



RETURNING FROM CHURCH.

a lake called by Tacitus the "Flevo." In 1170 came the great inundation, known in the history of the Netherlands as the "All Saints' Flood Day." The sea, hurled by north-westerly storms, beat against the natural barriers, ate and dissolved the sandy islands, swept into the interior, covered the forest. Cities were engulfed, towns destroyed, many thousands of human beings drowned.

The Zuyder Zee, writes Beckles Wilson, celebrated in Dutch legend and history, occupies some 1,400 square miles—the area of a large European province. On its shores are the ancient towns of Medemblik, Hoorn, Harderwyck, Norden, and Enkhuizen, once large cities in the halcyon days of Dutch commercial and naval supremacy. It encompasses the islands of Marken, Schokland, and Urk. But what Holland wants to-day more than anything else is territory—home territory—for expansion. She is too weak a state to enlarge her boundaries at the expense of her political neighbours; consequently there is nothing to be done but to gain elbow-room at the expense of Father Neptune. She has long cast her eye on the Zuyder Zee for this purpose, ever since 1849, in fact, when Mynheer Van Diggelen, Minister of Waterways, developed a plan for shutting off the whole Zuyder Zee within the islands to the north. In that year

and the following one the Haarlem Lake was pumped dry and many thousands of acres thrown open for cultivation and settlement. The present plan consists of building a dam or embankment across the northern part of the sea from Wieringen, in North Holland, to Piaam, in Friesland, having sluices into the North Sea. Then will follow the creation of two "polders," or areas of dry land reclaimed from the sea, pumping out the water by means of steam pumps. The rest will remain a fresh-water lake—at all events in so far as Mr. Lely's plan is concerned; but should the latter prove successful his successors may in days to come create two more polders on the north-east and south-east of the lake.

Upon the eminently practical minds of the Dutch the possibility of draining this vexatious gulf has long exercised an irresistible fascination. Much in the way of such reclamation had been done in other spots during the past two hundred years. Here and there considerable areas of rich land were wrested from the grip of the sea. These recovered patches the Dutch call "polders;" and a striking example of the success of this method of adding to the cultivable area of the country is found in the famous Haarlem Polder, where the lake of that name, lying far below the level of the North Sea, was pumped back into