

interruption of the forward view, by a curtain which appears a little ahead of you. It is the sail of a vessel upon the canal. The "network of cordage" which seems to stop your way at another time is "the rigging of vessels lying in some basin." The city is a seaport, and its canals are everywhere.

Rotterdam, the second city in importance in Holland, notwithstanding its great age, dates its chief commercial prosperity, only from 1830, the period of the separation of Holland and Belgium. It has a population of 175,000, who, according to one writer, "have more nearly mastered the art of perpetual motion than any of their neighbours." Its streets are thronged. One of them, the Steiger, a short street which can only be traversed by boat, and which is lined by some of the most curious and oldest houses of the city, presenting a picturesque appearance at night, when thousands of lights are reflected upon its waters. Between eight and nine thousand vessels annually clear the port of Rotterdam, while the inland steamboat traffic is extensive. Here Erasmus was born, near the close of the fifteenth century.

Its cathedral, once a Catholic church dedicated to St. Lawrence, is now the first Protestant church in the city. Its once glorious beauty and splendour are now mere memories of the past, in consequence of a mistaken zeal, which entered the "ancient churches with a pick and whitewash-brush," and reduced internal beauty to a uniform "whiteness and coldness." The architecture of the building marks the decline of the Gothic mode.

A stranger is soon impressed with the fact that the Dutch are great eaters. Their liquors have obtained a regrettably extended reputation. They are great smokers as well. With a spice of exaggeration, perhaps, one traveller tells us that the "boatman of the *trekschuit*, the aquatic diligence of Holland, measures distances by smoke. From here, they say, to such and such a place, it is, not so many miles, but so many pipes." A Hollander is credited with the proverb, "Smoke is our second breath." Another defines it as "the sixth finger of the hand."

Rotterdam affords an excellent example of the sudden changes in weather to which Holland is subject. One of these rapid transitions from sunlight to shadow, from heat to cold, has been thus described by De Amicis:

"All at once the sun vanished, the infinite variety of colours was dimmed, and an autumn wind began to blow. Then to the cheerful, tranquil gaiety of a moment before succeeded a kind of timid agitation. The branches of the trees rustled, the flags of the ships streamed out, the