

Groningen in the Forties

Steam tram puffed through Frisian pine woods,
Sandy tracks crossing, converging, and parting,
An occasional clearing, cottonwool clouds,
Then a rich countryside, its seams starting,
Once we reached the deep black soil of Groningen.
Here massive farmsteads squatted, dyke-surrounded,
Self-contained, incurious. Horse teams were ploughing then,
Turning that fertile earth where stark vigour abounded,
Dark rich roggebrod supplying strength to huge men
And vast wives, saxon solidity matching fat farms.
Deliberate, slow-moving, thinking all was measurable,
No floating population, though conscious of the watertable,
They controlled their dykes, subject to no alarms,
Living as they always had, levelling their flat plain,
Tellurians, these northern people, utterly un-Arcadian.

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