

fence against Spanish tyranny. In the terrible siege of Antwerp by the French in 1832, the dikes were cut, and the country for three years was flooded by the sea, the gun-boats cruised about the fields. The stratum of saline sand deposited almost prevented cultivation for many years.

The route from Antwerp to Rotterdam traverses a characteristically Dutch landscape—vast meadows, level as a floor and divided by trenches of water. Canals ramify everywhere, along whose silent highways stealthily glide the *trekschuits* or “draw-boats,” often dragged by men, or even women, harnessed like horses. Along the horizon, wherever one looks, are rows of picturesque windmills, ceaselessly brandishing their mighty arms, as if to challenge any over-valiant Quixote to mortal combat. I have seen a dozen in a single view. The villages, country-houses, and gardens are scrupulously, almost painfully, neat and clean. At Broek, near Amsterdam, no horses are allowed in the streets, and no one may enter a house with his boots or shoes on. The town-houses are generally high and narrow, built of red brick with crow-stepped gables, each with a large crane for hoisting goods from the streets, or from the canals which flow below. The lazy barges creep along, and just as you want to cross a canal, up swings the counterpoised drawbridge, and you envy the Dutch patience of the vrows and mynheers who quietly wait—the latter stolidly pulling at their porcelain pipes, as though it were life’s sole concern—till the bridge falls again. The language, too, has such a grotesque, half comic look—like English gone mad. For instance, on cellar doors you read, “Water en vuur te koop”—“water and fire to sell,” where boiling water and hot turf are furnished the poor to prepare their tea and coffee. “Dit huis is te huur,”—“This house is to hire,”—and “Hier verkoopt man sterke dranken,”—literally, “Here a man may buy strong drinks,”—frequently occur.

The men and women one meets in the street seem built on the same principle as the Dutch boats in the canals—very broad and staunch-looking craft. I saw, at last, where Rubens found the models for his very solid saints and angels, and for his exceedingly ample, not say exuberant, allegorical figures. There happened to be in progress, when I was in Rotterdam, a *Kermis*—literally a “Church Mass,” but practically a peasants’ fair or Dutch carnival, when the whole city, thronged with the neighbouring peasantry, was given up to holiday making. A