moderns are always attempting it, as here, and I think still without success. They tell us, this place is much improved since the wool duties began to be collected in it, and the export turned to St. Ander; it must then have been wretched indeed before that period.

Leon may have been, and might easily again be made a very fine city: situated on some small rivers, as they issue from the mountains to the north of it, and which form a noble back ground, with much fine country and good soil all around. Here is a charming convent or abbey, possessed by the priests of St. Jago: But Pontz will soon give us large accounts of all these.

They have, however, in these dry brown plains of Castile, sometimes tolerable crops