JOHAN CLASSON RISING,

THE LAST DIRECTOR OF NEW SWEDEN, ON THE DELAWARE.

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Among the early colonists and adventurers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we often find poetic talents of a high order; as for instance, John Smith, Thomas Morton, and a host of others—even the immortal Milton contemplated going to the New World. Experiences among strange peoples in new and unexplored worlds particularly appeal to the imagination and stir the spirits of literary minds, and the most restless among them, not content with second-hand information from the mouths of returning “heroes,” will go themselves to see the “living wonders.”

This was true of New France, likewise of New England, and New Netherland had its poets and writers during its short history. New Sweden was apparently an exception. The reasons are obvious to the student of history. Sweden was not ripe for great literary activity; the language was in a formative state, and wealth and leisure, the handmaids of poetry, were destined to be the heritage of a later age. Swedish talent was employed to the limit in directing the battles of
the Thirty Years’ War and in solving the problems of military tactics and the issues of statecraft, leaving few opportunities for the conception of lofty poetry or the creation of artistic peace. This being true of the mother country, it follows, as a matter of course, that literary activity, in the small and lingering colony on the Delaware, would be even more uncommon. However, although New Sweden during its brief Swedish period can boast of no Berkeley, no Sandays, no Waller, nor even a Steendam, yet the colony had its Bradford, its Van der Donck and its Elliott.

Of these chroniclers and translators Johan Classon Rising holds the highest rank. He was born in 1617 in Risingé parish, where his father, the Rev. Clas Botvidi, was pastor; and from his birthplace he adopted the name. His early education, being largely religious, was received in the parsonage under the guidance of his father, later supplemented by instruction in the parish school. Thereupon young Rising entered the famous Linköping Gymnasium (College-High School, founded in 1628), whence he graduated in due time with high honors. In 1635 he entered the University of Upsala. Here he came under the influence of the historian and legal authority, Loccenius, who, above all other professors, made a profound impression on his receptive mind. Through his capabilities and studious habits he attracted the attention of the rector of the University, Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, who became his patron and protector. Having presented his dissertation* for his degree in 1640, and apparently defended it successfully, he seems to have gone abroad and spent some time at foreign universities, undoubtedly through the aid of De la Gardie and other benefactors.

Having returned to his native land, he was engaged

*Disputatio philosophica de philosophia, etc. It was dedicated to several benefactors, including his father.
as tutor and companion to the young Count Clas Akesson Tott some time in 1646. In the summer of this year he travelled through the northern provinces with his charge and in the autumn and winter he superintended the studies of Count Tott and aided him in his various subjects.

In the early summer of 1647 he accompanied the Count on a journey to England and the continent. Sweden was now at the height of its power, respected and honored throughout Europe, as well as feared. Accordingly Count Tott was received with marked attention everywhere and had access to the most influential people and exclusive society. For instance, Rising relates that on a visit to Hampton Court they "kissed the hand of His Majesty." Thus vast and unusual opportunities presented themselves to the future governor of New Sweden for study and the gathering of valuable information, and he was not slow in making use of these. Endowed with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, almost unlimited capacities for work and unusual powers of observation, he gathered a store of knowledge. From England they continued through Holland and France. The attractions of Paris caused the Count to extend his sojourn in the French capital beyond the allotted time, certainly to the profit of Rising, who availed himself of the opportunity thus offered for a study of French history and economy. Returning by way of present Belgium, Count Tott and Rising landed in Sweden in the fall of 1648.

Perhaps, unable to obtain suitable employment, he again pursued special courses at the University. But the following year it seems he was enabled, through a joint stipend from De la Gardie and the Queen, to visit Holland for the purposes of economic and commercial studies. Already on his first visit to that country he had acquired an almost venerable admiration for Holland in general, the greatest mercantile nation of the
day, and for Amsterdam in particular, the greatest trading post in the world.

To be the guiding economist of his country and the teacher of new commercial theories by which the Baltic trade would be gradually controlled by Swedish shipping and by which the nation would ascend to an undreamed of height of prosperity,—this was his ambition and was to be his life work. His studies bore rich fruit and when he returned to Sweden in the spring of 1651, he was perhaps better equipped for his chosen field of work than any other scholar in Scandinavia.

The stipend from the Queen entailed the writing of a *Dissertation about Trade* and it seems that material for the book had been collected in Holland. It was completed in Sweden, and in 1652 money was appropriated by the Crown for its publication. Several short essays on commerce and trade were written by Rising during his last stay in Holland, but were never published as far as I know.

Rising was now without employment and without any immediate means of a livelihood; but in August, 1651, he was appointed to the secretaryship of the Commercial College,* just then established. It was a position he fully deserved, imminently suited to his training and bent of mind, and he performed his duties with ability and faithfulness, to the complete satisfaction of Erik Oxenstierna, the President of the Chamber.

At this time the directorship of the Swedish colony on the Delaware was vested in the Commercial College. All voyages to the settlement were decided by this body and all discussions about the colony were heard in this chamber. Rising was naturally greatly interested in the settlement and his knowledge of colonial affairs gave particular weight to his views, and we may assume

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*For the most complete account of the early history of the Commercial College in Sweden in either Swedish or English, see the author's *Swedish Settlements*, I, 16ff.*
that his arguments were always heard with attention by the members of the College.

Governor Printz, of New Sweden, had written repeatedly for orders to be relieved of his services or at least to receive an assistant who could handle the many and often intricate legal cases that came up from time to time. The government, dominated by the now frivolous and pleasure-loving Queen, paid no heed to his entreaties. But in 1653, when the reports of Dutch encroachments reached Stockholm, it was finally decided to send aid to the forsaken colony on the South River and the young and energetic Rising, "the best man in sight," was requested to repair to New Sweden and become assistant councillor to Governor Printz. Rising willingly accepted the post, giving various reasons for so doing, and began to prepare for his long journey.

In October, 1653, he resigned his secretaryship in the Commercial College (his signature in the minutes of the College being found for the last time on October 29). On December 9 his official appointment was signed by the Queen, and a few days later he was knighted and given a fief or estate with special prerogatives in Sweden. His salary was to be 1500D. a year; 1500D. were appropriated for his travelling expenses, and he was granted a large donation of land on the Delaware. On the journey thither, he was to command the expedition and have complete control of the ships with their crews and passengers. The expedition was to be composed of two ships, but after long delays and fruitless efforts only one ship, the Örn, set sail.

The vessel with Rising on board left Gothenburg harbor on February 2, 1654. To avoid English and Dutch men-of-war they attempted to sail north of Scotland, but such tremendous contrary storms were encountered that the ship was blown back to the Straits
of Dover. After long delays the Örn finally left the shores of Europe on March 3. Some two weeks later Rising cast anchor in the harbor of one of the Canaries, where the unspeakable sufferings of the people in the overcrowded vessel were somewhat relieved.

The Örn arrived before the deserted Fort Elfsborg in the evening of May 20. On the following morning a council of war was held on board, and it was decided to demand the surrender of Fort Casimir, the Dutch stronghold, which had been built by Stuyvesant in 1651, on territory claimed by the Swedish Company through priority of title from the Indians.

The Dutch commander requested delay, but Rising demanded an immediate answer, sending Gyllengren with a company of soldiers ashore. The soldiers finally made their way into the Fort, as the gates were open, and when the "Hollanders wanted to use their guns," they were told to put them down, "and thus the Swedes took possession of Fort Casimir." The Swedish flag was thereupon raised above "the Dutch citadel," the name of which was changed to Fort Trinity, "as it was captured on Trinity Sunday."

Rising later insisted that the Dutch fortress had surrendered without hostilities, and that he had followed his orders minutely, but it is difficult to see how he could maintain such views in the face of his instructions, which were as follows: "If the Dutch cannot be removed by argument and grave remonstrances, and everything, which can be done without danger and hostility, then it would be better in terminus protestandi to tolerate the Dutch there, than that the same fort should fall into the hands of the English as the strongest, and consequently the most dangerous, and to erect a Swedish stronghold below the Dutch fort, which would control the river and make the latter useless, since a hostile attack is not compatible with the weak power of the Swedes in that place." These instruc-
tions seem clear enough and would have been followed closely by a trained military man. Printz would have handled the situation without friction, and it is more than likely that the colony would have remained under Swedish jurisdiction several years longer than was the case, had he been in command when the Örn sailed up the South River. Rising knew little of the art of war; he apparently had no knowledge of the strength of the Dutch in the new world, nor of the restless energy of the old veteran Peter Stuyvesant, and he was not acquainted with the condition of the colony he was sent to aid.

When a garrison had been left in the Dutch fort and arrangements for its maintenance completed, Rising continued up the river and arrived at Christina, present Wilmington, on May 22, 1654. He was now indisposed as well as his other officers, and most of his immigrants were seriously ill; but as early as the following day, the commissions and instructions of the various officers were read before the assembled people in Christina.

These instructions and memorials (minute and detailed, in several of their provisions resembling those given to Printz eleven years before) intrusted to Rising the "direction of the political, judicial and commercial affairs of the colony," leaving the military management to other officers. "His duty should especially be to bring the country on a prosperous footing;" he should occupy and clear new land and assign plantations to the freemen; he should plant tobacco, sow grain, hemp and linseed; cultivate grapes and fruit trees and experiment with silk worms and the growing of ginger and sugar cane; he should found cities, select harbors and begin commerce, seeking to draw all the trade on the river into the hands of the Swedes; he should prospect for minerals; he should select land for the company and work it for the benefit of the same; he should establish ropewalks, saw mills, tanneries, tar-burneries and
manufactories of wooden utensils of all kinds, as well as fisheries in the rivers, streams and lakes; he should keep peace with the Indians, Dutch and English as far as possible, but he should also fortify the country with all vigor and ward off attack with the best means at hand; he should seek to increase the population of the colony and extend its settlement by inviting all valuable and industrious colonists to settle under the Swedish jurisdiction; but he should send away and remove (with caution) all who might be a disturbance or a hindrance to the prosperity of the settlement; he should draw up good ordinances, make rules for hunting and the preservation of the forest, preventing all indiscriminate cutting of trees, as well as ordinances concerning the trade, the agriculture and other pursuits; he should institute commercial relations with Africa; he should send game, bread, beer and brandy to Spain, and lumber and wood materials to the Canary Islands; he was to handle the money sent from the mother country, supervise the handling of the merchandise and see that proper and correct books were kept; he was to raise money for the purpose of the colonial government, and finally he was to appoint "persons who could judge according to the law of Sweden and its rightful custom in order that justice and righteousness may have their course in the land."

With these instructions in mind Rising began his busy life as director of the colony. New plots of ground were laid out, new houses were built and new settlements were made at various points on the river. He also appointed supervisors of agriculture and house building, and the clearing of new land, and made other provisions for the welfare of the little settlement. He sent commissions to the English on the south and north as well as to the Dutch of New Holland, and entered into commercial relations with various merchants of New England and those from New Amster-
Johan Classon Rising.

Dam and Virginia. He also established and renewed the good relations with the Indians, bought large tracts of land from them and concluded various commercial treaties. Had sufficient supplies been at his disposal, the colony would have prospered greatly under his rule, for he was a thorough organizer and indefatigable worker. A misfortune that befell the colony during his directorship was the capture by the Dutch of the Swedish ship Haj, which arrived at New Amsterdam in the autumn. "It was a great misfortune to us, and a loss that cannot be easily repaired," said Rising.

The capture of Fort Casimir could not be forgotten by Peter Stuyvesant, nor by the directors in Amsterdam to whom the matter was at once reported, and soon active preparations for revenge were under way, both in Holland and in the Dutch colony. The whole Swedish settlement must now be conquered and Swedish power in America destroyed forever. And for this purpose so large a force was to be employed, that there could be no question as to the success of the enterprise.

The preparations were made so secretly that neither the Swedish agents in Holland nor the officials in New Sweden had any idea of the approaching storm. The Indians, however, who were always friendly towards the Swedes, in some way obtained information about the intentions of the Dutch, and immediately made it known to Rising. The reports did not disturb him. He seemed quite confident that he would be able to ward off any danger that might come from New Amsterdam. All his men were set to work in the various forts, powder and other ammunitions were stored in the magazines and spies were dispatched to gather all possible information. But when the Dutch finally arrived it was evident that the Swedish power would soon succumb to the overwhelming force of Peter Stuyvesant, the trained soldier and forceful leader, and after about
two weeks of "warfare," Fort Christina, the last stronghold of the Swedes, surrendered to Stuyvesant on August 15, 1655. The articles of capitulation, which were extremely favorable to the Swedes, provided that Rising and all of his soldiers and settlers, who wished to return to Sweden, should be supplied with free passage by the Dutch West India Co. Accordingly, the Dutch prepared three ships for the transportation of the Swedes, and on October 23 Rising went to sea. On December 7 he landed in Plymouth, whence he went over land to London and made a report to the Swedish ambassador. From there he passed over to Holland, where he remained for some time. In Holland some of his luggage was plundered and his books, manuscripts and clothes were confiscated and sold at auction, possibly as a result of his inability to pay a draft for "300 Flanders," which fell due in March.

In the early spring of 1656 he left Amsterdam and in the summer he made his way to Elbing, in East Prussia, where he presented a memorial to Erik Oxenstierna about New Sweden and the Dutch attack. For a period he was kept busy preparing reports, memorandums and relations on the colony, how to regain the same and how to increase Swedish transatlantic commerce, and a dozen other subjects. Finally, in March, 1657, he was appointed chief inspector of the customs in the three governments of Prussia and Pomerania, with a salary of 1200 R.D. annually. In 1658 he made Elbing his headquarters, "where the Swedes were most tolerated." For nearly four years he travelled at his "own expense" in Prussia and Pomerania to establish the customs, but he claimed that only half a year's salary was ever paid to him. However, he seems to have enjoyed certain privileges and been entitled to certain fees, which made it possible for him to live without care.

In the beginning of 1660, when "Prussia was cap-
tured by the enemy," he applied to De la Gardie for a new post, and soon returned to Stockholm. Being overloaded with debts and in bad health, his first concern was to collect his salary as Director from the New Sweden Company and the sums he had advanced to soldiers and colonists on the Delaware, especially during the siege of Fort Christina.

Rising developed his usual activity. Memorials in the case were multiplied, arguments, repeated a dozen times in manifold variety, were presented and bills and accounts were duplicated with untiring industry; but nothing came of it all, and Rising was left without his money and without a means of income. In March, 1665, he was appointed assessor in the newly organized Maritime Court with a salary of 400D. a year, but the court was not put into operation and no salaries were paid.

As a consequence Rising was now in desperate circumstances. With the exception of some aid from his life-long patron De la Gardie, he was dependent upon what little he could make in this way or that, and it is not clear how he managed to live through the following years, and especially how he contrived to carry on his literary work.

He had for years collected materials for his "life monument," a comprehensive Treatise on Trade, and he longed for leisure to execute his gigantic task. The book (planned largely along the lines suggested by the English economist, Malynes, in his Lex Mercatoria) was to be divided into three parts. The first part (containing three books) and certain chapters of the second and third parts (the second part to contain two books, the third part to contain one or two (?) books) were completed, but only the first and second books of the first part have been preserved, together with a table of contents of the completed work. According to this
table the contents of the book would have had the following appearance:

**Part One.** First book of thirty-four chapters concerning merchandise, maxims for the increase of trade, business transactions, contracts, debts and bonds, markets and fairs, trade-marks, lotteries, merchants, brokers, monopolies and companies, colonies.

Second book in four parts concerning the principal trading places in Europe, Asia, Africa and America.

Third book of twenty-three chapters concerning navigation, navigation laws, sailors and officers, shipbuilding, equipment, freight, duties and excises, etc., insurance, journeys to foreign lands, piracy ports, staple cities, the ownership of rivers and coasts, fisheries and the right to fish.

**Part Two.** First book of eighteen chapters concerning money, the right of the government to coin money, gold and silver and their relative values, the shape and size of money, master coiners, counterfeit money, how to increase money in the country, loaning and borrowing of money, usury.

Second book “concerning the reduction of all kinds of measures, standard and weights (to the standard of weights and measures) of Stockholm.”

**Part Three.** First book of eleven chapters concerning drafts, their use and history, kinds of drafts and their proper form, the acceptance, payment, refusal and protesting of drafts.

When Rising discovered that it would be difficult to finish the large work (probably also to interest the government and his patron), he made an abstract from the *Treatise*, which he was able to prepare for the press through the liberality of De la Gardie. It was published at Stockholm, in 1669, under the title *Itt Uthtogh om Kiöp-Handelen aller Commerciern* (*An Extract Concerning Trade or Commerce*). Two years later he
published *Een Landboek (A Book Concerning Agriculture).*

A number of other treatises on Swedish and Dutch commerce and trade and how to increase the former and place it on a prosperous basis were also written by Rising, partly before, partly after his sojourn in America, but none of these were ever published.

He also wrote a number of *Descriptions of Nova Svecia* and several *Relations* from the colony concerning conditions there, and kept an interesting journal covering the period of his governorship of New Sweden. He used his pen diligently and his journals and reports are full of accurate information. He states the events plainly and clearly, without unnecessary details, and his diary extending over the greater parts of the years 1654–55, and his three reports are the most valuable documents concerning the history of New Sweden for the period they cover, giving more detailed information about the colony than any other sources preserved to us. In his acquired historical knowledge Rising is less accurate and, although he had read much of the colonial and historical literature of England and Holland, and knew the general facts of the early journeys to America, his historical essays contain many errors concerning events which took place before his arrival. His four descriptions preserved to us differ somewhat in detail, various dates being given for the same events (in some cases, however, probably due to the copyist) and we can trace many statements and errors in dates to Rising, which are found in the early writers on New Sweden. He says that Minuet came here in 1631 (repeated by Campanius Holm, Geijer and a host of other historians); he states that King Charles I surrendered his right to the Delaware to the Swedes about 1631 (other dates are also given by Rising) through Count Johan Oxenstierna. His descriptions are of much less importance for the
history and conditions of Nova Svecia than his other writings concerning the colony, and much space is given to prove the right of the Swedes to the colony, how to regain it and how to manage the colonial affair, "as well at home as out here for the benefit and prosperity of the Crown." The chapters on location, climate, forests, "wild animals and birds" show considerable powers of observation, but are of less value than Lindeström's writings on the same subjects.

Rising never discontinued his literary labors, in spite of his troubles and other work, and his ambition and burning desire to complete his great volume, *A Treatise on Trade*, never deserted him. But he labored under tremendous difficulties. He was forced to occupy the most miserable quarters and he was barely able to provide sufficient clothing for his body. Cold prevented him from doing work in winter and when summer came necessary books and other materials, even ink, were often wanted. He was ever in debt, and kind-hearted people and royal intercessions alone saved him from the prison bars. Under such conditions it is a wonder that he could accomplish what he did. The end came in April, 1672. It is a sad picture to see the former director of New Sweden, the first writer of importance on economy and commerce in Scandinavia, "ages ahead of his time in his views," die in a small, miserable garret of a tailor's hut. His books were unsold and his labors unrewarded, but a later age has been more charitable, and his works which could not be marketed during his lifetime are eagerly sought by the collector and often bring a considerable price.