

THE ETCHED WORK  
OF  
REMBRANDT.

*A MONOGRAPH.*

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN.



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REMBRANDT.  
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*Written as an Introduction to a Chronological Exhibition of Rembrandt's Etchings—being the first of its kind—held at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, May, 1877, for the purpose of introducing and substantiating new views as to the unauthentic character of certain of those Etchings.*

(WITH AN APPENDIX.)

BY  
FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, F.R.C.S.

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## NOTE TO THE PRESENT REPRINT.

*If the author had not, under the circumstances detailed in the Appendix, felt in some sort bound to reprint his work in its original form,—or, still more, if he had to rewrite it—he would not, while advancing his theory of the unauthentic nature of certain of the Rembrandt prints, have risked the general acceptance of his views by entering as largely as he has done into the absolute identity of the pupil work engaged in them. He feels, and frankly admits, that in this he has made, at least, a mistake. He should have remembered that inferior men, in the act of copying, do not use a style of their own, even when they have one,—and that it was imprudent—not to say unreasonable—to look for the style of Lievens or Van Vliet, in the effort of those artists to reproduce the style of Rembrandt. Such attributions, the author feels, on reflection, even when they are justified by appearances, are unwise, inasmuch as they open the door to objections which—though they do not touch the main argument—may yet be employed to hamper and embarrass it. He is content, therefore—at all events for the present—that these details should be considered ‘unproven’ and that his suggestions should be*

*accepted only so far as, upon the face of them, they are unassailable.*

*In the French and German translations of his work, though the event of the Club Exhibition is a thing of the past, the author has still thought it right to keep up the fiction of an exhibition—a display of Rembrandt's work, that is to say, in its chronological sequence, visible to the eye—since it is only by the sort of critical comparison rendered possible by such an arrangement that his argument can be followed and its conclusions tested. The only difference, therefore, that he proposes to make in the text of the three issues—is that, in the English, the references made shall be to the catalogue of Wilson, (W.)—in the French, to that of Charles Blanc, (C.B.)—and, in the German, to Bartsch, (B).*

*To Monsieur Charles Blanc, of the Académie Française, who urges as a reason for not adopting the Chronological order, (the advantages of which he otherwise admits,) that many of the Etchings of Rembrandt are “undated,” the author would submit:—1 That the more important Etchings which may be taken as types are dated. 2 That, the style of the Etchings at different periods of Rembrandt's career being fully as marked as that of his Paintings, no more difficulty attends the classification of one than of the other.*

*He has thought it sufficient to deal with a recent attempt to appropriate and mutilate his conclusions in an Appendix.*

March 1st, 1879.

NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

*The following Monograph makes no pretence to the infallibility of a Treatise.*

*An attempt, on the occasion of a temporary Exhibition of Rembrandt's Etchings at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, to give practical shape to suggestions made ten years ago—the utmost that can be claimed for it is that it may serve as a point of departure for more deliberate work in other and more competent hands.*

*Meanwhile, it is hoped that it has been so written that no one but its author can be held responsible for the subversive theory which it seeks to establish.*

1st May, 1877.

ABBREVIATIONS, &c.

- "Brit. Mus." . . . . . British Museum.  
"D." . . . . . Daulby's Catalogue.  
"W." . . . . . Wilson's.  
"Ch. B." . . . . . Charles Blanc's.  
"B." . . . . . Bartsch's.

(Words within brackets are to be read as additions to the  
text of the first issue.)

THE

## ETCHED WORK OF REMBRANDT.



THE object of this paper may be thus briefly explained. On the occasion of an Exhibition of the Etchings of Rembrandt, by the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1867, it was suggested (by the writer) that the arrangement according to *Subject*, then universally adopted, was fatal to the comprehensive study of such works, and that it might with advantage be discarded for the more rational order of *date of production*; that an arbitrary method, by which works of the latest were mixed up with works of the earliest period, confused the sense, perverted the judgment, and rendered critical examination and comparison impossible; and, generally, that such a system, though it might satisfy the cataloguer, was unworthy of the biographer and useless to the student. The Art work of a lifetime, it was contended, should not be looked at as a series of disjointed efforts, but as the continuous expression of a prolonged chain of logical sequences depending for their coherence on the due maintenance of the order of their production, and only to be properly understood when studied in that order; and finally it was hinted—and that with tolerable confidence—that if this unintelligent and incoherent classification were given up, and a more consecutive method of arrangement

substituted for it, new matter, yet unsuspected in regard to the Etched Work of Rembrandt, might be brought to light, and grave errors of attribution, especially as to some of his larger published plates, be both proved and rectified.

To these representations—novel and revolutionary as they no doubt felt them to be—the Committee were good enough to listen, and hence it came to be conceded not only that there should be a second Exhibition of the Etched Works of Rembrandt in the rooms of the Club, but that that exhibition, in accordance with one of the fundamental objects for which the Club was established, should be made subservient to a directly useful purpose. Discarding, therefore, the methods of the cataloguers from Gersaint downwards, we have in this Exhibition, for the first time, what may be called the Natural History of Rembrandt before our eyes, and may read, *pari passu* with the events of his Life, the motives of that Art of which those events were but the proximate cause. Admitted thus to the intimacy at once of the Artist and of the Man, we may here see him dealing with those magic fragments of copper to be measured only by inches on which his earliest essays were made; and, following him through the changes of style and execution of his middle period, may still attend him till his power, constantly augmenting, culminates in the impressive conceptions of his latest day—“Christ before Pilate” and the great “Crucifixion.” We may perhaps be pardoned, if—brought suddenly into the presence of a great story thus graphically told, and while even yet in the full enjoyment and fruition of a grateful dream thus at length realised—a somewhat less grateful thought should carry us on to that inevitable time when, in common with all sublunary things, this wealth of treasure must come to be dispersed, and when our “Hundred Guilders in the First State,” our “Rembrandts



with the Sabre," our "Tholinx's," our "Buenos with the Black Ring," our "Old Haaring's," and our "Turned-up Hats and Embroidered Mantles"—with their inestimable dates and *griffonnements*, and which by a generous courtesy we are now permitted to enjoy as our own—will pass into hands that know us not.

\* \* \* \* \*

Orlers, a Magistrate and Burgomaster of Leyden, having access to the municipal archives and writing at a time when Rembrandt was alive to contradict him, tells us plainly that he was born on the 15th of July, 1606, and that, "become one of the most renowned painters of the century," he had removed to Amsterdam, where "in this year of 1641 he still lives;" while Rembrandt himself, in a precious note on his own portrait (contributed by Mr. Holford), tells us no less plainly that in 1631, when that portrait was executed, he was twenty-four years of age—"Rembrandt, f. 1631, *Æ.* 24,"—the note, coupled with the contemporary and authoritative statement of Orlers, clearly showing that the portrait in question was made in the early part of the year—*i.e.*, before the 15th of July—and that the supposition that he was born in 1607 or 1608 is, at least, gratuitous.

Nor, since it is the immediate object of this paper to deal with error in whatever form it may present itself in connection with Rembrandt, is there any better ground for the fable that he was born of needy parents and in his father's mill, seeing that his parents lived at the time of his birth in a well-to-do house in the Weddesteeg of Leyden, and that when the family property came to be divided some years later on the death of his mother it consisted, besides "the house with land adjoining it" on the Weddesteeg, of "a house and land on the Rhine,

“ a house and land on the old Rampart, two other houses  
“ (smaller) on the Rhine, two houses behind the three last,  
“ and of a pleasure garden on the principal dyke of the town  
“ besides a-half share in the mill near the Whitte-Poert ”  
(valued alone at 3,064 fl.,) and of “ effects in gold and jewellery,  
and letters of rent.”

Rembrandt, then, was of burgher, not pauper, origin, and his entry into the world was consistent with that status, since we find him in 1630 taking a good house on the Breedstraat of Amsterdam, and shortly afterwards aspiring to, and effecting, an alliance with the considerable family of Rombartus van Ulenburg, Jurisconsult, Councillor and Burgomaster of Leëuwarden, a member of the Court of Friseland, and more than once a political envoy from that Court.\* Of this marriage with Saskia van Ulenburg, if time and space permitted, we should have much to say, since it furnished the proud and happy husband with many a motive for his art during the eight years of sunshine that succeeded it. Saskia, however, died in 1642, leaving to Rembrandt the usufruct of her property for as long as he should continue unmarried, with remainder to a son born of the marriage. From that moment, when the romance of his life may be said to have ended, comparatively little is known of Rembrandt. Whether, in the cloud that then began to gather about him and which finally enveloped him, this boy was a cause, or, whether, as some have not unreasonably supposed, Titus, by the various legal processes in which he figured, was merely an instrument to save for his father the wreck of a declining estate ; whether

\* It is this Rombartus who reports to his fellow magistrates how, on an occasion when he had been treated with marked affability and retained to dinner by William the Taciturn, the Prince, on leaving the table, had been assassinated by “ a Bourgoingnon.”—VOSMAER, “ Rembrandt, sa Vie et ses Œuvres,” p. 43. La Haye, 1868.

the cause of that decline was the reaction which often follows great success, or the general impoverishment consequent on the disastrous foreign wars in which Holland was then engaged ; or whether, as Sandrart suggests, Rembrandt would have been a richer man if he had known better how to "*ménager les gens qu'il fréquentait*," it is not within the scope of this article to inquire. That of which we are only too certain is that, somewhere about 1654, he did marry again, and that, in order to satisfy the claims put forth by the trustees of Titus, who was a minor, he was obliged to make an inventory of the goods which he had enjoyed in common with Saskia ; that he valued those goods at 40,000 fl., and that they realised less than 5,000 fl. ; and that this, with the sum produced by the sale of his house in 1660 for 6,700 fl., being insufficient to satisfy the claim against him, he became a bankrupt—and also, that, for some unexplained reason, his brother Adrian and his sister Elizabeth, both of whom had received a larger share of the patrimonial estate than he, fell into extreme poverty about the same time. But what it chiefly concerns us to know is that through all the troubles that followed upon the death of Saskia and his subsequent marriage, his constitutional energy and industry never forsook him, and that, from that time till his own death, though we hear of him and see him no longer, he was no less than at any period of his career adding to his power, and, both by his painting and etching, accumulating, so to speak, immortality. The following simple entry in the *Livre Mortuaire* of the Wester Kerk, of Amsterdam, is the last word we have of him :—

“Tuesday 8 Oct., 1669, Rembrandt Van Riyn, Painter, on the Rooze-graft, opposite the Doolhof. Leaves two children.”

A theory of Rembrandt's latest day, however, has been recently advanced so much more grateful to subscribe to than the received account and which is to some extent

confirmed by the relatively considerable sum of 16fl. spent on his funeral, that we transcribe it *tel quel*:—

“ Un jour,” says Mons. Vosmaer, “ j’allai à la recherche au Rozegracht pour voir encore s’il ne restait plus de trace de la dernière demeure de Rembrandt, qui ne paraissait plus être connue. En face de l’emplacement où s’est trouvé le vieux *Doolhof* au côté nord, je remarquai deux façades de vieux style, portant des écussons, avec la date 1652. Or c’est vers 1656 que Rembrandt s’établit sur ce quai. Au rez-de-chaussée d’une de ces maisons, se trouve l’atelier de M. Stracké, statuaire. Dès que j’entrai et regardais autour de moi, une vive ressemblance me frappa. Rembrandt a fait un croquis d’un vestibule, probablement dans sa maison. La vue est prise d’une chambre attenante, où au coin gauche se trouve une presse, à droite quelques marches d’un escalier. A travers la porte on voit le vestibule, deux fenêtres et une porte ouverte, par lesquelles on aperçoit le feuillage d’un arbre, un quai et les façades du côté opposé du canal. Voilà bien le même lieu que celui où je me trouvais ! M. Stracké eut la bienveillance de me montrer toute la maison, dont l’état actuel permet de saisir celui d’autrefois. Le plancher qui séparait les caves du premier étage a disparu, mais on voit encore les consoles des poutres. Au second étage, deux chambres ; celle qui donne sur le quai avait eu une belle cheminée et les murs sont encore garnis de plaques en faïence colorée, recouvertes aujourd’hui d’un papier moderne. L’autre appartement, qui a bien pu se prêter comme atelier de peintre, a trois fenêtres sur le nord. Le propriétaire a assuré au locataire actuel que la maison fut autrefois tellement garnie de marbre que la valeur des dépouilles en avait dépassé le prix d’achat de la maison. Même une ruelle, conduisant aux parties attenantes de la maison, en était pavée et aujourd’hui encore le dallage de la cuisine est en marbre de Carrare ! On voit que la maison, nouvellement construite alors, n’avait pas l’apparence d’une pauvre retraite.

“ Voilà donc apparemment la demeure où le vieil artiste a passé ses derniers jours et où sont encore écloses tant de chefs-d’œuvre.”

It is necessary before proceeding further, to say a word on the part played by Etching in the time of which we are writing, and in explanation of that condition of the etched plate which is technically called a “State.”

How comes it, it may first be asked, that the Old Masters made Etching—“Painter’s Etching” as it was called to

distinguish it from Engraver's copy—so essential a part of their practice, and that with us moderns it is a comparatively lost art? The answer is obvious. Etching is a direct and personal, as well as a reproductive, art, and, in the days when locomotion was difficult and communication limited, it was at once a means of extending the reputation of the artist and enlarging his market, and of putting into the hands of persons at a distance and of modest fortunes work as original as his painting, at a nominal cost. The engraving of the present day, or even of the day of the great English mezzotinters (who may be said to have done for Reynolds what Rembrandt did for himself), supplies the same want in a much less perfect degree, seeing that the engraver's work, however useful in disseminating design, is, as to execution and expression, but speech at second hand, while Etching is utterance *à vive voix*. Etching, therefore, and with reason, entered largely into both the Practice and the Commerce of Art in Rembrandt's day. Simple people like ourselves profited by that commerce; nor have we in these later times any reason to complain of it. How else in a small Society like this could we produce, at a month's notice and exhibit to others at a glance, the whole artistic side of such a life as Rembrandt's—how in our own persons, possess and enjoy, as we are able to do, not one but a dozen of his undoubted works! We venture to think the modern painter much to blame for his indifference to so original, prolific and passionate an art—an indifference to which we owe the idea that has come to be spread abroad that Etching, the most difficult of the Arts and the one which most requires the experience of the master, is fitted only for the amusement of the amateur; and which again, has taught the latter to believe that in proportion as he is ignorant and untrained he can practise it successfully. To Philip Gilbert Hamerton \*

\* "Etching and Etchers," 2d Edit. 8vo. Macmillan, 1876.



is due the merit of amending this error, and of replacing by philosophical and sound reasoning original Etching on its true æsthetical foundations; and to this Club, no less the credit of proving, by its splendid demonstration of to-day, that it is, *par excellence*, a Painter's Art.

A thing which cannot fail to strike the observer in making the tour of the Gallery of the Club\* is the constant repetition of the word "State." Two distinct notions, we may explain, attach to that word, the popular notion and the collector's notion. The popular notion is that the finished must be better than the unfinished state of a plate; the collector's that the first, which is usually the unfinished state, is the more desirable of the two; the less critical observer, in short, preferring to be in possession of what he would call the ultimate mind of the artist—the more fastidious collector of the freshness of his first impression. As usual in the settlement of such questions, reason and unreason meet, and both must be made allowance for. Thus, if we consider the spontaneity which distinguishes Etching from every other art—the impulse, the sensitiveness, and the emphasis which constitute its chief claim to interest and which determine the brilliancy of its suggestions—the collector has the best of it; if a more effective tonality and a corrected drawing be preferred, the less sensitive *acquéreur* has the advantage. Our own sympathies, we need scarcely say, are with the collector, who evinces in this preference a correct appreciation of the intention of Etching. But to proceed. Between the true "first" and true "second" state of an etched plate a distinct interval of time must always be supposed to have elapsed, an interval during which the spirit in which the work was undertaken has had time to cool or at all events undergo a change, and, in the subsequent elaboration which

\* See Prefatory Note, *ante*, p. vi.

is to constitute the new state, to be even altogether lost. The earlier the state also, as a rule, the better the impression, but not necessarily so, and upon this we desire to lay particular stress. And there is yet another point which, as practical etchers and printers, we would submit to the consideration of the purchaser of etchings, and that is that it is not every addition to a plate which properly constitutes a "State." Practically, what happens when the Etcher takes his plate to the printers, or proceeds to print it himself, is this—the artist may, if we will, be Rembrandt and the plate the portrait of the Burgomaster Six. An impression, or possibly two only, may have been taken, when it is seen that the height of the window-sill coming too near the shoulder of the Burgomaster affects unfavourably the freedom and movement of the figure, so—the plate being a "dry point" which will yield but few impressions, and perhaps a precious plate on other accounts—it is taken home at once, the objectionable sill in it is reduced, a false line in the *contour* of the face removed, and the artist's name and the date are added to the right-hand corner. This done, he again goes with it to the printer, and, while at the press side, rectifies first a misplacement of two of the numerals comprising the date, and, probably after another impression or two, thinks it better to add the name and age of Six to the left-hand corner of the work. Now, Rembrandt himself would tell us, as we now also venture to submit to the collector, that these four or five exceptional, unsettled impressions anterior to the main *tirage*, were but "trial proofs," and the printer will go farther and aver that they were not "good" proofs. But three centuries later come the biographer and cataloguer, and with him the dealer, to tell us something quite different—the first with wearisome precision to describe three different states of the plate—the last to persuade us that the two first of these "states" are worth three times more money than the

perfected plate. We desire to say that there is room for grave misconception here, and that the slight differences we have described in such a plate do not properly constitute so many states expressive of a descending scale of value, real or conventional, but that as "trial impressions" they are not so good as when the plate, in technical phrase, has "begun to print"—that is to say, when the ink has fairly begun to enter the deeper lines, and the printer has had time to become what is technically called "acquainted with his plate;" and, more than this, that as these desirable conditions do not usually happen till towards the eighth or tenth impression, it follows as a matter of course that the third state of such a plate is likely to be, as to impression, better than the first. In a "bitten" plate, like that of Clement de Jonge (W. 274), the case is different. Here, because the plate is more durable, there may be, and probably there have been, a considerable number of impressions taken of each condition of it, while a definite interval of time has been allowed to elapse between each printing of it. Each one of these conditions may, therefore, with propriety, be called a "State."

A word, also, about "Dates." The signature and date upon a plate might with reason be supposed to indicate the time of its execution. It does not necessarily do so. Thus, the signature and date of a plate will often not be found upon it till the second or third state, or even, as in the case of the "Christ before Pilate," till the fourth state of the plate. Now, in the case of so formidable a work as this, many weeks, and even months may elapse between the printing of the first and the printing of this fourth state; and, after all, the date found on that plate may refer, not to the time of its composition and first printing, but to the fourth printing of it. As practical Etchers we can attest this to be frequently the case, and we shall revert to the subject when we come to speak, as we shall



have to do, of the "Crucifixion," a companion and probably posterior plate to this, but which, for all that, bears a date anterior to it.

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We have now to address ourselves to a part of our task which appeals to the advanced student rather than to the general reader. Having glanced at so much of the life of Rembrandt as connects itself immediately or remotely with that branch of his art with which only we have undertaken to deal, and seen the part borne by original Etching in the business of the painter of his day, we come to the main purposes of this sketch, which are—Firstly, to inform ourselves of the actual means which Rembrandt took to develop the Art in his own particular case and to make it profitable to him in the way of his profession ; and Secondly, and principally, to inquire whether the whole of the extensive work before us is undoubtedly by his hand, or whether any and what portion of it may with greater probability be attributed to the hands of others—whether this treasure, in short, is without alloy, or whether its ring has been in any degree impaired by admixture with a baser metal. For ourselves, reverting to what has been hinted at at the commencement of this paper, we must state at once our belief that all we have here is *not* by the hand of Rembrandt ; that for many years past, as our acquaintance with his work has become more intimate, this belief (which we claim to have been the first to entertain), has strengthened ; and that by the rare opportunity for comparative study which has been afforded us by the present Exhibition, it has assumed all the proportions of a conviction. But how are we to impart this belief to others? If Rembrandt's hand is not in all we here see, whose is the hand that has displaced it, or been a sharer with his in the work? This

is the question which it is at once one of the purposes of this exhibition to raise and of this imperfect page to answer. How solve it? How account for the fact that these Etchings, the authenticity of many of which we say we doubt, are yet, one and all, signed "*Rembrandt*," and that no name, either of pupil or assistant, appears on any one of them? The position, it must be confessed, is embarrassing. On the other hand,—now that we have them arranged in the order of their date of production,—how comes it that one etching, say of 1633, is so unlike, and inferior to another etching of 1633, that one of them, on the face of it, is the work of the master, the other of the man? The conflict being between sense and evidence, how bring these into agreement? Obviously, only by sifting the evidence anew.

And the evidence is this. In 1630, or thereabouts, we have seen Rembrandt, as yet with no practice but with a reputation which, doubtless, had preceded him, taking a house (it matters nothing to the argument what house) on the Breedstraat of Amsterdam of unreasonable dimensions for a bachelor of twenty-three, unless some ulterior object attached to the venture. What was that object? Houbraken tells us plainly that it was the formation of a School:—"He divided the whole of the upper part of the "house," he says, "into cellules or small studios for the reception of pupils, who, by this kind of segregation, were to "preserve their individuality;" while Sandrart more specifically informs us who and what those pupils were, and what was the work they did there. To this testimony of Sandrart—the reliability of which has never been questioned, and whose knowledge of Rembrandt was intimate in this portion of his career—we invite the particular attention of the reader, because in it we find the first germ of the solution for which we are looking. "His house," says Sandrart, "was

“ constantly full of pupils of good family who paid him 100 florins annually, without counting the advantage he derived from their painting *and engraving*, which amounted to “ 2,000 or 2,500 florins more.” Who, we now ask, were those pupils—can they be shown to have been also etchers? Where are those engravings by which Rembrandt is said to have thus profited, but which the catalogues make no allowance for?

The first pupil that joined Rembrandt in the Breedstraat was Jan Van Vliet—that went with him there, rather, since he was already with him at Leyden—an etcher. Then Ferdinand Bol—an etcher. Then Jan Lievens—an etcher. Then Govart Flink; then Jacob Backer, Gerard Dow, and De Wedt (but which of the brothers we know not, except that it was the same that painted the “Raising of Lazarus” now at St. Petersburg). Then De Poorter, an etcher; Savry, an etcher; and Victor. Then Philip Koninck, an etcher; then Gerbrandt Van Den Eckhout, an etcher; and, probably about the same time, P. CÆ. Rodermondts and J. Verbeeck, both etchers. There were many more—thirty in fact in his house at a time, and many of them etchers too—but as they did not join Rembrandt till after the time at which, as we shall presently show, he had ceased to avail himself of pupil work in his engraved publications (that is to say till after 1639), we abstain from naming them. Well, what do we know of the etched works of these men? Does it in any way resemble in style and manner what we now see on the walls of our gallery? We answer, with considerable confidence, that it does; that we have there, in one and the same year, the work of Rembrandt, the work of Lievens, and the work of Bol, and the work of all three of them together. Is that really so? Is it susceptible of proof? If it be, then must the arrangement of every Cabinet in Europe be altered—every *Catalogue*

*Raisonné* extant, become obsolete! We are aware of this, and are sensible of the gravity of the position we are creating. We know what our distinguished and courteous friend, Monsieur Charles Blanc, who has committed himself to the old heresy, will say. Still we shrink not. Why should we? We are but proposing to exchange our habit of thinking in one direction—or possibly of taking things for granted without thinking at all—for the use of our eyes, and asking the same sacrifice of others. We do but suggest that they shall examine closely, critically, and anew, as we have done, the various public collections of the signed Etchings of Rembrandt's Scholars, and then—while the eye is full of what they have seen—that they shall carry their corrected knowledge with them into our Club gallery and compare it with what they find there. The following references—we apologise for the necessity of making them—will facilitate the inquiry.

(It has been suggested that we have made mistakes in our enumeration and nomination of the pupils of Rembrandt. Nothing is more likely. The accounts we have of many of these men and, with two or three exceptions, the men themselves, are too obscure, and the work they did too bad, to render a more laborious identification of them than we have here thought it necessary to make anything but a waste of time.)

*Jan Van Vliet.*—The characteristic of Van Vliet, the youngest of Rembrandt's pupils, is blackness, violent opposition of light and shade destructive of all tonality and all repose; coarse, incorrect drawing; vulgarity and exaggeration of expression; absence of quality. How could such a man be tolerated, much less employed, by such a master! How permitted, as we see he was (Wilson, 28-29), to make distorted second states of some of Rembrandt's plates, and even to

attach to vile copies of others of them his master's name (W. 8, 15, Signed "R. H. 1631," 136), and many more, of which, in particular, may be instanced (Brit. Mus.) his copy of "Rembrandt in a turned-up hat and embroidered mantle," with the signature and date of "R. H., 1631," in close, and evidently intentional, *fac simile*, but with a mistake in the last numeral of the date of 4 for 1. The work, however, of Van Vliet is not (positively) recognisable in any but the earliest Etchings of Rembrandt, and in the crowd of "small Heads" which have been recklessly attributed to him—and which we observe are still attributed to him—by the cataloguers. After that it was confined to the reproduction of his master's works, and, in its *ensemble*, constitutes the "*cupboard full of prints by Van Vliet, after pictures by Rembrandt,*" which figure in the catalogue of the bankruptcy.

*Ferdinand Bol.*—*En revanche*, there was nothing vulgar about Ferdinand Bol, but rather a quiet dignity which brought his work into closer harmony with that of Rembrandt than could be said of the work of any other of his scholars. He was, besides, a close imitator not only of the manner, but of the actual *modus operandi* of Rembrandt—a copier not only of the subject but of the very lines which composed it—so that at times, except for an absence of purpose inherent in the copied line, it is extremely difficult to say of two things at once so similar and so dissimilar—this is by Rembrandt and this by Bol. His weeds and broken foregrounds (Daulby 2), his foliage and middle distances (Brit. Mus. 20 and D. 2), and his treatment of masonry (B. M. 20) are studied *fac similes* of the same accessories when employed by Rembrandt, and the action and drawing of his hands are invariably good. See also (Brit. Mus. 12, 13) (Daulby 3, 8, 9). His hand (in our opinion) is largely seen in the present Collection.



*Jan Lievens.*—Lievens, since he signed his own works and was of the same age as Rembrandt, must be considered as a *Sectateur* and assistant rather than as a pupil.\* His style is of three distinct kinds—his own, thin and without force (Brit. Mus. D. 1)—that of Rembrandt (Brit. Mus. 45,)—and a late semi-Italian or “noble” style, as it was called, which he acquired at Antwerp (Brit. Mus. 40, 42). His diagnostic mark is an attempt to express dramatic force by a protrusion of the eye-ball and an exaggerated isolation of the pupil (Brit. Mus. 7), and by a treatment of atmospheric backgrounds by curls and vagaries of the needle, intended to be like Rembrandt’s, but really like nothing either in art or in nature (Brit. Mus. 14). We are of opinion that he was extensively employed by Rembrandt in the production of his larger etchings, and we shall have much to say of him when we come to speak of those etchings, of which, we believe, there are several in the Gallery. His powers became greatly developed in after life, and, when he left Rembrandt, he did some fine things on his own account, both portraits (D. 55) and woodcuts (W. 318).

(It has been objected that Lievens was in England at the very time we have supposed him to be at Amsterdam. In 1630, says Mr. Middleton, “we find” Lievens in England. But, as a matter of fact, that is just where we do not find him. Lievens did, indeed (April 10, 1629), apply to the Civic Guard of Leyden to dispense him from the night-watch, because it was his “*intention* to go immediately” to England; but inasmuch as three months afterwards he was still at Leyden, and the leave granted him was expressly terminable at the end of those three months if he still remained there, and was never, to all appearance, renewed, the inference

\* By the *Acte Constitutif* of the Guild of Painters at the Hague it was forbidden to a pupil during his apprenticeship, under penalty of a fine, to sign his own works.

is rather that he did *not* go—and this inference is strengthened by the following considerations:—1. That no mention is made of him either by Walpole or Vertue in their exhaustive accounts of the foreign painters then in this country. 2. That his name does not appear in the official lists at Painters' Hall. 3. That no pictures of his are known to be in England except one\* which there is no reason to suppose was painted there. While, on the other hand, positive evidence does exist in the treatment of the "Three Oriental Heads," and in the palpable adoption by Lievens of Rembrandt's handling at this time (B. M. 14), that a much more intimate connection than Mr. Middleton thinks existed between the two.

But even supposing that we have been mistaken,—and this is quite possible—in our attribution of specific portions of these etchings to this or that one of Rembrandt's contemporaries, the main argument that the etchings in question are not by Rembrandt's hand, but by the hands of one or other of his pupils, still remains untouched.)

*Philip Koninck.*—But the artist nature—the robust organisation—most akin to Rembrandt's was Philip Koninck's.

His paintings and etchings, both portrait and landscape, so closely approach those of his great prototype that we may well expect to find evidence of his collaboration with Rembrandt in his engraved publications. We do not find it, however, for the reason, probably, that he did not join Rembrandt till between 1635 and 1640, when, with one or two exceptions, he had ceased to avail himself of pupil-work in his etchings. His name, therefore, is introduced here rather to discharge than convict him of any such supposed association.

*Paulvs Egidius Rottermondts* (or Rodermondts), like Van

\* Smith Barry Collection.

Vliet, was engaged in making etchings with the signature of Rembrandt in *fac simile*, but whether as a disciple or a mere appropriator we have been unable to determine. His etching of "Esau Selling his Birthright" (Brit. Mus.), reminds us of the "Good Samaritan," and there are some cocks and hens in it in the middle distance ludicrously like the conventional birds which figure in that much overestimated print.

*Philip Virbeeck*.—The etchings of Virbeeck are also singularly like the early work of Rembrandt, and of the "Good Samaritan" in particular, but are said to have been done (which, however, we doubt) before his time.

*Salomon Savry* confined himself to the Etching of "Beggars" (W. 174, 175), which are freely signed with Rembrandt's name, with the one exception of "The Ratcatcher," the copy of which he avows.

In all these cases the difficulty of ascription is enhanced by three things. Firstly, by the *acte constitutif* of the Guild of Painters at the Hague already mentioned, which forbade pupils during their apprenticeship to sign their own works. Secondly, by the fact that the etchings which these pupils were employed upon are, after all, from Rembrandt's design, and therefore imbued with his manner. Thirdly, by the circumstance that these etchings are rendered all the more *trompeuse* by having received Rembrandt's corrections and by being published with his *imprimatur*.

But stranger still than that Rembrandt should have employed his pupils to carry out his designs is the fact that he himself, and that in a fashion quite undisguised, availed himself on numerous occasions of theirs (and of many others); thus—Jan Van de Velde is the reputed author of "The



Good Samaritan" (W. 95), "The Pancake Woman" (W. 128), and "The Charlatan" (W. 132); Beham of the *Gueux*, with the inscriptions "*t'is Vinnich Kout*" and "*dats niet*," which Rembrandt copied and Savry etched (W. 174, 175); Lievens, of the three "Oriental Heads" (W. 288, 289, 290); Jan de Wedt, so it is said, of much of the motive of the great "Raising of Lazarus" (W. 77); Bol of the plate attributed to, but only adopted by, Rembrandt in the "Pampiere Werld"; Eckhout of the "Sacrifice of Abraham" (W. 39), Albert Durer of the figure of Christ in the "Money Changers" (W. 73); Martin Van Heemskerck of two of the subjects from the Life of Tobit; Leonardo da Vinci of the famous Rembrandt drawing, with slight variations, of "The Last Supper," in the Collection of M. De Vos; Heemskerck again of the "Return of the Prodigal" (W. 96). Hercules Seghers of the "Flight into Egypt" (W. 61). Gerard Dow of the "Woman of Samaria at the Ruins"? (W. 74). Andrea Mantegna of the small "Holy Family" (W. 67), and others whose names we cannot call to mind of the "Travelling Musicians" (W. 123), the small "Disciples at Emmaus" (W. 93), and the "Onion Woman" (Ch. Blanc 102). To these, also, may be added the great "St. Jerome at the foot of a Tree" (W. 109), which is after a drawing by Titian, and several other etchings, in which Titian's or Campagnola's drawings or prints furnished motives for the backgrounds (W. 208, 64, 112).

But strangest fact of all—several of these artists came to be, in the estimation of Rembrandt's contemporaries, of greater account than he. If a public work or historical fact, such as the visit of Henrietta Maria to Amsterdam, had to be illustrated, it was Lievens or Bol, not Rembrandt, who was called upon by the authorities to immortalise it. If a large price had to be paid for a picture, it was Flink who was

the Millais of the day. If verses in honour of Painting had to be composed, it was to Koninck, not Rembrandt, that the bays were awarded.

“Roi Philippe.” “Roi (*i.e.* König) par le pinceau et les couleurs.”

It was to no purpose that Rembrandt, then in the Rozen-gracht, was painting and etching with a splendour hitherto unequalled. A reaction had set in. His *prestige* had departed. It was no longer necessary, as Houbraken once told us, to paint like Rembrandt to command success; what was now necessary was *not* to paint like him. Six florins was enough for a portrait of his then going begging for a purchaser, while Flink was living in a palace, and Vondel was exalting him and Koninck at Rembrandt's expense,

“C'est Flink dont la Clarté nous sert d'avis.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Painting also has its Sons of Darkness,  
 “Like owls loving the night;  
 “While Koninck follows truth,  
 “And, dealing not in false shadows  
 “Or in phantoms clothed in black,  
 “Paints life and nature as it is—*clear*.”

All of which, doubtless, the “Son of Darkness,” and the “Owl loving the night,” received with unruffled equanimity.

\* \* \* \* \*

We may now enter our imaginary Gallery,\* and, without losing sight of the special object with which it has been filled, proceed to the examination of its contents. The order of hanging and presumed date of production have been arrived at in the following manner. The dated etchings of a given year were first hung; then those which were not dated, but which presented a similarity of manner with the dated etchings of that year; or which were known to have some

\* See Prefatory Note, *ante*, p. vi.

necessary association with the events of Rembrandt's life at that time; or which immediately followed on pictures of the same subject painted in that or the previous year; or, if portraits, when they corresponded with the known age of the individual at the time. Thus the little etching of the dying Saskia (W. 353), which is an undated work of the style of the middle period, finds its place in 1642, partly because it is like the work of 1642, partly because, on the face of it, it is a portrait of Saskia, and partly because it is known that Saskia died in that year. By the aid of these and other *data* the task of assignment has proved by no means so difficult as had been prophesied, and for all the purposes of a comprehensive study of the master it may, we think, be taken as sufficiently correct. (*Du reste*, there is no more difficulty in establishing the approximate date of an etching than of a picture.)

This much premised—a glance at the collection in its dated order of sequence, will show us much that this article is meant to demonstrate. Manifest differences of style and treatment marking the dawn, growth, and maturity of Rembrandt's genius, will probably strike us first; then a certain inequality in the work of the first ten years, as if different hands had been employed upon it—coarse publications like the "Ecce Homo," coming into incongruous apposition with refined plates like the "Death of the Virgin," melodramatic efforts like the "Raising of Lazarus," with timid representations like the "Good Samaritan,"—and so forth. These once passed, a greater homogeneity of design and handling will become apparent, and then Landscape will be seen not only to have a place, but to become so unexpectedly predominant as nearly to fill the wall space devoted to the next ten years. Then, at last, this in its turn will give way to portraits, compositions, and biblical subjects of such

transcendent power and beauty that we shall need no more to convince us that the apogee of this form of art has been finally attained.

Our circuit will also have suggested this to us, that, in our more deliberate examination of the prints before us as well as for the convenience of such passing reference as we shall here have to make to them, we shall do well to consider them as belonging, not only to certain years, but to one or other of three periods or decenniads; an Early, or first period—from 1628 to 1639; a Middle, or second period—from 1640 to 1650; and a Late, or third period—from 1651 to 1661.

#### EARLY PERIOD. 1628 TO 1639.

We have said that a chief object in the present arrangement has been to obtain by it the advantage, never yet enjoyed on such a scale, of comparing one etching with another so as to arrive at a knowledge of what is and what is not by Rembrandt. As it happens, an example of this kind of advantage meets us at the very threshold. Thus, if we compare the subtle portrait of Rembrandt's mother (W. 348) and the spirited little etching of Rembrandt himself (W. 16) with an aged head which is a little below it (W. 26) we shall see at once that, of the three things, two only are by the same hand, and, from what we now know of the work of Rembrandt's scholars, that the third is, in all probability, by Bol. Similar or analogous mistakes, it may here be mentioned, have been constantly met with and corrected during the hanging of the Collection, till at length, by a process of expurgation, which, however, has still left us quite questionable prints enough for illustration, our Gallery has been in a great measure cleared of them.

Portraits of Rembrandt, and his Mother and Wife, abound

in this period, those of himself being, commonly, in some fancy costume which, in the gravity of mature age, we notice he does not condescend to. The most important of these is "Rembrandt in a turned-up hat and embroidered mantle" (W. 7), on the first state of which we have Rembrandt's drawing, with signature, date, and age, in his own handwriting. We shall do well to spend a little time over this interesting and valuable print,\* partly because of the evidence it gives us of Rembrandt's age, and partly because it is necessary we should know that the chalk additions to it were made, not at the time of its execution, 1631, but at some period posterior to that date. The handling, the writing, and the discrepancy between the signature in full and the "*R. H.*," which Vosmaer has shown was his proper signature at that time, and which appears on every subsequent state of the plate except the 7th state, leave us in no doubt as to this. Then "Rembrandt with three moustaches" † (W. 2), a small head of extreme beauty and vivacity, should be noticed ; then three others which occur towards the end of the series—"Rembrandt in a cap and feather" (W. 20), "Rembrandt with a drawn sabre" (W. 18), and "Rembrandt leaning on a sill" (W. 21), the latter having on both the first and second states, as in Mr. Holford's print, the artist's drawing in pencil. We do not class the all-but-unique "Rembrandt with an aigrette" (W. 23) among his portraits, because the face (compared with W. 2) is clearly not his, and because it has a distinct mole near the nose, which Rembrandt had not. Among the portraits of his mother is, besides the charming head of 1628, one (W. 340) which deserves notice from the fact that it is in widow's

\* The compiler of the "Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt," in emulation we suppose of our suggestions, makes the extraordinary statement that only the head in this print is by Rembrandt !—Academy, Feb. 24, 1877.

† We repeat these titles to avoid confusion, but it is high time that a new and more simple nomenclature was adopted.



weeds for the death of Harmen (his father), and that Rembrandt has availed himself of that event to attach his name to it at full length ; up to that time his signature having been, as has been shown,\* “*R. H.*” (“Rembrandt Harmenszoon”—Harmen’s son). The fine head of his wife, Saskia (W. 337), then a bride, next claims attention ; the 1st rare state, in particular, because of its extraordinary brilliancy of execution and of the consummate way in which it is lighted, and also because it is an instance of how much may be lost, even in such hands as Rembrandt’s, in the elaboration of an etching, or rather in the act of taking it up to work upon it a second time. To judge by the shadow projected by the head, the etching in its 1st state would seem to have been made opposite an ordinary window, and, from the same shadow in subsequent states, to have been completed in the studio—with how much loss to its luminous quality it is needless to say.†

We now come to a series of prints which belong entirely to this period (some of which are here, but the majority of which have been excluded), the authenticity of which we distinctly impugn ; that is, we say of them that they are only in part—and that in small part—by Rembrandt, and, although after Rembrandt’s design, and done in his house, and under his surveillance and correction, that they are executed by his scholars or assistants. These are—besides a number ‡ of heads by Van Vliet, signed “*R. H.*,” which are not here, but which are chronicled as Rembrandt’s work in all the catalogues—a little wood-cut of a “Philosopher with an Hour Glass,” by Lievens ; “A Bust of an Old Man,” by Bol (?) ;

\* Vosmaer, 1st Edit. vol. i. pp. 134-136, and, after him, Middleton, who is specific in his mention of an exact date. Academy, No. 251, p. 169.

† This had been already pointed out by Mr. Frederick Wedmore.

‡ The compiler of the “Descriptive Catalogue” makes us say (p. 12) “most” of these heads.

“The Flight into Egypt,” *Rembrandt inventor et fecit*, 1633, probably also by Bol, after a design by Lastman; “The Good Samaritan,” *Rembrandt inventor et fecit*, 1633, by Bol or Rotterdamt (?); “The Raising of Lazarus,” *R. H. V. Riyu ft.*; “The Great Descent from the Cross,” *Rembrandt fecit cum pryvl.* 1633, by Lievens or Bol (?); “Adverse Fortune,” *Rembrandt f.* 1633, probably by Bol (?); the “Three Oriental Heads,” *Rembrandt geretuckerdt*, 1635, by Lievens. “Rembrandt with a Bird of Prey;” by Van Vliet (?); the “Ecce Homo,” *Rembrandt, f.* 1636, “*cum privile,*” by Lievens, (or possibly, Van Vliet ?); “Rembrandt with Frizzled Hair,” by Van Vliet (?); “St. Jerome in Meditation,” *Rembrandt*, 1634, by Bol (?); “The Goldweigher,” *Rembrandt f.*, 1639, of which the head and shoulders only are by Rembrandt; and “Rembrandt Drawing from a Model,” of which the *ébauche* alone is by his hand, and the rest—as in the case of the Goldweigher—by Bol (?).

“THE RAISING OF LAZARUS” (W. 77).—There is no date on this print, and the signature is not Rembrandt’s, nor is the *ordonnance* of the plate; nor its melodramatic action; nor is it at all like any of Rembrandt’s work previous to 1633, when he was using the signature “*R. H.*,” or indeed after it. It looks as if done from a picture, and it is said, though we cannot vouch for this, that there is a picture like it at St. Petersburg, by De Wedt. Whether this is so or not there is little of Rembrandt, either in feeling, composition, or execution, in the plate before us, and what there is has the air of being foreign to it—of having been imported into it. The etching of the robe on the principal figure is very able, but not like Rembrandt’s. There is work in different parts of the sky like the work of Lievens, and more still in every part of the plate (except the figure of Christ), like that of Bol. The faces in the crowd are Bol’s, as well as the rock and earth

lines, and the shadowing under the signature. On the other hand there is more force in the work than is usual with Bol, and more, apparently, of the hardihood of Lievens.\* Altogether, therefore, while we profess a general distrust of the plate, we hesitate to pronounce upon it, nor do we know when it was done. Meanwhile, the Student may compare it for *difference from Rembrandt's work* with the head of Rembrandt (W. 16) done before it, and with the small head of Rembrandt (W. 2) done after it; and for *similarity with Bol's work*, with the School of Rembrandt in the British Museum, and with the heads in the "Good Samaritan" (W. 95).

"THE GOOD SAMARITAN" (W. 95).—Of this work we may speak with less hesitation. We hold that the plate is by Bol—unless, indeed, which we once thought possible, Rembrandt found for the occasion another Bol in Rotterdam. The barrel in the right corner without substance, rotundity, or containing power; the straw above it like hair; the landscape, buildings, and foliage in the middle distance, Rembrandtesque, but not Rembrandt; the toy poultry; the ill-expressed masonry about the window; the boy holding the horse; the old man on the steps; the weeds in the foreground; all have their counterpart in Bol's work in the British Museum. Meantime, Vosmaer, speaking of an anterior etching of the same subject, signed "*I van de Velde fecit*" (to whom, in fact, though we cannot agree with him, he attributes its invention), says, "La scène me paraît le prototype de celle de Rembrandt, avec son vieil édifice, son perron, où apparaît un valet portant une torche, son escalier, au bas duquel le Samaritain paye l'hôte qui tient une chandelle, et avec son cheval et le serviteur qui en enlève le blessé. Le fond en diffère." † Compare the heads in this composition, for *difference*, with

\* Mr. Middelton thinks Van Vliet. Possibly.

† Vosmaer. "Rembrandt, sa vie et ses œuvres," p. 39, 1st Edit.



“Rembrandt's mother” (W. 348), or “Rembrandt with three moustaches” (W. 2), or the portrait of “Saskia” (W. 337.)

“THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS” (W. 84).—Of the various copies made for Rembrandt in the year 1633 (the year prolific of copies) this plate is the one at once the most able, and yet the most demonstrably a copy, since the evidence against it is not only such as it bears on its face, but such as is obtainable from without. There are, in fact, two plates of the subject similar in size, but widely different in execution and comparative merit. Of these two plates, the first one failed in the biting, and was abandoned; the one exhibited being a second plate done to replace the first. A close study of the two is needful to the appreciation of the views put forth in this article. The first plate (Brit. Mus. W. 83) is finely and delicately etched, and has all the appearance of being by the hand of Rembrandt. The work in it is masterly, and looks original; that is to say, every line and mark in it has its purpose, and there is a look about the whole as if it had been done *con amore*. An attempt, for the purpose of illustration, has been made to photograph a portion of this first plate, but the ruin made by the acid has been too complete to make the reproduction other than a confused blot. (Plate 2). Carefully looked at, however, and compared with a photograph of a similar portion of the second plate (Plate 3), its superiority of handling will be at once perceived. In the foreground, for instance, is an embroidered cloth: look at it attentively, and then carry the eye quickly to the same cloth in the second plate; look at the ladder and the strands that compose it, and especially at its lowest rung in the first plate, and then at the mechanical rendering of it in the second; at the work, and especially at the outline and drawing of the advanced leg of the kneeling man, in the one, and at the same thing in the other. If a difference of quality, fatal to the idea

of the two plates being by the same hand, be not immediately perceived nothing that we can say will make the difference apparent. If it be perceived, it is worth while to carry the comparison further. Look again, therefore, at the embroidered cloth in the first plate, and two pins will be perceived in it by which the folds have been arranged as an artist would arrange them. Examine these folds, and the fine action of the point by which they have been expressed; and then, as before, examine the same would-be folds in the second plate; at the roundness expressive of substance of the one cloth, and the unsubstantial flatness of the other which the heaviest work has proved unable to redeem; at the woodwork, which is like wood on the ladder of the first, and at the gross idea of a ladder which the copyist has had in the second. From such an examination carried over the whole of the two plates, it is, we hold, impossible to avoid the conclusion that the first was done by a master, the last by a scholar; and that the scholar in this case was, probably, Lievens. Compare with the same heads of Rembrandt, for *difference*, and with the works of Lievens referred to at page 16 for *similarity with his work*.\*

ST. JEROME IN MEDITATION (W. 105).—This is a small plate with much of the character of the heads in the “Good Samaritan,” and presumably by Bol. The lion is the heraldic leopard, and has its counterpart in an etching by Bol of St. Jerome in a cavern (D 3). A drawing of a lion by Rembrandt, of a later date however, has been placed next to it by way of contrast.

“THE THREE ORIENTAL HEADS” (W. 288).—We need not waste much time over these. The original of one of

\* Marriette (MS. note) has referred to the “*addition*” of certain burin lines in this print as being, evidently, not by Rembrandt.

them, with the characteristic staring eyes, by Lievens, is here, and we credit it with being the original head, and think it better than the supposed copy of it, "with retouches," by Rembrandt. As to the signature, we are convinced from re-examination that Vosmaer's reading of it as a Dutch word signifying "retouched," is the correct one. That Lievens, and no one else, is mainly responsible for the *authorship*\* of all these plates we cannot doubt.†

"THE ECCE HOMO" (W. 82).—Here again we are assisted by evidence from without. First, we have the original picture obligingly placed at the disposal of the Club by Lady Eastlake; next, two finished proofs of the etching itself; next, a *fac simile* of an unfinished proof of the etching in course of reproduction by the copyist; and, lastly, several etchings large and small, done at the same time by Rembrandt, to compare with these, namely, "The Death of the Virgin," "The Presentation in the Vaulted Temple," and "Youth Surprised by Death." We have only to bring the whole of this evidence into juxtaposition—picture, proof, copy, and Rembrandt's undoubted work—to be assured that this popular, but coarse print, for which such large sums have been paid, and which the cataloguers one and all go out of their way to extol, is no more than an able copy largely touched upon by Rembrandt, and published by him solely for commercial purposes. To make this clear, we have had a reduced *fac simile* made of a portion of the unfinished proof (Plate 4). It is worth observing; the handling of it; the weak heads in the left corner; and the glaring fact that the copyist—proceeding from the sides of the plate

\* Mr. Middleton makes us say that "both" original and copy are "*by*" Lievens ("Descriptive Catalogue," p. 105).

† Is it possible—we hazard the suggestion merely—that "geretuckerdt" may mean "redone" as well as "retouched"?

towards its centre, in true mechanical fashion, finishing as he goes—has actually made the shadows projected by the legs of Pilate's chair, before making the legs themselves! The late respected Keeper of the Prints of the British Museum (is reported to have) said, of this unfinished proof, that "it was "wonderful Rembrandt could have worked in this strange "way from the side toward the centre of his plate," or something to that effect,\* but two things certainly never struck Mr. Carpenter; namely, that an original artist would *not* have worked in this way, and that a copyist *would* †—and that other examples are to be found in Rembrandt's works of spaces thus left by the copyist for him to fill up, as in the "Goldweiger." But as if to make all this still plainer there happens to be in the British Museum a second impression of this rare unfinished state, covered with Rembrandt's corrections of the scholar's work—great dabs of bistre here, to let him know where it was to be stronger; sweeping erasures there, to show where it was to be altogether removed—and, generally, such an emphatic treatment of the proof as we see in unfinished prints of the *Liber Studiorum* of Turner. Compare for *difference with Rembrandt's work at this time*, the "Death of the Virgin" (W. 104); "The Presentation in the Vaulted Temple" (W. 54); and "Youth surprised by Death" (W. 113); and for *similarity with the work of Lievens*—whom we designate as the probable author of the plate—the prints by him in the British Museum, to which we have referred at page 16.

"THE GOLD WEIGHER" (W. 283).—Here, as we have said, is another instance of the copyist—in this case we

\* Mr. Reid, the present Keeper of the Prints, has since (Appendix, p. 49) informed us, textually, of what Mr. Carpenter did say.

† See M. Flameng's copy in course of execution of the "Hundred Guilder" plate.

believe Bol—working from the sides towards the centre evidently in the preparation of an etching which Rembrandt was to finish by putting in the principal head. Of this plate we should say that it is from a picture,\* and that, like another plate next it, “Rembrandt drawing from a model,” it was *ébauché* by Rembrandt, and given to Bol to fill in, but with instructions to leave a vacant place for the head and shoulders. The head once put in, the most unpractised eye will see the difference between the masterly work of Rembrandt which composes it and the furred robe, and the rest of the plate—between it and the head of the kneeling boy for instance; while for *difference* between the money-chest, barrels, and tablecloth, observe the accessories in the “Death of the Virgin,” and, for general dissimilarity of work, with “Youth surprised by Death,”—both contemporary prints.

“REMBRANDT DRAWING FROM THE MODEL” (W. 189).—The free use of the dry-point line in the laying in of this plate gives it the look of a much later production, but we think from the work in the background, that it is a plate of about this time, which, for some unknown reason, was abandoned while in the act of being filled in by Bol. On the first state, when out of the frame, will be seen, in fact, Rembrandt’s instructions to his pupil to lower the tone of the two light patches which appear as “spots” in the background.†

We have now come to the end of what we have called these “commercial plates,” respecting which we may mention,

\* Since writing the above we have acquired in Holland an old and very fine mezzotint by J. Van Der Brugge of this picture, in which, on the ground, is a monkey, which does not appear in the etching

† The suggestion that this is a later print may possibly be a correct one. It has been retained where it is however partly because the date is doubtful, and partly to show the similarity in the handling of the background with that of the “Goldweiger,” which hangs next to it.



as a proof of our consistency, that we would never admit them into our own collection. We can at no time, indeed, remember—even in our youngest and least experienced day—to have felt the least desire to possess any of them.

And now a word, in especial, as to the year 1633. In this year there were done in Rembrandt's studio more etchings alone than would have occupied a professed engraver for a year. If Rembrandt did them all, how, we would ask, did he manage to do thirty-three known pictures, large and small, and a number of signed drawings besides? The two great plates of the "Descent from the Cross" would alone have occupied six months of the time, and the aggregate work of the year, these two great plates included, would have been at the rate of a picture or etching a week!

#### MIDDLE PERIOD. 1640 TO 1650.

We enter upon the Middle Period with, as it were, a new sensation. Much had happened to Rembrandt by this time. He had made a great name, he had married, and his wife was dying; and we know that after her death things did not go well with him. We also remember that about this time less began to be heard of him. Is there anything about the work of this period to throw light on this obscure part of his career? We have said, as an apology for our new method of approaching the subject of Rembrandt, that the accidents and events of a man's life are the immediate incentives and regulators of his work. Inversely then, ought not the Work to tell us something about the Man? Where was Rembrandt at this time? What became of him after the death of Saskia in 1642, and the disorder of his affairs? Was he still in Amsterdam?

If so, how is it we cease to hear of him, and that he is no longer painting and etching its citizens? Does the sudden appearance of Landscape in his work, and its singular preponderance in the etchings of this period—to which, indeed, it is almost wholly confined—tell us nothing on this score? What part of Holland furnished him with the motives of all these landscapes—“The Three Trees,” the “Omval,” the “Goldweigher’s Field,” the “Hog,” the “Bull,” the “Orchard,” the “Cow Drinking,” the “Milk Pails,” the “Boat House,” the “Village near a High Road Arched”? Where are they? They negative the idea that he was still in Amsterdam, but they do not tell us what we want to know, which is where he was. Does our boasted chronological arrangement—do our dates—tell us nothing? Saskia died in 1642, and the two or three landscapes which precede that date are at, or in the immediate neighbourhood of, Amsterdam. But after that? Well, we believe we have the answer before us. Look at the group of etchings, brought as it were by accident close together, under the years 1645 to 1648. The “Portrait of Jan Six” (W. 287), “Six’s Bridge” (W. 205), “Medea” (W. 116), the frontispiece to Six’s tragedy; the “Spanish Gipsy” (W. 83), an illustration of another tragedy in which, doubtless, Six was also interested; the portrait of the Portuguese Physician, “Ephraim Bueno” (W. 280), the original picture of which Six had in his possession; “A Grotto,” so-called, but as we think, a garden boat-house (W. 107); “Rembrandt Drawing at a Window” (W. 22). Surely that window can be no other than a window in Six’s house, and that Rembrandt had found refuge and solace at this time with his sympathetic and powerful friend at Elsbroeck; and that these things, and all these landscapes—and possibly the “Hundred Guilder Print” itself, which we observe close at hand—were thought out and finished in his companionship, and



under his sheltering roof. If so, what an episode in the intellectual life of Six—what a compensation for Rembrandt!

Passing the more important of the prints of this epoch in rapid review, and noticing, as we go, the singular addition of Italian backgrounds to more than one Dutch foreground among the landscapes, we have the famous "Mill" (W. 230)—not "Rembrandt's mill" though, as the catalogues have it, but a mill etched from a large picture which we ourselves remember to have seen many years ago at the British Institution—a most beautiful and rare proof; the bright little etching of "Amsterdam" (W. 207), and the "Saskia Dying" (W. 353), of which rare print there are two proofs, one touchingly worked upon by the hand of Rembrandt himself; then the "Three Trees" (W. 209), grave and sombre as at such a time it would be; then the beautiful "Omval" (W. 206), the most perfect of landscapes, done just three years after the death of Saskia; then the "Elsbroeck Group" as we henceforth propose to call them, among which is the portrait of "Sylvius" (W. 282)—the remonstrant minister who suffered, and looks as if he had suffered, for his opinions—the cousin of Saskia, the ally of Rembrandt, and who, in fact, married them; not done from the life, for Sylvius had died in 1638, but from a picture painted from recollection of him in 1644; and what place so suggestive of such congenial recollections as the quiet of Elsbroeck? Then the "Faustus" (W. 272), the two "St. Jeromes," the larger one of which is after a drawing by Titian\* (W. 109); the "Landscape with a Ruined Tower" in its rare 1st state (W. 220), the "Gold Weighers' Field" (W. 231), so called, but which we would rather believe to be the Chateau of Six; and, finally, the

\* This drawing, differing in nothing from the etching, except in the absence of the lion, and the presence of a recumbent figure of Venus in place of the Saint, was recently sold in London at Dr. Wellesley's sale.

famous "Hundred Guilder" print (W. 78) in its two states. These speak so eloquently for themselves, and are represented by such exceptionally fine proofs, that we need do no more than recommend a careful study of them. Of the "Hundred Guilder" prints, however—of which there are no less than four magnificent impressions, two of them in the first state—a few special words are very necessary. No difference, it will be observed, as to *technique*,\* exists between these two states except a few oblique lines laid across the neck of the ass in the right-hand corner of the plate—a few lines, however, which represent a difference of many hundreds of pounds in their market value. Now, of these two states, what we want to say, as practical etchers and printers, is this: that for the reasons given at page 10, the two impressions in the later states are more satisfactory than those in the earlier. We know, probably within one or two, how many impressions were taken of this rare first state, for Rembrandt has told us on the back of one of them. Well, of those few impressions (all of which we have seen,) we say advisedly that they have not, as yet, what we have previously called "begun to print"—that the ink has not yet fully entered into all their lines, and, consequently, that the lighter and more luminous portions of them to the left of the plate are less good as to impression than in the proofs in the second state which immediately succeed them. The point being an important one, as bearing upon the conventional, as opposed to the real, value of "states," we direct attention to it.

#### LATE PERIOD—1651 TO 1666.

The latest period opens with portraits of Rembrandt's friend and publisher Clement de Jonge, John Asselyn, and Coppenol,

\* We use this word as applied to the work of Rembrandt, which is singularly free from method, with reluctance.

from which, and from the fact that it presents us with only one dated landscape, "The Vista" (W. 219), we may conclude that, by this time, a return had been made to Amsterdam. Other Amsterdam portraits also, principally of friends like Lutma, Jan Antonides Van der Linden and Coppenol, or of persons connected with the proceedings in bankruptcy then going on, like Abraham Françen and the elder and younger Haaring, mark this period; besides the rare portraits of Rembrandt himself at an advanced age contributed by Monsieur Dutuit, and of Dr. Arnoldus Tholinx, usually confused with the advocate, and supposed alchemist, Van Tol. It is in this period, also, that we have the plate "Tobit and the Angel," by Hercules Seghers, so strangely adopted by Rembrandt, and altered by him into a "Descent into Egypt" (W. 61), and the "St. Francis," and that those sublime conceptions occur which fitly close the work of Rembrandt, "Christ Before Pilate," and the "Crucifixion."

The series of four impressions of "Clement de Jonge" (W. 274) should be first noticed, because of their broad treatment, and as examples of those progressive conditions of an etched plate, which may properly be designated "states." Nor should "Tobit blind" be passed by (W. 46), on account of its pathos and the complete mastery over the material which it displays, or the touched and other rare proofs of "Jan Asseliyn with the Easel" (W. 279), with the MS. date appended, 1651; or the "St. Francis" (W. 112), Italian in character, and with back-ground evidently inspired by Titian or Campagnola. But the portraits of the period—the conspicuous examples of the power of etching—are the "Lutma" (W. 278), the "Tholinx" (W. 286), first and second states, and the "Elder" (W. 276) and "Younger" (W. 277) Haaring. These alone would furnish material for a treatise. Since, however, the business of this essay is not with matters

which speak for themselves, but with points which have been misunderstood or which require elucidation, we pass on at once to the consideration of the two great plates to which we have referred, and which appear to us to involve such a point—namely, the “Christ before Pilate” (W. 80), and the “Crucifixion” W. 81).

In the present collection, notwithstanding a difference in their dates, these obviously companion prints—companion in feeling, treatment, size, and subject—have been brought into close juxtaposition, the “Presentation” first and the “Crucifixion” next to it, as if they were essentially one work, which, in its conception, composition, execution, and printing in all its various stages, had taken from first to last, not a week, as the cataloguers appear to suppose, but a year or more to accomplish. Nor has this arrangement involved any anachronism, since it is clear that the dates on the two plates refer in neither case to the year of their production, but only to the year in which certain late states of them were printed, which of course leaves the question open as to which of the two was done first. The rudely expressed actors in the “Crucifixion,” too, which had suggested an earlier performance, have been only thus “laid in,” because they had to be ultimately rendered in an advanced chiaroscuro to suit the divine passage which they were destined to illustrate. \* \* \* “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;” \* \* \* The plate, in short, from the first, was intended to be one of those dark plates of which we have an example in the “Christ Entombed” (W. 91). It was, therefore, useless to do more than indicate figures which were to be ultimately half obscured. And this being so, we would ask, How is it that this rude preparation for a chiaroscuro

plate—for it really amounts to nothing more—and which has impressed the observer so meanly as to cause him to take it for a younger work, yet so recommends itself to the collector that he will pay three times more for it than for the true and final expression of the perfected plate, which does not occur till towards its third state?

And now, imperfect as we feel it to be, this article would be still less complete without a word upon the insufficiency of the catalogues and of those who undertake to make them. To make a *Catalogue Raisonné* of the work of Rembrandt, it is not enough to be able to detect and record small points of difference, and yet be without a comprehensive knowledge of the man, and of his art, or of Art in general, or of the art of Etching in particular. Experience; practice; an actual acquaintance with what is possible and what is impossible to be done upon a plate of copper, and with the details of the printing process too; the ready discernment which belongs to the artist nature; the skill of the synthesist no less than of the analyst, and many a rare gift besides, must be in possession of him who would undertake so delicate and responsible a task. Borrowed ideas hastily picked up and strung together, the division and sub-division of things which in their very nature are indivisible, can, without such special aptitudes, but lead to the multiplication of states and differences profitable only to the dealer—and to a confusion of the subject even greater than that which exists at present.\*

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN.

May 1, 1877.

\* See "A STATEMENT" respecting a mutilated appropriation of most of the suggestions contained in this Monograph in the Appendix, p. 43.



## POSTSCRIPTUM.

It would be neither fair nor courteous, considering the tone of disparagement of catalogues and cataloguers in which the above article has confessedly been written, not to give to Monsieur Charles Blanc (who is too distinguished to be included within the general scope of its reflections) an opportunity of stating his reasons for not adopting the method of classification which we have proposed, and of which our present exhibition is the first practical example.

“ . . . . Pour ranger les estampes d’un maître,” says Monsieur Charles Blanc,\* “ il n’y a, ce nous semble, que deux méthodes : l’une consisterait à les classer selon leur date, de manière que l’on pût suivre les phases diverses du talent de l’artiste, ses commencements, ses progrès, son apogée, sa décadence, et une telle classification ne serait pas à coup sûr sans intérêt ; l’autre méthode serait toute de raison ; elle consisterait à rassembler les sujets homogènes et à les ranger philosophiquement par ordre d’importance, et pour ceux que tiennent à l’histoire, par ordre chronologique. C’est le parti que nous avons adopté, pour deux motifs : d’abord un grand nombre de pièces de Rembrandt ne portant pas de date, il serait impossible d’en supposer une à celles qui n’en ont point ; en second lieu, cet ordre serait, dans l’œuvre de ce maître, beaucoup moins curieux que dans celui de tout autre, parce que son génie ne présente aucune inégalité, aucune intermittence, depuis le début jusqu’à la fin de sa carrière de graveur, si bien que parmi tant de pièces, on n’en citerait guère qui se ressentent de l’inexpérience de la jeunesse ou de la faiblesse de l’âge avancé.† D’ailleurs l’œuvre de Rembrandt est si varié, qu’un classement suivant la date des eaux-fortes, présenterait une confusion désagréable et souvent choquante. Telle fantaisie un peu trop libre semblerait monstrueusement déplacée à côté d’un sujet tiré de l’Evangile. Il a donc fallu renoncer absolument à ce genre de classification.”

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\* Charles Blanc, “ L’Œuvre Complet de Rembrandt,” Paris, 1859, pp. 7, 8.

† On the contrary, a great difference of style marks the etchings of different periods.

PROPOSED CHANGE OF TITLE, AND FORM OF  
CATALOGUE.

Year of Production.		Dated Prints of the Middle Period from the Death of Saskia to the Return to Amsterdam, including the Etchings of the Elsbroeck Group.	No. in Wilson.	No. in Ch. Blanc.
1642	1	The Dying Saskia ... ..	353	202
	2	A Cottage with White Pales ...	229	332
1643	3	The Three Trees ... ..	209	315
	4	The Hog ... ..	154	350
1644	5	The Shepherd ... ..	217	321
1645	6	Abraham addressing Isaac ...	38	5
	7	The Omval ... ..	206	312
	8	Repose in Egypt ... ..	63	31
	9	Six's Bridge ... ..	205	311
	10	The Boat House ... ..	228	331
1646	11	Sylvius ... ..	282	187
1647	12	The Burgomaster Six ... ..	287	184
	13	Ephraim Bonus ... ..	280	172
1648	14	Medea ... ..	116	82
	15	The Gypsy ... ..	124	83
	16	Beggars at a Door ... ..	173	146
	17	St. Jerome Writing ... ..	108	74
	18	Rembrandt Drawing ... ..	22	235
	19	The Synagogue ... ..	130	98
1650	20	Christ Healing the Sick (1650?)...	78	49
	21	A Canal with Swans ... ..	232	335
	22	The Canal Boat ... ..	233	336
	23	The Flock of Sheep ... ..	221	325
	24	The Milkman ... ..	210	316
	25	The Village with a Square Tower	215	319
	26	The Three Cottages ... ..	214	318
1651	27	Six's Chateau (?) ... ..	231	334

It will be seen by a reference to existing catalogues that considerable liberties have been taken with the titles of most of the above etchings—No. 1, “A Woman with a large hood” being called “*The Dying Saskia* ;” No. 7, “Omval” (which is not a village, but a bend in the river Amstel, near Amsterdam), “*The Omval* ;” No. 10, “A Grotto with a Brook,” “*The Boat House*,” &c.; and (subject to further examination) No. 27, “The Goldweiger’s Field,” *Six’s Chateau*—the probability being that most, if not all, of the prints from 9 to 27 were done at Elsbroeck or in the neighbourhood. At Jan Six’s sale too in 1702 (Vosm. 385) were “some engraved plates by Rembrandt.”

F. S. H.



APPENDIX.



## A P P E N D I X.

*A Statement presented by the Author, March 1, 1879, to the Committee of the Burlington Fine Arts Club, respecting a mutilated appropriation of the foregoing Monograph in "A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt Van Ryn," by Charles Henry Middleton, B.A. 1879.*

THE necessity for a reprint of the preceding Monograph will be sufficiently explained by the annexed letter:—(*Athenæum*, January 18, 1879.)

"I should be doing myself less than justice if I did not at once direct critical attention to a treatise on 'The Etched Work of Rembrandt' which has just issued from the press.

"With the ink hardly dry of an essay which I wrote in the spring of 1877 on the same subject, I know not at which to be most amazed, the suppressions, the appropriations, or the misrepresentations in respect to it contained or implied in the treatise in question—unless, indeed, it be the dedication of that treatise to the members of the Burlington Fine Arts Club, in whose service the original essay was written, and by whose Committee it was printed and circulated.

"Meanwhile, as an individual member of the Club, and pending the republication of my Monograph, I have no choice but to repudiate a dedication to which my assent was never asked, and which, unrepudiated, would have the effect of committing me to a tacit approval of a disingenuous and unreliable book.

F. SEYMOUR HADEN.

"BURLINGTON FINE ARTS CLUB,  
"January 14."

Reduced to terms, the charge here preferred amounts to this:  
1. That, both the foregoing Monograph and the Chronological

arrangement to which it refers having been devised by its author to bring forward and substantiate views of his own as to the probable unauthentic character of certain of the prints hitherto attributed to Rembrandt, that arrangement and those views have been appropriated, *en bloc*, by the Rev. C. H. Middleton, B.A., and now stand as his ; 1, in a series of papers published by him in the *Academy*; 2, in "a Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt" of which he is the recent compiler.

2. That, shorn of these appropriations, which constitute their sole claim to originality, the publications in question are without a *raison d'être*, and—as to the Descriptive Catalogue in particular—that it is intrinsically unreliable.

To substantiate this charge the author proposes simply to contrast passages from the Monograph with extracts from Mr. Middleton's book, and to leave the reader to form his own conclusions; the few words of general explanation which follow being, however, in the first place, necessary.

When Mr. Middleton presented himself to the author in 1876, he regarded him, and was justified in regarding him, less as a student of Rembrandt, than as a literary man who saw that there was room for a new Catalogue of the Etchings, and who proposed to himself to supply the want. Admitting that, as yet, he knew little of Rembrandt and nothing of Etching processes, and that he was unendowed with any special art faculties to help him in such a task, he still hoped, by time and study, to surmount these disadvantages, and, as to the last, was not sure that it was a disadvantage. What he wanted, was to learn. He had heard of a projected Exhibition of Rembrandt's Etchings at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, which he understood was to be on a novel plan devised by the author, and he wished to profit by that exhibition; and if, in the way of mere clerical work for which he had abundant leisure, he could in any way assist in it, he should be glad to render such assistance, and, for that purpose, to place himself entirely under his (the author's) direction. On this modest footing Mr. Middleton was enlisted as a recruit, and became a member of the Club and of the Rembrandt Committee, and on these simple conditions his first piece of clerical work—which was to be the writing out of a chronological list of the Etchings based on that of Vosmaer—was given

him: the working plan of the committee being that the prints exhibited should first be hung according to such a list, and then that the author and the hanging committee should go in and change them and give them the order which, for the special purposes of the exhibition, they were ultimately to bear. All this was done; the Etchings were hung according to the approximative list prepared, and then, as agreed upon, the author and his colleagues, went in and altered them, rectifying dates that had been misread, relegating to their proper places late prints which Vosmaer had placed as early ones, and, generally, bringing the whole collection into the order which from the first he had designed it to have, and which it was absolutely necessary it should have, to bring it into harmony and intelligible accord with the paper which he was writing and with the new views which it was the object of that paper to develop.

Meanwhile, a circumstance had occurred which materially disturbed the smooth current of these proceedings. Mr. Middleton, who had by this time been a member of the club long enough to master the author's plan in all its details, had written him a letter in which he began to speak of his work as in some sort his own, and, closely following on this letter, had appeared in the *Academy* a paper which clearly foreshadowed his intention to make such a claim. Moreover, this paper being headed No. 1, seemed to promise a series which, at the rate only of one a fortnight, might easily have been made to cover the whole ground of the author's speculations, and to forestall the appearance of the paper which he was preparing, and which would not, in the ordinary course, be printed till April. Now, apart from the extreme impropriety of such a proceeding on the part of a member of a club engaged with other members in a common work, and the sinister intention which it betrayed, was this serious inconvenience attending it: viz., that before even the hanging of the frames could be finished it would have introduced into the whole scheme such an element of confusion as to dislocate its sense and continuity, and even endanger the result which it was hoped to obtain from it. It will, therefore, not be thought extraordinary if, in the face of such a project, it was deemed necessary to remonstrate with Mr. Middleton, and even to threaten him with exposure if it were persisted in. It was not persisted in. No more papers were sent to the *Academy*, and, on the distinct understanding that no more

should be sent, and that Mr. Middleton was sensible of his *laches* and regretted it, the author so far overlooked the matter as not to bring his conduct before the committee, and not to oppose his resumption of the purely mechanical work which he had undertaken to do—contenting himself with merely reading to two of its members, unofficially, the letter he had received, and with sending a note to the editor of the *Academy* to offer him, if he wished it, an explanation of the cessation of Mr. Middleton's contributions.

1. This much premised, let any one now take up Mr. Middleton's book and see if, from the first page to the last, it would be possible to infer that any one but himself had been concerned in the new views and arrangements here described.

First, however, the Monograph: "On the occasion of a former Exhibition of the Etchings of Rembrandt, in the Old Club House in 1867, it was suggested to the Committee that the arrangement according to *Subject*, then universally adopted, was fatal to the comprehensive study of such works, and that it might with advantage be discarded for the more rational order of *date of production*; that an arbitrary method, by which works of the latest were mixed up with works of the earliest period, confused the sense, perverted the judgment, and rendered critical examination and comparison impossible; and, generally, that such a system, though it might satisfy the cataloguer, was unworthy of the biographer and useless to the student. The art work of a lifetime, it was contended, should not be looked at as a series of haphazard disjointed efforts, but as the continuous expression of a prolonged chain of logical sequences depending for their coherence on the due maintenance of the order of their production, and only to be properly understood when *studied in that order*; and finally it was hinted—and that with tolerable confidence—that if this unintelligent and incoherent classification were reversed, and a more consecutive method of arrangement substituted for it, new matter yet unsuspected in regard to the Etched Work of Rembrandt might be brought to light, and grave errors of attribution as to some of his larger published plates be both proved and rectified." (Mon. pp. 1, 2.)

Now, Mr. Middleton's book: "That which gives this catalogue its greatest claim to *originality* is the chronological arrangement



“ which *I* have thought it expedient to adopt ” (Mid. Cat. p. xii). “ The reasons which have led *me* to determine on some form of “ chronological arrangement ” (p. xiv). “ The conclusions which *I* “ have come to ” (this is as to the new views) “ and to which I do not “ hesitate to commit myself ” (p. xxiii), &c., &c. “ And ” (as to the hanging) “ I am glad to express my obligations to the experienced “ connoisseurs with whom I was associated for valuable hints and “ criticisms which have afforded *me* no small assistance in this “ part of my task ” (p. xiv). Would any one suppose from this kind of writing that there was any such a thing as a committee of which Mr. Middleton was but the humblest member, or, from what follows, that any one was so odious or, in the matter of etching, so ignorant as the author ! Thus : “ Mr. Seymour Haden charges “ Rembrandt with having permitted the use of his signature that he “ might make a profit of it ” (p. 12). “ It is evident from Mr. “ Haden’s remarks that he has not thoroughly acquainted himself,” &c., &c., “ while the curious mistakes he makes in enumerating the “ pupils and his criticisms upon their peculiar work prove that he had “ *not studied their technic* with sufficient closeness to justify his “ conclusions ” (p. 13). “ *Amateurs* who have not made Rembrandt “ their special study may be *excused* if they are disposed, at first “ sight, to repudiate it, and assign it to inferior hands ” (p. 10). “ The *true explanation* however is that the larger number of these “ studies ” (*i.e.* the small heads considered by Mr. Haden to be spurious) “ were experimental ; trials of the needle and of the “ copper to familiarise himself ” (*Rembrandt!*) “ with his ground, “ his point, his mordant, and his press ” (p. 13).

Having thus,—while expressing, with amusing gravity, his obligations to the rest of the hanging committee,—taken quiet possession of the chronological arrangement, and disposed of any claim which its author might be supposed to have to be heard on the question of “ technic ” (a vile word, by the way, and a cloak for much ignorance), Mr. Middleton next proceeds, by the simple process of a wholesale suppression of his identity, to dispose of him altogether as an original observer. Thus, on each of the prints to which he had, till now, believed himself to be the first to take exception, Mr. Middleton has of course something to say, but, oddly enough, that something invariably refers not to the author but to *himself*, or to some imaginary *connoisseur* whom he invokes for the occasion, and who has, all along,



been thinking exactly in the same direction. Thus, of "The Flight into Egypt," which is one of the prints which the Monograph condemns, "this is a very doubtful piece," says Mr. Middleton, "see *my* notes" (p. 171); of "The Goldweiger," "*Connoisseurs* have agreed in assigning the inferior work 'in this plate' to another hand," &c. (p. 121); of the great "Descent from the Cross," "the *first* to cast a doubt on its *authenticity* was P. J. Marriette" (p. 176) (the fact being that Marriette does not throw a doubt on the *plate* at all, but only on some *burin lines* which he clearly implies had been *added* to it), and so on; the whole of these remarks being, clearly, only half true, and of a nature to mislead. But the most glaring instance of the form of misrepresentation referred to is the account given of the "Ecce Homo," the print which, more than any other, had occupied the attention of the author, and which, in fact, had furnished him with a chief motive for his inquiries.

Of this print, which, up to the moment of the author's putting pen to paper, had been extolled by the cataloguers, one and all, as one of the most able of Rembrandt's works, Mr. Middleton has not scrupled thus to write:—

"It has *long been a question*, among competent critics, as to what "extent this finely designed print is the work of Rembrandt, or how "much of it was intrusted to an assistant or pupil. . . . Josi is "said to have first raised the question. Mr. Carpenter, late keeper "of the prints in the British Museum, kindly directed *my* attention "many years ago to those details which he believed were by a different "hand; and more than one distinguished artist has so strongly expressed himself upon the inferiority of the technic in some parts of "this large print, that its doubtfulness has become almost traditional "in the British Museum print-room" (pp. 193, 194).

On reading this imprudently circumstantial statement the author thought it worth while to address the following question to Mr. Reid, the present Keeper of the Prints in the British Museum, premising that when he did so, and was already in receipt of Mr. Reid's answer, Mr. Reid had not seen (so he has since assured him) Mr. Middleton's book, and was unaware of the author's object in addressing him.

"*Question.*—During your long connection with the late Mr. "Carpenter, did you ever hear him question the authenticity of the "great 'Ecce Homo' of Rembrandt?"

"*Answer.*—The unfinished proof of the 'Ecce Homo,' the large

“ ‘Coppenol,’ with the white background, and the uncut plate of the  
 “ ‘Sleeping Dog,’ were frequently shown as specialities by Mr. Josi,  
 “ and Mr. Carpenter completely accepted Mr. Josi’s theory with  
 “ regard to the first, which was to the effect that this print displayed  
 “ the wonderful power of Rembrandt, by means of which he could  
 “ dispense with an outline of the design on the copper, and could  
 “ begin at the corners of the plate and work towards the middle. *I*  
 “ *have often heard Mr. Carpenter descant on this notion.* Two cir-  
 “ cumstances also have for many years been frequent subjects of con-  
 “ versation between you and me. The first is that when I assisted  
 “ Mr. Josi in arranging our Rembrandts, I endeavoured to find out  
 “ the Master’s mode of working ; but although I had the advantage  
 “ of being able to draw on wood, so that technical processes were  
 “ known to me, I could never understand how the differences in the  
 “ character and execution of certain examples were to be accounted  
 “ for *till you suggested, and often repeated,* your conviction, that those  
 “ examples had been executed by other hands, with which suggestion  
 “ I have, from that time, entirely agreed. The second circumstance  
 “ is that (*your suggestion having been first made*), I was the person  
 “ who, in corroboration of it, called your attention to the study in  
 “ bistre belonging to Lady Eastlake, which I pointed out had  
 “ evidently been made by Rembrandt as a working model for the  
 “ copyist of the ‘Ecce Homo,’ and I observed upon the following  
 “ facts as being in favour of my idea, viz. :—1. That the composi-  
 “ tion is in a sense the reverse of the etching. 2. That its date is  
 “ earlier than that of the etching. 3. That the pigment employed upon  
 “ it is of a nature to facilitate its reproduction by a copyist. This  
 “ second circumstance you may remember occurred long before the  
 “ last exhibition of Rembrandt’s etchings at our club in Savile Row.

“ Signed—GEO. WILL. REID,

“ British Museum Print Room, Jan. 15, 1879.”

This statement, and Mr. Reid’s answer to it, the author now  
 brings to the formal notice of the Committee of the Burlington Fine  
 Arts Club, who, by an adroit process, which he is assured has never  
 obtained the assent of the Committee, find themselves yoked to  
 the chariot-wheels of the Rev. Mr. Middleton ; while to Mr.  
 Middleton himself he puts the following question :—How is it if  
 competent critics have been so long agreed as to the unauthentic

character of this print—ever since the time of Josi in fact—that, so lately as 1873, the most competent of them all thus speaks of it?<sup>1</sup>

“Les nombreux dessins de ce grand peintre qui sont répandus dans les collections de l’Europe peuvent nous faire juger que Rembrandt se prépara par des études sérieuses à l’exécution de cette belle planche, la plus considérable de son œuvre. Il n’est pas une seule des figures de premier plan, de celles qui composent le groupe placé dans la lumière, qui n’ait été l’objet d’une étude à part. Rembrandt en a cherché les modèles, non pas dans son imagination, mais dans la nature. Le quartier des Juifs, qu’il habitait à Amsterdam, lui a fourni cette variété de types dans une même race, qu’il n’aurait pu rencontrer nulle autre part, ces têtes marquées à l’empreinte du fanatisme, ces jeunes hommes à la barbe fine et frisée, à la peau luisante, ces vieillards enfumés, squalides et rances, qui affichent à la fois de la misère et de luxe, qui sont revêtus de fourrures précieuses et d’habits troués, de linge sale et de pierreries. Et quelle foule ! Comme elle est épaisse, remuante, et ondoyante !”

And that this description refers, not alone to the composition, but to the plate itself :—“Ce morceau est fort recherché, une très belle épreuve, provenant de la collection Michel de Marseille, fut adjugée à la vente Debois pour 1,095 fr. Mais depuis la vente Debois qui eut lieu 1843 les choses ont bien changé et le prix des pièces rares s’est accru de beaucoup. Nous avons vu cette année même un amateur de Paris, M. Dreux, payer une superbe épreuve de ce même état 1,400 fr.”

This “*Ecce Homo*” statement, and the “*Josi-Carpenter story*” employed to support it, are now, the author wishes it to be observed, being circulated with the tacit sanction, which a dedication supposed to be authorised implies, of the Burlington Fine Arts Club. It is for the Committee, as guardians of the honour and influence of the Club, to consider this.

2. But the question still remains. Is Mr. Middleton’s compilation, divested of its appropriations and its misstatements, a desirable addition to Rembrandt literature, and a reliable guide to the student and collector, or is it not? The author submits that it is not. Firstly, because it is disingenuous, and, in a large portion of its plan, written, obviously, to mislead. Secondly, because, by reason of the redundancy of useless matter which encumbers it—

\* *L’Œuvre Complet de Rembrandt*. Par M. Charles Blanc. Paris, 4to., 1873.

such as its enumeration of "copies" which would not deceive a child, and its exaltation into "states" of mere "press" scratches which may be seen on one impression and not on another—it is a positive aggravation of the confusion which the surplusage of the catalogues has already introduced into the subject. Thirdly, because, by the compiler's ignorance of processes, and inaptitude by nature to form a reliable art judgment, its conclusions are nearly always wrong and often ridiculous. Mr. Middleton, it is true, has himself told us that he sets little store by this intuitive art faculty—nay, that "it often lamentably fails in cases where we should have expected to find it in perfection;" but the author's opinion, as the offender here referred to, is that if Mr. Middleton had been endowed with but a tithe of this invaluable aptitude, he would not have written all the nonsense he has about "technic," or been led into the absurdity of accounting for differences of style, and even of authorship, by vagaries of "the acid," and that many of his "true explanations" would not have been hazarded; that we should never have heard that only the head in the "Rembrandt with a turned-up hat and embroidered mantle" was by Rembrandt;\* that the 2nd State of the Lutma was evidently *not* by him; and that the great and laborious *dry point* of the Crucifixion was "probably nothing more than a *study for some more important work on canvas!*" (p. 231). Mr. Middleton's description of, and criticisms on, this great plate—one of the most dramatic, characteristic, and personal of all Rembrandt's works—are, in fact, altogether so extraordinary that, in estimating his competency and the reliability of his compilation, it would never do not to give it *in extenso*.

The Monograph had said that "The rudely expressed actors in the early state of the 'Crucifixion,' had been only roughly 'laid in,' because they had to be ultimately rendered in an advanced chiaroscuro to suit the divine passage which, in a later state, they were destined to illustrate. . . . 'Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;' . . . that the plate, in short, from the first, was intended to be one of those dark plates of which we have an example in the 'Christ Entombed' (W. 91), and that it was,

\* "Academy," Feb. 24, 1877.



“ therefore, useless to do more than indicate figures which were to “ be ultimately half obscured.”

Well, with this—as it will seem, the author thinks, to most practical etchers reasonable explanation—Mr. Middleton thus deals : having first, as has been said, made the suggestion that the whole thing after all may be no more than “ a study ” for a more important work on canvas.

“ *It has been asserted that the fourth state* ” (*i.e.* the dark state referred to in the Monograph, and which Mr. Middleton chooses to christen “ the altered plate ”) “ is Rembrandt’s true completion “ of the design. . . . ‘ *I have no hesitation in ascribing it to another hand.*’ . . . . Let the student compare an impression of the “ *altered plate*, part by part, with an impression of the first and “ second state, or a good impression of the third ; let him remark “ on the variations in the Sacred Figure upon the cross, and the “ re-arrangement and details of the groups below ; the obliteration “ of the dying thief upon the right (one of the most ably drawn “ figures in the whole scene) ; let him notice the *utter weakness* or “ entire absence of expression, the confused *dis-arrangement* of “ light and shade, the feebleness of the ruled lines, and the uncer- “ tain purpose of the deep strokes across the foreground, only *the “ more imbecile if, as has been suggested, they are intended to repre- “ sent the rending of the rocks*, and then form his own conclusions as “ to the value of the work. *This new work was neither designed nor “ executed by Rembrandt, but by some inferior artist who could neither “ understand the conception nor imitate the technic !* ” (P. 231.)

A wonderful piece of *expertism* indeed ! So wonderful that it may safely be left to make its way in the Art world without the author’s assistance. From him, therefore, it shall have no other comment than that which, in a spirit of prophecy, as it now appears, he wrote two years ago (Monograph p. 38), and with which he is content to close his review of this worthless book :—

“ To make a *Catalogue Raisonné* of the work of Rembrandt, it “ is not enough to be able to detect and record small points of “ difference, and yet be without a comprehensive knowledge of the “ man, and of his art, or of Art in general, or of the art of Etching “ in particular. Experience ; practice ; an actual acquaintance with “ what is possible and what is impossible to be done upon a plate of “ copper, and with the details of the printing process too ; the ready

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“ discernment which belongs to the artist nature ; the skill of the  
“ synthesist no less than of the analysist, and many a rare gift be-  
“ sides, must be in possession of him who would undertake so  
“ delicate and responsible a task. Borrowed ideas hastily picked up  
“ and strung together, the division and sub-division of things which  
“ in their very nature are indivisible, can, without such special  
“ aptitudes, but lead to the multiplication of states and differences  
“ profitable only to the dealer—and to a confusion of the subject  
“ even greater than that which exists at present.

“ FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN.”

*March 1, 1879.*



LONDON :  
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,  
BREAD STREET HILL.





PHOTOGRAPH BY J. LEITCH & CO. LONDON.

FAC SIMILE OF A PORTION OF  
GREAT DESCENT FROM THE





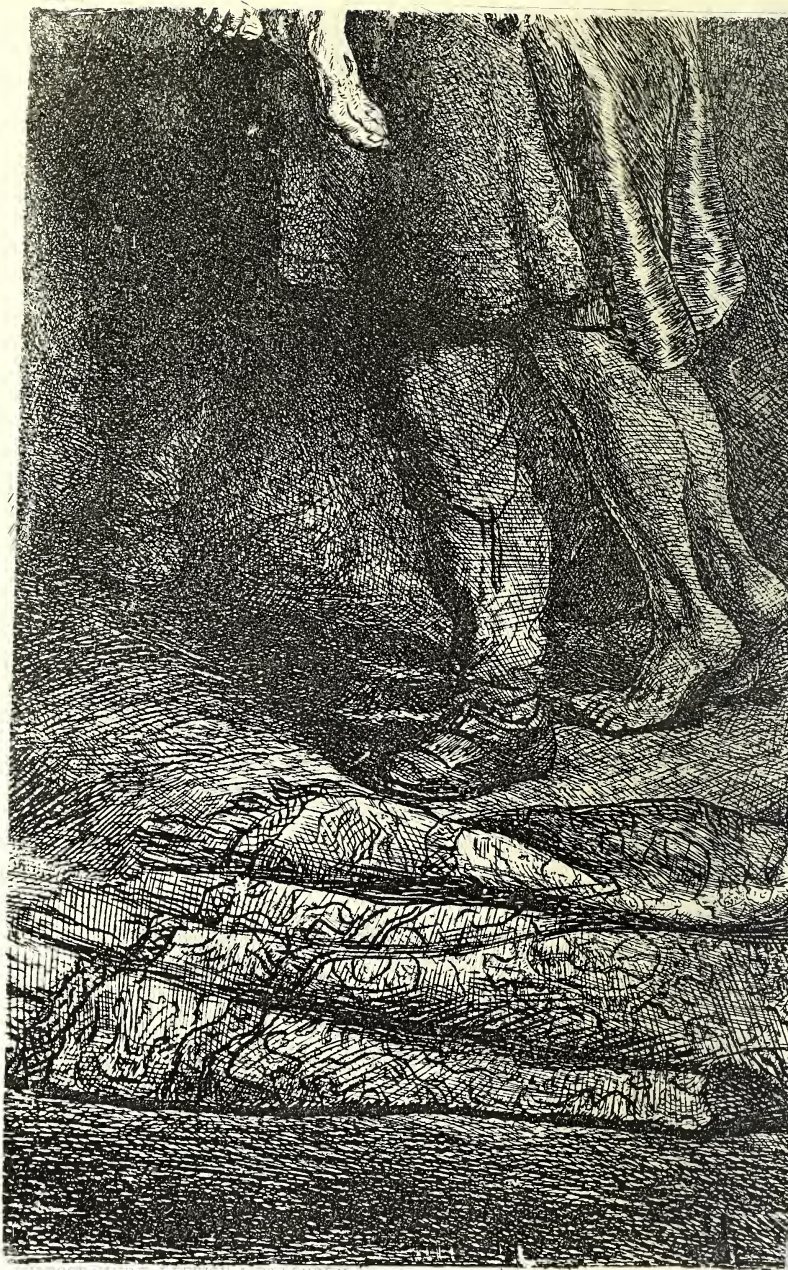
PLATE 2.

THE SPOILED PLATE OF THE  
CROSS BY REMBRANDT? (BRIT MUR)









PHOTODUPLICATION BY W. LEITCH & CO. LONDON

FAC SIMILE OF A SCULPTURE  
GREAT DESCENT FROM THE CROSS





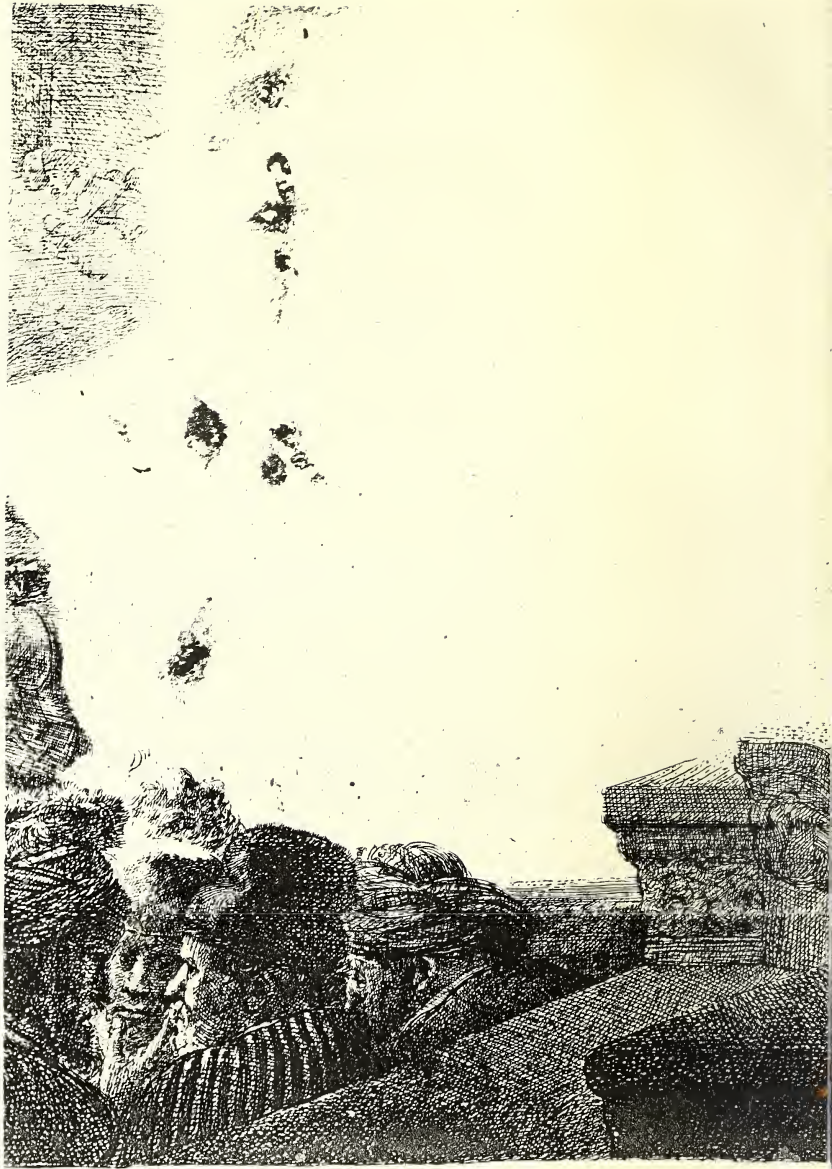
THE SECOND PLATE OF THE  
ROSS BY A PUPIL (BRIT. MUS.)

PLATE 3









THE ENGRAVER, HORTON & CO LONDON

REDUCED FAC SIMILE OF PART OF  
ECCE HOMO OF REMBRANDT. IN COURSE OF BE

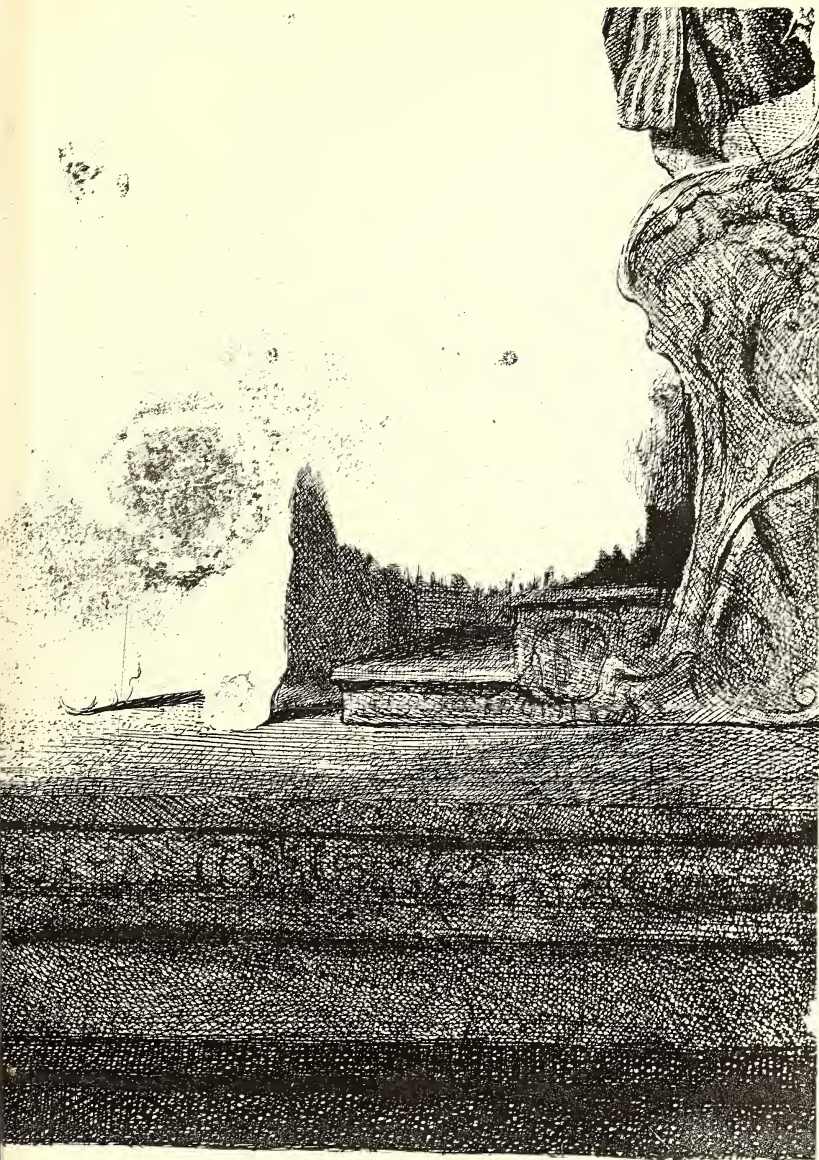


PLATE 4

UNFINISHED PROOF OF THE GREAT

COPIED BY A PUPIL? ( BRIT. MUS. APRIL 6 1877 )



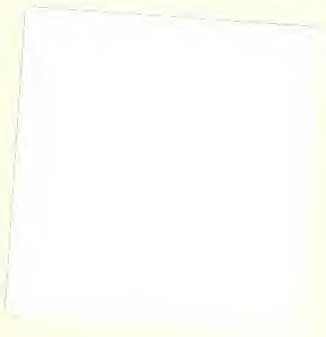












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