

FRANCIS HILLEN OF YARMOUTH, LIMNER,
PREACHER AND GRAMMARIAN

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ON 23 June 1637, Francis Hillen, limner, aged 24, his wife Elizabeth Hillen, aged 25, and his mother Ann Wright, aged 58, desirous to pass into the Netherlands, were examined at Great Yarmouth¹; they were among those Puritans of Norfolk that were determined not to submit to changes in their religious practices imposed by Bishop Wren, an ardent supporter of Archbishop Laud, and who preferred to go voluntarily into exile.²

The Hillens went to live at Rotterdam and stayed there probably until East Anglia had been firmly secured for the parliamentary party in the beginning of the Civil War; they returned to England before 3 January 1644-45, for on that date the baptism of their son Salathiel was registered in the Church Book of Great Yarmouth Independent Church.³ On 21 November 1645 Francis Hillen was admitted to the Church, *the church having received satisfaction of his admission the Church of Rotterdam*, but his wife had to wait for admission until 8 October 1646.⁴ On 25 January 1645-46, on 3 August 1647 and on 1 October 1650 three more sons were baptized, Johannes, David and Nathaniel.⁵

In 1664 a Francois Hillenius published at Rotterdam a text-book for the study of English by the Dutch and of Dutch by the English, of which the general title runs as follows:

“ Den Engelschen ende Ne’erduitschen // Onderrichter, // Gheschikt in // Twee Deelen; // Van welcke ’t Eene begrijpt korte ende Noodt-// wendighe Regulen / tot Onderwijsinghe // van de Engelsche Sprake. // ’t Ander, t’ Zamenpraatjes / gemeene Redenen / // Discoursen / Zendt-Brieven / ende Zin-spreuk-// ken; om daar door tot de wetenschap / // ende ’t aan-staan der zelve ghe-// rieffelijk te komen. //

“ The English, and Low Dutch // Instructor, // Disposed, in to // Two Parts; // The First, whereof containeth, Brief, and Neces-// sary Rules, for the Instructing of the Dutch Tongue. // The Second, Common dialogues, Communica-// tions, Discourses, Letters, and Sentences rea-// dily for to come thereby to the know-// ledge and liking of the same. // By Francois Hillenius. //

“ Tot Rotterdam, // Gedrukt by Bastiaen Wagens, Boukverkooper, // op ’t Steyger. In ’t Jaar 1664. // ”

The titles of Part I is:

“ Den Engelschen ende Ne’erduitschen, // Onderrichter, // Waar in // Korte ende Noodtwendighe Regulen / tot On-// derwijsinghe van de Engelsche Sprake // vergadert zijn. //

“ The English, and Low Dutch // Instructor, // Wherein // Briefe and Necessary Rules, are Collected for // the Instructing of the Dutch tongue. //

“ Tot Rotterdam, // Gedrukt by Bastiaen Wagens, Boukverkooper, // op 't Steyger. In 't Jaar 1664. //

That of Part II is :

“ Den Engelschen ende Ne'erduitschen // Onderrichter, // Waar in // 'tZamenpraatjes / gemeene Redenen / Discour- // sen / Zendt-Brieven / ende Zinspreukken ; om // daar door tot de wetenschap / ende 't aan- // staan van de Engelsche sprake gerieffe- // lijk te komen / vergadert zijn // Mitsgaders, een Kleine // Vocabular, // Ofte Wordt-Boekje, met het gemelde Aan- // hanghel daar aan bekljvende. //

“ The English, and Low Dutch // Instructor, // Wherein // Are Collected Common dialogues, Communica- // tions, Discourses, Letters, and Sentences, readily // for to come there by to the knowledge and // liking of the Dutch Tongue. // Together with A Small // Vocabular, // And the mentioned Appendix joyning thereunto. //

“ Tot Rotterdam. // Gedrukt by Bastiaen Wagens, Boukverkoper, // op 't Steyger. In 't Jaar 1664.”

Francois Hillenius, who is also called *Hillen* in a laudatory poem prefaced to the *Instructor*,⁶ was an Englishman,⁷ who had been authorized by the magistrates of Rotterdam to open a school in the city in 1637.⁸

In 1664 he is described as an English and Dutch Schoolmaster residing at Rotterdam.⁹ He was qualified to teach the two languages, since he had been acquainted with both of them since his very cradle.¹⁰ At some time of his life, he was a public preacher. Edward Richardson, the Commonwealth Minister of Ripon Cathedral, who later had to flee to the Netherlands and published *Ango-Belgica* (1677), another English and Dutch text-book, writes *that he that made the late English and Netherdutch Instructor had been in his day a publick Preacher*.¹¹

Francis Hillen who left Great Yarmouth in 1637 and Francois Hillenius who started teaching at Rotterdam in 1637 most probably were the same person. The writer of *The English and Low-Dutch Instructor* lived in the Netherlands at least during two periods of his life. Between 1637 and his return to Great Yarmouth in 1646 and later about 1664, when he may have left Norfolk on account of the difficult times for Puritans after the Restoration.

At the end of the sixties there are mentioned two Francis Hillens. *Lijsbeth Hille wife of Frans Hille* is mentioned among the deceased at Rotterdam during the week of September 23-29, 1668.¹² And the Church Book of Great Yarmouth Church, which has come to light recently and was gone through by Mr. C. B. Jewson for the period in question, has the following entry dated 20 January 1669/70 *At the Thursday meeting it was agreed that Mrs. Hillen late wife of Francis Hillen should be dismissed and have liberty to join the church in Amsterdam whereof Mr. Malbourn was Pastor*. It is impossible to make out whether the two entries refer to the same Hillen or not. The Hillen who lost his wife in 1668 might have remarried and have died before his second wife was granted dismission in January 1669/70. The two Hillens might have been different persons.

No evidence has been found thus far to show when or where Francis Hillen might have been a preacher or a minister. He is described as a limner in the Register of Passengers from Great Yarmouth, but he is not found mentioned as a minister in the Index of Congregational Ministers in Dr. Williams's Library in London nor in any of the Norfolk Congregational Records examined by C. B. Jewson. As a Congregationalist he could be a preacher on the basis of his experience and natural gifts without any special training.

The *English and Netherdutch Instructor* contains an English and a Dutch Grammar (Part I, the English Grammar on the left-hand pages, the Dutch Grammar on the right-hand pages), a series of Dialogues, letters and other texts in English and Dutch (Part II, 1—146) and a logical vocabulary according to subjects also in English and Dutch (Part II, 147—72).

The texts of the second part contain a religious section: the ten commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and a few extracts from the Bible, which shows that the author was interested in the edification of his readers.

The Instructor was popular for some twenty years.¹³ It was reprinted by Bastiaan Wagens in 1672 and 1677, by Isaac Naeranus and Joannes Borsius in 1678 and by Reynier van Doesburg in 1686, all of them printers of Rotterdam. The editions of 1678 and 1686 omitted the general title-page with the author's name and contain only the two parts without the introductory matter.

¹Registers of Passengers from Great Yarmouth to Holland, transcribed by C. B. Jewson, *Norfolk Record Society*, Vol. XXV, 1954, p. 36. We are indebted to Mr. C. B. Jewson for the information from the Norfolk records, for which we express to him our sincere feelings of gratitude.

²C. B. Jewson, *The English Church at Rotterdam and its Norfolk Connections*, in *Original Papers of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society*, Vol. XXX, Part IV, 1952, pp. 333-34.

³Baptisms recorded in Great Yarmouth Independent Church Book, compiled by A. Stuart Brown, in *Norfolk Record Society*, Vol. XXII, p. 9.

⁴Extracts from Great Yarmouth Church Book made by Mr. C. B. Jewson.

⁵Baptisms recorded, pp. 10, 11, 12.

⁶F. Hillenius, *The English, and Low Dutch Instructor*, 1664, fo. lv.

⁷The author of the Instructor calls English *our English* (Part I, p. 91), and the the Dutch Letters their letters (Part I, p. 5).

⁸F. Hillenius, o.c., fo. 3r. No trace of an authorization to open a school was found in the Minutes of the decisions of the Magistrates of the time in the Municipal Archives of Rotterdam.

⁹F. Hillenius, o.c. fo. lv.

¹⁰F. Hillenius, o.c. fo. 3r.

¹¹E. Richardson, *Anglo-Belgica*, 1677, fo. 5r.

¹²*Burial Register of Grote Kerk*. Entry for week of 23-29 September 1668, in the Municipal Archives of Rotterdam.

¹³See for more bibliographical details: G. Scheurweghs, *English Grammars in Dutch and Dutch Grammars in English in the Netherlands before 1800*, in *English Studies*, Vol. XLI, 1960, pp. 146-49. A microfilm of the copy of the 1664 edition of the Library of the University of Leyden has been deposited with *The Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society*.