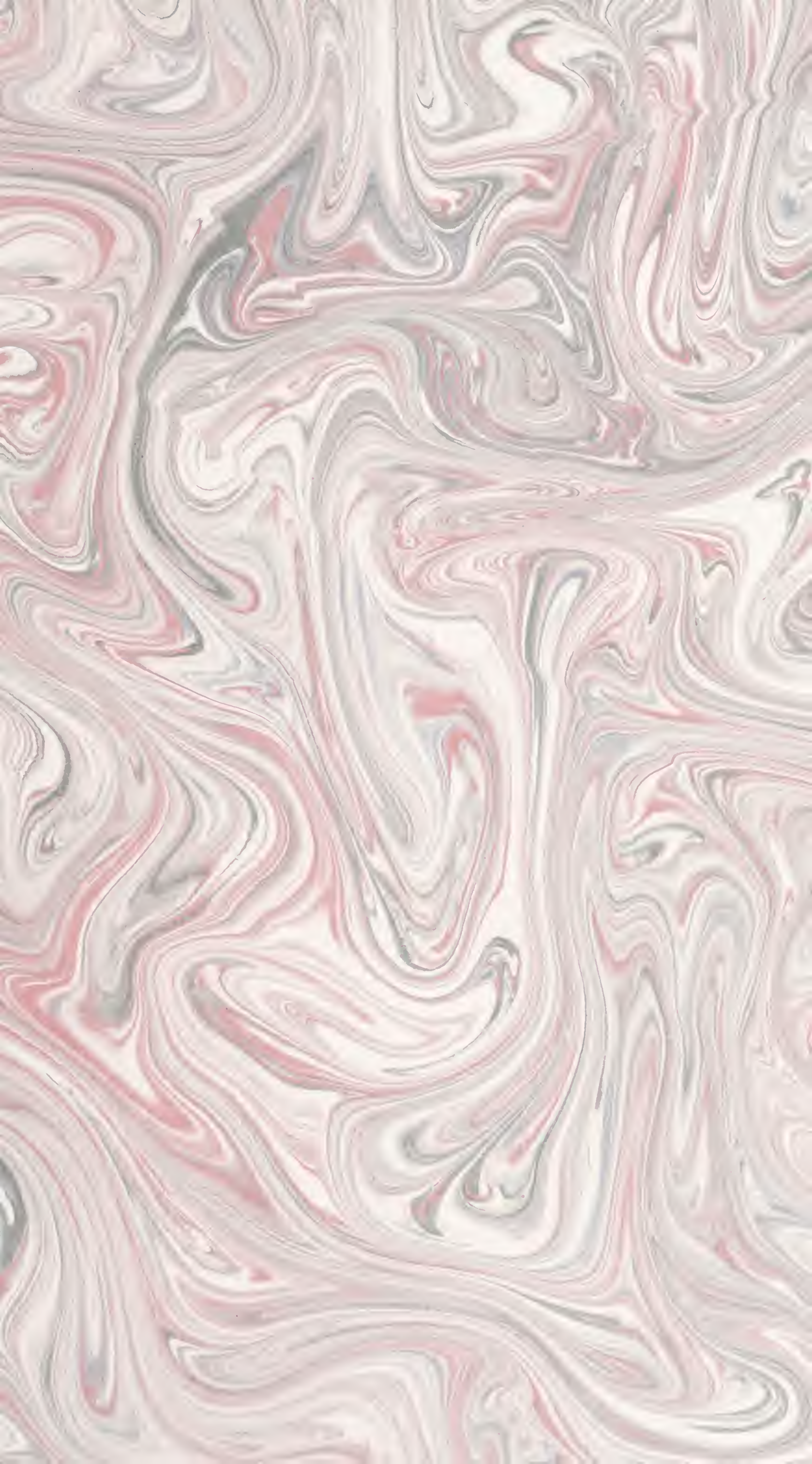


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September, 1895

Dutch Etchers

of the

Seventeenth Century

by

LAURENCE BINYON



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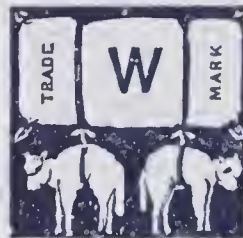
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Paulus Potter. F 165 2

# DUTCH ETCHERS

*OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*

*By*

LAURENCE BINYON

*Of the Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum*



LONDON

SEELEY AND CO. LIMITED, ESSEX STREET, STRAND

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1895



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# DUTCH ETCHERS

OF

## THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

### INTRODUCTION

#### I

WHEN, towards the close of the last century, Adam Bartsch began that monument of his industry and patience, *Le Peintre Graveur*, he devoted the first volumes of his twenty-one, not to the early engravers of Germany or Italy, but to the Dutch etchers of the seventeenth century. These were, in fact, the idols of the amateur of that day; and the indiscriminate praises which Bartsch lavishes on mediocre artists, like Waterloo or Le Ducq, sufficiently show how uncontested was their rank, and how fashionable their reputation.

Since then their vogue has considerably declined. Rembrandt, of whom Bartsch treated in a separate work, is perhaps more admired, more studied than he ever was. His etchings, reproduced in more or less accurate forms, are not only familiar to artists and to students, but, to a certain extent, reach even the general public. But Rembrandt's glory has obscured the fame of his countrymen and contemporaries. Like Shakespeare by the side of the lesser Elizabethans, he stands forth alone and dazzling, and, though they enjoy a titular renown, they suffer a comparative neglect.

Yet, if Rembrandt is by far the greatest, others are great also. The following pages are designed to serve as a sort of introduction to the more notable among these etchers, in the same way that Mr. Hamerton's monograph, the first of the present series of the *Portfolio*, was intended as an introduction to the etched work of Rembrandt.

And first, let us warn the reader who is familiar perhaps with masterpieces like the *Christ Healing the Sick* and *Rembrandt Drawing at a Window*, *Clement de Jonghe*, or *The Three Trees*, but who is not yet acquainted with the etchings of Ostade and Paul Potter, not to expect too much. Few of these lesser masters approach Rembrandt in the specific qualities of the etcher: he is beyond them all in draughtsmanship, far beyond them in the intensity of his imagination. Yet the best of them must rank high.

It is his immensity of range which marks off Rembrandt, more even than his transcendent powers, from the rest of the Dutch etchers. Not only did his production exceed by far the most prolific among them, but he touched on almost every side of life. Yet he was not the school in epitome, as a hasty enthusiasm might affirm. With all his breadth of sympathy, his insatiable curiosity, he was not quite universal. The life of animals, the growth and beauty of trees, the motion of the sea-waves—none of these attracted Rembrandt deeply. And here, to supplement him, we have the work of men like Potter, Backhuysen, Ruisdael, each developing his peculiar vein.

All of these etchers whom we have to consider are, however, independent of Rembrandt and his influence. The Rembrandt school has been expressly excluded from the present monograph. For, interesting as some of those artists are, the first thought suggested by their work is that it recalls Rembrandt: the second thought, that it is not Rembrandt. It is their relation to their master that interests us rather than any intrinsic excellence of their own.

Only the independent masters, therefore, are exhibited here; and from these groups of etchers several of the greatest names in Dutch art are absent. Frans Hals, Jan Steen, Vermeer of Delft, Hobbema, De Hooch—none of these, so far as we know, has left a single plate. Adriaen Brouwer etched a few; but they afford only the slightest indications of his genius. And Albert Cuyp, who is the author of half a dozen

small etchings, showed in this line but little of his skill, and did not apparently pursue it farther.

Yet the quantity of etched plates produced during this period in Holland is immense, and most of the best work was published within the same two or three decades. To take a single year, 1652, Potter's studies of horses, a set of cattle by Berchem, several plates by Du Jardin, one of the finest pieces of Ostade, *La Fileuse*, appeared in it; while the year following saw the publication of Adriaen van de Velde's largest etching, and Ruisdael's *Three Oaks* had been issued but three years earlier. Rembrandt's *Tobit Blind* is dated 1651, and the *Three Crosses* 1653. This great fecundity has been necessarily a source of some embarrassment to the writer; and though a number of minor men have been omitted, several etchers have been included, whom for the sake of completeness it was necessary to give some account of, but whom it is hard to make interesting, and about whom enthusiasm is impossible.

## II

Treating, as it does, of so considerable a number of masters, the present monograph aims at indicating, as far as space would allow, something of the relations between them, and at tracing the interdependence of the various schools. To have taken the etchers separately and considered their work apart, would have meant the compilation of a tediously crowded catalogue.

But when once the masters are approached from the historical side, it is impossible to treat them simply as etchers. It is as painters that they influenced and were influenced. Consequently some account has had to be taken of them as painters. And since some who produced little, and that little not very remarkable, in etching, are yet of great significance as artists, it has been impossible to treat each man simply on his merits as an etcher. Hence, for instance, much more space has been devoted to Ruisdael than the quality or the amount of his work on copper strictly merits.

The lives of most of these artists have, till recently, rested on a somewhat shifting foundation. Dates of birth and death have fluctuated in

various authors with easy rapidity. Of some, even now, nothing certain is known.

But the researches of Dr. van der Willigen, Dr. Bredius, Dr. Hofstede de Groot, and others in the archives of the Dutch cities have proved much, disproved more, and set the whole subject in a clearer light. To Dr. Bredius' *Meisterwerke der königlichen Gemälde-Galerie im Haag*, and



Fig. 1.—*The Spectacle Seller.* By Ostade. B. 29.

still more to his *Meisterwerke des Rijks Museum zu Amsterdam*, the writer is under special obligation, which he desires most gratefully to acknowledge.

But in spite of many readjustments of chronology, materials for the lives of these artists are singularly meagre. Doubtless their lives were in most cases extremely simple. Many never left their native town, or exchanged it only for a home a few miles off: Haarlem for Amsterdam,

or Amsterdam for the Hague. Others made the journey to Italy, or spent some years in France or Germany ; but here the journey itself is sometimes only a matter of inference from the painter's works. Birth, marriage, and death : there is little beyond these, and the dates of their principal productions, to record about many of these men.

Of the whole social life of the Holland of that day we know practically nothing but what its paintings tell us. Had those paintings not survived, what a blank would be left in our conceptions of this country and its history ! Most countries that have left us great art have left us also great literature, and each is the complement of the other. The marbles of the Parthenon have not only the enchantment of their incomparable sculpture, but bring to our minds a thousand recollections, gathered in the fields of literature. In a less degree, it is the same with our enjoyment of Italian painting. It is one aspect of the flowering time of the Renaissance, but not the only aspect, nor the only material we have for investigating and realising that movement.

There was, no doubt, a certain amount of literature produced in seventeenth-century Holland ; but it does not penetrate beyond Holland. Besides the names of Spinoza and of Grotius, who are great but not in literature proper, not a single author's name is familiar, nor any book eminent enough to become a classic in translations. And it is certainly not for the sake of the literature that a foreigner learns Dutch. Hence a certain remoteness in our ideas about Holland, although it lies so near us : a remoteness emphasised in England by the general ignorance of the language.

When one looks at a picture by Watteau, one seems to be joining in the conversation of those adorable ladies and their gallants ; half instinctively, one seems to divine the witty phrase, the happy compliment that is on the speaker's lips. But the conversations of Ter Borch and of Metsu are mute and distant. We hear the jovial laughter of Hals, but we cannot divine his jests and oaths. And Van de Velde's merry skating companies, and Ostade's tavern-haunting peasants, and the family groups in their gravely furnished rooms, rich with a sober opulence, of De Hooch or of Jan Steen, all, in spite of their human touches and their gaiety, affect us with a kind of haunting silence.

Mr. Pater, in one of the most finished and charming of his Imaginary

Portraits, *Sebastian van Storck*, called up a picture of the social life of these times, very suggestive and delightful ; but it was noteworthy, how much of it was merely a reconstruction, in words, of impressions from the contemporary pictures.

After all, however, our ignorance may not cost us much. We judge the painters as painters, and by their works ; we are not distracted by



*Fig. 2.—Peasant with a Pointed Cap. By Ostade. B. 3.*

other circumstances about them, and that is an advantage. They may have had theories about painting, but fortunately we do not know them, except by inference from their practice.

And if seventeenth-century Holland has only expressed herself in painting, she has known how to express herself with marvellous fulness. Never before, and never perhaps since, has pictorial art been so universally the speech of a nation ; never has it been more various and abundant. Instead of being the handmaid of religion or the adornment of a court, it is now for the first time itself : full-blooded, active, exuberant, scorning nothing, attempting everything. Modern with all the added richness that the modern spirit allows in life and art, it reflects the just pride and joy of a great nation arrived, through incredible struggle and privation, at victory and peace.

Yet more wonderful even than this abundance is the fine tact, the instinctive judgment, which guided such profuse creation.

For in all the great painters of Holland there is the same sure choice of subjects proper to painting, the same sure avoidance of what does not lend itself so much to painting as to some other expression of art. Religious pictures in the old sense, pictures intended for churches, were forbidden by the Protestant spirit. No court existed to patronise the painters. Yet they seemed unconscious of being cut off from any province. In the life around them they found overflowing material, and their choice of subject was invariably simple, never a complex product like the engravings of Dürer, half literary in their interest; never anecdotic or moral. An excellent tradition was begun, which lasted through the century.

Nor was this tradition due to the creative impulse of one man. There was nothing in Holland parallel to the renovation, the re-creation rather, of Flemish art by Rubens. Rembrandt came near the beginning, but he did not start the period. One cannot say precisely how this great tradition began; it seems as if the flowering time came all at once throughout the country, with the mysterious suddenness of spring. Till the seventeenth century, it was Italy from which Dutch artists took their inspiration, but henceforward it is a native impulse. Only men of lesser importance went to paint at Rome, and even then they took there more than they brought away.

### III

Considered as etchers, the Dutch masters range themselves somewhat differently.

Only a few, seemingly, realised the specific capacities and limitations of etching: the rest regarded it merely as a method of reproducing their drawings, as an easier kind of engraving. This was probably the conception of those who first applied acid to metal for the purpose of reproducing designs, at the beginning of the sixteenth century: the art had been formerly employed only in the damascening of swords or armour. Albert Dürer is an exception; for, though he did not develop the method far, he saw that it required a different kind of handling from

that suitable for the burin; and in his few etched plates the work is freer and more open than that of his line-engravings.

The first men to use etching extensively were the Hopfer family of Augsburg, who produced a great number of prints, chiefly decorative designs.

It was employed in landscape by Altdorfer, Hirschvogel, Lautensack, and others among the Little Masters. But these did little more than



*Fig. 3.—Game of Backgammon. From a drawing by Ostade. British Museum.*

carry on the Nürnberg tradition of engraving, through another medium. They had little or no influence on the Dutchmen.

A new and powerful stimulus, however, was to be given to etching with the beginning of the seventeenth century, by the prolific and famous French artist, Jacques Callot. Born in 1592, Callot produced a great mass of work before his death in 1638, and his etchings, by which alone he is known, had a great popularity in his lifetime. In 1624 he was invited to Brussels by the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, and was com-



missioned by her to commemorate the Siege of Breda, an event which also occasioned a masterpiece to Velasquez, the famous *Lances* of Madrid. Callot undoubtedly brought the art into prominence and favour in the Netherlands. Yet of direct influence over either Flemings or Dutchmen, Callot had little or none. His spirit was too essentially French, his method too individual, for him to be imitated by men of such different race and temperament.

In 1627, however, Callot met, at Nancy, Claude Lorraine, and probably instructed him in etching. Claude left Nancy for Italy in the same year, and in the following year etched his first plates. Between 1630 and 1663, he published a considerable number, among them some of exquisite delicacy and beauty. And from these etchings many of the Dutchmen derive their inspiration; and Claude is said to have employed men like Swaneveldt, Andries Both, and Jan Miel for inserting figures in his landscapes.

Another foreign master who exercised a widespread influence over the Dutch etchers was the German, Adam Elsheimer. Traces of this influence pervade the history of Dutch art, as Dr. Bode in his *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei* has very fully demonstrated.

Elsheimer etched a few plates; but, with all deference to Dr. Bode's authority, we find it difficult to attach to them the importance which he gives them. Through the etchings and engravings made from his pictures Elsheimer was undoubtedly a source of inspiration to the Dutchmen, but scarcely through the rare and by no means remarkable plates which he etched himself.

The real importance of Elsheimer, and the secret of his fascination over his contemporaries, lie in his fresh treatment of light and shade. Problems of lighting occupied his contemporaries, Caravaggio and Honthorst, but these devoted their skill chiefly to effects of double lighting and strong contrast; it was the rendering of luminous shadow and subtle tones of twilight that Elsheimer was the first to attack. In this he is a forerunner of Rembrandt, who undoubtedly took suggestions from him, and was helped by him in his own development of chiaroscuro. Rembrandt cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of what Elsheimer had done before him.

But Rembrandt was by no means the only Dutch master who profited

by the German's art. The whole of the Italianised Dutch school at Rome, men like Poelenburg for instance, felt his influence more or less strongly. Nor was he without followers in the native school of landscape painters and etchers in Holland, as we shall see when we come to them.

Elsheimer, in fine, though by no means a great painter, is of considerable historical importance, and the admiration which he excited in his



*Fig. 4.—The Child and the Doll. By Ostade. B. 16.*

own day can hardly be over-estimated. So great a man as Rubens admired him so much that he had three of his landscapes on his walls, and made copies from his paintings and designs.

This is the more remarkable, because Rubens rarely occupied himself with the problems that fascinated Elsheimer. And while these problems

were of a kind to appeal to etchers, it was not on etching but on line-engraving, an art admitting little scope for subtlety of chiaroscuro, that Rubens cast his potent influence. Without using the burin himself, he employed a number of brilliant engravers to reproduce his designs, just as Raphael had employed Marc Antonio for the like purpose. Even in our day, when public picture-galleries are numerous and the distances between various capitals have so immensely shrunk, the fame of the great painters rests still to a large extent on photographs and engravings from their works ; it is easy, therefore, to comprehend of what capital importance it was for masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to secure competent interpreters.

Line-engraving was admirably suited for the reproduction of pictures like those of Rubens, with their large design and flowing sweep. And so potent was Rubens's example, that etching found in Belgium only a few isolated, and with the single exception of Vandyck, unimportant followers.

In Holland it was just the reverse. Perhaps it was the result of some vital difference in temperament between the Flemings and the Dutchmen, such as caused the one country to embrace the severer, soberer religion of Protestantism, while the other clung to the more ancient creed of Rome, with its strong appeal to the senses ; at any rate, it seems characteristic that line-engraving, with its capacity for reproducing qualities of splendour and spacious action, should have found in Antwerp its most effective, various, and brilliant exposition, while the plainer, more self-contained, more intense spirit of the great Dutchmen developed the more personal, intimate, subtle art of etching, as it had never been developed before.

But Dutchmen, no less than Flemings, felt the need for reproducing their designs, and here arose a difficulty. For etching is not, in spite of modern successes, so well adapted to reproduction as line-engraving is.

As we have said, it was only a certain number of the Dutchmen who divined this. Rembrandt, of course, perceived it ; and though he spread his fame by working steadily on copper as well as on canvas, he made his etched work independent of his painting and never a simple reproduction

of pictures. Lesser men had not the intelligence to do as he did ; and many of the artists of whom we shall treat, though they produced fine work on copper, cannot be esteemed true etchers.

We will begin our studies with one who was, beyond dispute, a born etcher, Ostade.



*Fig. 5.—Man and Woman Conversing. By Ostade. B. 37.*

## OSTADE AND HIS SCHOOL

### I

ADRIAEN VAN OSTADE was born in Haarlem, at the end of 1610. The researches of Dr. Van der Willigen have placed this fact beyond doubt, and the old tradition of his having been born at Lübeck must therefore be set aside. In the baptismal register for December 10, 1610, there is entered the name of Adriaen, son of Jan Hendricx, of Eyndhoven, and of Janneke Hendriksen. On the 2nd of June, 1621, the birth of Isack, son of the same parents, is recorded.

These dates have always been associated with the births of the brothers Ostade, and there are other grounds for identifying them with the Adriaen and Isack just mentioned.

Jan Hendricx was a weaver, and in consequence of the religious persecutions of the time, left his native Eyndhoven, a village in North Brabant, for Haarlem. This was some time before 1605, for in that year, already a burgess of the town, he married. He had several children; and in a document of 1650, two of them are mentioned as brother and sister to Adriaen and Isack, who are thus proved to have been his sons. The name of Ostade was taken from a hamlet close to Eyndhoven. Adriaen is first mentioned with this surname as a member of the civic guard, in 1636.

Haarlem, M. Vosmaer has said, is in two things like Florence. It is a city of flowers and a city of artists. Its archives show that from an early time the arts flourished and were fostered there. Money was never grudged for fine work in every branch of skilful industry, no less than for good painting and good sculpture. The goldsmith, the potter,

the leather-worker, the stone-cutter, could find employment for their powers and remuneration worth their skill. Haarlem was, in fact, a type of those busy and prosperous cities where it seems that art thrives best ; for though art and commerce are often supposed to have a natural disagreement, history shows them to have been the most apt companions.

But the city of Dierick Bouts, of Albert van Ouwater, of Jan Scorel, was at the time of Ostade's birth, in a condition even more favourable for the production of fine work than it had been in the fifteenth and following centuries. In 1573 occurred the famous siege by the Spaniards. Those who had borne the burden of those terrible days were now growing old ; but the young generation received and handed on their heroic memories, unembittered by thoughts of loss, suffering, or defeat. And when, in 1609, peace came, and the United Provinces, acknowledged by Spain, turned to enjoy their victorious repose, there was added the sense of triumph to that of trials endured. It was the great time for Holland. Her soldiers were famed as the finest in Europe. Her navy was the most powerful, the best-manned. Her cities grew, and wealth poured into them. A universal well-being pervaded the country, and a spirit of joy and of expansion, like the glow of health, diffused itself in the citizens.

It was natural that art, too, should feel this new influence. And in Haarlem, where the siege had destroyed so much of the old town, and modern buildings of warm red brick had sprung round the vast surviving monument of the middle ages, the Groote Kerk of St. Bavon ; in Haarlem especially, a new spirit, intensely modern, began to possess the rising painters. From art which lavished its parade of dexterity on the old mythological fables, handled without heart or meaning, from the smooth and pallid conventionalities of Cornelis Corneliszoon, and the extravagant cleverness of Goltzius, these men turned to the life that was around them. Among them were artists like Jan de Bray, Esaias van de Velde, Dirk and Frans Hals. It was in the studio of Frans Hals that the young Ostade learnt to paint. Already in 1616, Hals had painted his superb group of the civic guard, and was now in the fulness of his extraordinary power. The exuberant joy and energy, the confident sincerity, the swift and certain touch, intimate with realities, that marked Hals, were typical of the country and the time. Life—that is the

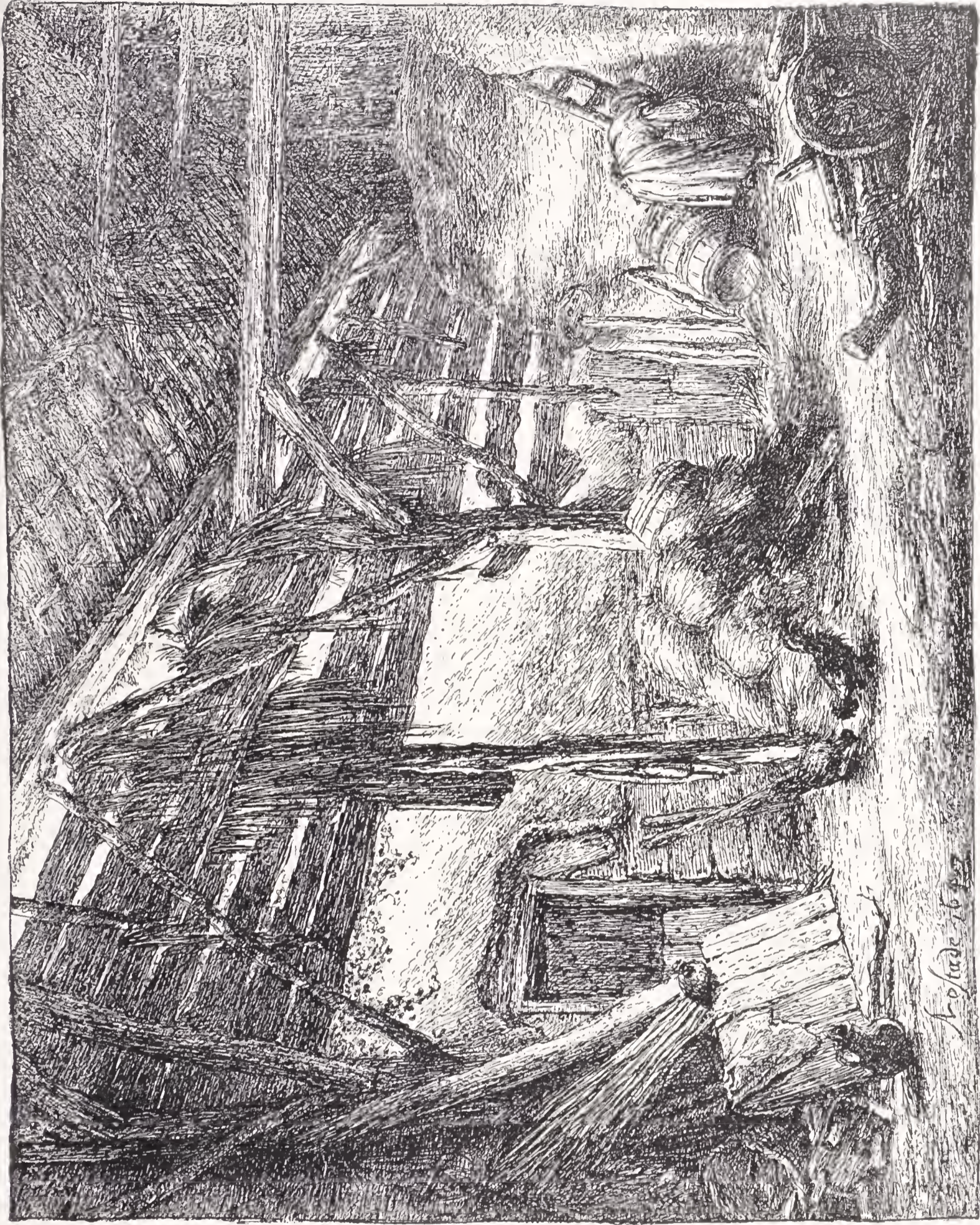


Fig. 6.—The Barn. By Ostade. B. 23.

absolute necessity for such an artist : for him everything that has life is a possible subject, a possible realm to conquer. A subject that he cannot feel, as well as conceive, his instinct rejects at once. A great pride of life is what characterises Hals' pictures ; human life in all its fulness he accepts : unhindered by the shrinkings of more fastidious natures, he enjoys with a robust enjoyment.

It is the same also with Ostade ; but the pupil was too individual an artist to repeat his master. Ostade felt, perhaps, that he could never rival those magnificent portrait-groups, and his own preferences, his own gifts, led him to a different choice of subject.

Perhaps some who have seen Ostade's pictures and found them coarse and ignoble, have imagined the painter of them to be equally coarse and ignoble-looking as his boors. His portrait shows him a man of somewhat severe, keen countenance, in plain attire ; a grave man, one would say, with humour lurking in his gravity, as often happens ; it is a portrait that might be taken for that of an Englishman of the Commonwealth. Ostade was, in fact, a well-to-do citizen of the middle class. His collection of pictures, sold at his death in 1685, was, as we know from the *Haarlem Gazette*, extensive ; and the fact that it contained two hundred of his own paintings, proves that he was, unlike so many of his compeers, far removed from want.

Of Ostade's life, apart from his production, we know almost nothing. He was a member of the *Oude Schuts*, the ancient and honourable Company of Arquebusiers. He was married twice ; first, in 1636, to Machtelgen Pietersen, who died in 1642 ; and again to a second wife, whose name is not known, by whom he had a girl, Johanna Maria. This daughter married a surgeon, Dirk van der Stoel, into whose hands Ostade's etched plates and proofs passed at his death.

In 1647 and 1661 Ostade is mentioned as a member of the government of the Guild. In 1662, he was dean of the Guild. An incident of his earlier years is of interest, as showing his liberal spirit. In 1642 he joined Salomon Ruysdael, at a meeting of the Guild, in protesting against the policy of protection, which inspired Haarlem Guild, like many others, to oppose the importation of works of art from other towns or their sale in Haarlem.

Ostade seems never to have travelled, like many of his countrymen,



beyond the borders of Holland, nor ever to have changed his home, except from one street of Haarlem to another.

He died in 1685.

On an early afternoon of May his body was carried from his house in the Kuis-straat to the Groote Kerk, a little company of his friends following.

## II

With most of the Dutch artists, etching was a subordinate accomplishment, and their work on copper is but a less interesting reflection of their work on canvas. This cannot be said of Ostade. As with Rembrandt, his etched work is the complement, rather than a supplement merely, of his painting. To the present writer, indeed, his etchings have more interest than his pictures. The latter are numerous; they may be seen in almost all galleries of importance, and the reader is doubtless familiar with their characteristics. Delightful as they often are, they do not rival those of Adriaen Brouwer, who was by four years Ostade's senior, and who, though born a Fleming, worked mostly in Holland, and entered Hals' studio at the same time. There are a few plates attributed to Brouwer; but, if genuine, these show that he never thoroughly mastered the technique of etching; none of them approaches the least successful plates of Ostade. Brouwer as a painter, on the other hand, surpasses beyond question all the painters of peasant life, whether of Holland or of Flanders.

Ostade does not manage paint with the freedom of a great master, but his drawing is always superb. The drawing reproduced (Fig. 3) is a characteristic specimen. It is the end of a game of backgammon. The game is won, but the defeated player refuses to accept his defeat without a careful scrutiny. In the attitudes, the gestures of players and onlookers, everything is vital; the moment is admirably caught.

There is an etching also of a game of backgammon, but it does not directly illustrate the drawing.

Ostade did, however, make use of sketches for his etchings. There is in the British Museum a sketch for *The Father of a Family* (B. 33). A comparison of this with the etched plate is interesting. There is a certain affinity to Rembrandt in the manner of drawing; less summary and swift,

but masterful and free. And, like Rembrandt, Ostade does not use his sketch as a finished thing, and copy it faithfully and minutely. His



*Fig. 7.—The Humpbacked Fiddler. By Ostade. B. 44.*

interest in the subject has not died out ; he is alert for a new posture, a fresh touch, a livelier handling of some part of his design, that may im-

prove the whole. In this case the drawing, which is of a different shape from the print and much broader, contains at the left the figure of a man seated and cutting a loaf of bread on his knees. Ostade felt that this figure disturbed the unity of the piece no less than the sense of home seclusion, and he omitted it from his work on the copper. This reveals the born etcher: one who works with directness, swiftness, passion; whose needle takes the impulse of his thought immediately, who never works in cold blood.

### III

Let us now consider the etchings themselves. There are just fifty in all, and nine or perhaps ten of the number are dated. The earliest date is 1647, the latest 1678. Arranging the dated plates in order of time, we get the following table. The references are to the numbers in Bartsch, *Peintre-Graveur*, Vol. I.:—

1647.	
The Hurdy-Gurdy Player.	B. 8.
The Barn.	B. 23.
The Family.	B. 46.
1648.	
The Father of the Family.	B. 33.
1652.	
The Wife Spinning.	B. 31.
1653.	
The Tavern Brawl.	B. 18.
Saying Grace.	B. 34.
1671.	
The Cobbler.	B. 27.
1678. <sup>1</sup>	
The Child and the Doll.	B. 16.

To this may possibly be added *The Humpbacked Fiddler* (B. 44).

<sup>1</sup> The last figure is doubtful. It is 8 according to Bartsch and Dutuit, but may also be 9.

Neither Bartsch nor Dutuit appears to have noticed a date on this plate ; but it seems clear that it is there, following the signature, though obscured by lines. The writer inclines to decipher it as 1631 or 1651 ; but it is impossible to be positive on the point. These data would doubtless serve many critics with material for constructing a chronological list of the whole of the etchings. But this amusement shall be left to the reader. The etchings, as a matter of fact, do not present any marked variety of treatment. Ostade was not, like Rembrandt, a master of many styles ; nor did he develop any particular style by continually surpassing his own successes. We can only say that he seems to have attained his greatest mastery in a middle period, about 1650. *The Wife Spinning* of 1652 is not followed by any dated piece that at all rivals it. *The Cobbler* of 1671, for instance, which was a failure in the first biting, betrays also a certain languor of handling, very different from the inexhaustible care and skill bestowed on the earlier plate.

This inference is confirmed by what we know of Ostade's work on canvas. His first period dates from 1630 to 1635 ; then follows a middle period in which, influenced by Rembrandt, he adopted a warmer scheme of colour ; lastly, in a third period, he began to repeat himself and decline.

Beyond such general deductions it does not seem worth while to go. In Rembrandt's case the question of chronology is of extreme interest and significance, but in Ostade there is no development to speak of, and to labour after exhibiting it would be waste of time.

Next, as to the various states of the etchings. The reverence for first states and rare states, common to collectors, has from their point of view its own justification ; but they are apt perhaps sometimes to confuse the æsthetic value of a print with its market value. Artists, on the other hand, are sometimes prone to dismiss the whole question of states as tedious and absurd. It is, however, of great importance that the etcher should be judged on his own merits and not on the merits, or demerits, of other people. Ostade undoubtedly made alterations in his plates during printing and thus created "states" ; but many more states were created after his death by other hands re-working the worn copper.

It is reasonable to suppose that the last state touched by the artist is the one that he would wish to be taken as typical of his perfect work.

But the question arises : Which is the last state touched by the artist ?

The work of later hands, added to a plate after the artist's death, does not concern us ; but the development of the etching up to that state when the artist leaves it as a finished thing, must interest us greatly. How are we to decide ?

In the case of Ostade, we are helped a little by external data. As we



Fig. 8.—*Peasant paying his Reckoning.* By Ostade. B. 42.

have seen, the plates were sold at his death in 1685. We know also that they were sold again by their new possessor, Dirk van der Stoel, Ostade's son-in-law, in 1686 ; and eight years later again, in 1694. What state they were in then we can only conjecture : but we may infer something from what we know to have been their state in 1710 or a little later.

In the year just mentioned a French engraver, Bernard Picart, arrived in Holland ; and some time after his arrival he published a collection of

the etched work of Ostade and of his pupil Bega. The book of Ostade's etchings was bought, perhaps on its publication, by Hans Sloane: and through him it has passed into the possession of the British Museum. Whoever examines it will notice at once the inequality of the plates: some are worn and harshly retouched, some are passable, a few are even good. Something of this is due to the delicately-worked plates, giving out sooner than those more coarsely etched. Probably also some were more in demand than others. Thus, to take a few examples: while *The Painter in His Studio* (B. 32) is in the tenth and last state, and *Peasant Paying His Reckoning* (B. 42) is in the seventh or last but one, *The Dance in the Tavern* (B. 49) is in the fourth out of seven states in all, and *The Empty Jug* (B. 15) in the fourth out of eight states in all. And several of the smaller plates are still in the second state.

In determining therefore the extent to which later hands have worked on the etchings, each must be considered separately. Only in a few cases, probably, are those in Picart's edition still in the condition left by the master himself; and most seem to have been retouched more than once. Every one will judge for himself the precise point at which new work comes in: and opinion will always differ on such questions. As Ostade was not always successful in his first biting, the second state is generally the most representative. *Peasant Paying His Reckoning* is a very different thing in Picart's edition from the brilliant second state of the same etching.

The student of Ostade will find Dutuit's book<sup>1</sup> indispensable: it contains all that was known of the etchings and their different impressions up to the year of its publication. And the author's own collection was perhaps unrivalled. Nevertheless, it is not perfect. The states are described with an extraordinary superfluity of detail, and the one or two differentiating circumstances are buried in a mass of irrelevant description. Verification is therefore a matter of time and labour.

There are also a few states still undescribed. Still, for those who have an appetite for "states," Dutuit is very satisfying.

<sup>1</sup> *Manuel de l'Amateur d'Estampes*: par M. Eugene Dutuit. Vol. V. Paris. 1882.



Fig. 9.—Saying Grace. By Ostade. B. 34.

## IV

Ostade's etched work is, considered as etching, unequal. Sometimes, as for instance in *The Cobbler* (B. 27), the first biting was not a success; at other times, as in the *Man Laughing* (B. 4), the *Saying Grace* (B. 34), or the *Fiddlers* (B. 45), the plate has been over-bitten. The plate which Bartsch calls *La Fileuse* (*The Wife Spinning*. B. 31) [Plate I.], is one which represents very fully some of Ostade's characteristic excellences as an etcher. It is a fine example of his success in bathing his subject in atmosphere. One feels the quiet afternoon warmth upon the cottage-front, as the woman who spins feels it, as the child feels it, as the two basking pigs feel it. That softness of air, which in our northern climate gives even to the near trees a kind of impalpable look, and which seems to clothe things with itself—that is what Ostade has sought to render with mere etched lines; and he has triumphed over immense difficulties. His figures detach themselves with a wonderful reality, with no hard brilliancy, no superfluous shadows. There is a fine absence of cleverness in such quiet mastery of means.

More remarkable still is the little plate (B. 42) which is reproduced in Fig. 8. The amount of knowledge, of feeling for light and shadow, of subtle and sure draughtsmanship in this small etching is astonishing. The problem of painting daylight as it is diffused in a room through the window, which, of all painters in the world, Jan Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch, and, in a different way, Rembrandt and Ostade himself, have most fully mastered, is here attacked in etching, and with extraordinary success. What seems strange is that a problem so fascinating, one which had evidently a strong seduction for Ostade in his painting, should have been attempted by him so rarely in his etchings. *The Painter in his Studio* (B. 32) is another success in the same line, while the *Players at Backgammon* (B. 39) is partly a failure, through the biting having gone wrong. But, as a rule, Ostade prefers out-of-door effects.

None of the etchings quite rivals, in the writer's judgment at least, this little plate, *Peasant Paying his Reckoning*. But there are several typical small pieces which have a great charm. The *Spectacle-seller* (B. 22, Fig. 1), for instance, is an admirable composition, and the







etching rich. The *Humpbacked Fiddler* (B. 44, Fig. 7), and the *Man and Woman Conversing* (B. 25, Fig. 5), though the needle has been used somewhat differently in each, have similar merit.

But the plates that interest, perhaps, most, are not always those which are etched the best. The chief glory of Ostade is his imaginative draughtsmanship, and akin to this are his vivid human sympathy and his humour. These are not so manifest in the plates we have mentioned as in some others.

But before passing to those pieces which show these qualities at their



Fig. 10.—*The Angler.* By Ostade. B. 26.

best, let us notice one which is unlike any of the others. This is *The Barn* (B. 28, Fig. 6). Had the execution of this plate matched the feeling it evinces, it would have been a fine achievement. Who does not know the strange, vague impression which such a barn as this produces on the mind? The cool dimness, the mysterious shadow among the rafters, penetrated here and there by soft rays, the atmosphere of the farm, scent of hay, cries of fowls, mingling in a sense of imperturbable

antiquity—all exhale an intangible emotion impossible to express in language, but which a painting or an etching could well convey. Ostade has conceived his subject finely; but the acid and the needle have imperfectly seconded his design. Rembrandt would have given us out of such material a memorable plate indeed. But let us not deny Ostade his due. Much in the piece is admirable: note especially the softness with which the light comes through the chinks on to the hay.

In *The Angler* (B. 26, Fig. 10) the difficulties attempted are less great, and there seems little wanting to entire success. Here Ostade's human interest is engaged, and whenever this is so, he is great. The stationary posture, the muscular habit of the angler, with lax body but firm wrist, is perfectly given; as is the slackening of the line, the indolent gaze of the boy leaning on the rail, and the sleepy impression of a still summer day without breezes.

It is in such expressive drawing of the human body that Ostade shows himself a master. The delighted eagerness of the baby in Fig. 4; the jerk of its short limbs and crowing of its lips; or in *The Music Party* (B. 30), the boisterous, maudlin pleasure of the man who sits in the chair, beating time with his hand to the laborious scraping of the fiddler, catching what he can of the score, with what humour and expression are these portrayed! One hears the terrible discord and the cheerful thump of the peasant's fist accompanying it.

Another piece of imaginative drawing is *The Brawl* (B. 18). The loose, ineffectual, lurching stroke of the drunken man, the startled effort of the fat man as he springs up from his barrel, the terror of the woman clasping her baby closer, the mingled fear, anger, and surprise of the little man who has provoked the quarrel and prepares to defend himself—all are excellent.

The same qualities pervade Ostade's largest plate, the *Dance in the Tavern* (B. 49), which also shows his extraordinary art in composition at its best.

There are people, and perhaps always will be, who find in work such as Ostade's nothing but vulgarity. And some, who cannot help enjoying his fine drawing, find themselves repelled by his choice of subjects.

It seems difficult to understand this repulsion. For in his etchings, at any rate, Ostade shows no exclusive preference for the coarse and

sordid. Mr. Hamerton has accused him of deadness of heart and apathy of intellect, and declares him to be insensitive to all that is best among the poor. But is this quite true?

An accomplished lady some time ago wrote an essay in condemnation of the "vulgarity" of John Leech and Charles Keene in certain of their drawings for *Punch*. Such criticism seems to argue an excessive delicacy or a deficiency of humour. Ostade's range was limited, compared with that of those two great artists, but as a draughtsman he is in the same order with them; and in the writer's judgment he is equally free from that dulness which has no sense for the fine or rare in men and things, that acceptance of the common price, the common standard, which are the attributes of real vulgarity.

Look, for instance, at the etching reproduced (Fig. 9). The subject has been the theme of many painters and engravers. It is a subject easily spoiled; a little too much of sentimental piety, a little too much of satirical mockery, and the theme is made trivial or obvious. But Ostade's feeling is just right. There is no drawing of a trite moral, as, for instance, in the treatment of the same subject by a later engraver, Nicholas van Haeften. Nor is there a hint of mockery at the discrepancy between the "good things" for which Heaven is thanked and the humble pottage on the table. But is there not, besides the wonderful sensitiveness of drawing in the figures, which makes one feel how the toil-hardened, clumsy hands tremble awkwardly as they are clasped, and how the boy, though his back is turned, is shutting his eyes resolutely tight—is there not also a tenderness, a dignity in the whole?

Again, in the little plate, *The Child and Doll*, is there not true feeling, expressed with a fine reticence, in the mother's face and in the child's? The careful fondness of the mother is even better expressed in another etching, where she hands a baby down to the eager arms of its elder sister, a child of six or seven, who receives it with joyful pride. The drawing reminds one of some of the exquisitely humorous and exquisitely tender sketches of Leech.

## V

It is when we come to the work of his pupils, Bega and Dusart, that we realise best Ostade's finer qualities.

Cornelis Pietersz Bega was born at Haarlem in 1620, and died there of the plague in 1664, fully twenty years before his master.

According to Houbraken's story, his real name was Begyn, which he changed to Bega after being turned out of his father's house for his youthful escapades. The story is not incredible of such a youth as he appears in his portrait, gay and somewhat vain-looking, with long curling locks.

Bega's etchings are thirty-eight in number, and have a very distinctive air. Certain characteristics seem to indicate that his original bent was towards a decorative treatment of his subject. His drawings show a care for the happy disposition of drapery, remarkable in this school. He has a feeling for large design, combined with great indifference to human character. But such treatment was alien to the Dutch school in general; nor did Dutch peasants lend themselves at all willingly, so it seems, to passive decoration. Certainly a pupil of Ostade's would have no encouraging influences to help him forward on such lines. So, though Bega adopts in part the themes and general handling of his teacher, the rather flat design which he affects, his frankly artificial chiaroscuro, his use of light and shadow as masses of black and white rather than as opportunities of mystery, contrast strongly with Ostade's solid modelling, his pervading atmosphere, and his pre-occupying human interest. One perceives that the master's influence could not altogether swamp the pupil's natural impulse: but neither wins the day, and the result is an unsatisfying compromise.

*The Tavern* (Fig. 11) is a very characteristic plate. It is very brilliant, and makes a powerful impression at first sight. But it does not bear close study. There is a want of subtlety in it, and a want of feeling; a certain hardness, combined with a certain cleverness, that repels.

Bega's two other large plates, also of tavern scenes, reveal just the same qualities, and need not be further particularised.

In technical character, these etchings recall the Spanish etcher Goya, who was also fond of producing a sharp, vivid, emphatic effect by a similar artificial manner of lighting. Not improbably Bega's etchings may have been known to Goya, and given him a suggestion.

Bega had apparently no tenderness, and little or no interest in



Fig. 11.—*The Tavern.* By Bega. B. 32.

humanity. This deficiency, in one of the Dutch school, and trained in the Dutch tradition, is notable. One has only to turn from his mother and baby sitting by the window (B. 21) to Ostade's *Child and Doll*, to feel what a difference lies between the two.

Cornelis Dusart was a much later scholar. At Bega's death he was only a child of four, and he survived Ostade many years, living on till 1704. When Ostade died, he finished his master's uncompleted pictures, but kept them till his death in his own possession.

Some of Dusart's etchings, as for instance *The Village Fête* (B. 16) have a pleasing effect, with well-managed light and shade; but they cannot be compared with the similar pieces by Ostade, whose method is here carried on, but in an inferior manner. Yet he has a vein of his own, a gross, riotous, extravagant vein, with a great fondness for violent action. In the plate called by Bartsch *Le Violon Assis* (B. 15), which was too large to be reproduced here, his specific qualities appear to great advantage.

One seems to hear an hilarious din merely from looking at it. The fiddler plays with a wild fantastic energy; one peasant accompanies him with crashing tankard and roaring chorus; another sits bent and sullen with his head on his hands. The landlord, with huge frame and round paunch, looks on with twinkling eyes. A woman by the great chimney, on which hangs the notice of a sale of tulips and hyacinths, "Tulpaan en Hyacinthen," calls a child to her. The roomy background with its beams and rafters, is drawn and lighted with extraordinary skill. As a page of daily life, fresh and vivid, this etching deserves the fullest praise.

Dusart in his later years devoted himself to mezzotint, and produced a great deal in this manner. These engravings, some of which represent in Dusart's extravagant way, the joy in Holland at the taking of Namur in 1695 by William III., are more interesting historically than artistically. It was not till the middle of next century that mezzotint, the invention of which does not date from much earlier than Dusart's birth, reached its perfection in the hands of the English engravers.



## THE ETCHERS OF LANDSCAPE

### I

THE seventeenth century, which inaugurated so much that is characteristic in modern art, permitted for the first time the recognition of landscape as a subject worthy for its own sake of painting. And feeling for landscape seems to be almost entirely a modern thing.

Drawings of landscape by Titian and Campagnola among the Italians, and by Dürer among the Germans, had indicated the first beginnings of a preference ; and there are a certain number of landscape subjects among the engraved work of the Little Masters. But these are occasional efforts by men whose chief work lay in other lines. In painting no one ventured as yet to concentrate his interest on the landscape, and though men like the Flemish Joachim Patinir evidently cared more for their backgrounds of mountain and river than for the human incidents which relieve them, they had not the courage to cast away compromise and brave authority by omitting the traditional foreground.

Rubens is the first great Northern master who paints landscape with entire and frank abandonment to the subject. The broad prospects and swelling undulations of Flemish country are painted by him with a kind of glory that reflects his large and joyous mind. Lodowyck de Vadder and Lucas van Uden, his contemporaries, etched landscape for the first time in Flanders. But it was in Holland that this line was most abundantly developed. To tranquil, observant natures, such as seem typical of the nation, there was in landscape a strong appeal, a permanent delight. The majority of the Dutch etchers found here their chief material.

### II

Earliest, perhaps, of all Dutch landscape painters, and almost certainly earliest among Dutch landscape etchers, is a little known artist,

Hercules Seghers. A mystery hangs over him; for though there is documentary evidence in an inventory of 1625 or thereabouts, that he painted a considerable number of landscapes, these pictures have nearly all disappeared. Some, doubtless, may be lurking under other names; one, called a Rembrandt, was discovered some time ago at Florence; one is at Berlin; but this can hardly account for all. We can only guess what they were like from the etchings, which are usually either views



Fig. 12.—*Tobias and the Angel*. By H. Seghers. M. 236.

of Holland with vast horizons, or strange visions of wild and mountainous country. Seghers was born in 1589,<sup>1</sup> and died in 1650. A scholar of Gillis van Conninxloo, he was producing work as early as 1607, and from that date to 1630 seems to have been his chief period of activity.<sup>2</sup> His life, like that of several of the Dutch masters, was a long and hopeless

<sup>1</sup> By all the older authorities the date is wrongly given as 1625.

<sup>2</sup> The *Tobias and the Angel* dates probably from about 1613, or a little later, as this was the date of de Goudt's print.

struggle against poverty. He is said to have become a drunkard, and to have died from the effects of a fall. Dr. Bredius, judging apparently from his work, thinks that he must have visited the Alps, travelled into Italy, and found a stimulus in the art of Adam Elsheimer. Certainly the rocky landscapes which appear in the etchings could have no archetypes in Holland. But there is so strong a vein of the fantastic in them, that it is difficult to believe they were done from nature, especially when one observes how precise a pencil Seghers uses when he sketches his native country. However, truth to mountain formation is anything but an easy thing to seize; only by incessant training and close observation does the eye acquire it; and to draw rocks imaginatively, that is, with vivid realisation of their essential forms, is scarcely possible to one who has not the work of predecessors to learn from and to surpass, and whose eye has not dwelt upon them from childhood. One may imagine, therefore, that the efforts of a lowlander, to whom mountains must have had something visionary and strange in their aspect, would be halting, laborious, and confused in grappling with such unfamiliar material. The rocks painted by Patinir are a case in point. This may well explain the singular shortcomings of Seghers' rendering of rocks and mountains. In his attempts to represent floating clouds on the mountain sides he is simply grotesque.

If, then, it was actual scenery that Seghers etched, where is that scenery to be found? It is certainly not the Alps, and though one or two plates suggest the Tyrol, the landscape is most like in character to the Karst district on the eastern shores of the Adriatic. One of the etchings might almost stand for the rock-surrounded plain of Cettinjé, in Montenegro, though to infer that Seghers travelled to so remote a country would be a wild conjecture.

There can be no doubt, on the other hand, of the influence of Elsheimer over Seghers, and through him, over Rembrandt.

In the National Gallery there is a picture by Elsheimer representing *Tobias and the Angel*, in a wooded landscape. This was engraved by Elsheimer's friend, Count de Goudt, and either from the picture or the engraving,<sup>1</sup> Seghers borrowed the main features of one of his etchings

<sup>1</sup> Probably the engraving, since Seghers' print is a reverse copy from this, but in the same sense as the picture.

(Fig. 12). The two chief figures have been retained almost unaltered ; but their being placed higher up in the picture makes a considerable change in the composition, they have more dignity and significance. The elimination, also, of some rather trivial details, such as the great flowers in the foreground, and the passing figures in the middle distance, make for the same effect. A kind of mystery and solemnity have been added to the landscape, and in fact the impression of the whole is deepened and enlarged. The subject has been fused in Seghers' mind and has become his own.

At his death, Seghers' effects, including his etched plates, were sold. Among the buyers of these latter were, apparently, Antoni Waterloo and Rembrandt. Waterloo published some of Seghers' landscapes with his own, and it has been assumed by Dutuit that these impressions were from the earlier artist's plates, re-worked. Comparison of one of the original etchings, however, with that published by Waterloo of the same subject, leads the writer to doubt this. The work is entirely different.

Rembrandt, we know from the inventory of his effects taken in 1656, bought six of Seghers' landscapes, and he also bought the copper on which had been etched the *Tobias and the Angel*. It was re-worked by Rembrandt, and it now appears in Rembrandt's work as a *Flight into Egypt*.<sup>1</sup> (See Fig. 13.)

The dark wooded landscape remains unaltered, and though the Holy Family and a group of trees now occupy the right hand of the scene, the great wing of the angel is still distinctly to be seen above them, and Tobias's legs have not been perfectly erased.

Rembrandt, we may be sure, would never have taken another man's work unless he had found in it a strong appeal to his own nature. And Seghers seems to have been his prototype in landscape. On the one hand, the mysterious, darkly wooded, mountainous visions of Seghers suggest the type of landscape in which Rembrandt set, for instance, his own *Tobias and the Angel*,<sup>2</sup> a type which he was fond of reproducing. On the other hand, Seghers' love for the vast distances of Holland, crowded plains with broad rivers winding into an infinite horizon, appears again in some of Rembrandt's etchings, and more notably still in those spacious prospects, "escapes for the mind" as Mr. Pater has

<sup>1</sup> No. 236 in Middleton's Catalogue.

<sup>2</sup> In the National Gallery.

called them, of Rembrandt's pupil, the most truly Dutch and perhaps the greatest, of all the landscape painters of Holland—Philip de Koninck.

To return to Seghers' etchings. There is something about them which arrests the eye at once, and this is partly due to their peculiar printing. Seghers was a born maker of experiments, and in nearly all his plates sought to get an effect of colour. In fact, it is usually asserted



Fig. 13.—*The Flight into Egypt.* By Rembrandt. M. 236.

that he anticipated, by a hundred years, the coloured engravings of Leblond.

Printing in colour from two or more blocks had been practised by wood-engravers long before this time. Burgkmair and Cranach in Germany, Ugo da Carpi and Andrea Andreani in Italy, had produced a number of these "chiaroscuros," as they are called, with charming effect. This was about the beginning of the sixteenth century. And almost in Seghers' own time, Hendrik Goltzius, of Haarlem, published some of his best work from coloured wood-blocks.

But in all of these cases, at least two, and often three separate blocks were used, and the colours superimposed on each other. This was also the procedure of Leblond, though he used metal plates and mezzotint.

Seghers, however, employed a single plate only, and his effects are not due to what is usually understood as colour printing. He first prepared his paper with a coat of paint, which formed the ground; in some cases this was a greenish tint. He then etched his subject and printed it in an indigo ink; and in order to procure shading of the same colour, he lightly scratched the parts to be shaded with the dry-point, so that the copper held the ink on its surface. By this simple means he produced an apparently complex effect.<sup>1</sup>

The green tint and dark-blue ink are, of course, only taken as a specimen, for Seghers used various colours. Sometimes the impressions are printed on linen. In one case the etching is printed in white on a brown ground.

Besides views of Dutch plains and of mountain scenery, Seghers also etched trees; not with great success, but with a striving after truth of foliage very rare in his day. Now and then, too, he attempted buildings, and with a real feeling for the romantic, for picturesque beauty, in architecture.

On the whole, we must allow an important place in the history of Dutch landscape to Hercules Seghers. But that must not prevent us from perceiving that it is an historical importance only. Seghers opened up the road, but he achieved no eminent triumph himself. Nor, in spite of his suggestiveness for Rembrandt and De Koninck, does he seem to have exercised any great influence on the landscape etchers who immediately succeeded him.

He has no affinity with the men whose work we must now consider.

<sup>1</sup> Seghers has also been credited with the use of soft ground etching or of aquatint. Examination of the prints shows, however, that the effects in question were got either by using acid on the plate, or by working in dotted lines, not with the roulette but with the simple needle. In ascertaining these facts and in correcting some of his first impressions the writer has profited by the knowledge and the kind assistance of Mr. S. R. Koehler, Keeper of the Prints at Boston, U.S.A., whose authority on such questions is well known.

## III

The two diverging tendencies of Dutch art, that which fed on the Italian tradition and that which clung to the native soil, are both to some extent represented in Seghers.

Leaving for a time the Italianised masters, let us follow the main development of Dutch landscape art, the painters and etchers whom Holland alone inspired.

The first names of note are those of Esaias and Jan van de Velde. Jan was born in 1596, Esaias a few years earlier. Of the former we shall say something later on. He produced a great deal of work, the most remarkable part of which is a number of plates engraved and etched in the manner of Elsheimer. It is by these plates that he is best known, and through them he ranks as one of the Italianised school. As, however, he etched a certain number of purely Dutch landscapes, after the designs probably of his brother, he must also be mentioned here. These landscapes are mostly sets of traditional subjects, such as the sixteenth century loved: *The Four Elements*, *The Four Seasons*, *The Twelve Months*. Always strongly overworked with the burin, these etchings have a somewhat harsh and dry effect. The harshness is especially noticeable in the treatment of foliage. It is as if the artist were striving to reproduce with the etching-needle the manner of line-engraving as employed by the Goltzius school. Failing to secure this he has recourse to the burin to supplement his incomplete success in etching.

Esaias uses the acid in a much franker fashion. A plate of his, which we may take as representative, depicts a whale cast on the shores of Holland, perhaps at Scheveningen, in 1614. A great crowd has assembled on the beach staring at the stranded monster, examining and measuring its vast proportions. The dunes recede in the distance; boats are at anchor in the surf.

The scene is treated with the plainness and sincerity characteristic of Dutch art. And the etching, with its firmly and rather coarsely bitten lines, unsophisticated by the burin, has a solidity and simplicity not without attraction.

Regarded as etching, this is primitive work. Still it is genuine etching,

and by one who has perceived that needle and acid demand an employment and an aim different in kind from that of the graver. It is interesting, therefore, to compare this plate with the line-engraving of a similar subject, representing another whale stranded, a few years before, in 1598, by Jacob Matham, the pupil of Goltzius.

With the Van de Veldes it is natural to associate two contemporaries, who with them helped to inaugurate the great age of Dutch art ; Pieter



*Fig. 14.—Three Men under a Tree. By Everdingen. B. 5.*

Molyn, the elder, and Jan van Goyen, the latter born in the same year with Jan van de Velde.

Molyn, who was born in London, but was working in Haarlem before 1616, is an artist of real independence. A set of etchings, published in 1626, shows the same qualities that appear in his drawings—firm draughtsmanship, openness and freedom of design, and a fine economy of means. Heaths and moors, a climbing country road with plodding waggon, a wayside inn, such were the simple elements which he translated into always distinguished work. Doubtless to Molyn's teaching must be attributed something of that fine manner which imparts so much charm to the pictures of Gerard Ter Borch, his pupil.

Dying in 1656, Molyn survived by a few years one who, though not



a pupil, came certainly under his influence ; Van Goyen. Till lately Van Goyen, perhaps because his works are better known, was supposed to have been Molyn's teacher, or at least to have given a stimulus to his art. Van Goyen shows more power in his drawings than in his paintings, which are sometimes but little removed from sepia monochromes ; and it is a surprise to come, here and there, upon a picture of his which is bright and fresh. The few etchings which he published are undated, but belong, according to Dr. Lippman, to his middle life, 1625-30. They



Fig. 15.— *Landscape in Norway.* By Everdingen. B. 75.

have not the character of Molyn's plates, and are far less good as etchings.

Simon de Vlieger, who ranks in date as a younger contemporary of the Van de Veldes and of Molyn, is more successful as an etcher in the few plates which he produced, than any of the early landscape artists. Unhampered by the traditions of the line-engraver, he aims at an effect at once delicate and free. As a painter, he is known almost entirely by sea-pieces, silvery in tone, from which Jan van de Cappelle drew something of his mastery over still effects at sea, mornings of sleepy mist

through which the sun breaks palely on the sails of anchored vessels. Like most of the Dutch painters, de Vlieger changed his home several times. Born at Rotterdam in 1600, he was at Delft from 1634 to 1640, and from then till his death, nineteen years later, at Amsterdam. It seems probable that here he gave lessons to the young Willem van de Velde, who was afterwards to be famous as the greatest of Dutch sea-painters, and who died at Greenwich, a Court painter to Charles II.

In his etchings, which are undated, de Vlieger does not attempt the sea; though one (B. 10), a fine piece in its way, is a scene on the sea-beach, with fishermen and their haul. The best of the plates are two Sylvan pieces, *The Wood by the Canal* (B. 6), and the *Grassy Hill* (B. 7). The foliage is more sensitively treated than it commonly is by Dutch etchers, and with more approach to delicate truth. There is also a set of animals and poultry; possibly one of the earliest sets of subjects of this kind, which the middle of the century found so popular.

#### IV

With Allardt van Everdingen (1621–1675) we reach a new element in Dutch landscape. Working under Pieter Molyn at Haarlem, he began by painting marine subjects; and with a view to increasing his knowledge of the sea, took ship on the Baltic. But a storm drove him to Norway; and there for some time, taking advantage of misfortune, he lingered travelling and sketching.

Before 1645, however—that is, before he was twenty-five, Everdingen was back in Haarlem. He now began to paint pictures from his Norwegian sketches: and to the Dutch public this northern scenery disclosed a novel charm. Used to wide pastures and ample skies, they found a romantic strangeness in tumbling streams among rocks and pine-forests, where the sky was shut off by mountain slopes.

In 1652 Everdingen removed to Amsterdam, where he remained till his death. Probably his fame had preceded him: at any rate his popularity soon grew great there also, and his canvases were much sought after.

Besides numerous pictures, the Norwegian sketches provided the artist with material for a long series of etchings. Fig. 15 is a very characteristic specimen of them. Without any extraordinary qualities, they have often

a genuine charm. The Norwegian landscape is treated with insight into its peculiar features, and though Everdingen fails entirely to suggest the rush and foam of torrents, he makes fine use of the log cabins, rafts, and palings, and etches pines with truth and spirit.

Of a probably later date are the four views of a watering-place, possibly Spa, one of which is here reproduced (Fig. 16). The subject is

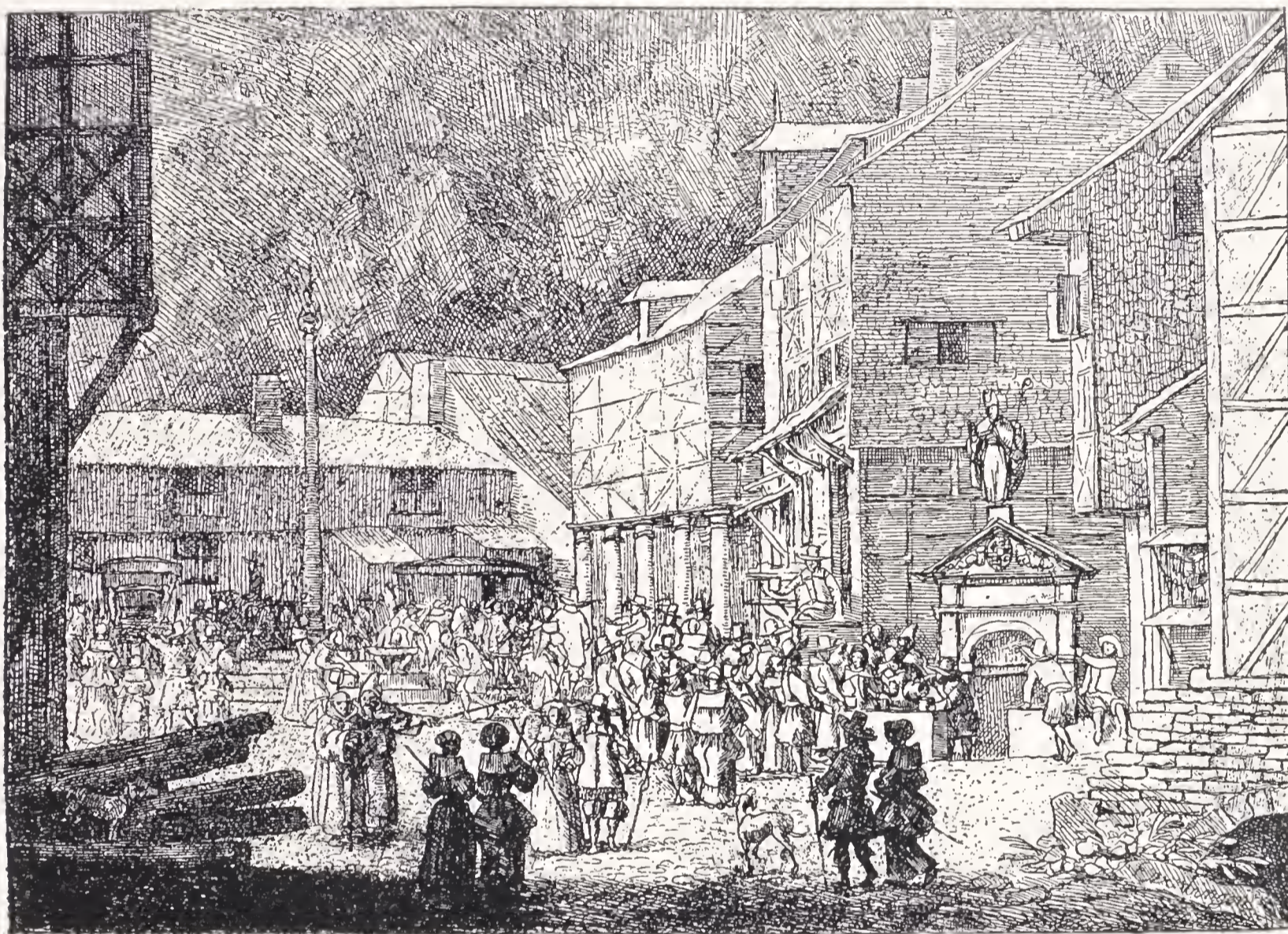


Fig. 16.—*Drinking the Waters at Spa.* By Everdingen. B. 96.

interesting, and the handling of the buildings and the groups of people is excellent.

Everdingen was not without humour, which is shown in the long series of illustrations to *Reynard the Fox*. But most readers will probably find the chief interest of the artist to lie in his relations with a greater man, Ruisdael.

## V

Though a native of Haarlem, Jacob van Ruisdael produced most of his life's work at Amsterdam. He is conjectured to have been born about 1625; the precise year has not been discovered. His father Isaak, a frame-maker, had him trained as a surgeon; and it was not till after he had passed a course of surgery that he abandoned the profession for painting, in which he had early shown his gift.

Ruisdael's first pictures are dated 1646, and his works from that year to 1655, his "early period," are nearly all views of Haarlem and its neighbourhood. Thoroughly Dutch in character, they have little of that gloomy tone so frequent in the artist's later time. The beautiful *View of Haarlem* at the Hague, with its massed clouds and ray of sunshine gliding over the plain, is a perfect example of this early manner.

With Ruisdael's removal from Haarlem, a great change comes over his art. There seems no doubt that his early Dutch landscapes were not popular. They were perhaps too original. He came to Amsterdam poor and without much reputation, and he found there, established in fame and popularity, Allardt van Everdingen, returned from Norway and now attracting the world of buyers by his pictures of that wild and romantic country. It was in 1652, as we have seen, that Everdingen settled in the city, and three or four years later Ruisdael arrived. He did not become a burgess till 1659, but had probably been already some years in residence before the formal inscription of his name.

From this period dates the lamentable change in Ruisdael's art. The master, whose native independence is so marked that one is at a loss to name his probable teacher, of his own will and in sheer mortification of spirit at his want of success, forces himself from the meadows and dunes of his delight, and invents, to win the patronage of the rich men of Amsterdam, a Norway of his own. A visit to North Germany, of which there is some evidence, helped his invention. Now begins the long series of waterfalls and pines and torrents so familiar in the picture galleries. It is not on these that Ruisdael's fame rests; on this ground Everdingen, in spite of his inferior merits as a painter, remains his master. But as the pictures of this period are the most common, the public is apt to

identify him with this acquired style in which the true Ruisdael is obscured. For this reason it was a fortunate choice which secured for the National Gallery, two years ago, so exquisite a specimen of the painter at his best as the *Shore at Scheveningen*, No. 1390. The chilly ending of an afternoon, with clouds blowing up and the rain beginning, the vexed movement of shallow water as the rising wind breaks it into short waves, the wetness of the spray-laden atmosphere, are painted with a sensitive subtlety that more modern landscape, with all its triumphs, has not excelled. The mood of feeling here expressed is intimately Ruisdael's own. Without the brooding melancholy which became oppressively habitual later, which found such grandiose expression in pictures like the famous *Jews' Burying-place* at Dresden, there is here a latent sadness that seems to have been bred in the fibre of the man. It seems a kind of expectation of sorrow ; the mood that poetry with greater intensity has expressed in some lines of Browning which suggest themselves :

The rain set early in to-night ;  
 The sullen wind was soon awake :  
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
 And did its worst to vex the lake.  
 I listened, with heart fit to break. . . .

For such a nature who would predict happiness? Fortune satisfied that inborn melancholy to the full. The years brought increasing poverty, and the cares of providing for himself and for his father wore the artist down. The autumn of 1681 found him ill and helpless ; so helpless that the religious community to which he belonged, the sect of Mennonites, procured admission for him to their almshouse at Haarlem. There he lingered till the next spring. In March he was buried in St. Bavon's.

## VI

Ruisdael's etchings are but twelve, or perhaps thirteen, in number ; only seven being catalogued by Bartsch. Their fewness shows, what their technical qualities confirm, that the artist neither had great aptitude for this method of expression nor cared to pursue his experiments in it far. They all belong to his earliest period. One, the *Three Oaks* (B. 6),

is dated 1649, and it is difficult to assign any of the others, except possibly the *Cornfield*, to a later date.

Of the four large plates, the one which Bartsch calls *Les Voyageurs* (B. 4), is decidedly the most interesting. It is a forest scene, wild and intricate, with water running or standing in pools among the great roots of the oak which occupies the centre and of the beech which fills the left. The two figures are passing in the middle distance, where the wood is clearer. It is a remnant, perhaps, of that vast forest which at one time covered the whole of Holland. Ruisdael's strong feeling for old trees, for the solitude of forests, densely branching and mysterious, inspires him here; and one has only to turn to the facile etchers of sylvan scenery, Waterloo or Swanevelt, or Van der Cabel, to realise the difference between the man who feels what he cannot perfectly master and the man who has perfect mastery of a facile formula. Ruisdael never succeeded in finding a quite satisfactory convention for foliage in etched line; but his continual feeling after truth of rendering, his sensitiveness, to which the forms of branch and leaf are always fresh and wonderful, make his work always interesting.

The three other large plates (B. 1-3) are less successful handlings of the same kind of subject. Though the first, *The Little Bridge*, is not a forest scene, and represents a decayed old farm-building, it is penetrated with the same feeling for picturesque, moss-grown antiquity and neglected solitude. The *Three Oaks* are etched with truth and strength, but they do not rival the grandeur of the oak in the larger plate. The *Cornfield* (Fig. 17) is sunny and pleasant.

There are two states of the four large plates, and many of the *Three Oaks* and the *Cornfield*. As the later states are by far the more common, it is well to be warned that the plates have been retouched, and, in the writer's opinion, certainly not by Ruisdael. In the first three a pudding-shaped cloud, with hard, bulging edges (what a satire on this consummate master of clouds!) has been inserted, and in all there is fresh work, sometimes adding to the effect of the plate, but still suggesting an alien hand.

Ruisdael's etching is little more than an illustration of his painting; criticism, therefore, of the one must deal to a certain extent with the other.

Ruisdael's great fame rests, perhaps, as much on his historical importance as on his actual merit. With Hobbema he prepared the way for Crome and Constable, and through them for Rousseau and the landscape of modern France. But, taken on his own merits, he is a considerable figure. Were it not for the fatiguing series of unconvincing waterfalls, which too often represent him, his real qualities would have more chance of making themselves felt. When on his own ground he is



Fig. 17.—*The Cornfield.* By J. Ruisdael. B. 5.

more various, more subtle, altogether finer than Hobbema, except when Hobbema is at his very best, as in the severely charming *Avenue of Middleharnis*. Hobbema often fails to convince, because he has not sufficiently felt his subject; and so he will paint a grand sky with the wind moving great clouds across it, but when he comes to the trees of his foreground he forgets his sky, and paints the branches in a breathlessly stiff atmosphere, without the suggestion of a wind. The resulting effect is a perplexing heaviness. Ruisdael betrays the same defect in his

later pictures; what else could one expect from one condemned to produce unrealities for a market? But in his good period he always shows an impressible imagination, and his materials are fused by the feeling in which he steeps them. His sense for the beauty of trees is profound, though rather limited in its range. He was lacking in the consummate style of Crome, and would never have achieved the largeness and reticent power of a picture like the English master's *Avenue at Chapel Fields*. But for skies, for clouds, he has an eye more true, a love more comprehensive, than those of any who had gone before him, than those of many who were to follow him. He piles his clouds in mountainous glory, "trailing" their shadows over the wide country, till the level pastures of Holland grow in "visionary majesties" like the grandest mountains of Norway. This gives us all the more reason to deplore the absence of any attempt to deal with clouds in the etchings, still more the presence of those inflated shapes inserted by a stupid publisher.

## VII

Though an important figure in the history of landscape painting, Ruisdael did not strongly influence the contemporary etchers of landscape. Hobbema, his famous scholar, did not, so far as we know, etch at all. A few etchers, however, felt Ruisdael's stimulus more or less: Van Beresteyn, who was working at Haarlem in 1644, and produced some etchings somewhat in the manner of Ruisdael's *Cornfield*, but with a mannered treatment of trees: H. Naiwincx, who handled a delicate point, and etched a set of graceful plates of woodland and river: and Adriaen Verboom, who in his two or three etchings is perhaps more successful in treatment of trees than any of the Dutchmen.

But more celebrated than any of these is Antoni Waterloo.

His etchings, to which alone he owes his reputation, are considerably over a hundred in number; and as the subjects are monotonous, they soon become tedious. Groups of trees by a roadside, or a fringe of wood alone occupy Waterloo's needle. Now and then, as in B. 28, the touch is light and the effect pleasant: but having once found a formula, Waterloo is content to repeat it. His foliage is hard and heavy.





Fig. 18.—*The Burnt House on the Canal.* By Van der Heyden.

Roelant Roghman (1597-1686), though most of his plates are nominally topographical, shows more feeling, if less skill. One set of plates by him illustrates the Dutch postal system between the mother country and the East Indies, and has therefore an historical interest.

But Roghman's chief claim on our concern is that he was the faithful and beloved friend of Rembrandt. His etchings, however, show no trace of Rembrandt's influence; and he was by ten years the elder man.

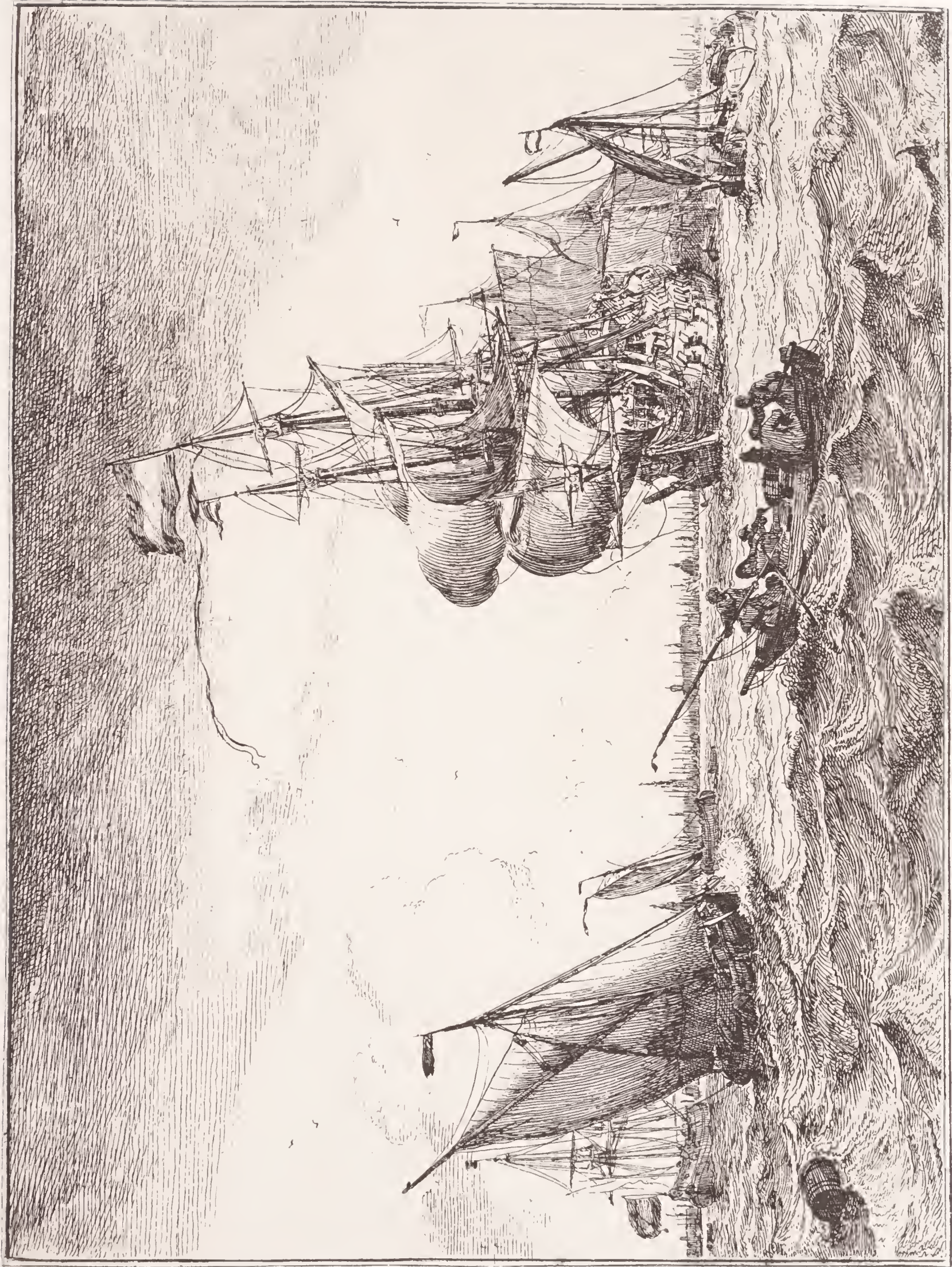
Like Seghers and like Ruisdael, Roghman was neglected and miserable in his life, and died in an almshouse. One of his landscapes is in the National Gallery.

### VIII

The illustration on page 51 (Fig. 18) is from an etching which represents a certain province of Dutch art, handled by several of the painters with much success, but scarcely touched by the etchers.

Of this group, to whom architecture, whether in the spacious and austere interiors of the Dutch churches, or the squares and ruddy brick house-fronts of the towns, was the chief preoccupation, Jan van der Heyden is the most famous and the best. He is also the one among them who has etched. The illustration, though much reduced, gives a fairly good idea of his work. Master of a precise and patient pencil, Van der Heyden is not content till he has drawn in every brick, every stone. And the marvel is, that in spite of his method, he contrives to convey a certain spirit of largeness into his design. In fact, though so minute in detail, he seems always to have kept his eye on the whole. A pleasant temperate warmth of colour pervades his pictures, the kind of light which on certain days suffuses old brick walls, as if dyed in the sunshine of many summers: and that exquisite order, the almost extravagant cleanliness of Dutch households, makes itself felt in these glimpses of tree-bordered canals, and of trim house-fronts with their well-proportioned windows.

Much of this colour persists even in the black and white of an etching like that reproduced. It is the day after a fire, and a little crowd of neighbours is gathered to look on the burnt remnant of the house. How



*Sea Piece. From an etching by L. Backhuysen.*



excellently are the groups and figures depicted ! This is not true etcher's work ; but it is very skilful work, very good work, of its kind.

Neither Van der Heyden, nor any of the Dutch painters of architecture, realised the capacity of outlines in stone or brick, attended by their circumstance of light and shadow, to impress the imagination, to stir emotion, as Méryon was to do later. But their work, by its soberness and firm simplicity, wins us. In its own way, and in its own degree, it will always give pleasure.

## IX

From Holland, the first naval power in Europe of the seventeenth century, a love of the sea and an expression of it in art were naturally to be expected : and among the several fine painters who now for the first time made the sea their subject, two at least, Reynier Zeeman and Ludolph Backhuysen, have left some admirable etchings. Simon de Vlieger painted, but did not etch marine subjects ; of Jan van de Capelle only three indifferent plates are known ; and Willem van de Velde did not etch at all.

Zeeman's real name was Nooms ; but his love of the sea procured him early the name which he adopts on all his plates. He travelled much, but worked chiefly at Amsterdam, where probably he was born in 1623.

Zeeman's etchings are nearly all in sets, representing views of Amsterdam, different kinds of Dutch shipping, and naval battles. They passed through the hands of several publishers, who, we may conjecture, commissioned him to do them : and they were evidently popular. Such work, nominally and primarily intended to serve a literary rather than a pictorial purpose, suffers in consequence. The artist has had to choose his subjects with a view to those whose interest was not in the etcher as etcher, but in his knowledge of ships and skill in depicting them.

Yet Zeeman has managed to serve art as well as history. Ships, with their ordered intricacy of rigging and their mysterious beauty, have an endless fascination for him : for it is shipping, rather than the sea itself, which he loves. And his ships are etched with an admirable feeling, a simple and effective handling of the bitten lines. His men of war move with royal

stateliness ; and the battle-pieces have something of the magnificence one imagines in the old sea-fights. Equally good in their way are plates like the fishing boats (Fig. 19) setting out at morning over the still sea, bathed in a wash of limpid air and sunshine. Only in his clouds does Zeeman completely fail. Historically, too, these prints are interesting. Here, with patriotic pride, Zeeman is fond of showing the English ship of the line or frigate, with her sails riddled, conquered at last, and with the Dutch tricolour hoisted over the St. George's Cross. Nothing could more



Fig. 19.—*Fishing Boats.* By R. Zeeman. B. 38.

vividly bring home to Englishmen the powerful position of Holland at the time.

Backhuysen's etchings are later than Zeeman's, being all produced in 1701, when the artist was seventy years old,<sup>1</sup> and seven years before his death at Amsterdam. A pupil of Everdingen, he had soon risen to fame and was employed or sought after by many foreign princes, including the Tsar Peter the Great ; and from over much production his work suffered.

<sup>1</sup> This assumes him to have been born 1631. Another date given is 1633.

The etchings, however, though produced so late in life, are neither languid nor feeble. In freshness and vivacity they excel Backhuysen's drawings. It is the same with Zeeman : probably because the etching-needle has so much more capacity for giving the crispness of foam and the sharp lights of running waves, than pencil and sepia. No one, till Turner came, succeeded at all in painting the mass and weight of water as the tides move it in deep seas ; but the easily agitated, breezy motion of the shallow Dutch waters is often suggested with a pleasant freshness by Backhuysen. The best of the etchings is that of the ship under sail, crushing the water under her bows into foam.

## X

So far, we have considered only the native school of landscape artists, who took their subjects from Holland and its borders. But towards the end of the sixteenth century there was established in Rome a group of painters from the Netherlands, to which each succeeding generation added new members, whether they settled there for life or stayed only for a few years.

Belonging to this group are a certain number of etchers, deriving originally, in more or less degree, from Elsheimer, and receiving a second and more powerful stimulus from the art of Claude.

Jan van de Velde,<sup>1</sup> it seems probable, spent some years of his manhood in Italy, and perhaps worked under Elsheimer himself. At any rate, a number of his plates are entirely in Elsheimer's manner. These are so heavily overworked with the burin that they must count rather as line-engravings than as etchings. The burin plays, indeed, a more or less important part in all Jan van de Velde's prints.

One set, illustrating the story of Tobias, was etched from designs by Moses van Uytenbroeck, an artist who also published a number of plates of his own. Here again is an instance of the traditional chronology being at fault. Uytenbroeck's birth is usually given as 1600. But Bode has pointed out that there are engravings after his work by an artist who died in 1612. The date must therefore be put back several years. Uytenbroeck is perhaps the nearest to Elsheimer of all his followers. The

<sup>1</sup> See *supra* : p. 41.

relation of the figures to the landscape, the curious human types, with their rather stolid, plain faces and heavy gestures, the treatment of Italian landscape, all are intimately akin to the German master's art.

Elsheimer's influence still persists strongly in Cornelis Poelenburg, one of the most popular of the Dutch artists in Rome, whose small, smoothly glowing pictures of grottoes and bathing nymphs are familiar in every



*Fig. 20.—Road, with Trees and Figures. By Breenbergh. B. 17.*

gallery. Poelenburg did not etch himself, but his friend Jan Gerritz Bronchorst etched from his paintings and in his style, though with less grace and elegance. We find here the beginnings of that school of landscape, "Arcadian" as Bode calls it, which so soon received its fullest and most perfect expression in the large and tranquil art of Claude.





D. 3. 1554

B. V. 236. 3.

Fig. 21.—Landscape. By Both. B. 3.

Pieter de Laer, of whose etchings of animals we shall say something in the next chapter, etched one landscape at least in the delicate soft manner of that master. And with him may be associated Bartolomeus Breenbergh, who lived in Rome from his twenty-first to his twenty-eighth year, 1620-1627. He was married at Amsterdam in 1633 and died there in 1659 or earlier ; but was at Rome again in the interval, during which he published (1640) a set of very attractive little prints. Fig. 20 is an example of his work.

The same delicate, fine needle, and the same preference for the picturesque, characterise the earlier etchings of Thomas Wyck. Later he adopted a freer, broader style, and worked on a larger scale, but with less success.

But the most conspicuous and important of this group is Jan Both. Like Poelenburg, he was a man of Utrecht, where he was born in 1610 and where he died in 1652. His portrait, taken in his later days at home, is that of a stout, grave burgher. Quite young he left the studio of his master Bloemart and travelled through France to Rome. There the soft sunshine of Claude fascinated him and he began to follow in the footsteps of that famous painter.

Every one knows the landscapes of Both, their smooth, rather insipid grace, their premeditated balance of composition, their elegant monotony. It is certain that they were popular in Holland, whither they were brought in ships from Italy to adorn the walls of wealthy buyers. Probably in that day such painting of placid sunshine was a new thing ; what we perceive to be a surface acquaintance with Nature savoured almost of intimacy ; and doubtless Both's pretty and monotonous conventions had then a permanent charm.

In his etchings, Both's weaknesses do not appear so strongly. And, wisely, he did not produce many. Had there been more they would, beyond doubt, have been precisely similar to what we have ; and from mere fatigue at their monotony one would have rated them below their worth.

As it is, the ten landscapes after his own designs are more than enough to reveal Both's great limitations. Yet they are few enough for us to enjoy them. For, after all, they are attractive and accomplished etchings. From Claude, Both had learned how to produce, with a nice

management of the acid, an exquisite softness in his distances. The atmosphere is limpid and bathed in sunshine, and the foregrounds are suggested with that light touch and selection of detail which are first requisites in an etching.

Here, again, it is only fair to the artist to judge him by the early states of his work. The ruled lines defacing the sky which they are meant to constitute, were added in the second state by the publisher. Of that there can be little doubt. Unfortunately, Both's first states are extremely rare.

Both's pupil, Willem de Heusch, approaches if he does not rival his master. He is not independent enough, however, to merit special notice.

Herman van Swanevelt, another artist whose birth-date must be put further back than the traditional 1620,<sup>1</sup> lived on to 1690, when he died at Rome. His etchings are more considerable in number than in merit. He began the school of reminiscences from Claude and Titian's landscapes which lingered on through paler and paler repetitions into the eighteenth century, in the sad facility of Genoels and Van der Cabel and Glauber. Never was art more bloodless and apathetic than in these degenerate spoilers of a fine tradition.

<sup>1</sup> A drawing of his is dated *Paris*, 1623. And according to Bertolotti he was in Rome by 1627.

## THE ETCHERS OF PASTORAL

### I

WHILE landscape thus occupied the talent of so many Dutch painters, a certain number struck out a branch apart, choosing subjects that may briefly be called pastoral. For these men the foreground of cattle, the goatherd or the shepherd with his flock, was of greater interest than the background of often quite conventional scenery. Sometimes two or more painters collaborated, and one painted the landscape while another put in the animals.

And as in painting, so in etching. A certain group of men etched nothing but animals, with now and then a landscape. Of these the chief are Paul Potter, Claes Berchem, Adriaen van de Velde, Karel du Jardin.

This love of the domestic animals for their own sake in art seems native and almost peculiar to Holland.

Many painters before this time had shown a remarkable love of animals. From Benozzo Gozzoli to Bassano, individuals among the Italian masters had introduced their favourites, wherever opportunity offered, into sacred and historical compositions. And among the elder contemporaries of the Dutchmen, Rubens, Snyders, and Velasquez had painted dogs and horses as only they could paint them. But it is mainly in hunting pieces, as servants or companions of man, that these painters introduce animals; cattle and sheep do not interest them.

It is the same with the great engravers who preceded the seventeenth-century etchers. Dürer was undoubtedly very fond of animals and engraved them frequently. And that singular master of the fifteenth century, whose name we do not know, but who is generally called the Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet from the fact that by far the fullest collection of his prints is at Amsterdam, engraved dogs and horses with a

freedom and a vivacity which Dürer never attained, and which were in that period of Northern art unique. This master was long thought a Dutchman, but the type of his faces, among other considerations, marks him as a Swabian artist.

Yet in none of these men appears anything like the peculiar feeling which in Potter, for instance, strikes so strong a note. The glory and



Fig. 22.—A Ram. By Berchem. B. 51.

excitement of the chase, so magnificently put on canvas by Rubens, the relish of the boar's savage fury as the hounds hurl themselves at him, are absolutely alien to that brooding intentness, as alert to catch every curve in the attitude of cattle rising or lying down, as subtle to penetrate to their mysterious non-human existence, so distant and aloof, pervading the Dutchman's art. It is a mood which fuses the mind into the life it

watches, till the delight of cool running water to the cattle, as they plunge in from the hot fields, is as intimately felt as the joy of battle in their charging hounds, which is merely reflected human feeling, is felt by the painters of the hunt.

Thus, while in Flanders painters and etchers like Jan Fyt carried on in their animal pieces the tradition of Rubens and Snyders, a totally different mode of animal painting and etching was springing up in Holland.

“Pastoral,” it is most convenient to call it; but it is not pastoral in the same sense that the word has come to have, as applied to certain types of poetry, whether the *Idylls* of Theocritus or the *Eclogues* of Virgil. There, as with the early painters of animals, the human interest is the preoccupying interest; and the poet sings of the peasant’s life in the fields, his industries, his pleasures, his loves and quarrels, either from native love and knowledge of that life, or in a desire no less genuine, if expressed through forms of more or less artificial colouring and outline, for the real simplicity of the country. It is the herdsman, not his herd, that is the pastoral poet’s theme.

Now, for the first time, the artist disengages himself from the point of view of man, and effaces himself before the dumb life he contemplates.

Already, in the engravings of Lucas van Leyden, who, by his early maturity and his early death, his gentle nature and his exquisite skill, seems to stand as a prototype of Paul Potter—a kind of foreshadowing of this attitude appears. But not till the seventeenth century does the vein begin to be developed. Then, by rapid degrees, not through any single influence, but communicated imperceptibly as if “in the air,” the tradition grows.

## II

Moses van Uytenbroeck and Claes Moeyart, whose etchings in the style of Elsheimer were mentioned earlier, both produced a certain number of purely pastoral plates. Of Uytenbroeck, we have a set of groups of animals with backgrounds of Campagna landscape, which seem to date from early in the century. And in the later manner of Moeyart, dated 1638, is a group of cattle, sheep, and goats, under shady trees, in a conventional landscape but with an unidealised Dutch herdsman. Neither of these men etched cattle with much knowledge or spirit,

though Moeyart was an artist of many-sided talent, and painted pictures that are excellent in their way.

Considerably better is an etching by Jan Gerritz Bleecker, also dated 1638. It is a group of cattle with a cowherd piping, conceived in the pastoral vein of Potter's *Shepherd*. Here, already, the interest of the artist begins to centre on the animals.

In Pieter de Laer this interest is still more frank. Born before 1613, de Laer found early a home in Italy, where his pictures were widely appreciated. In the same year that we have just mentioned, 1638, he, too, published a set of etchings of animals, in which attitude and action are caught with far more vivacity and truth than hitherto, while the design—though coarsely bitten—is light and free, compared with earlier work. Another set of horses, which probably followed this, is the prototype of studies like those of Potter's.

De Laer seems to have been one of the first Dutchmen to import Dutch realism and the Dutch method of painting into Italy. The Italians found in such art something fresh and vigorous. De Laer soon gained immense vogue in the south, and had a corresponding influence on his countrymen who came to work there.

Among these, probably, was Claes Pietersz Berchem. It is not known for certain whether this artist visited Italy, but the internal evidence of his pictures points strongly to the supposition that he did. At any rate, Dr. Bredius is convinced of it, and for the present we may safely accept the hypothesis on his authority.

Berchem was born at Haarlem in 1620, but was working at Amsterdam before 1642, in which year his name occurs as member of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke. We also know that he was painted by Rembrandt in 1647.<sup>1</sup> Was this before or after his journey to Italy, asks Bredius, and leaves the question open. The etchings, however, help us towards an answer. 1644 is the date on a set of cattle, with a milkmaid for title; also on the *Return from the Fields* (*L'Homme Monté sur l'Âne*) (B. 5). These are etched with fine, delicate short strokes, in a manner afterwards abandoned by Berchem. His most celebrated print, however, the so-called "Diamond," or *Joueur de Cornemuse* (B. 4), and the *Fluting Shepherd* (B. 6), are in the delicate early manner, and must be

<sup>1</sup> Bredius gives the date as 1644.

assigned to the same date. Now, these are all unmistakably Italian in character. If we may assume from Berchem's pictures that he had been to Italy, we can assume it with equal safety from these etchings. We may infer, then, that in 1647 he had already returned from Italy. Berchem had many pupils, including Karel du Jardin, of whom we shall speak later. He was evidently one of the popular artists of the day. It is curious to compare the features of the man as they live in



Fig. 23.—*Title Piece.* By Berchem. B. 35.

Rembrandt's magnificent portrait,<sup>1</sup> with the characteristics of his art. It is a face in which, for all its obvious strength, there is a want of gentleness, fineness, impressibility; a type of nature that succeeds easier in life than in art: for the qualities which count for strength in the world count often in art for weakness. And weak, in truth, is Berchem the artist.

<sup>1</sup> Exhibited last winter (1895) at Burlington House by the Duke of Westminster.



With his paintings we are not now concerned. Through them he rivalled Both in popularity, and for facility and complacency it is hard to say which bears the palm. Berchem is quite content to paint the gnarled trunk of an oak, the hairy leaf of a burdock, the moss on a stone and the stone itself, grass and leaping water, as of the same polished, one might almost say, "slimy" texture. So long as he has produced an agreeable composition, he is content.

In his etchings, this insensibility to the fine differences in the grain and moulding of things, all that goes to give trees and rocks and plants the charm and interest of character, is less obviously disclosed. At first sight the plates have a pleasant look, they are touched by a cunning hand which has attained no common skill in distributing light and in grouping. But one has not to look at them long before wearying of their emptiness. Berchem etches cows, and sheep, and goats, because they make pretty groups in composition—they add to the effect of a pastoral landscape; but in themselves he shows no real interest whatever. His goats pose; his cows have a look of faded human sentiment; his very sheep are foolishly self-conscious. Though they are drawn with a certain spirit and with a "touch" that mediocre artists and their admirers mistake for an evidence of genius, the main truths in the lines of these animal forms escape him.

In fine, Berchem was one of those men who have little of the artist in them but skill of hand and facility in assimilation. Having invented or concocted a recipe for producing a chosen class of subjects, he is perfectly happy in repeating himself as long as the demand continues. Berchem lived sixty-three years, and worked hard.

### III

Who that has seen it can forget the portrait of Paul Potter by his friend Van der Helst? The most beautiful portrait of that accomplished painter, it has also an impalpable attraction that comes wholly from the sitter, and of the many choice pictures in that choice gallery of the Hague, the Mauritshuis, its charm is not the least enduring.

The picture was painted in 1654, when Potter was already near death. A certain drooping of the eyelids, a pallor of the face, indicate the

fatigue which was overmastering his powers. He was not yet thirty when he died, but his production had been immense. And in him, as sometimes happens, Nature, as if by a kind of anticipation, had brought the inborn gift to early flower, a compensation in some sort to the world for its early loss.

It was at Enkhuisen, a village on the extreme point of jutting land



*Fig. 24.—The Bull. By Paul Potter. B. 1.*

that looks out upon the Zuider Zee, that Paul Potter was born, Nov. 20, 1625. But only his early boyhood was passed there, for in 1631 his father Pieter, also a painter, removed to Amsterdam. From his father the boy first learnt to draw, and perhaps from him also inherited the love of animals which was so strong in him. M. van Westrheene, in his life of Potter, conjectures that he was influenced by two artists, Aelbert Klomp

and Govert Camphuisen, who painted pictures of the kind that Potter made famous. But these men appear to have begun painting too late for this to have been possible. Dr. Bredius thinks Claes Moeyart was a more likely source of influence. It is known also that at a certain period, about 1642, Potter was in the studio of Jacob de Wet at Haarlem. But whoever may have taught him, his early ripeness and the strong sincerity of his nature assure us that Potter derived little from any teacher. With vivid preferences, a habit of subtle observation, and an extraordinary skill of hand, he would have been content to repeat no master's formulas, however popular. His first signed picture and his first signed etching bear the same date, 1643. He was eighteen years old. The etching (B. 14) shows already skill in grouping and a hitherto unknown knowledge in etching of animal forms. Its fault is over-much elaboration. Three years later Potter was at Delft, and there in 1647, at the age of twenty-two, painted his most famous picture, *The Young Bull*, now at the Hague. It was one of the pictures carried off by Napoleon, and of all those masterpieces from all countries which were restored by France in 1815, this was esteemed the second in value. Since then its fame has fallen, but with all its obvious demerits it has suffered more—to borrow an expression applied by Mr. Swinburne to Byron's Address to Ocean in *Childe Harold*—from praise than from dispraise. In 1649 Potter removed to the Hague, and it was here that he met his wife, Adriana Balcheneynde, daughter of an architect in that town. They were married in the following year. His marriage did not stop the artist's ceaseless industry, but rather increased it by his desire to provide for his household. Thinking perhaps to find more patrons there than at the Hague, he was induced by Dr. Tulp, the professor of anatomy, famous from Rembrandt's picture, to come to Amsterdam. In a letter by a Frenchman who was in Amsterdam at this time, looking for pictures on behalf of Queen Christina of Sweden, we have a glimpse of Potter in his studio, working with prodigious assiduity. The Frenchman found Potter at work on a painting which had already cost him five months of continuous toil. "Rien ne se peut voir plus curieusement fait," says the Frenchman. When we consider that the painter produced considerably over one hundred pictures in his brief life, it is amazing to realise his powers of work. He was only to live two years longer.

## IV

The etched work of Potter that has come down to us consists of eighteen plates ; not many, considering how prolific he was as a painter, but all the plates are important.

Taking them in chronological order, we have first the etching already spoken of, done when the artist was only eighteen, *The Cowherd* (B. 14). In 1649, six years after its original execution, the plate was reduced in length by Potter and the new date affixed. A reedy hollow, with a pool, was substituted for the group of three cows at the left ; and an alteration was also made in the feet of one of the cows descending the hill on the right. The etching, we know, was popular. For, after it had been cut down, it was issued by at least three publishers in turn ; by F. de Wit, by P. Schenk, and by an anonymous publisher who effaced the two former names. Probably in the first instance it was issued by Potter himself, as was the series of cattle published in 1650.

Full of skill in grouping and knowledge of form as this plate is, it is certainly inferior to the later etchings. Already, by the next year, Potter was able to produce a print, *The Shepherd* (B. 15) which surpasses it in every way, and which to more sound drawing adds a pastoral atmosphere of lightness and sunshine and repose.

Berchem, Potter's senior by five years, was at Haarlem in 1642, when Potter, as we know, was in De Wet's studio. We may assume, therefore, that the two met. Perhaps it was in emulation of Berchem's set of etchings, published in 1644, that Potter produced his *Cowherd* and *Shepherd*. If so, he succeeded in surpassing them.

There now occurs an interval of some years in Potter's etched work. His next publication, so far as we know, was the series of eight plates (B. 1—8) representing cattle, and beginning with the fine *Bull* (Fig. 24). This title-piece is dated 1650, so that we may refer the production of the plates to 1649, and possibly the year or two immediately preceding. However, the fact that 1649 is the date of the revised *Cowherd* seems to point to Potter's having resumed his interest in etching in that year, and to his having executed the whole set after the re-publication of that plate.



Fig. 25.—Studies of a Dog. By Paul Potter. British Museum.

He would hardly issue an immature work, when he had by him much more triumphant specimens of his skill.

As studies of animals, these eight little plates are as good as they can be. But they are not more than studies. As we saw, it had become a fashion for artists to etch such studies, and so spread their fame among those who could not buy their pictures. This at once suggests the reason of Potter's deficiency as an etcher. Strictly speaking, he was not an etcher at all. He used etching because it was the favourite medium for multiplying sketches of his time. But one feels that the burin would have been the apter instrument for that sure and cunning hand. There is a deliberation, a want of immediacy in these designs, that are not of the born etcher. Between the treatment of cattle in these etchings and their treatment in line-engraving by Lucas van Leyden there is no essential difference.

But we must take things as they are, and as specimens of subtle and certain drawing, the plates are astonishing. The attitudes and movements of oxen have never been better given. But it is not in mere correctness of drawing that Potter excels his rivals. Berchem was only interested in animals so far as they helped him in the composition of a landscape, but with Potter they were the main interest, he loved them for themselves. And in expressing that vague inarticulate soul that is in the look of cattle, that mildness and acquiescence which are in their attitudes and motions, he is a master, greater than any.

There is something in Dutch landscape, so open, tranquil, large, which seems to look for the presence of these peaceful creatures as its natural complement; their spirit is so entirely in harmony with the spirit of their pastures. Not accidental, perhaps, nor without its due effect, was the Dutch strain of blood in the American poet who seems to have first suggested in words what Potter expressed in art—

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain, or halt in the leafy shade,  
What is it that you express in your eyes?  
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Compare also a little-known piece of Whitman's "The Ox-Tamer," in *Autumn Rivulets*, which ends:

Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them . . .  
I confess I envy only his fascination—my silent, illiterate friend,  
Whom a hundred oxen love there in his life on farms,  
In the northern county far, in the placid pastoral region.

Like Whitman, Potter is possessed by the fascination of animals; he, too, "stands and looks at them long and long." And with a feeling so reticent that its intensity escapes a superficial notice, he puts into these etched lines the breath that moves their bodies, and the dumbness that looks out of their eyes.

## V

Two years after the publication of the cattle series, appeared the five larger plates of horses. These have less the air of being mere etched studies for pictures; they seem to have been made for their own sake, and make a kind of history, such as Tolstoi in the strange story of Kohlstromir has written; a kind of Horse's Progress.

The fourth (B. 12), the *Two Plough Horses*, is reproduced on Plate III. This and the *Horse Whinnying* (B. 10) seem to the writer the finest of the series, and the finest of all Potter's etchings. The work is entirely simple and unaffected: there is immense skill, but no apparent consciousness of it, still less parade of it. Nothing adventitious is brought in, no artifice is used of setting or surrounding: bathed in light and air, on their own level pastures, the horses stand clearly outlined. But what a feeling of morning freshness, of careless and free joy, is in the breeze that tosses the mane of the whinnying horse, and makes him tremble with felt vitality! It is a triumph of the untamed energy of life. How different a picture from this of the two tired creatures, set free from their heavy labour at the plough, but no longer rejoicing in their freedom, except as a respite. By some magic of sympathy Potter makes us feel the ache of their limbs, stiff with fatigue, just as he expresses the patience in their eyes. Yet tender as is the feeling of the drawing, it is so restrained that "pity" seems a word out of place. It is rather the simple articulation by means of sensitive portrayal, of an else inarticulate pathos. Such drawing as this is in a true sense imaginative.

The studies of dogs, reproduced in Fig. 25 are an admirable example of Potter's gift. It is interesting to compare them with a drawing by Berchem, also in the British Museum, representing a hunting scene, with the boar at bay and dogs springing at him or struggling in the leash. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to find room for a reproduction of

it ; but whoever looks at it will perceive at once a vital difference between such drawing and that of Potter's. Berchem sketches the scene in a rapid, summary manner, using a few strokes only for each figure. It is Rembrandt's method ; but what a difference in the result ! There is a sketch by Rembrandt of a lion springing at and seizing a man on horseback. Only a few lines are used, but the whole action of each figure is expressed perfectly. Berchem thinks to do the like, but his



*Fig. 26—The Cow. By Paul Potter. B. 3.*

lines are all just beside the truth. His mind, which has not sufficient love for things to brood upon their forms, is incapable of the swift act of sympathy necessary to seize their movement in action ; and its power of reproduction, by nature probably a delicate and precise faculty, has been warped and blunted by the man's satisfaction in his own cleverness, till it gives an inaccurate image.

Berchem's work is therefore false, and deserves to be called unimaginative. It convinces only the incompetent spectator of things.



Potter's work is never false, and its imaginative quality is rather obscured than absent in his poorer productions. The fact is that, having



Fig. 27.—Mules. By K. Du Jardin. B. 2.

given the vital image of an animal, he could not resist the temptation of adding to it non-essential facts. He had not that transcendent intelligence which instinctively practises the economy called "style." But it

was on the side of intelligence, certainly not of tenderness or sympathy, that he was lacking. He sat down to Nature's feast, and the delight of his eyes seduced him.

Before leaving this plate of the *Two Plough Horses*, we may notice a point which does not seem to have been remarked before, that there was apparently a kind of tradition of subjects among the animal painters and etchers. This plate was published, in the set of horses, in 1652. But in a set of etchings published the year before, 1651, by the artist Dirk Stoop, this identical subject appears. The horses stand towards the left of the plate in precisely the position of Potter's horses.

Stoop, though as good as many of the Dutch etchers, was no consummate draughtsman, and his horses are not to be compared with Potter's. Yet they do not look in the least like a copy, while the dates discountenance such a supposition. If there be any direct relation between the two etchings it must have been Potter who took a hint from Stoop. But it seems equally likely to suppose that the subject, two plough-horses released from labour, was a traditional one. The life of cattle and horses does not offer more than a certain number of typical pictures, and hence the tendency of painters and etchers to repeat the same subject, always with an eye to improving on the best yet done; just as earlier painters would choose a *Saint Sebastian* as the typical subject in which to display their power of painting the human figure. In the same way Potter's fifth etching of horses, where he depicts the forlorn death that overcomes the worn-out beast, has its prototype in a similar etching by Pieter de Laer, and the subject is repeated by Du Jardin.

The etcher mentioned above, Dirk Stoop, led a wandering life, went to Lisbon, became painter to the Court there, and, being brought over to England with the Infanta, worked also in London. His etchings of horses and dogs are less good than those of the court *fêtes*, processions, and spectacles at Lisbon, at Hampton Court, and at London.

## VI

If Potter did not produce many etchings himself, Marcus de Bye, who etched in most cases after Potter's designs, was comparatively prolific. He produced over a hundred prints. Some of these, pur-



*Ox and Sheep. From an etching by A. van de Velde.*



porting to be after drawings by Potter, are studies, not of cattle and sheep or horses, but of wild animals—lions, tigers, and wolves. If these could be taken as fairly representative of Potter's work, we should have to infer that Potter was far less fortunate in his drawing of wild creatures than of tame. And it would be unlike Potter to have made such studies except from the life. De Bye, however, lost a great deal of the subtlety and life of his original in working from Potter's sketches. Karel du Jardin is a more independent artist. Born at Amsterdam in 1622, he was trained in Berchem's studio, but went to Italy still young. There he found De Laer's pictures in great esteem, and developed a manner and a choice of subject very similar to his. Some time before 1656 he returned to Holland, and remained at the Hague till 1659, when he removed to Amsterdam. There he painted some fine portraits, quite unlike his ordinary pictures in style, being stirred to emulation presumably by the superb Corporation pieces then produced there. In 1675 he started again for Italy, but died three years later in Venice.

The British Museum possesses a red-chalk drawing of Du Jardin by himself. It is an agreeable portrait, but the face does not suggest much power.

Though a pupil of Berchem, Du Jardin in his etchings follows Potter much more than that artist. Dr. Lippmann, in fact, speaks of him as "Schuler Potters," but the expression must only mean a follower, not a pupil, of Potter.

Twenty-four of Du Jardin's etchings are dated, the dates being 1652, 1653, 1655, 1656, 1658, 1659, 1660, and 1675. Only one piece belongs to the last year, while the other years have two, three, four, and five pieces each. So that, whenever the undated etchings were produced, the bulk of Du Jardin's work on copper may safely be assigned to the eight years 1652—1660; that is to say, to the first years after his return to Holland, and possibly to the last year or two of his first stay in Italy. Most of the etchings are from sketches made in Italy. Fig. 27 is an example, and is a good specimen of Du Jardin as an etcher. There is nothing very original about such art, but its agreeable qualities will always give pleasure. Du Jardin, in his drawing and in his painting, has a light and happy touch; yet beyond such craftsman's merits there is

little to be said for him. He seems to have painted and etched what was the fashion with a facile grace and commendable skill, but without any strong inborn love of the subjects he handled.

As an etcher he is of the same order as Potter. A good many of the prints are pastoral landscapes; these are less good than those in which animals are the main subject. To turn from some of these small land-



*Fig. 28.—Pigs. By K. Du Jardin. B. 15.*

scape studies of Du Jardin's, in which nothing is seized strongly while everything is made a little dull, to an etching of Rembrandt's, say *Six's Bridge*, is to receive a most vivid impression of Rembrandt's immense superiority. Rembrandt's light sketch is instinct with style; Du Jardin, in these prints at any rate, has no style at all. Such etchings as that of the pigs (Fig. 28) are of far higher quality.

Another etcher from Amsterdam, Adriaen van de Velde, came strongly under Potter's influence. Born in 1635-36 Van de Velde, like Du Jardin, studied with Berchem. It has sometimes been assumed that he, too, followed up his studies with a journey to Italy, but Dr. Bredius decides against this supposition. There is Italian scenery in many of Adriaen's pictures, but there were plenty of fellow artists to borrow materials for such backgrounds from. And with him the landscape is never much more than a background. His interest lay more in his cattle and his figures than in their surrounding. It is known, indeed, that he inserted figures for several of the landscape painters, including Ruisdael and Hobbema.

Van de Velde's etchings are nearly all of cattle, and here he sometimes comes near Potter in drawing, while in management of the acid he is decidedly Potter's superior. His earliest dated etching of 1653 is a large plate, which though not powerful has a real beauty. The cow which forms the centre of the composition is almost identical with that in the foreground of Potter's *Cowherd*. Perhaps this was deliberate imitation, and if so, is evidence of the recognition Potter's knowledge of animal form commanded, but it may equally well have been an accident. The whole plate is bathed in drowsy sunshine, with which the man asleep by the roadside, drawn with an admirable suggestion of repose, harmonises well. This print is one of those which must be seen in the silvery earliest state to be appreciated.

The original design for this plate is in the British Museum. In the same collection is also the design for *The Cow Lying Down* (B. 2). On the same sheet of paper is a study of part of the cow in a slightly altered position, and this has been adopted in the etching. Except for this insignificant change, the two etchings are copied from the pencil studies with entire fidelity. And probably this was always Van de Velde's practice, as it was with Potter and Du Jardin. It is, therefore, strictly speaking, incorrect to describe the drawings as being made for the etchings. The studies were etched simply that they might be multiplied.

None of the studies of cattle, etched by the Dutch masters, surpasses Van de Velde's set of three, numbered 11, 12, and 13 in Bartsch. The second is reproduced (Plate IV.). Potter never produced an effect so

delicate and so rich in colour as Van de Velde in these three etchings. At the same time there is no ostentation of skill ; rather there seems a



*Fig. 29.—A Goat. By A. Van de Velde. B. 16.*

kind of modesty in the workmanship that is winning. Equally excellent is the charming little study of a goat (Fig. 29).

Van de Velde, if not a great artist, was a true one, and his early death at the age of thirty-seven was a loss to the art of Holland.



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