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The House that tells the truth.

produce to the market or to the seaport of Harlingen, or in disporting himself on the broad meres which dot his province in the southwest, and which provide him with such toothsome eels for his table. The cows are in the barns, and the canals are frozen a foot thick. It is time to put on skates and live the merry winter life.

The average Dutchman of the South, although he can skate very well, looks a little absurd on the ice. His short legs and wide pantaloons are admirable adjuncts to his nose, his thin beard, and his, to us, curious expression. His breadth, it is true, makes him look important; but if he were less muscular, it would be a considerable hindrance to him in battling with the wind, which in winter is apt to make skating in one direction something of a trial.

The Frieslander, however, is taller, better proportioned, and is quite a good-looking man. The yellow beard which he not infrequently wears seems to put him on a footing of affinity with the members of the Anglo-Saxon family; his blue eyes "make assurance doubly sure." He is a most wonderful creature when once he has put on those quaint, old-fashioned skates of his, and he thinks nothing of making a score of miles from one village to another before you and I are out of bed. As for the cold, what cares he for that? He knows that he must rely on his circulation to keep him from being benumbed, however well he may be clothed, and he appears more careful of his head—which is covered by a sealskin cap—than of his body.

A Friesland canal in winter is as lively as anything can be. The ice may not be very good or of unquestionable

strength; but no sooner are the boats penned in and the broken pieces of ice sufficiently welded to allow him to skate between them, than his sport begins. It is a feat of honor to be the first in the district to cross the canal when the wintry season is in its youth. The name of the bold boy is remembered for a few weeks; and I have no doubt that his pluck is rewarded by the esteem of the cherry-cheeked girls of his province, whose eyes dance past one so brightly when the ice festival is in full swing, and journeying is all done upon skates.

But to recur to some more general features of life in this flat little corner territory of Europe. I was astonished at being told by several intelligent Dutchmen that there is a great amount of religious scepticism in the Netherlands. I should as soon have expected to hear a like accusation brought against Scotland. Afterwards, however, when I had had more time to visit the churches and to watch the worthy Dutchmen at their devotions, my surprise was greatly lessened.

Almost all over Holland one sees a succession of wrecked churches; and a dilapidated place of worship is about as mournful a picture as I know of. I distinctly remember wandering into one large church while service was in progress. The drowsy voice of the pastor could be heard even in the beautiful, forlorn choir, which had been boarded away from the rest of the edifice. Once upon a time it had been a magnificent building. Now it was whitewashed, its chiselled work had been beaten to pieces with hammers, the brasses from the ornate gravestones which paved it had long been torn away, and the very excrescences of the scrolls and flourishings

which adorned the epitaphs had been scratched and levelled by vandals. Texts from the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer were painted in dark colors upon the glowing white columns of the choir. Where the high altar had been, there was a common table piled with boards and a couple of ladders. The windows were of ordinary glass, and through a broken pane the cold winter's wind blew upon this unedifying scene. And all the while on the other side of the wooden screen, in the cosy body of the church, there were three or four hundred respectable burghers and their wives in their best clothes, worshipping in sober, brown pews, and keeping themselves comfortable with cushions, aided by stoves. The men wore their hats. In this respect, but in no other, they resembled the orthodox Jews. A visit to one of these neglected churches has a most depressing influence—even upon an agnostic.

I was struck rather by the simplicity of the people than by anything in them which was at all likely to make them aggressively irreligious. They have a natural love for their unlovely land; and they have very little desire to see the rest of the world, and to compare it with their own country. This characteristic seems to mark them as a good divergent in nature from the main stock from which we also have come. When they are rich, they build pretty, little villas, to which they give names in much the same way as a child names its dolls. Sometimes the name is a whole text, which must be troublesome to the correspondents of the inmates of the villa. They deck the small gardens of their residences with miniature lakes