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Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
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Dutch Life in Town and Country

P. M. Hough

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Contents

- I. National Characteristics
- II. Court and Society
- III. The Professional Classes
- IV. The Position of Women
- V. The Workman of the Towns
- VI. The Canals and Their Population
- VII. A Dutch Village
- VIII. The Peasant at Home
- IX. Rural Customs
- X. Kermis and St. Nicholas
- XI. National Amusements
- XII. Music and the Theatre
- XIII. Schools and School Life
- XIV. The Universities
- XV. Art and Letters
- XVI. The Dutch as Readers
- XVII. Political Life and Thought
- XVIII. The Administration of Justice
- XIX. Religious Life and Thought
- XX. The Army and Navy
- XXI. Holland Over Sea

Index

List of Illustrations

The Delft Gate at Rotterdam
Types of Zeeland Women
Zeeland Peasant – The Dark Type
A Zeeland Woman – The Dark Type
Dutch Fisher Girls
A Bridal Pair Driving Home
A Dutch Street Scene
A Sea-Going Canal
A Village in Dyke-Land
A Canal in Dordrecht
An Overijssel Farmhouse
An Overijssel Farmhouse
Approach to an Overijssel Farm
Zeeland Costume
Zeeland Costumes
An Itinerant Linen-Weaver
Farmhouse Interior, Showing the Linen-Press
Type of an Overijssel Farmhouse
A Farmhouse Interior, Showing the Door into the Stable
Farmhouse Interior, the Open Fire on the Floor
Palm Paschen – Begging for Eggs
Rommel Pot
A Hindeloopen Lady in National Costume
Rural Costume – Cap with Ruche of Fur
An Overijssel Peasant Woman
Zeeland Children in State
Kermis 'Hossen-Hossen – Hi-Ha!
St. Nicholas Going His Rounds on December 5th
Skating to Church
Parliament House at the Hague – View From the Great Lake
Interior of Delftshaven Church (Where the Pilgrim Fathers Wor-
shipped
 Before Leaving for New England)
Utrecht Cathedral

Dutch Life in Town and Country

Chapter I

National Characteristics

There is in human affairs a reason for everything we see, although not always reason in everything. It is the part of the historian to seek in the archives of a nation the reasons for the facts of common experience and observation, it is the part of the philosopher to moralize upon antecedent causes and present results. Neither of these positions is taken up by the author of this little book. He merely, as a rule, gives the picture of Dutch life now to be seen in the Netherlands, and in all things tries to be scrupulously fair to a people renowned for their kindness and courtesy to the stranger in their midst.

And this strikes one first about Holland – that everything, except the old Parish Churches, the Town Halls, the dykes and the trees, is in miniature. The cities are not populous, the houses are not large, the canals are not wide, and one can go from the most northern point in the country to the most southern, or from the extreme east to the extreme west, in a single day, and, if it be a summer's day, in *day-light*, while from the top of the tower of the Cathedral at Utrecht one can look over a large part of the land.

[Illustration: Types of Zeeland Women.]

As it is with the natural so it is with the political horizon. This latter embraces for the average Dutchman the people of a country whose interests seem to him bound up for the most part in the twelve thousand square miles of lowland pressed into a corner of Europe; for, extensive as the Dutch colonies are, they are not 'taken in' by the average Dutchman as are the colonies of some other nations. There are one or two towns, such as The Hague and Arnhem, where an Indo-Dutch Society may be found, consisting of retired colonial civil servants, who very often have married Indian women,

and have either returned home to live on well-earned pensions or who prefer to spend the money gained in India in the country which gave them birth. But Holland has not yet begun to develop as far as she might the great resources of Netherlands India, and therefore no very great amount of interest is taken in the colonial possessions outside merely home, official, or Indo Dutch society.

[Illustration: Zeeland Peasant – The Dark Type.]

With regard to the affairs of his country generally, the state of mind of the average Dutchman has been well described as that of a man well on in years, who has amassed a fair fortune, and now takes things easily, and loves to talk over the somewhat wild doings of his youth. Nothing is more common than to hear the remarks from both old and young, 'We *have* been great,' 'We have *had* our time,' 'Every nation reaches a climax;' and certainly Holland has been very great in statesmen, patriots, theologians, artists, explorers, colonizers, soldiers, sailors, and martyrs. The names of William the Silent, Barneveldt, Arminius, Rembrandt, Rubens, Hobbema, Grotius, De Ruyter, Erasmus, Ruysdael, Daendels, Van Speijk, Tromp afford proof of the pertinacity, courage, and devotion of Netherland's sons in the great movements which have sprung from her soil.

To have successfully resisted the might of a Philip of Spain and the strategy and cruelties of an Alva is alone a title-deed to imperishable fame and honour. Dutch men and women fought and died at the dykes, and suffered awful agonies on the rack and at the stake. 'They sang songs of triumph,' so the record runs, 'while the grave diggers were shovelling earth over their living faces.' It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that a legacy of true and deep feeling has been bequeathed to their descendants, and the very suspicion of injustice or infringement of what they consider liberty sets the Dutchman's heart aflame with patriotic devotion or private resentment. Phlegmatic, even comal, and most difficult to move in most things, yet any 'interference' wakes up the dormant spirit which that Prince of Orange so forcibly expressed when he said, in response to a prudent soldier's ear of consequences if resistance were persisted in, 'We can at least die in the last ditch.'

Until one understands this tenacity in the Dutch character one cannot reconcile the old world methods seen all over the country with the advanced ideas expressed in conversation, books, and newspapers. The Dutchman hates to be interfered with, and resents the advice of candid friends, and cannot stand any 'chaff.' He has his kind of humour, which is slow in expression and material in conception, but he does not understand 'banter.' He is liberal in theories, but intensely conservative in practice. He will *agree* with a new theory, but often *do* as his grandfather did, and so in Holland there may be seen very primitive methods side by side with *fin de siècle* thought. In a *salon* in any principal town there will be thought the most advanced, and manner of life the most luxurious; but a stone's-throw off, in a cottage or in a farmhouse just outside the town, may be witnessed the life of the seventeenth century. Some of the reasons for this may be gathered from the following pages as they describe the social life and usages of the people.

In the seven provinces which comprise the Netherlands there are considerable differences in scenery, race, dialect, pronunciation, and religion, and therefore in the features and character of the people. United provinces in the course of time effect a certain homogeneity of purpose and interest, yet there are certain fundamental differences in character. The Frisian differs from the Zeelander: one is fair and the other dark, and both differ from the Hollander. And not only do the provincials differ in character, dialect, and pronunciation from one another, but also the inhabitants of some cities differ in these respects from those of other cities. An educated Dutchman can tell at once if a man comes from Amsterdam, Rotterdam, or The Hague. The 'cockney' of these places differs, and of such pronunciations 'Hague Dutch' is considered the worst, although—true to the analogy of London—the best Dutch is heard in The Hague. This difference in 'civic' pronunciation is certainly very remarkable when one remembers that The Hague and Rotterdam are only sixteen miles apart, and The Hague and Amsterdam only forty miles. Arnhem and The Hague are the two most cosmopolitan cities in the kingdom, and one meets in their streets all sorts and conditions of the Netherlander.

[Illustration: A Zeeland Woman—The Dark Type.]

All other towns are provincial in character and akin to the county-town type. Even Amsterdam, the capital of the country, is only a commercial capital. The Court is only there for a few days in each year; Parliament does not meet there; the public offices are not situated there; and diplomatic representatives are not accredited to the Court at Amsterdam but to the Court at The Hague; and so Amsterdam is 'the city,' and no more and no less. This Venice of the North looks coldly on the pleasure seeking and loving Hague, and jealously on the thriving and rapidly increasing port of Rotterdam, and its merchant princes build their villas in the neighbouring and pleasant woods of Bussum and Hilversum, and near the brilliantly-coloured bulb-gardens of Haarlem, living in these suburban places during the summer months, while in winter they return to the fine old houses in the Heerengracht and the many other 'grachten' through which the waters of the canals move slowly to the river. But to The Hague the city magnates seldom come, and the young men consider their contemporaries of the Court capital wanting in energy and initiative, and very proud, and so there is little communication between the two towns—between the City and Belgravia. One knows, as one walks in the streets of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, or Utrecht, that each place is a microcosm devoted to its own particular and narrow interests, and in these respects they are survivals of the Italian cities of the Middle Ages. There is, indeed, great similarity in the style of buildings, and, with the exception of Maastricht, in the south of the country, which is mediæval and Flemish, one always feels that one is in Holland. The neatness of the houses, the straight trees fringing the roads, the canals and their smell, the steam-trams, the sound of the conductor's horn and the bells of the horse-trams, the type of policeman, and above and beyond all the universal cigar—all these things are of a pattern, and that pattern is seen everywhere, and it is not until one has lived in the country for some time that one recognizes that there are differences in the mode of life in the larger towns which are more real than apparent, and that this practical isolation is not realized by the stranger.

The country life of the peasant, however, is much more uniform in character, in spite of the many differences in costume and in dialect. The methods of agriculture are all equally old-fashioned, and

the peasants equally behind the times in thought. Their thrifty habits and devotion to the soil of their country ensure them a living which is thrown away by the country folk of other lands, who at the first opportunity flock into the towns. But the Dutch peasant *is* a peasant, and does not mix, or want to mix, with the townsman except in the way of business. He brings his garden and farm produce for sale, and as soon as that is effected — generally very much to his own advantage, for he is wonderfully 'slim' — he rattles back, drawn by his dogs or little pony, to the farmhouse, and relates how he has come safely back, his stock of produce diminished, but his stock of inventions and subtleties improved and increased by contact with housewives and shopkeepers, who do their best to drive a hard bargain. In dealing with the 'boer' the townspeople's ingenuity is taxed to the utmost in endeavouring to get the better of one whose nature is heavy but cunning, and families who have dealt with the same 'boer' vendor for years have to be as careful as if they were transacting business with an entire stranger. The 'boer's' argument is simplicity itself: 'They try to get the better of me, and I try to get the better of them' — and he *does* it!

If, however, there are these differences between city and city and class and class, there is one common characteristic of the Dutchman which, like the mist which envelops meadow and street alike in Holland after a warm day, pertains to the whole race, viz. his deliberation, that slowness of thought, speech, and action which has given rise to such proverbs as 'You will see such and such a thing done "in a Dutch month."' The Netherlander is most difficult to move, but once roused he is far more difficult to pacify. Many reasons are given for this 'phlegm,' and most people attribute it to the climate, which is very much abused, especially by Dutch people themselves, because of its sunlessness during the winter months; though as a matter of fact the climate is not so very different from that in the greater part of England. The temperature on an average is a little higher in summer and a little lower in winter than in the eastern part of England; but certainly there is in the southern part of the country a softness in the air which is enervating, and in such places as Flushing snow is seldom seen, and does not lie long. But the same thing is seen in Cornwall. Hence this climatic influence is not a sufficient reason in itself to account for the undeniable and

general 'slowness' of the Dutchman. It is to be found rather in the history of the country, which has taught the Netherlander to attempt to prove by other people's experience the value of new ideas, and only when he has done so will he adopt them. This saps all initiative.

There is a great lack of faith in everything, in secular as well as religious matters, the Dutchman will risk nothing, for four cents' outlay he must be quite certain of six cents in return. As long as he is in this mood the country will 'mark time,' but not advance much. The Dutchman believes so thoroughly in being comfortable, and, given a modest income which he has inherited or gained, he will not only not go a penny beyond it in his expenditure, but often he will live very much below it. He would never think of 'living up to' his income; his idea is to leave his children something very tangible in the shape of guildens. A small income and little or no work is a far more agreeable prospect than a really busy life allied to a large income. All the cautiousness of the Scotchman the Dutchman has, but not the enterprise and industry. With his cosmopolitanism, which he has gained by having to learn and converse in so many languages, in order to transact the large transfer business of such a country as the Netherlands, he has acquired all the various views of life which cosmopolitanism opens to a man's mind. The Dutchman can talk upon politics extremely well, but his interest is largely academic and not personal; he is as a man who looks on and loves *desipere in loco*.

The Dutchman is therefore a philosopher and a delightful *raconteur*, but at present he is not doing any very great things in the international battle of life, though when great necessity arises there is no man who can do more or do better.

Chapter II

Court and Society

Society life in Holland is, as everywhere else, the gentle art of escaping self-confession of boredom. But society in Holland is far different from society abroad, because The Hague, the official residence of Queen Wilhelmina, is not only not the capital of her kingdom, but is only the third town of the country so far as importance and population go. The Hague is the royal residence and the seat of the Netherlands Government; but although, as a rule, Cabinet Ministers live there, most of the members of the First Chamber of the States-General live elsewhere, and a great many of their colleagues of the Second Chamber follow their example, preferring a couple of hours' railway travelling per day or per week during the time the States sit, to a permanent stay. Hence, so far as political importance goes, society has to do without it to a great extent. Nor is The Hague a centre of science. The universities of Leyden, Utrecht, and Amsterdam are very near, but, as the Dutch proverb judiciously says, 'Nearly is not half;' there is a vast difference between having the rose and the thing next to it. In consequence the leading scientific men of the Netherlands do not, as a rule, add the charm of their conversation to social intercourse at The Hague.

High life there is represented by members of the nobility and by such high officials in the army, navy, and civil service as mix with that nobility. Of course there are sets just as there are everywhere else, sets as delightful to those who are in them as they are distasteful to outsiders; but talent and money frequently succeed in making serious inroads upon the preserves of noble birth. This is, however, unavoidable, for the Netherlands were a republic for two centuries, and the scions of the ancient houses are not over-numerous. They fought well in the wars of their country against Spain, France, and Great Britain, but fighting well in many cases meant extermination.

On the other hand, two centuries of republican rule are apt to turn any republicans into patricians, particularly so if they are prosperous, self-confident, and well aware of their importance. And a patrician republic necessarily turns into an oligarchy. The prince-merchants of Holland were Holland's statesmen, Holland's absolute rulers; two centuries of heroic struggles, intrepid energy, crowned with success on all sides, may even account for their belief that they were entrusted by the Almighty with a special mission to bring liberty, equal rights, and prosperity to other nations.

When, after Napoleon's downfall, the Netherlands constituted themselves a kingdom, the depleted ranks of the aristocracy were soon amply filled from these old patrician families. Clause 65 of the Netherlands constitution says, 'The Queen grants nobility. No Dutchman may accept foreign nobility.' This is the only occasion upon which the word nobility appears in any code. No Act defines the status, privileges, or rights of this nobility, because there are none. There is, however, a 'Hooge Raad van Adel,' consisting of a permanent chairman, a permanent secretary, and four members, whose functions it is to report on matters of nobility, especially heraldic and genealogic, and on applications from Town Councils which wish to use some crest or other. This 'High Council of Nobility' acts under the supervision of the Minister of Justice, and its powers are regulated by royal decrees, or writs in council. The titles used are 'Jonkheer' (Baronet) and 'Jonkvrouw,' Baron and Baroness, 'Graaf' (Earl) and 'Gravin.' Marquess and Duke are not used as titles by Dutch noblemen. If any man is ennobled, ail his children, sons as well as daughters, share the privilege, so there is no 'courtesy title;' officially they are indicated by the father's rank from the moment of their birth, but as long as they are young it is the custom to address the boys as 'Jonker,' the girls as 'Freule.'

For the rest, life at The Hague is very much like life everywhere else. In summer there is a general exodus to foreign countries; in winter, dinners, bazaars, balls, theatre, opera, a few official Court functions, which may become more numerous in the near future if the young Queen and Prince Henry are so disposed, are the order of the day. For the present, 'Het Loo,' that glorious country-seat in the centre of picturesque, hilly, wooded Gelderland, continues to be the favourite residence of the Court, and only during the colder season

is the palace in the 'Noordeinde,' at The Hague, inhabited by the Queen.

Her Majesty, apparently full of youthful mirth and energy, enjoys her life in a wholesome and genuine manner. State business is, of course, dutifully transacted; but as the entire constitutional responsibility rests with the Cabinet Ministers and the High Councils of State, she has no need to feel undue anxiety about her decisions. She is well educated, a strong patriot, and has on the whole a serious turn of mind, which came out in pathetic beauty as she took the oath in the 'Nieuwe Kerk' of Amsterdam at her coronation. How far she and her husband will influence and lead Society life in Holland remains to be seen. Both are young, and their union is younger still. During the late King's life and Queen Emma's subsequent widowhood, society was for scores of years left to itself, and of course it has settled down into certain grooves. But, on the other hand, the tastes and inclinations of well-bred, well to do people, with an inexhaustible amount of spare time on their hands, and an unlimited appetite for amusement in their minds, are everywhere the same. Of course, Ministerial receptions, political dinners, and the intercourse of Ambassadors and foreign Ministers at The Hague form a special feature of social life there, but here, again, The Hague is just like European capitals generally.

Once every year the Dutch Court and the Dutch capital proper meet. Legally, by the way, it is inaccurate to indicate even Amsterdam as the capital of Holland; no statute mentions a capital of the kingdom, but by common consent Amsterdam, being the largest and most important town, is always accorded that title, so highly valued by its inhabitants. The Royal Palace in Amsterdam is royal enough, and it is also sufficiently palatial, but it is no Royal Palace in the strict sense of the word. It was built (1649-1655), and for centuries was used, as a Town Hall. As such it is a masterpiece, and one's imagination can easily go back to the times when the powerful and masterful Burgomasters and Sheriffs met in the almost oppressing splendour of its vast hall. It is an ideal meeting-place for stern merchants, enterprising shipowners, and energetic traders. Every hall, every room, every ornament speaks of trade, trade, and trade again. And there lies some grim irony in the fact that these merchants, whose meeting-place is surmounted by the proud symbol of

Atlas carrying the globe, offered that mansion as a residence to their kings, when Holland and Amsterdam could no longer boast of supporting the world by their wealth and their energy.

Here they meet once a year—the stern, ancient city, represented by its sturdy citizens, its fair women, its proud inhabitants, and Holland's youthful Queen, blossoming forth as a symbol of new, fresh life, fresh hope and promise. Here they meet, the sons and daughters of the men and women who never gave way, who saw their immense riches accrue, as their liberties grew, by sheer force of will, by inflexible determination, by dauntless power of purpose; here they meet, the last descendant of the famous House of Orange-Nassau, the queenly bride, whose forefathers were well entitled to let their proud war-cry resound on the battlefields of Europe: 'À moi, généreux sang de Nassau!'

When the Queen is in Amsterdam the citizens go out to the 'Dam,' the Square where the palace stands, offering their homage by cheers and waving of hats, and by singing the war-psalm of the old warriors of William the Silent, 'Wilhelmus van Nassouwe.' Then the leaders of Amsterdam, its merchants, scientists, and artists, leave their beautiful homes on Heeren-and Keizers-gracht, with their wives and daughters wrapped in costly garments, glittering in profusion of diamonds and rubies and pearls, and drive to the huge palace to offer homage to their Queen, just as proud as she, just as patriotic as she, just as faithful and loyal as she.

Three hundred years have done their incessant work in welding the House of Orange and Amsterdam together; ruptures and quarrels have occurred; yet, after every struggle, both found out that they could not well do without each other; and now when the Queen and the city meet, mutual respect, mutual confidence, and reciprocal affection attest the firm bond which unites them.

To the Amsterdam patriciate the yearly visit of the Queen is a social function full of interest. To the Queen it is more than that; she visits not only the patricians, she also visits the people, the poor and the toilers. Of course Amsterdam has its Socialists, and a good many of them, too, and Socialists are not only fiery but also vociferous republicans as a rule, who believe that royalty and a queen are a blot upon modern civilization. But their sentiments, however well

uttered, are not popular. For when 'Our Child,' as the Queen is still frequently called, drives through the workmen's quarter of Amsterdam, the 'Jordaan' (a corruption of the French *jardin*), the bunting is plentiful, the cheering and singing are more so, and the general enthusiasm surpasses both. The 'man in the street,' that remarkable political genius of the present age, has scarcely ever wavered in his simple affection for his Prince and Princess of Orange; and though this affection is personal, not political—for nothing is political to 'the man in the street'—there it is none the less, and it does not give way to either reasoning or prejudice.

Such is the external side of Court life. Internally it strikes one as simple and unaffected. Queen Emma was a lady possessing high qualifications as a mother and as a ruler. She grasped with undeniable shrewdness the popular taste and fancy, she had no difficulty in realizing that her rather easy-going, sometimes blustering, Consort could have retained a great deal more of his popularity by very simple means, if he had cared to do so. She did care, so she allowed her little girl to be a little girl, and she let the people notice it. She went about with her, all through the country, and the people beheld not two proud princesses, strutting about in high and mighty manner, but a gracious, kind lady and an unaffected child. This child showed a genuine interest in sport in Friesland, in excavations in Maastricht, in ships and quays and docks in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and in hospitals and orphanages everywhere. Anecdotes came into existence—the little Queen had been seen at 'hop-sotch,' had refused to go to bed early, had annoyed her governess, had been skating, had been snow balling her royal mother, etc. And later, when she was driving or riding, when she attended State functions or paid official visits, there was always a simplicity in her turn out, a quiet dignity in her demeanour, which proved that she felt no particular desire to advertise herself as one of the wealthiest sovereigns of the world by the mere splendour of her surroundings.

This supreme tact of Queen Emma resulted in her daughter being educated as a queen, as the Dutch like their sovereigns. Court life in The Hague or at the Loo certainly lacks neither dignity nor brilliancy, but it lacks showiness, and many an English nobleman lives in a grander style than Holland's Queen. Now, education may bend, but it does not alter a character, and whatever qualifies may have

adorned or otherwise influenced the late King, he was no more a stickler for etiquette or a lover of display than Queen Emma has proved to be. So there is a probability that their daughter will also be satisfied with very limited show, and if Prince Henry be wise, he will not interfere with the Queen's inclinations. He is said to be 'horsy,' but the same may be said of her, though as yet her 'horsiness' has not become an absorbing passion, nor is it likely to be.

It is said also that she abhors music; but as long as she, as Queen, does not transfer her abhorrence from the art to the artists, no harm will be done. The facts are that, simple as her tastes are, she does not impose her simplicity upon others. When she presides at State dinners or at Court dinners, she is entirely the *grande dame*, but when she is allowed to be wholly herself, in a small, quiet circle, she is praised by every one, low or high, who has been favoured with an invitation to the royal table, for her natural and unaffected manners, her urbanity, and her gentle courtesy.