



CHAPTER XIII

SCIENCE, LITERATURE, AND ART IN THE NETHERLANDS

NEVER, if we except the ancient Greeks, has a people restricted to so small a territory accomplished such great things in a century and a half, or given the world such illustrious examples as the Dutch. From the oldest times the struggle with the sea had strengthened the character of the peoples from the delta of the Rhine to beyond Friesland. But now, calling on the eternal rights of man, they had declared themselves free. As wise as they were brave and enduring, they took advantage of every circumstance in European politics which could be turned to their profit. The new commonwealth which they founded suggested new ideas to the statesmen and philosophers of Europe. They became the creators of a colonial system which we cannot, however, place on a par with that of the Hellenes, for it was founded solely on egoism.

The Dutch did not, like the Greeks from Cyrene, Massilia, and numerous other seaport towns, spread a beautiful and lofty civilisation from the sea inland. And yet the extended sea authority called all forces into the field, even the scientific; geography, cartography, astronomy reached a height undreamed of. The cities grew so rapidly that the Russian ambassadors who appeared in Holland in 1615 described the country even then as one continuous city. The little land could not shine by natural production: the natives, to be sure, boast that certain branches, as horticulture and the production of art works, brought large sums into the country; but it was chiefly through its industries and through its colonial organisation that Holland, even after England had begun to be a formidable rival, remained a model state until well into the eighteenth century. Even the high taxes were held to be only a sign of prosperity. The popular spirit found expression not only in festivals but also more worthily in state buildings and public institutions. In Holland, the democratic idea, which had already been proclaimed in single imperial cities and in the Hanse towns, was kept alive at just the time that the latter declined; Holland became in the north the home of the modern system of institution for the common good. The council house at Amsterdam (used as a palace by Louis Bonaparte in 1808) was

called the eighth wonder of the world; institutions for the insane and prisons arose, in which care was taken for the improvement of the inmates.

Especially creditable and also advantageous for the states-general, was their attitude towards intellectual culture and the sciences. Like every art, so also learning and ideas of liberty in their origins were closely associated with religion. Discussions concerning subtle doctrines of faith took place in Holland at the family table and in the taverns. A translation of the Bible was undertaken by Philip van Maraix, lord of Sainte-Aldegonde; but not until 1637, at the instigation of the synod of Dort (Dordrecht), did the so-called state Bible gain official recognition.

In the year in which the Peace of Westphalia was concluded (1648) Holland received its fifth university, Harderwijk; the other four were Leyden, Franeker, Utrecht, and Groningen. In addition the *Athenæum illustré*, founded at Amsterdam in 1632, had almost the rank of a university. Leyden always held the first place, as well in mathematics, jurisprudence, and medicine as especially in philology. Holland became the chief seat of polyhistory — a new kind of learning which may be regarded as the successor of Italian humanism.

The scholars of Leyden and of other places did indeed start out in their investigation of classic authors from textual correction and from a linguistic standpoint, but they sought, above all, the realities: they tried to explain the real nature of the so-called antiquities and heaped up an enormous amount of erudition for that purpose.



GERARDUS JOHANNES VOSSIUS (1577-1649)

(The typical Dutch polyhistor, known also as "the perfect grammarian")

SPINOZA

Holland in its great century attained the highest reputation among posterity for the freedom and protection it afforded to thought. It was here that Descartes¹ and Locke developed their systems. In no other country of Europe could the great thinker Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza have shown to an after world the spectacle of an independent scholar who, bound by no religious obligations, lived for truth alone.

Spinoza, born at Amsterdam in 1632, was descended from an immigrant Portuguese Jew. He received a rabbinical education and studied ancient languages with a Dutch physician, Van den Ende. But his abandonment of their idea of God could not long remain hidden to the Jews; the formula of the Jewish ban (*cherem*) was pronounced against him, and he even received a knife wound in front of the synagogue. After that time he kept wholly aloof from the Jewish community, without formally assuming any Christian tie. He was, however, in close connection with the Arminians and

[¹ The celebrated French philosopher spent the last twenty years of his life, from 1629-1649, in Holland, and did all his important work there. John Locke spent the years 1683-1689 in voluntary exile in Holland and there wrote his "Essay concerning Human Understanding."]

occasionally urged others to attend their preaching services. He earned his living by grinding lenses, and refused a call to Heidelberg to avoid giving offence to any man. One of his most important works, the *Ethics* was not published until after his death.

The wonderful calm of his style of writing, where everything is proved mathematically, has from the first not failed to make a deep impression upon simple readers. Since Spinoza recognises only one Being, a single, unlimited, self-existing substance, in which all individual existence with its opposites is included; since this substance takes the place of God with him, there is lacking in his conception of divinity the personality which seems indispensable to most people and the likeness to man which is indispensable to mythology. Since, moreover, this universal existence moves in time and space according to immutable laws, there is no place for the freedom of will.



BARUCH SPINOZA (1632-1677)

Spinoza's conception of good and evil likewise did not fit into any current moral system. If we further take into consideration that in his states, doctrine the connection of right and might could easily be misinterpreted into an abolition of all moral obligation, we see that there were elements enough to make his whole philosophy appear objectionable for long years to come. Thus the stigma of atheism remained attached to him, whereas in reality the last axioms of his philosophy teach that the highest cognition is the knowledge of God; from this springs the highest intellectual bliss, the inward repose which comes from reflecting upon the necessity of all things; the release from the fruitless struggle with the finality of our being. The highest spiritual virtue according to him is love to God; who really loves God does not expect God to love him in return; his reward consists in the blessedness of that higher cognition.

Among the foreigners who from Holland attacked antiquated doctrines and aroused a spirit of doubt and criticism, Pierre Bayle was unquestionably the one who exercised the most direct and active influence, especially through the tireless energy by means of which he was able to create new forms of expression. In Bayle the spirit of investigation and contradiction was ever active. In the seventeenth century he was known pre-eminently as the doubter, somewhat like Hume in the eighteenth.

In the Spanish Netherlands, which remained monarchistic and Catholic, intellectual activity retreated wholly into the background during the seventeenth century. The rhetorical chambers had already been suppressed under Philip II; the sciences also could not flourish under the absolute dominion and the clerical servitude. Philip's daughter Isabella and her husband Duke Albert had patronised literature to a certain extent and had attended lectures by the celebrated philologist Lipsius. During the newly beginning seventeenth century there is no literary activity of a national character to be recorded, in the country now called Belgium; only a few Jesuits like Haschins distinguished themselves as Latin poets.^b In Holland, however, there had been a splendid efflorescence.

GOLDEN AGE OF DUTCH LITERATURE

The first writer who used the Dutch tongue with grace and precision of style was a woman and a professed opponent of Lutheranism and reformed thought. Modern Dutch literature practically begins with Anna Bijns. Against the crowd of rhetoricians and psalm-makers of the early part of the sixteenth century, she stands out in relief as the one poet of real genius. The language, oscillating before her time between French and German, formless, corrupt, and invertebrate, took shape and comeliness, which none of the male pedants could give it, from the impassioned hands of a woman. Anna Bijns, who is believed to have been born at Antwerp in 1494, was a schoolmistress at that city in her middle life and in old age she still "instructed youth in the Catholic religion." She was named "the Sappho of Brabant" and the "princess of all rhetoricians." She bent the powerful weapon of her verse against the faith and character of Luther. In Dirk Volckersten Coornhert (1522-1590) Holland for the first time produced a writer at once eager to compose in his native tongue and to employ the weapons of humanism.

Towards the end of the period of transition, Amsterdam became the centre of all literary enterprise in Holland. In 1585 two of the most important chambers of rhetoric in Flanders, the "White Lavender" and the "Fig-Tree," took flight from the south, and settled themselves in Amsterdam by the side of the "Eglantine." The last-named institution had already observed the new tendency of the age, and was prepared to encourage intellectual reform of every kind, and its influence spread through Holland and Zealand. In Flanders, meanwhile, crushed under the yoke of Parma, literature and native thought absolutely expired.

In the chamber of the Eglantine at Amsterdam two men took a very prominent place, more by their intelligence and modern spirit than by their original genius. Hendrick Laurensen Spieghel (1549-1612) was a humanist of a type more advanced and less polemical than Coornhert.

Roemer Pieterssen Visscher (1545-1620) proceeded a step further than Spieghel in the cultivation of polite letters. He was deeply tinged with a spirit of classical learning that was much more genuine and nearer to the true antique than any that had previously been known in Holland. His own disciples called him the Dutch Martial, but he was at best little more than an amateur in poetry, although an amateur whose function it was to perceive and encourage the genius of professional writers.

The Visscher Family

Roemer Visscher stands at the threshold of the new Renaissance literature, himself practising the faded arts of the rhetoricians, but pointing by his counsel and his conversation to the naturalism of the great period. It was in the salon at Amsterdam which the beautiful daughters of Roemer Visscher formed around their father and themselves that the new school began to take form. The republic of the United Provinces, with Amsterdam at its head, had suddenly risen to the first rank among the nations of Europe, and it was under the influence of so much new emotion and brilliant ambition that the country no less suddenly asserted itself in a great school of painting and poetry. The intellect of the whole of the Low Countries was concentrated in Holland and Zealand, while the six great universities, Leyden, Groningen, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Harderwijk, and Franeker, were enriched by a flock of learned exiles from Flanders and Brabant. It had occurred, however, to Roemer Visscher only

that the path of literary honour lay, not along the utilitarian road cut out by Maerlant and Boendale, but in the study of beauty and antiquity. In this he was curiously aided by the school of ripe and enthusiastic scholars who began to flourish at Leyden, such as Drusius, Vossius, and Hugo Grotius, who themselves wrote little in Dutch, but who chastened the style of the rising generation by insisting on a pure and liberal latinity. Out of that generation arose the greatest names in the literature of Holland — Vondel, Hooft, Cats, Huygens — in whose hands the language, so long left barbarous and neglected, took at once its highest finish and melody. By the side of this serious and æsthetic growth there is to be noticed a quickening of the broad and farcical humour which had been characteristic of the Dutch nation from its commencement.

Of the famous daughters of Roemer, two cultivated literature with marked success: Anna (1584–1651) was the author of a descriptive and didactic poem, *De Roemster van den Aemstel* (the Glory of the Aemstel), and of various miscellaneous writings; Tesselschade (1594–1649) wrote some lyrics which still place her at the head of the female poets of Holland, and she translated the great poem of Tasso. They were women of universal accomplishment, graceful manners, and singular beauty; and their company attracted to the house of Roemer Visscher all the most gifted youths of the time, several of whom were suitors, but in vain, for the hand of Anna or of Tesselschade.

Hooft and Vondel

Of this Amsterdam school, the first to emerge into public notice was Pieter Cornelissen Hooft (1581–1647). In his poetry, especially in the lyrical and pastoral verse of his youth, he is full of Italian reminiscences both of style and matter; in his noble prose work he has set himself to be a disciple of Tacitus. Mr. Motley^c has spoken of Hooft as one of the greatest historians, not merely of Holland but of Europe. His influence in purifying the language of his country and in enlarging its sphere of experience can hardly be overrated.

Very different from the long and prosperous career of Hooft was the brief, painful life of the greatest comic dramatist that Holland has produced, Gerbrand Adriaanssen Brederoo (1585–1618), the son of an Amsterdam shoemaker.

The greatest of all Dutch writers, Joost van der Vondel, was born at Cologne on the 17th of November, 1587. In 1612 he brought out his first work, *Het Pascha*, a tragedy or tragicomedy on the exodus of the children of Israel, written, like all his succeeding dramas, on the recognised Dutch plan, in alexandrines, in five acts, and with choral interludes between the acts. There is comparatively little promise in *Het Pascha*. In 1625 he published what seemed an innocent study from the antique, his tragedy of *Palamedes, or Murdered Innocence*. All Amsterdam discovered, with smothered delight, that under the name of the hero was thinly concealed the figure of Barneveld, whose execution in 1618 had been a triumph of the hated Calvinists. Thus, at the age of forty-one, the obscure Vondel became in a week the most famous writer in Holland.

A purely fortuitous circumstance led to the next great triumph in Vondel's slowly developing career. The Dutch Academy, founded in 1617, almost wholly as a dramatic guild, had become so inadequately provided with stage accommodation that in 1638, having coalesced with the two chambers of the "Eglantine" and the "White Lavender," it ventured on the erection of a large

public theatre, the first in Amsterdam. Vondel, as the greatest poet of the day, was invited to write a piece for the first night; on the 3rd of January, 1638, the theatre was opened with the performance of a new tragedy out of early Dutch history, the famous *Gysbreght van Aemstel*. The next ten years were rich in dramatic work from Vondel's hand. In 1654, having already attained an age at which poetical production is usually discontinued by the most energetic of poets, he brought out the most exalted and sublime of all his works, the tragedy of *Lucifer*.¹ Very late in life, through no fault of his own, financial ruin fell on the aged poet, and from 1658 to 1668 — that is, from his seventieth to his eightieth year — this venerable and illustrious person, the main literary glory of Holland through her whole history, was forced to earn his bread as a common clerk in a bank, miserably paid, and accused of wasting his masters' time by the writing of verses.

Vondel is the typical example of Dutch intelligence and imagination at their highest development. Not merely is he to Holland all that Camoens is to Portugal and Mickiewicz to Poland, but he stands on a level with these men in the positive value of his writings.

Cats and Huygens

While the genius of Holland clustered around the circle of Amsterdam, a school of scarcely less brilliance arose in Middelburg, the capital of Zeeland. The ruling spirit of this school was the famous Jakob Cats (1577-1660). In this voluminous writer, to whom modern criticism almost denies the name of poet, the genuine Dutch habit of thought, the utilitarian and didactic spirit which we have already observed in Houwaert and in Boendale, reached its zenith of fluency and popularity.

A poet of dignified imagination and versatile form was Sir Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687) the diplomatist. Though born and educated at the Hague, he threw in his lot with the great school of Amsterdam, and became the intimate friend and companion of Vondel, Hooft, and the daughters of Roemer Visscher. His famous poem in praise of the Hague, *Batava Tempe*, appeared in 1621, and was, from a technical point of view the most accomplished and elegant poem till that time produced in Holland. Huygens represents the direction in which it would have been desirable that Dutch literature, now completely founded by Hooft and Vondel, should forthwith proceed, while Cats represents the tame and mundane spirit which was actually adopted by the nation. Huygens had little of the sweetness of Hooft or of the sublimity of Vondel, but his genius was eminently bright and vivacious, and he was a consummate artist in metrical form. The Dutch language has never proved so light and supple in any hands as in his, and he attempted no class of writing, whether in prose or verse, that he did not adorn by his delicate taste and sound judgment.

Three Dutchmen of the seventeenth century distinguished themselves very prominently in the movement of learning and philosophic thought, but the illustrious names of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) can scarcely be said to belong to Dutch literature, since they wrote in Latin. Balthazar Bekker (1634-1698), on the contrary, was a disciple of Descartes, who deserves to be remembered as the greatest philosophical writer who has used the Dutch language.^d

[¹ This great work bears so much similarity to a greater work, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, that it is frequently stated that Milton must have been acquainted with it. Milton's poem was begun in 1655, and finished in 1667.]

Hugo Grotius

In the annals of precocious genius there is no greater prodigy on record than Hugo Grotius [in Dutch, Huig de Groot], who was able to make good Latin verses at nine, was ripe for the university at twelve, and at fifteen edited the encyclopædic work of Martianus Capella. At Leyden he was much noticed by J. J. Scaliger, whose habit it was to engage his young friends in the editing of some classical text, less for the sake of the book so produced

than as a valuable education for themselves. At fifteen Grotius accompanied Count Justin of Nassau and the grand pensionary Older-Barneveld on their special embassy to the court of France. After a year profitably spent in that country in acquiring the language and making acquaintance with the leading men, Grotius returned home. He took the degree of doctor of law at Leyden, and entered on practice as an advocate.



HUGO GROTIUS (1583-1645)

Grotius vied with the latinists of his day in the composition of Latin verses. Some lines on the siege of Ostend were greatly admired, and spread his fame beyond the circle of the learned. He wrote three dramas in Latin: *Christus Patiens*; *Sophompaneas*, or the story of Joseph and his brethren; and *Adamus Exul*, a production which

is still remembered as having given hints to Milton. In 1603 the United Provinces, desiring to transmit to posterity some account of their struggle with Spain, determined to appoint a historiographer. Several candidates appeared, Dominicus Bandius among them. But the choice of the states fell upon Grotius, though only twenty years of age, and not having offered himself for the post.

His next preferment was that of advocate-general of the fisc for the provinces of Holland and Zealand. He had already passed from occupation with the classics to studies more immediately connected with his profession. In the winter of 1604 he composed a treatise entitled *De jure prædæ*. This treatise he did not publish, and the MS. of it remained unknown to all the biographers of Grotius till 1868, when it was brought to light, and printed at the Hague under the auspices of Professor Fruin. It discovers to us that

the principles and the plan of the celebrated *De jure belli*, which was not composed till 1625, more than twenty years after, had already been conceived by a youth of twenty-one.

A short treatise which was printed in 1609, Grotius says without his permission, under the title of *Mare Liberum*, is nothing more than a chapter (the twelfth) of the *De jure prædæ*. It was necessary to Grotius's defence of Heemskerck that he should show that the Portuguese pretence that Eastern waters were their private property was untenable. Grotius maintains that the ocean is free to all, and cannot be appropriated by any one nation. Many years afterwards the jealousies between England and Holland gave importance to the novel doctrine broached in the tract by Grotius, a doctrine which Selden set himself to refute in his *Mare clausum* (1632).

In June, 1619, Grotius, as we have seen, was immured in the fortress of Loevestein, near Gorkum. He had now before him, at thirty-six, no prospect but that of a lifelong captivity. He did not abandon himself to despair, but sought refuge in returning to the classical pursuits of his youth.

The address and ingenuity of Madame Grotius at length devised a mode of escape. His first place of refuge was Antwerp, from which he proceeded to Paris, where he arrived in April, 1621. In October he was joined by his wife. There he was presented to the king, Louis XIII, and a pension of 3,000 livres conferred upon him. French pensions were easily granted, all the more so as they were never paid.

In March, 1625, the printing of the *De jure belli*, which had taken four months, was completed. But though his book brought him no profit it brought him reputation, so widely spread and of such long endurance as no other legal treatise has ever enjoyed.

As in many other points Grotius inevitably recalls to us Erasmus, so he does in his attitude towards the great schism. Grotius was indeed a man of profound religious sentiment, which Erasmus was not; but he had an indifference to dogma equal to that of Erasmus, although his disregard sprang from another source. Erasmus felt the contempt of a man of letters for the barbarous dissonance of the monkish wrangle. Grotius was animated by an ardent desire for peace and concord. He thought that a basis for reconciliation of Protestant and Catholic might be found in a common piety, combined with reticence upon discrepancies of doctrinal statement. His *De veritate religionis Christianæ* (1627), a presentment of the evidences, is so written as to form a code of common Christianity, irrespective of sect. The little treatise diffused itself rapidly over Christendom, gaining rather than losing popularity in the eighteenth century. It became the classical manual of apologetics in Protestant colleges, and was translated for missionary purposes into Arabic (by Pocock, 1660), Persian, Chinese, etc.

Grotius was a great jurist, and his *De jure belli et pacis* (Paris, 1625), though not by any means the first attempt in modern times to ascertain the principles of jurisprudence, went far more fundamentally into the discussion than anyone had done before him. It is in the larger questions to which he opened the way that the merit of Grotius consists. His was the first attempt to obtain a principle of right, and a basis for society and government, outside the church or the Bible. The distinction between religion on the one hand and law and morality on the other is not indeed clearly conceived by Grotius, but he wrestles with it in such a way as to make it easy for those who followed him to seize it: The law of nature is unalterable; God himself cannot alter it any more than he can alter a mathematical axiom. This law has its source in the nature of man as a social being; it would be

valid even were there no God, or if God did not interfere in the government of the world.

These positions, though Grotius' religious temper did not allow him to rely unreservedly upon them, yet, even in the partial application they find in his book, entitle him to the honour of being held the founder of the modern



PETER PAUL RUBENS
(1577-1640)

science of the law of nature and nations. The *De jure* exerted little influence on the practice of belligerents, yet its publication was an epoch in the science. Mackintosh affirmed that his work is "perhaps the most complete that the world has yet owed, at so early a stage in the progress of any science, to the genius and learning of one man."¹

From 1600 to 1650 was the blossoming time in Dutch literature. During this period the names of greatest genius were first made known to the public, and the vigour and grace of literary expression reached their highest development. It happened, however, that three men of particularly commanding talent survived to an extreme old age, and under the shadow of Vondel, Cats, and Huygens there sprang up a new generation which sustained the great tradition until about 1680, when the final decline set in.²

TAINÉ ON FLEMISH ART

There are moments in the history of a nation when it resembles Christ transported by Satan to the mountain top; it becomes necessary for it to choose between the higher ideal and the lower. In the case of the Netherlands the tempter was Philip II with his army; put to the same test, the people of the North and the people of the South differed decidedly, following the slight differences of make-up and character. The choice once made, these differences increased, exaggerated by the result of the situation they had produced. The two peoples were two almost similar varieties of the same species; they became two distinct species. There always exist moral as well as physical

types; their origin is the same, but as they develop they vary and this variation is the birth of their separate existence.

After the separation, when the southern provinces became Belgium, the predominating idea was a need of peace and well-being, a disposition to accept existence comfortably and mirthfully — in a word, the spirit of Teniers, the state of mind that can laugh and sing, smoke a good pipe, quaff a good beer in a bare tavern, a dilapidated cottage, or on a wooden bench. In fact, it was now possible to sleep in beds, to amass provision, to enjoy work, travel, converse, live without fear; one had a house, a country: the future opened up. All the ordinary affairs of life took on interest; the people felt the resurrection and seemed to live for the first time. It is under such conditions that the arts and literature are born. The great shock undergone had broken the uniform glazing that tradition and custom had spread over everything. Man now occupied the centre of things; the essential traits of his nature, transformed and renewed, were grasped; the mind was as Adam's at his awakening. Later was to come the refining and weakening; at this moment the conception of things was large and simple. Man was competent because he was born in a period of disintegration and raised in the midst of naked tragedy; like Victor Hugo and George Sand, Rubens as a child was in exile, near his imprisoned father, and heard on all sides the din of tempests and ruin.

After the generation of activity which had suffered and created came the poetic generation which expressed itself in literature and the arts. It explained and amplified the desires and energies of the world founded by its fathers. This was the cause of Flemish art glorifying in heroic types the sensual instincts, the coarse enjoyments, the rude energy of the surrounding souls, and the finding in the tavern of Teniers the heaven of Rubens.

Peter Paul Rubens

Among the painters was one who stood out from all the others. This was Peter Paul Rubens.¹

Rubens was not an isolated genius, and the resemblance of the works of the painters of his period to his, shows that the tree of which he was the most splendid shoot was the product of his nation and his epoch. Before him came his master Adam van Noort and the master of Jordaens; around him his contemporaries educated in other studios, and whose creative faculties were as great as his — Jordaens, Crayer, Gerard Zeghers, Rombouts, Abraham Janssens, Van Roose; after him his pupils — Van Thulden, Diepenbeck, Van den Hoecke, Cornelius Schut, Boyermans, Vandyke greatest of them all; and Jakob van Oost of Bruges; the great animal and still-life painters Snyders, Jar. Fyt, the Jesuit Seghers: the same sap gave sustenance to all these branches, the large and small alike.

In Belgium as in Italy the religion consisted in rites: Rubens went to mass in the mornings and gave a picture to obtain indulgences; after which

[His father, a legal scholar and lay assessor of Antwerp, had fled to Cologne, and it is generally supposed that Rubens was born there, or, as has been latterly stated, at Siegen. In his tenth year his mother brought him to Antwerp. In 1600 he went to Italy, received from the duke of Mantua the title of court equerry, and was sent by him to Madrid. After 1608 Antwerp became his home; Duke Albert appointed him to be court painter. Yet at one time he accepted commissions in Paris for a considerable period, and then sold his art collection to the duke of Buckingham for 100,000 guildens. In 1629 he took part in the peace negotiations between Spain and England, for which Charles I gave him a golden chain with his picture. Rubens lived the life of a great lord, and had many paintings executed after his sketches by numerous pupils. He died at Antwerp in 1640.²]

he would return to the poetic feeling of his daily existence, and paint in the same style a Magdalene overflowing with repentance or a corpulent siren. Aside from this his art is truly Flemish; it is harmonious, spontaneous, original, in this being distinct from the preceding period, which was but a discordant imitation. From Greece to Florence, from Florence to Venice, from Venice to Antwerp, one can follow all the steps of passage. The conception of man and life lost in nobleness and gained in breadth.

Rubens is to Titian what Titian is to Raphael and what Raphael is to Phidias. Never has the artistic sympathy grasped nature with so frank and general an embrace. The ancient landmarks, already so often pushed back, seemed to be entirely destroyed in order to open an infinite course. The historic laws were disregarded; he put together allegorical and realistic



ADAM VAN NOORT (1557-1641)
(Rubens' first master)

figures, cardinals and a nude Mercury. So with the moral laws: he introduced into the ideal, mythological, and evangelistic heaven brutal or malignant figures— a Magdalene who is a nurse, a Ceres who whispers a joke into her neighbour's ear. He did not fear shocking the physical sensibilities; he went to the limit of the horrible, through all the tortures of suffering flesh and all the thrill of agonised screams. He did not shrink from shocking the moral sense; he represents Minerva as a shrew who lashes herself into a fury, Judith as a butcher accustomed to blood, Paris as a scoffer and an amateur epicure. To describe the impression given by his Susannas, Magdalenes, his Saint Sebastians, his graces, his sirens, his great kirmesses of divinity and humanity, ideal or realistic, Christian or pagan, would require the words of a Rabelais.

With him all the animal instincts enter upon the scene. He fails in nothing except the very pure and idealistic; he has under the control of his brush all human nature save the highest plane. This is the reason that his creations are the most numerous ever seen and that they include all types: Italian cardinals, Roman emperors, contemporary nobles, bourgeois, peasants, cowherds, with the innumerable variations that the play of nature creates in these types; and more than fifteen hundred pictures have failed to exhaust his creative faculties.

For the same reason, in representing the human body, he more than anyone has understood it; in this he surpasses the Venetians as they surpassed the Florentines; he feels even more than they that the flesh is a substance that is constantly renewing itself. This is why no one has surpassed him in rendering contrasts, or in showing so visibly the destruction and the blooming of life: sometimes it is death— heavy, flabby, without blood or substance, pale, bluish, drawn with suffering, a clot of blood at the mouth, the eyes glazed, feet and hands corpse-like, swollen, and deformed; at other times the freshness of the living flesh tints, the young athlete, blooming and radiant, the easy flexibility of his torso acting in a youthful body well nourished, the cheeks smooth and rosy; the placid frankness of a maiden

in whom no harmful thought has ever quickened the pulse or dulled the eye; the groups of chubby cherubims and trifling cupids, the delicacy, the pucker, the delicious under-rose-glow of the child-skin like the wet petal of a rose impregnated by the light of dawn. No one has given to figures such an impulse, gestures so impetuous, motion so furious and with so much abandon, so great and general a movement of muscles swollen and twisted in one great effort. His characters are speaking, even their repose is on the edge of action; one feels what they wish to do and that which they will do; the present with them is impregnated with the past and full of the future. In his work most subtle and fine distinctions of feeling are found.

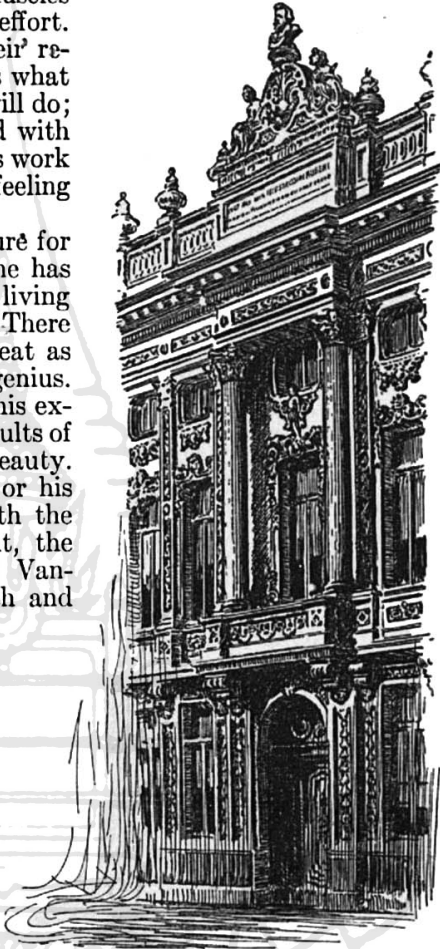
In this respect Rubens is a treasure for the novelist and psychologist; no one has gone farther in the knowledge of the living organisation of the human animal. There is but one Rubens in Flanders. Great as were the others they lack some of his genius. Crayer has neither his audacity nor his excess; he painted, with the delicate results of fresh soft colouring, a quiet happy beauty. Jordans has not his royal grandeur or his fund of heroic poetry; he painted with the wine colouring of the thick-set giant, the packed crowds, the plebeian roisterers. Vandyke even had not his love of strength and life for itself.^g

Fromentin's Estimate of Vandyke

With his many works, his immortal portraits, his soul capable of the finest sensations, his individual style, his distinguished personality, his taste, his standard and charm in all he touched, one asks what Vandyke¹ would have been without Rubens.

How would he have seen nature, how conceived painting? What palette would he have created — what model would he have chosen? What laws of colour would he have laid down — what poetry have accepted? Would he have leaned to the Italian schools? If the revolution made by Rubens had been later, or had never been, what would have happened to the followers for whom he prepared the way — all his gifted scholars, and particularly Vandyke the most gifted of all? Take away from them the influence, direct

[¹ Born at Antwerp in 1599, educated at the school founded by Rubens in Belgium, Vandyke went himself to drink from the fertile and living source open by the Italian masters in the sixteenth century. He took this voyage in 1620, and returned in 1626. During this period he visited all the great art centres of Italy and studied seriously. While studying all the great masters, it was Titian whom he chose as a model. In 1632 he was knighted by Charles I, and lived in England as court painter till his death in 1641 at London.^h]



RUBENS' HOUSE IN ANTWERP

or indirect, of Rubens, and imagine what is left to these luminous satellites. There is always more sentiment, and profound sentiment, in the refined Vandyke than in Rubens. Yet is this certain, or is it an affair of differences of temperament? Between these two souls, so unequal in other things also, there was a feminine influence, first of all a difference of sex. Vandyke made slender the statues that Rubens made heavy; he put less muscle, bone, and blood. He was more quiet, never brutal; his conceptions were not so vulgar; he laughed less, felt compassion often, but did not know the great sob of the more passionate temperament. He often corrected the unevenness of

his master; he was easy in his work because with him his talent was wonderfully natural; he is free, active, but never loses himself.

He was twenty-four years younger than Rubens; he belongs not at all to the sixteenth century but entirely to the generation of the seventeenth. This one feels physically and morally, in the man and in the painter, in his own well-cut features and in his choice of beautiful faces; and most of all is this felt in his portraits. In this regard he is wonderfully in touch with the world, his world and the world of the period. Never having created one set type which would blind him to the truth, he was exact, correct, and saw the right likeness. Perhaps he put into all his portraits something of his own graceful personality — an air more noble, a finer bearing, more beautiful hands; in any case he knew better than



RUBENS AND HIS WIFE. AFTER HIS OWN PAINTING, SHOWING EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ARISTOCRATIC COSTUME

his master the proper adjustment, the things of his world, and had taste in the painting of silks, satins, ribbons, plumes, and swords.

His were not chevaliers but cavaliers. The men of war had forsaken their armours and helmets; these were courtiers in unbuttoned doublets, floating laces, silk shoes, knee-breeches, all the fashions and customs which were familiar to him and which he better than anyone else knew how to reproduce in the perfection of their worldliness. With his manner, in his line, by the unique conformity of his nature with his times he occupied a high place in the world of art. His Charles I, in its perfect understanding of the model and subject, the easiness of style and its nobility, the beauty of the whole

work, the drawing of the face, the colouring, the wonderful technique, bears comparison with the highest achievements.

He created in his country an original style, and consequently he is a factor in the new school of art. He also had a foreign following: Reynolds, Lawrence, Gainsborough, in fact almost all the genre painters who were faithful to English traditions and the strongest landscape painters, are the result of Vandyke, and indirectly of Rubens through Vandyke. Posterity, always just in its decisions, has given to Vandyke a place of his own, between the greatest and the next rank. After his death, as during his life, he seems to have stood near the throne and to have held well his position there.^a

David Teniers

David Teniers the Younger, the son of an able painter of the same name, was born at Antwerp in 1610. He is especially noteworthy because in his choice of subjects he took the road which led the Dutch to their peculiar greatness. It is significant that Louis XIV would not hear of him; but Duke Leopold William made him inspector of his picture gallery, which was afterwards taken to Vienna.

Teniers even became rich so that at his castle of the Three Towers (Dry Toren) at Lereck, not far from Brussels, he gathered the scholars and artists of Belgium about him like a princely Mæccenas. He died at Brussels in 1685. He liked to paint contented people in modest circumstances, peasant dances, card players, bowlers, and fairs; his figures, even those of youths and maidens, he reproduces without any idealisation as the national style demanded. He has fantastic representations of an alchemist in a room crowded full of peculiar apparatus; also St. Anthony tempted with visions by the devil.

DUTCH ART

In Holland, however, there was developed a new school of art, which cut itself loose from all symbolic restrictions and apparently even from all idealism; but which in compensation obtained new and unsuspected charm and deep sentiment out of human life and external nature. It should be remembered, on the one hand, that a certain sense of droll humour always existed in the Netherlands and that it was there that the fable of Reynard was developed in which the human traits of animals are shown in their life. On the other hand it should not be forgotten that in the seventeenth century philosophers and naturalists attempted to investigate objects as they actually exist without any preconceived opinions and that at the same time the English drama represented the impulses of humanity with living, objective, reality and without regard for time, manner, or position. Human existence develops its innermost pulsebeats and the external world its most intimate traits, in an environment which in antiquity and in the early Middle Ages was seldom handled poetically and even less often artistically.^b

Taine's estimate of Rembrandt

One of the greatest merits of the Dutch school is its colouring. This was the result of the natural training of the eye. This country, a great alluvial tract of land, like that of the Po, with its rivers, canals, and humid atmosphere, resembled Venice. Here, as in Venice, nature made colourists of men. In Italy a tone remains the same; in the Netherlands it varies

incessantly with the variations of the light and ambient mists. At times full light strikes an object: it is not usual, and the green stretch of country, the red roofs, the varnished façades, the satiny flesh or flush stand out with extraordinary distinctness. At other times the light is dull; this is the usual condition in Holland, and objects scarcely show, almost losing themselves in the shadows. The eye becoming accustomed to this obscure light, the painter instead of using his whole scale of colours employs but the beginning of that scale; all his picture is in shade save one point. He gives us a continuous low-keyed concert broken sometimes by a brilliant burst of sound. In this way he discovers unknown harmonies, all those of obscure light, all



REMBRANDT VAN RIJN (1607-1669)
(Portrait drawn by himself)

those of the soul, harmonies infinite and penetrating; with a dash of dirty yellow, of wine dregs, of mixed grey, of vague blacks, in the midst of which is placed a dash of life, he stirs the farthest depths of our souls. This is the last great creation in the art of painting; it is in this style that to-day the painter speaks most effectively to the modern soul, and such was the colour that the light of Holland furnished to the genius of Rembrandt.

Among all the Dutch painters Rembrandt Van Rijn (1607-1669) through his wonderfully trained eye and an extraordinary almost savage genius, went ahead of his nation and century, and grasped the common instincts which

unite the Germanic races and lead to modern ideas. This man, collector, recluse, drawn along by the development of a mighty power, lived as Balzac did, a magician and a visionary, in a world of his own to the door of which he alone held the key. Superior to all other painters in the fineness and natural acuteness of his impressions, he understood and followed in all its consequences the great truth that for the eye all the essence of a visible object is in a spot, that the simplest colour is infinitely complex, that all visual sensation is the outcome of its own elements and the outside surroundings, that every seen object is but a spot modified by other spots, and that therefore the principal element of a picture is the coloured vibrating atmosphere in which the figures are plunged as fish in a sea. He rendered this atmosphere palpable, filled with mysterious life; he has put into it the light of his country, that light dull and yellowish like that of a lamp in the depths of a cave; he felt its pitiful struggle with the shadow, the weakness of the rays that died away into the depths, the trembling of the reflections that clung to the shining walls and all the vague population of the half-shadows, which, invisible to

the ordinary observer, seem in his pictures and etchings like a submarine world viewed across an abyss of waters. From out of this obscurity, the full light for his eyes was a dazzling shower; he felt it as a flash of lightning, a magic illumination, or a bundle of arrows. Thus he found in the inanimate world the most complete and expressive drama, all the contrasts, all the conflicts, all that is most oppressive and most lugubrious in the night, that which is most elusive and most melancholy in ambiguous shadows, that which is most violent and irresistible in the breaking forth of day. This done, he had but to pose in the midst of the natural drama, his human drama; a theatre so constructed gave birth to its own characters.

The Greeks and Italians knew man and life in their most correct and highest paths, the healthy flower that blossoms in the light; Rembrandt saw far back to the source, all that goes down and moulds in the shadows; the obscure paupers, the Jews of Amsterdam, the deformed and stunted, the begrimed suffering populace of a large city and a bad climate, the crooked, the bald head of the old decrepit artisan, faces with the paleness of ill-health, all the mass of humanity alive with evil passions and hideous miseries which multiply in our civilisation like worms in a rotten tree.

Once started on this road he was able to understand the religion of sorrow, the true Christianity, to interpret the Bible as a Lollard would have done, to find again the eternal Christ. He himself as a result was capable of feeling pity; in contrast with his conservative and aristocratic contemporaries, he was of the people; at least he is the most human of them all: his sympathies, more broad, embrace nature in its entirety; no ugliness was repugnant to him and no appearance of joy or nobility hid from him the reality that lay beneath. Thus, untrammelled and guided by his fine sensibility, his interpretation of humanity not only includes the general framework and the abstract type which suffices for classical art, but also the peculiarities and depth of the individual, the infinite complexity and indefinable traits of the moral character, all this moving picture which concentrates in a human face in a single moment the life history of a soul, and which has been seen clearly by only one other man — Shakespeare. In this he is the most original of the modern artists and has forged one end of a chain the other end of which was made by the Greeks; all the other great masters lie between, and when to-day our over-excited sentiment, our insatiable curiosity in the pursuit of fine distinctions, our pitiless search after the truth, our divination of the remote characteristics and under-currents of human nature seek for precursors and masters, it is in Rembrandt and Shakespeare that Balzac and Delacroix would find them.

Fromentin's Estimate of Frans Hals

It is at Haarlem that one best sees Frans Hals (1584–1666). Here as elsewhere in the French galleries and other Dutch galleries, the idea one receives of this brilliant master is that he is unequal although seductive, amiable, spiritual, neither true nor equitable. The man loses what the artist gains. He astonishes, amuses. With his quickness, his wonderful good nature, his tricks of technique, he separates himself by his joking of mind and hand from the severe atmosphere of the painters of his time. Sometimes he astounds; he gives the impression that he is wise as well as highly gifted, and that his irresistible humour is but the happy grace of great genius; then almost immediately he compromises himself, discredits himself and discourages one. To-day the name of Hals reappears in our modern school at the moment when

the love of realism enters with great noise and not less excess. His method has served as precedent to certain theories in virtue of which the most vulgar realism is wrongly taken for the truth. To invoke in support of this the works which he flatly contradicted in his best moods is a mistake and but injures him.

In the large hall of Haarlem which contains many of his works, Frans Hals has eight large canvases. These pictures cover the whole period of his work. The first (1616) was painted at the age of thirty-two, the last, in 1664, two years before his death, at the advanced age of eighty. In these works one sees his debut, his growth, and his searching for the way. He arrived at his zenith late, toward middle age, even a little later; his strongest work and development was in his old age.^h

Public Paintings

The most interesting pictures are those which, in expressive groups, represent the public life of the Netherlands as it flourished under the influence of civil and religious freedom. Holland has had no poet to immortalise its growth, like Æschylus in the *Persians* or Shakespeare in his historical dramas; on the other hand the native civic life, elevated by culture, appears before us strong and cheerful. Pictures were banished from the Reformed church, and it cannot be denied that from now on public taste was largely influenced by the needs of private ownership. Nevertheless the halls of the council houses, of the guilds, also of the universities provided exhibition room, although for commemorative pictures of monumental importance. After the independence of the United Provinces had been recognised by the Peace of Westphalia the festivities which greeted this event at home were preserved in animated paintings, some of which are groups of portraits. Among these is the *Banquet at Amsterdam* (in the museum of that place) by Bartholomeus van der Helst, a work of the first rank; the strong, cheerful faces around the richly spread table, in the midst the captain with the city banner, show at once that the scene is taken from a flourishing state life. By the same painter is the *Distribution of Prizes by the Amsterdam Rifle Corps* (now in the Louvre). Rembrandt himself represents the departure of the sharpshooters from Amsterdam under the leadership of Captain Korn, in that splendid colour picture which is often incorrectly called the *Night Watch*.

In the *Hospital for Lepers*, Amsterdam had a group picture by Ferdinand Bol of Dordrecht, one of Rembrandt's best pupils, which portrays the five directors of the hospital as they are receiving a poor peasant boy. We should also mention Rembrandt's *Anatomy*, celebrated for its wonderful colouring, which shows Professor Tulp as he explains a dead body to his pupils.

Terburg and Other Painters of the Dutch School

Since in such pictures portraits are grouped in one scene or action, they take the form of representations of actual life, of so called *genre* pictures. We use the word without here investigating its origin. Even many a picture from the Old and New Testaments is turned into a family or street scene in the Dutch treatment. When Teniers paints the liberation of Peter, our gaze lingers in the foreground where the guards who should be watching the apostle are playing at dice while he escapes. In the same way in the old German or Dutch passion-plays we find scenes introduced where a peddler is offering his salves for sale and Mary Magdalene is bargaining with him.

It is of great importance, however, that the Dutch painting applies itself to the reproduction of actual life with as much skill as affection, that it makes a

scene of most intimate family associations into a work of art and increases its value by the perfection of the style. One paints persons of the lower classes in quiet situations, represents a drinker, a soldier smoking, a cook at her work, with all the contentment of unaffected existence; another prefers animated scenes, disputes, even brawls in a tavern. But the life of the higher classes in its more dignified attitude likewise finds perfect expression, whereby the highest art is manifested in silken garments, draperies, ornaments, just as in the earthen pitchers or the dully lighted-up wooden benches of the former class.

Terburg, Van Ostade, and Steen

Here we must mention Terburg, who shows us scenes from the higher classes of society painted with great delicacy and spirit; his pictures and others like them have not unjustly been called novelistic. Adrian van Ostade, who likes to paint comfortable scenes in peasant homes with admirable use of hearth and chimney-fire effects, was born at Lübeck; like various other Germans who were either educated in Holland or else assimilated the Dutch style by long residence in the country, he is reckoned among the painters of the Netherlands, as is also Balthasar Denner of Hamburg, who was so opposed to a smooth and elegant style of representation that he of a preference painted old men and women and most carefully supplied their faces with all the natural wrinkles, hairs, and warts. Gaspar Netscher from Heidelberg is distinguished for his society pictures and is unexcelled in the reproduction of costly stuffs (died 1684).



FRANS VAN MIERIS (1635-1690)

A real Hollander, however, was Jan Steen of Delft, who was himself an innkeeper for a time and reproduces jovial scenes from tavern life as well as cozy family pictures, with a masterful gift of observation and splendid execution; no painter excels him in the complete unaffectedness with which his characters seem to act in the situation he portrays. Steen died in 1679 in bitter poverty. Less realistic in his choice of quiet scenes is Gerard Dow [Dow], who is extremely exact and painstaking in his treatment. Close to him in the minute execution of detail stand his pupils Frans van Mieris and Gabriel Metz of Leyden.

Landscape, Still Life, and Animal Painters

Landscape painting first began with the putting of objects like woods, hills, towers, and bridges into the background of religious pictures instead of painting them on a gold ground. These beginnings hardly give an inkling of the deep importance which this branch of art, as it was developed in the Netherlands, was to have in the future. Landscape painting clothes the objects of external nature with character and tone; in forest and meadow, on

the strand of the sea, by the clear light of day, by twilight and moonlight, it coaxes from nature those motives which appeal to human sentiment.

The greatest Dutch master in this field is Jakob Ruysdael of Holland, whose composition is especially happy in the treatment of woods and water and in such subjects as impress by a feeling of solitude. During the last decades it has become customary to put Meyndert Hobbema, who was formerly little known, on a level with him. In this field, as also in that of the genre painting, each painter chooses his own narrow sphere. Only through the most extreme care and technical finish could they attain that perfection of art which makes so-called cabinet pieces of their works, which in our day are the joy of art lovers. New schools arise in marine and in animal pictures. The monumental demand, consideration of church and council-house, retreat into the back ground; the artists work solely for private ownership; their works are reviewed and compared.

Only thus could the branch of still-life painting come into existence, which shows lifeless objects, table appointments and goblets, dead game, flowers, and fruit; it is effective through its pleasing combination of colour and acquires a special life of its own by affording a glimpse into a wealthy or luxurious existence. Whereas in the older periods of art, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Albrecht Dürer had achieved great things in several fields at once and had besides comprehended in spirit the knowledge and researches of their times, we now see single masters restrict themselves to an extremely narrow sphere in order there to claim complete mastery. The number of good painters brought forth by Holland in the seventeenth century is almost incalculable. But one (Schaleken) paints only small groups lighted by candle-light; another only the interior of churches; Pieter Wouwerman, the unsurpassed horse painter, does indeed also paint hunting scenes, fairs, and the meeting of cavaliers and is likewise great in landscape. In the pictures of Paul Potter, who lived to be only twenty-nine years old, the faithfulness to life of his stalled animals, cows, and sheep astonishes us.

Johann Heinrich Roos, who was born in the Palatinate and died at Frankfurt, likewise devoted his attention to animals; Frans Snyders of Antwerp acquired a reputation for his hunting scenes. Art drew nature and human life in its most varied scenes within its realm. It was long before it began to be felt that a one-sided cultivation of perfection leads to tedium.^b

DECLINE OF DUTCH ART

Such a period of bloom is necessarily but temporary, for the sap which produced it is expended in the production. Towards 1667, after the naval defeats of the English, there were slight indications of a change in the customs and feeling which had given rise to the national art. The well-being was too great. The India companies paid a dividend of 45 per cent. The heroes became bourgeois. They desired enjoyment, and the houses of the great, which the Venetian ambassadors in the commencement of the century found so simple and bare, became luxurious; in the homes of the prominent bourgeois, tapestries, priceless pictures, and vessels of gold and silver were to be found. The rich interiors of Terburg and Metz show us new elegance, robes of pale silks, velvet jackets, jewels, pearls, hangings embossed with gold, high mantels of marble. The old activity relaxed.

When Louis XIV in 1672 invaded the country he found no resistance. With this declining of national energy declined the arts; taste altered. In 1659, Rembrandt died in poverty, forgotten by almost all; the new element of

luxury took its models from foreigners in France and Italy. Already, during the flourishing period, many painters had gone to Rome to paint figures and landscapes; Jan Both, Berghem, Karel Dujardin, twenty others, Wouverman himself, formed side by side with the national school a semi-Italian school; but this school was natural and spontaneous; among the mountains, the ruins, the fabrics, and the rags, from beyond the mountains, the mistiness of the air, the well-being of the figures, the softness of the reds, the gaiety and humour of the painter had marked the tenacity of instinct of the Hollander. Now on the contrary these national characteristics begin to disappear before the invasion of fashion. On the Kaisergracht and on the Heeregracht sprung up great hôtels in the Louis XIV style. Gerard de Lairesse, a Flemish painter, founder of the Academy, commenced to decorate them with his learned allegories and his mythological hybrids.

True, the national art did not disappear immediately; it survived by a series of chefs d'œuvre until the early years of the eighteenth century; at the same time the national sentiment, awakened by its humiliation and danger, provoked a popular revolution, heroic sacrifices, the inundation of the country, and all the successes which followed. During the war of the Succession in Spain, Holland, when the stadholder had become king of England, was sacrificed to the allies; after the treaty of 1713 she lost her supremacy on the sea, fell to the second class, and then still lower; soon Frederick the Great was to say of her that she was towed by the English as a fishing boat is towed by a liner. France trampled upon her during the war of the Austrian Succession; later England imposed on her the right of visitation and took away from her the Coromandel coast. Finally Prussia overwhelmed her republican party and established the stadholderate. Following the fate of the weak, she was roughly treated by the strong, and after 1789 conquered and reconquered. The result was fatal; she resigned herself to her fate and was content to become a good commercial and banking country. Herein is the cause of the disappearance of creative art with the disappearance of practical energy.

Ten years after the commencement of the eighteenth century, all the great painters are dead. For a century the decadence in art had shown itself by a poorer style, a restrained imagination, and the minute finish found in the works of Frans van Mieris, Schaleken, and others. One of the last, Adrian van der Werf, by his painting cold and polished, by his creamy reds, by his weak return to the Italian style, showed that the Dutch had forgotten their native taste and their proper genius. His successors resemble the man who would speak but has nothing to say; the pupils of the masters or of illustrious fathers, Pieter van der Werf, Hendri van Limboech, Philip van Dyck, Mieris the son, Mieris the grand-son, Nicholas Verkolie, Constantin Netscher, but repeat automatically the phrases they have heard. Talent survived only in the genre painting of Jacob de Witt, Rachel Ruysch, and Van Huysum, which required but slight creation, and endured but a few years, like a tenacious briar clinging to the dry earth where all the great trees have died. It in turn died and the soil rested barren — last proof of the bond which links individual originality to social life and proportions, the creative faculties of the artist to the active energy of the nation. †