

romance to the country round; but their emotion would have been of a different kind had they guessed the risk we must take in running through the winding fortifications. It was not so great a risk that it was foolish to take it, and thirty or forty cars must do the same thing every day; but the fact was, that we had to run through these tunnels on tram-lines, with no room to turn out in case of meeting a steam monster from Hilversum. I had chosen my time, knowing the hours for trams; still, had there been a delay, there was a chance of a crash, for our horn could not be heard by the tram driver, nor could he see us in time to put on his brakes and prevent a collision.

With the girl I love beside me, and three other passengers, not to mention the chauffeur, it was with a tenseness of the nerves that I drove through the labyrinth, and I was glad to clear Muiden. Next came Naarden—that tragic Naarden whose capture and sack by the Spaniards encouraged Alva to attack Haarlem; and then, without one of the party having dreamed of danger, we swung out on the road to Laren, a road set in pineland and heather, which would have reminded the real Lady MacNairne of her Scottish home. There was actually something like a hill here and there, which the strangers were astonished to find in Holland, and would hardly believe when I said that, on reaching Gelderland, I would be able to show them a Dutch mountain two hundred feet high, among a colony of smaller eminences to which half the Netherlands rush in summer.

Meanwhile they were satisfied with what they saw; and it is a pretty enough road, this way between Amsterdam and Laren. At first we had had the canal, with its sleepy barges, peopled with large families, and towed by children harnessed in tandem at the end of long ropes; its little shady, red-and-green wayside houses, with "Milk Salons" printed attractively over their doors. We had had avenues of trees, knotted here and there into groves; we had passed pretty farmhouses with bright milk-cans and pans hanging on the red walls, like plaques in a drawing-room; we had seen gardens flooded with roses, and long stretches of water carpeted with lilies white and yellow; then we had come to pine forests and heather, and always we had had the good klinker which, though not as velvety for motoring as asphalt, is free from dust even in dry weather. We had run almost continuously on our fourth speed; and even in Laren I came down to the second only long enough to let them all see the beauty of the Mauve country.

Starr knows Anton Mauve's pictures, and his history; but the ladies had seen only a few delicious landscapes in the Ryks Museum. Still, they liked to hear that at Laren Corot's great disciple had found inspiration. Nowhere in the Netherlands are there such beautiful barns, each one of which is a background for a Nativity picture; and it was Laren peasants, Laren cows, and the sunlit and cloud-shadowed meadows of Laren which kept Mauve's brush busy for years.

After the charm of Haarlem's suburbs, Hilversum, where merchants of Amsterdam play at being in the country, was disappointing; but having lunched in open air, and spun on toward Amersfoort, we ran into a district which holds some delightful houses, set among plane trees, varied with flowering acacias and plantations of oak. Everywhere our eyes followed long avenues cut in the forest, avenues stretching out like the rays of a star, and full of a tremendous green light, shot with gold.

In the midst of this forest we came upon Soestdyk, where the Queen-Mother lives, that pleasant palace with its romance of a mysterious, secret room; then by-and-by we ran into Amersfoort, aged by its park, and Nell was so attracted with the Gothic church tower, that she rejoiced to hear it was the best in the northern Netherlands. I had chosen market-day in Amersfoort for our drive, and as we sailed into the spacious square of the town, my passengers saw in one moment more Dutch stables than in all their previous days of Hollow Land.

It was too late for the best of the

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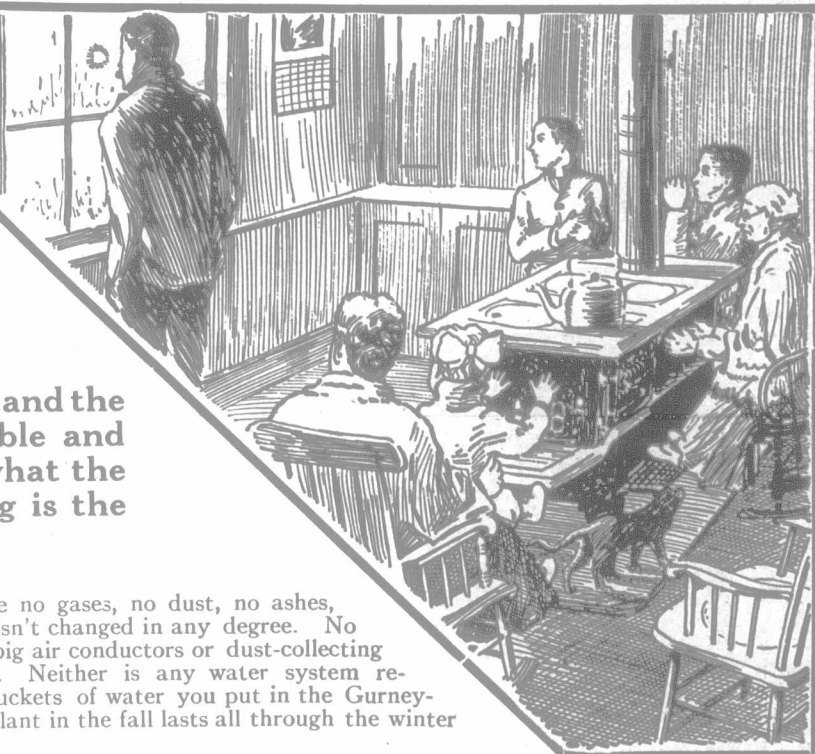
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