

It is only fourteen miles from Rotterdam to the Hague, and on the way we pass, first Schiedam, celebrated for its "Hollands" and "Geneva," in which baneful manufacture 220 distilleries are said to be employed; and then Delft, which gives its name to our common pottery, and from which the pilgrim fathers sailed for Plymouth Rock. A more painful interest attaches itself to the Prinsenhof, or palace, the scene of the assassination of William the Silent, the grand Protestant champion of Europe. The mark of the bullet is still seen. Here also Grotius was born.

The Hague, for centuries the capital of Holland, with a population of 100,000, is one of the most charming cities I have ever seen. Its handsome streets, spacious squares, quaint old houses, splendid park of stately elms and chestnuts, its fishponds and tree-shaded canals, have an air of unsurpassed quiet, comfort, and thrift. Its galleries and museums are exceedingly rich in treasures of art. Nor is it without stirring historic memories. It was with profound interest that I visited the spot where the grand old Arminian, Barneveldt, was executed in his seventy-second year, 1619. In the art gallery one may read the naval history of Holland in the famous battle pieces which illustrate the career of De Ruyter and of Van Tromp, who, with broom at masthead, swept up the Thames till his guns were heard in London streets. The splendid wig and aristocratic nose of our Dutch sovereign, William III., will also profoundly impress the hero-worshipping mind. The gem of the collection, however, is neither King nor Kaiser, but Paul Potter's far-famed bull—a magnificent animal, which seems about to step out of the canvas.

Amsterdam, the Venice of the North, contrasts very unfavourably with the Queen of the Adriatic. It may be more thrifty, but it is far less poetic. The busy traffic of its canals continually perturbs their muddy waters, which have the colour and consistency of pea-soup; and the tall, dull red brick houses, through the sinking of the piles on which they rest, lean at various angles as though they would topple over. Like Venice, Amsterdam has grown from a few fishermen's huts, built like seagulls' nests, on an oozy sandbank, to be a great commercial entrepôt. It has a thrifty population of 300,000. Its ninety islands are connected by 300 bridges, and, as in Venice, almost every house can be reached by water. The stately rows of elms, however, that border the canals have no counterpart in the fairer southern city. The finest building is the Palace,