

JAN BERNOULLI IN GDANSK

ANDRZEJ JANUSZAJTIS

*Technical University of Gdansk
Faculty of Technical Physics and Applied Mathematics
Narutowicza 11/12, 80-952 Gdansk, Poland*

A famous Swiss astronomer and traveller, residing in Germany — Jan Bernoulli – lived in Gdansk in the times shortly before the Second Partition, which separated Gdansk from Poland for a long time. Here we present fragments of his relation:

„5th July. It was raining heavily, the streets were terribly covered with mud. Because of that I had no reason to like Gdansk, however, I told myself that this was purely the fault of bad weather and my temporarily bad mood, because in spite of all that I noticed what I had seen the previous day: that the city has many quite beautiful and straight streets, which the famous obstructing thresholds still leave wide enough, that it has numerous big buildings — towers, gates, etc. , that the gable houses constructed, of course, in the hanseatic style, are, with their proportions and numerous decorations, the proof of the grandness and richness of their owners, that many of the beautiful new tenement houses have been erected according to the best, newest style, and that also others happily combine the old architecture with the modern one (...)”.

„8th July (...). In the afternoon I spent my time from 3 p.m. till 7 p.m. in the rooms of the Physics Association (Societas Physicae Experimentalis — the first Association for nature in Poland), in the so called Green Gate, where several members of the truly scientific and deserving the highest approbation society met to show me, with all their patience and kindness, its fantastic natural collection. They are all kept in a beautiful and very large room in perfect order, and at the end of the room there is a very nice space where the Association holds its meetings (...)”.

„9th July (...). At St. Catherine’s I was especially impressed by the strong colours and bravery of the style in the picture with many human figures, painted on a concave surface below the organs, and showing the Christ’s entering Jerusalem. The painter’s name, as I was later told was Milzwith (...). Hevelius is buried at that

church. I did not know this at that time, neither have I noticed any monument which should have been built for that great man. An inconspicuous tombstone (...) covers the bones of a man who deserves a statue.

From there I took Dr. Wolf (Stanislaus Augustus' physician in ordinary, a founder of the second in Gdansk astronomical observation), to go together to the house in which Hevelius had lived. Its present owner is Mr Leonardi, an Italian from Lucca, who has been living in Gdansk for a long time on his pension, and who is married to Hevelius' great-granddaughter. We stayed for more than an hour at this very nice gentleman's house; he took me to the scenic terrace on the roof, crosswise which, together with two adjacent ones, there was Hevelius' observatory before the fire which destroyed it. He also showed me two rare silver medals which the city ordered to honour the death of Hevelius (...), ..

„10th July. The beautiful morning made me accept the offer of Dr Scheffler to show me along the dikes right around the city. I could not have wished for a better guide, as Mr von Scheffler knows perfectly well not only the fortifications, but the city itself, as well. (...) This walk, which takes over two hours and requires a short river Motlawa crossing, is in many places really a nice one. You can admire various beautiful views outside and see many wonderful gardens on the side of the city: among others the gardens of count Mniszech and those of the Russian car resident, where also the buildings are worth noticing for their beauty and modern style (...). ..

„Everywhere on the dikes one can notice numerous bronze cannons. This beautiful yet scary abundance comes from the times when all councillors and mayors had to found one or two cannons respectively, after succeeding to the office. Two huge arsenals gather the rest of what belongs among the great war supplies. There are some more cannons in the bigger and more beautiful arsenal situated in the Right City, another less well known one is in the Old City (in reality in the Old Suburb). This one gathers mainly cavalry equipment. The present garrison consists of 1500 people in infantry and 60 in cavalry. The latter ones are aided by a battle corpse if needed (...). ..

„13th July. In the evening I, together with Mr Stadtmüller, von Scheffler, and von Wolf, went to the abbey in Oliwa. We had hardly entered the park when we met the abbot, who was taking a walk with the bishop of Warmia and the voivode count Ledochowski. I was introduced to him immediately and received very cordially. His name is Rybinski, he is a very nice and winsome man, quite old. He is highly appreciated in the city, with which he has always lived in best harmony. He speaks perfect Spanish, and fifteen years ago he travelled widely through the Netherlands, England, France, and Germany under a false name.

I was nicely impressed by the park, although I was not surprised, as I had known earlier that it is adequate to the rich and famous monastery, to which it belongs. It is totally flat, and its main beauty lies in the main alley with enormously tall trees, and also in the fact that optical illusion makes it seem to touch the sea.

When you stand at its beginning, a small platform carefully made at the end of the alley covers from sight the further field. Between the park and the sea is a forest which has been so precisely cut that the alley in it seems to be the continuation of the park (...). ,,

„After having a look around we came back to the abbot (...). I ordered coffee to be served, together with good Hungarian wine, and the bishop, who had remembered me from Berlin, did me the honour of talking with me for a long time. It should be mentioned that he is a very witty and talented man, and in Poland he belongs among the most famous writers. There are two poems in Polish: *Myszeis*, and *Monachomachia*, and two novels: *Mikolaj Doswiadczynski's Adventures*, and *Mr Lord High Steward*. He also told me the story of finding in his cathedral the real tomb of Copernicus and invited me there, as well as to his usual place in Lidzbark. ,,

Translation: Anna Kucharska