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**GREAT ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS**

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# **HANS BRINKER**

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BARONET BOOKS, New York, New York

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New York, New York

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Printed in the United States of America



They Didn't Pay Much Attention to the Cold.

## Chapter 1

### The Poor Brinker Family

Long ago, in the 1840's, on a cold but bright December morning, two children were kneeling on the bank of a frozen canal in Holland. Ice covered that country's canals all winter long, and skating was the main means of transportation.

The children's thin jackets barely warmed their shivering bodies, but fifteen-year-old Hans Brinker and his twelve-year-old sister, Gretel, didn't pay much attention to the cold, as their numb red fingers tried to fasten "things" onto their feet.

## HANS BRINKER

Those strange-looking "things" were clumsy pieces of wood which Hans had carved into runners. They were pierced with holes into which he threaded strips of rawhide, which tied around their shoes and feet. These took the place of regular ice skates, which their poor peasant mother couldn't afford to buy for them, but which still managed to give Hans and Gretel many happy hours on the ice.

"Come on, Gretel," called Hans as he stood up and glided smoothly across the canal, avoiding the peasant women on their way to market and the young men on their way to work.

"I can't, Hans," groaned his sister. "My right foot still hurts from where the string cut it the last time I wore the skates."

"Then tie them higher," said her brother, intent on the circles he was making on the ice.

"I can't! The string is too short!"

"Troublesome girls!" he muttered, throwing his arms up in the air, but skating towards his



“Come On, Gretel,” Called Hans.