

# **Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

**Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

**Up the Rhine**

**Hood, Thomas**

**London, 1840**

To Peter Baxter, Esq., Solicitor, Canterbury

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“touter” in disguise. However, the house is clean, quiet, and comfortable, with a small garden in the rear, and a painted wooden figure of a Dutchman at the end of the main walk ; to which figure, by the way, I caught my Uncle bowing, hat in hand, mistaking it, no doubt, for our Doctor himself. This wooden statuary is, timberly speaking, quite a branch of the Dutch fine arts, and surely art must be in its second childhood, when it returns to playing with dolls. On which theme, my dear Gerard, I could write an essay, but my paper being filled up, as well as my leisure, I must conclude, with kind regards to yourself, and love to Emily.—  
Yours, &c. FRANK SOMERVILLE.

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TO PETER BAXTER, ESQ., SOLICITOR,  
CANTERBURY.

MY DEAR PETER,—I take shame to myself for not writing you before, as you could only come to one conclusion. But you have been long prepared for such an event, and consequently the less shock to your feelings ; still, an old friend is an old friend, and I heartily beg your pardon for the sorrow I am sure you would display at my loss. As for black clothes, being professional wear, you would be at no cost, I trust, on that score, but I do hope you have not added to trouble by acting on my last will. But you were never hasty in law matters. No doubt it was my bounden duty to let you

hear from Rotterdam, and my mind misgives there was some sort of promise to that effect, provided I lived over the voyage. At all events, I owe you an apology, and it is a melancholy excuse to make, but from day to day, I expected there would be news to break by another hand, that would fully account for my silence. I had two very smart warnings, one in a storm on board ship, and the other ashore, but both so nigh fatal, that the next *must* be the finish. Though I am not sensibly weaker or worse, reason dictates that I am sapping in my vital parts; and at last, even my constitution seems to have given in. If I only felt any bodily pain, I should be a deal easier, but I am more comfortable than I have been for years, which I take to be about the worst symptom I could enjoy. Mayhap a mortification has set in, and my inward feelings are dead and gone beforehand, and in that case I shall go off in a moment, like a hair-trigger. So much for the good to be done my health by the river Rhine! The present is writ at Nimeguen, and it will take two days more to get to Cologne, so that I am as sure of the port and sherry that Truby bet me, as if it was in my own cellar. Well, God's will be done! Nimeguen is as nigh to heaven as Beckenham in Kent; and a thousand miles north or south, east or west, make no odds in our journey to a world that has neither latitude nor longitude.

Now I am here, I am not sorry to have had a peep at such a country as Holland; but being described by

so many better hands, in books of travels, besides pictures, I need not enlarge. If you only fancy the very worst country for hunting in the whole world, except for otter-dogs, you will have it exactly. Every highway is a canal; and as for lanes and bridle-roads, they are nothing but ditches. By consequence, the lives of the natives are spent between keeping out water and letting in liquor, such as schiedam, aniseed, curaçoa, and the like; for, except for the *damming* they would be drowned like so many rats, and without the *dramming*, they would be martyrs to ague and rheumatics, and the marsh fever. Frank says, the Hollanders are such a cold-blooded people, that nothing but their ardent spirits keeps them from breeding back into fishes; be that as it may, I have certainly seen a Dutch youngster, no bigger than your own little Peter, junior, toss off his glass of *schnapps*, as they call it, as if it was to save him from turning into a sprat. It is only fair to mention, that Dutch water seems meant by Providence for scouring, or scrubbing, or washing, or sailing upon, or any other use in nature, except to drink neat. It costs poor Martha a score of wry faces only to hear it named, for she took one dose of it for want of warning, and it gave her a rattling fit of what she calls the Colliery Morbus.

As regards foreign parts, I was most taken with Rotterdam. It is a fine outlandish business-like city, with a real Dutch medley of quays, and canals, and bridges, and steeples, and chimneys, and masts of ships,

all in one point of view. The same forming, altogether, a picture that, to my mind, might be studied with advantage by certain folks at home. Not to name party spirit, which poisons every public measure in England, there is far too much of separating matters that ought never to be considered apart. By way of example, we hear the landed interest, and the funded interest, and the shipping interest, and so forth, talked of night after night in Parliament, as if they were all private interests, instead of public ones; or what is worse, in opposition, instead of being partners in one great national firm—namely, Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures, and Company. As such, it is neither just nor wise for one branch to be protected or encouraged at the expense of the rest; and besides, I have made up my mind that the welfare of any member, in the long-run, must be looked for in the prosperity of the whole. If we wish, then, to thrive as a nation, instead of splitting our bundle of sticks, we must bind them all up together, and consider our commerce, and agriculture, and manufactures in one cluster, like the chimneys, the fine elm trees, and the ships' masts on the Boomjes, as it is called, at Rotterdam. Those are my sentiments, though it is not speaking, mayhap, like a landowner with well-nigh a thousand acres in his own hands. But I am not going to favour you with a batch of politics, and besides I am called to meals, where I have promised myself the pleasure of drinking your health, old friend, in a bumper of Madeira, that has made a voyage to Java, in the East Indies.

DEAR PETER,—Since the above, you will be concerned to hear I have had another very serious attack. It took place in Dokter's garden, having gone into the same after dinner to enjoy a little fresh air, when all at once I went off quite insensible, and nobody being by, except a painted wooden image of a Dutchman, it is unknown how long I remained in that state, and certainly should never have recovered, but for a providential cold shower of rain that brought me to by its shock to the system. My nephew will have it, that indulging in a glass of wine beyond the common, I only went to sleep in the bower; but relations are always sanguine, and particularly the youthful, and his affection, poor fellow, makes him hope the best. In my own mind, I am quite convinced it was suspended animation, and especially by being so terrible cold in my extremities. Truby makes light of these runaway knocks, as he calls them, but my own sense tells me, Peter, they are warnings that Death intends to soon call upon me in earnest. As such, you may suppose I am not best pleased to be pestered with matters, disagreeable at any time to free-born principles, but particularly to a man under my serious circumstances. I allude to the passport system, whereby an Englishman abroad is treated like so much liquor, or wine, or soap, at home, that can't be moved without a permit. Here was a fellow, just now, wanting me to show myself up at the police-office to be vizeed.

and so forth; but for an individual going to another world to be passported out of Holland into Prussia seemed such an idle piece of business, not to say presumption, that I declined stirring in it. Master Frank, however, thought otherwise, and not being in my solemn frame of mind, was so obstinate on the subject that we almost came to words. So the end is, I have been vizeed, and identified behind my back, and made passable in Germany, forsooth, for six months to come!

Sister Kate rubs on in her usual way, in tolerable health, but taking on about poor George. She has got already into two or three travelling troubles, and by way of companion has encumbered herself with a bale of Dutch linen as big as a baby. And now, God bless you, and likewise all of the name. Something tells me it is a last farewell from, Dear Peter, your sincere and dying friend,

RICHARD ORCHARD.

P.S.—I had the pleasure of forwarding a few gallons of real Dutch Hollands, which by this time should be on their road to Canterbury. It is called Schiedam, and makes a capital mixture, provided you don't brew it like a Mounseur in the house here, who makes his spirits and water without the spirits. That reminds me of your old joke against Bob Rugby, the classical schoolmaster, about mixing the Utile and Dulce. "Utile and Dulce be hanged!" says you, "the French drink it, and it's nothing but sugar and water!"