

III: Holland, Jan 1, 1893

When the traveller shapes his route to include Holland it is rather with a view to enjoy, not only its natural beauties, but the superb collections of art in the branches of painting in which the Dutch attained to such supreme excellence, and it is seldom that a journey is taken through the Lowlands for the purpose of seeing and studying what examples of the architectural art might exist there as a proof of their genius in that direction. In fact there is a wide spread opinion that there is no architecture in Holland, and no less an authority that James Fergusson dismisses the subject of their ecclesiastical architecture with the epithet "mere warehouses of worship", yet in the short and hurried trip that I recently made through the country I found much of interest even in these "warehouses", and in one group of buildings the stamp of an original genius whose influence is felt even today in the latest work of the Netherlands and Germany.

In Sieven de Key, a mason-architect of Haarlem who flourished during the latter part of the 16th and beginning of the 17th Centuries, we see an original genius who was able by his own talents to not only benefit by the flood of the Renaissance that was sweeping over the country, but to preserve those qualities in his work that rendered the later Gothic secular work so pleasing, and appropriate to the country. Beyond his own inimitable work in the Vleeschhal and Weighhouse at Haarlem or the Stadhuis at Leyden, it is to the influence of his rich fancy that we owe the charming old Leibnitz House at Hanover, the Pottenfänger House at Hameln, the old dwelling on the Markt at Breisau, and scores of others, as well as the best work that is now being done in western Germany and his own country. Hendrik de Keyser and Pieter Post are two

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other names connected with the architecture of this same time and are not unknown in the province of painting also, for almost all of these architects were also either painters or sculptors or both.

There are few remains of the Romanesque period in Holland, and in my visit to a dozen or more towns met with only a few buildings in that style. At Nymwegen on a promontory projecting into the Rhine there is a fine relic of the once important palace of Charlemagne: the apse of the palace chapel ~~is~~ semicircular in plan and divided into two tetragonally ~~is~~ ^{water table at half its height} the upper string is pierced by five windows and the whole crowned by a corbel frieze supported at intervals by the characteristic cubical capped round column. Near this scanty remnant of the great palace stands a small baptistry dating from the 8th century and restored in the 12th. It consists of an octagonal clerestory supported by heavy piers and surrounded by a sixteen sided aisle. There is a projecting porch of two stories on the west side showing the usual round arch openings. At Utrecht the church of St Jans possesses a Romanesque nave and aisles, but with a Gothic choir and curious Renaissance facade it has but little of the earlier style in its general effect. Finally at Maastricht, although within the borders of Holland really a German city in the church of St Servatius (Hoofdkerk), the oldest in the country, we have a purely Romanesque building in the massive west front, and the semicircular apse with its loggia arcade under the roof and square flanking towers follows closely the churches of the period on the Rhine. In the same town is the Lieve Vrouwekerke of the 11th century which shows many parts still remaining built in the Romanesque style, and a restoration is in progress that will no doubt restore to the building its old character that ~~was~~ ^{so much} injured by alterations since its foundation.

When we come to consider the Gothic work in Holland,³ we find examples in every town and city, many of them imposing in size and several of merit. Like the brick churches of the Baltic provinces, their exteriors are usually plain even to ugliness, although there are exceptions to this, but their interiors are almost universally imposing and effective. In the great cathedral of St. Jans at 'S Hertogenbosch, Holland possesses a building that will compare favorably with anything in Germany. Unfortunately the west front and the lower part of the great west tower have been built in the late Romanesque style of the 11th century and are entirely out of keeping with the rest of the building. The church is built on a cruciform plan with double aisles, a great dome at the crossing, and an apse, which is bounded by ~~the~~ seven sides of a dodecagon, with radiating chapels. The exterior is in the richest Gothic. Every part is covered with intricate and beautiful tracery; the buttresses end in pinnacles and are decorated on their faces by niches carrying statues. Both aisle and clerestory windows are protected by canopies and the aisle and nave walls terminate in pinnacled stone balustrades. The window tracery is everywhere of beautiful design but the work reaches its climax in the great window and elaborate portal of the north transept, where the entire building is a maze of the richest sculpture. The interior also is richly decorated but the ~~color~~ color is a little cold. The nave is of great height which is perhaps $3\frac{1}{2}$ times its width. The double aisles are of the same height and about $\frac{1}{2}$ the height and width of the nave. The clerestory walls are supported by piers which have no caps nor impost of any kind, but the ribs of the vaulting and mouldings of the arches are carried down to the floor. This arrangement gives a most curious effect of indefinite height to the interior, pleasing or not it is difficult to say, and must be classed with

such optical tricks as the tapering nave of St Marie Potiers. The Cathedral at 'S Bosch is perhaps the richest Gothic building in Holland but there is no lack of important buildings in the same style. The great cathedral of St Martin at Utrecht suggests in the fragment of choir and west tower, the nave was destroyed by a tornado in the 17th century, what it once was, and the Oude Kerk at Amsterdam nearly 300 feet in length; the St Baron at Haarlem; St Peter's at Leyden; St James at The Hague; the Nieuwe Kerk at Delft; St Lawrence at Rotterdam and finally the Groot Kerk at Dordrecht a most effective and imposing interior, are all buildings of the first class, at least in size, and form a most instructive series in the study of this side of Gothic development.

In these buildings we can plainly see the influence of the French Gothic churches in the proportion of the aisles to the nave the ambulatory and radiating apsidal chapels. But the towers, whether at the west front or over the crossing, as is frequently the case, are of that peculiar design seen all over Holland not only on the churches but the Stadhuises as well. They are usually octagonal and rise in many stories each smaller in diameter than the one below ~~it~~. Near the summit there is usually a bulbous dome or cupola with an open lantern and the whole almost invariably ends in an open crown approaching a bulb in form. This latter feature is so common that it is one of the features that makes us recognize a town as Dutch and has a peculiar, fantastic effect especially since it is usually made of copper and takes on a rich green color in the damp salt air of the country.

The interiors are usually plain and the nave-aisle piers nearly always circular in section with

simple foliage caps. The ceilings are perhaps always intended for stone vaulting but in a number of cases, St Bavo at Haarlem & Oude Kerk Amsterdam for example, the nave is covered with wooden ^{imitation} vaulting.

In the Renaissance architecture of Holland we find a native good taste displayed and a combining of the old forms with the newly acquired details of decoration that has resulted in a style peculiarly pleasing. The old Gothic step-gable house continued to hold its place as the leading motive in public and private houses with a more refined treatment of the mouldings and decoration around the doors and windows. The Renaissance reached Holland in the 16th Century and it is in the latter part of that century that the famous group of architects Lieven de Key, Hendrik de Keyser, Pieter Post and others, contemporaries of the great painters Hals and Rembrandt, lived and worked. These men seemed to have had little to do with church architecture, although we have a charming example of de Key in the tower of the Church of St Anna at Haarlem, but are seen at their best in the town halls and other municipal buildings that the independent Dutch republicans were fond of building. Perhaps ~~the~~ of all these the old Vleeschhal or Meat Market of Haarlem, erected by de Key in 1602-3, is the most picturesque and captivating. It combines all the peculiarities of its author in a most carefully studied and happily worked out composition. The peculiarities of the master are shown here in the tall stepped gable divided into unequal parts by strong moulded horizontal courses. The artistically grouped windows are strengthened at the sides by stone quoins and at places are crowned by the radiating voussours of a

flat arch. Below is the principal entrance, round arched, crowned by a slight projection defined by projecting courses of stone alternating with the brick of the wall. The steps of the gable are protected by projecting coping of stone and occasionally are surmounted by a small ornamented obelisk. In the apex of the gable and set in the wall of the first story are stone bas-relief decorations representing the arms of the town and the purpose of the building. The side of the building is low, only one story in height, and shows elaborate dormers in the style of the principal gable. Taken as a whole it is to be doubted if there is a more strikingly picturesque building in all Europe and ^{it} triumphantly refutes the idea that classical forms and feeling are ^{necessarily} cold and uninteresting. We find the same taste and skill exhibited by this ~~same~~ master's work in the Weigh House at Haarlem and the facade of the Seyden Stadhuis both executed in stone which although composed in a more quiet manner show a wealth of fancy combined with the purest classical forms. The Stadhuis at Delft gives us some idea of the manner of De Keyser, who worked in a much more conventional style than de Key, but shows great skill in his management of the orders and a rich imagination in the design of detail. The Stadhuis at The Hague, built just before the career of these men, is most interesting in showing the genius of the ideas they worked up so successfully, and is in itself a most attractive building. Several other town halls erected later in the 17th century, for example that at Amsterdam, now the Royal Palace, and the smaller one at Maastricht show much

less talent for attractive composition, and while well proportioned and dignified are plain almost to the point of dullness.

In the later Renaissance Holland did not reach the extravagance that was practiced in Germany, and even when we find the great scroll gables, garlands, and twisted and contorted cherubs that characterize the ornament of the 18th century, it is almost always handled with better taste and consequently less offensive. Of this period are many of the private houses of Amsterdam, in fact they give to the city its quaint and very Dutch appearance. There is almost an infinite variety of gables each treated in a variation of the step motive. In the smaller cities and towns there are still remaining many of the older houses especially in Dordrecht, where they range through the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and the quaint picturesqueness of the crooked canals lined with these true-colored houses must be a feast for the artist in search of subjects.

The material is almost universally brick, although stone is often used for ornament; for example the churches almost all show applied tracery and other ornament in stone on the brick walls, and buildings entirely of stone are not uncommon, but brick is the material of the country. They are usually made of river mud I believe, and have a rich deep color bordering on a purple; the roofing tile is almost gray, They are of large size, about $11 \times 5 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$, and are usually carefully laid, English bond, in thin beds of mortar carefully

pointed.

At the present time in the cities where the more important works are being erected, there is a tendency to return to the early Renaissance where the national characteristics are strongly brought out, and with almost universal success. In the many new business houses of Amsterdam, the new Riks Museum and magnificent railroad station of the same city we can see the influence of the quaint little meat market of Haarlem in spite of the rich faience decoration and imposing dimensions of the newer buildings, and must we say, that after we become accustomed to the greater ostentation of the 19th century, that the palm of artistic excellence still belongs to the master mason who knew how to use suggestions presented by the work of past centuries, and did not copy but produced a work that was truly his own and of his age.

Justus Meyer

Moscow Jan 1st 1893,



