

RUBENS AND HIS SCHOLARS.

BY F. W. FAIRHOLT, F.S.A.

The Illustrations from Original Sketches by the Author.

IN the old city of Cologne, hallowed by memories which come to us in unbroken succession from the days of the Romans, there arrived, to pass the last few years of life, the father of one destined to rank among the noblest masters of Art. John Rubens, a man of learning and integrity, had held honourable office in his native city of Antwerp, where he had married Maria Pypelink, a scion of an old-established family there. But peace had fled from the Low Countries in the sanguinary wars which commenced between the Catholic and Protestant factions, and internecine war raged in the old city on the Scheldt. The Reformers, goaded to madness by the arrogance and determined cruelties of Spanish papal rule, rose *en masse*, and destroyed the monasteries and churches, burning and wasting the noble pictures and rich furniture of the altars, smashing the glorious windows of the sacred buildings, and defacing them within and without. These buildings, once the glory of Antwerp, were ruined in one night. The Catholic families fled from a city where the emperor's power could not suffice for their protection, and among the number were the parents of Rubens. They had descended from a Styrian family. Bartholomew Rubens, the father of John, had first visited Brussels in attendance on the court of the Emperor Charles V. in 1520; had married a Flemish lady of noble birth, and then settled in Antwerp. His son fled from the city in 1566, and sought a home in the ancient city of Cologne. The house he inhabited is still pointed out to the visitor,—it is in the "Sternen Gasse," No. 10; but in that city of tortuous narrow lanes the stranger may walk wearily and far in a futile attempt to find it without a competent guide. The tall houses, the narrow streets, and the tendency of the latter to wind suddenly, completely mislead a stranger, who cannot catch sight in their close depths of any friendly landmark of steeple or tower to guide his steps aright. The house, once found, is easily distinguished from others near it, as well from its size as from the inscriptions upon it. It is a noble mansion, situated at a slight angle of the street. The carved door-frame was added in the year 1729; in a medallion over its centre is a portrait of Rubens, and on a shield above are the arms of Marie de Medicis. In the year 1822, two inscribed tablets were placed between the windows on each side the doorway, to which attention was called by large gilt stars above them. One narrates the fact of Rubens's birth in the mansion; the other, the death, in the same house, of Marie de Medicis, the widow of Henry IV. of France, the mother of Louis XIII., and the mother-in-law of three sovereigns, among them Henrietta Maria, wife to our Charles I., who was by the intrigues of the Cardinal Richelieu compelled to exile herself, living for many years an unhappy fugitive in various countries,* and ultimately dying at Cologne, where her heart was buried near the high altar, but her body removed to France. The glory of the house, as the birthplace of Rubens, is somewhat saddened by the melancholy end of this once-powerful royal patroness of the painter. She is said to have died in the same chamber where he was born.†

In the Church of St. Peter, a few hundred yards from the house of his birth, the infant Rubens was christened. It still preserves a certain picturesque quaintness, which belongs to the past, and does not disturb the mind of one who might dream he saw the christening procession of the baby-boy destined to be so great a painter and so distinguished a man hereafter.‡ John Rubens had already a son

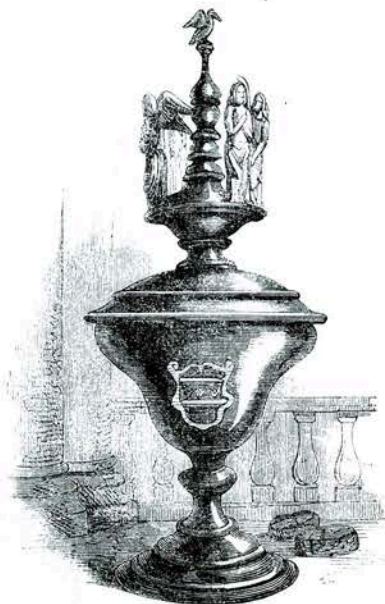
* She lived for some time in England, but was compelled to leave it in 1641, when Lilly, the famous astrologer, who saw her, describes her as an "aged, lean, decrepit, poor queen, ready for her grave; necessitated to depart hence, having no place of residence in this world but where the courtesy of her hard fortune assigned it."

† The inscription on the house informs us that "he was the seventh child of his parents, who resided here twenty years;" that his father died here, and was buried in the Church of St. Peter.

‡ One of the last acts of Rubens's life was done in affectionate memory of the church of his baptism. He painted for it an altar-piece, representing the Crucifixion of St. Peter, the patron saint of the edifice. It depicts the martyrdom, with the saint's head downward, and is more re-

born to him in this good city in the year 1574, but his second son was born three years afterwards, that is, on the 29th of June, 1577. That day being the festival of SS. Peter and Paul, the infant was carried to the Church of St. Peter, and christened Peter Paul Rubens, a name never to be forgotten in Art. Let us enter the cloister, and walk beneath its arches toward the narrow door of the sacred building. Poverty is not without its pic-

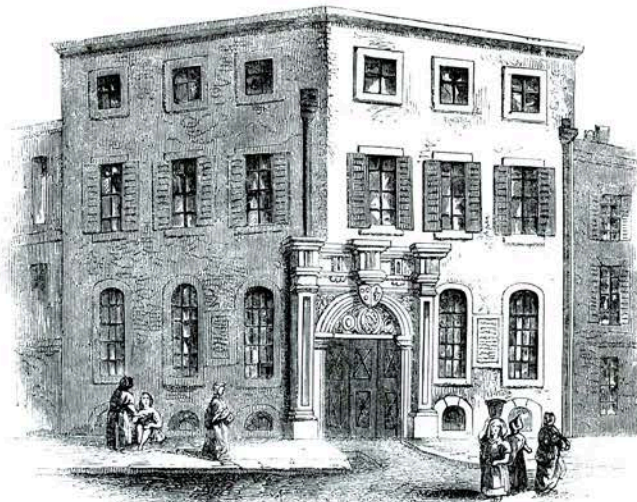
turesque features, in the beggars that lean against the wall, or sink upon their knees beside the gate, awaiting the approach of worshippers, whose charity they then solicit. The group inside the building has an equally marked individuality; the rich bourgeois and his family can be readily distinguished from the prosperous farmer, the peasantry are unlike both, as they are unlike each other, for the dwellers on this side the Rhine are very different from those



FONT IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH, COLOGNE.

on the other side of the noble river. Society has not here assumed the dead level of English uniformity. There is a local pride in local habits which no great modern scheme of centralization has yet destroyed. We see little in the scene before us that might not have met the eye on the day when the unconscious baby of the Rubens family was formally admitted a member of the Roman Catholic church. At one corner of the building still stands the remarkable font in which he was christened. It is of bronze, shaped like a large chalice (can it have a

mystic allusion to the wine-cup of the Holy Communion?), and bears date "Anno 1569" upon the rim. The bowl is decorated with the arms of the city—three royal crowns upon a fess—alluding to the heads of the three magi, once popularly termed "the three Kings of Cologne," still preserved as a sacred relic in the Cathedral of Cologne, first brought there by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in the twelfth century, and which wondrously enriched the city in the middle ages by the number of pilgrims drawn toward their shrine.* The



BIRTHPLACE OF RUBENS.

summit of the cover is decorated with figures representing the baptism of the Saviour by St. John,

attended with angels, the sacred dove descending on the apex.

markable for the striking character of the scene than for general merit. Rubens thought highly of it, and in one of his letters to his friend Gildorp talks of it as one of his best works. But Sir Joshua Reynolds says, "Many parts of this picture are so feebly drawn, and with so tame a pencil, that I cannot help suspecting that Rubens died before he had completed it, and that it was finished by some of his scholars." The picture was taken by the French to Paris, but has since been restored to its original place over the altar; the copy made to supply the place when it was absent is that constantly exhibited,—the original is at its back.

* This shrine is still one of the most remarkable upon the continent. It consists of a case covered with plates of silver-gilt, enriched with chasing, and laid out in arcades, enclosing figures of saints and prophets, and highly embellished with jewels and antique sculptured stones. The skulls of the three kings repose within, and may be seen from an opening in the centre. They are crowned, and have their names formed in rubies on each. Many of the jewels which once enriched this shrine were removed, to support those monks who carried it to Westphalia for safety, at the time when the French Republicans were masters of the city of Cologne.

At the early age of ten years Rubens lost the fostering care of a father. He had known no other home but Cologne, but his mother reverted to her earlier one in Antwerp. Fearful scenes of strife had been enacted in that city, as Protestant or Catholic faction gained the ascendancy; but now the Duke of Parma had subjugated its hostile inhabitants to the Emperor Maximilian II. and the Catholic faith. In 1588 the widowed mother of Rubens was again located with her family in Antwerp. Her position and connexions enabled her to place him as a page, at the age of sixteen, with another widowed lady, the Countess of Lalaing. But the life was irksome to the lad,—irksome by the very indolence and irregularity that would be its great charm to an unintellectual boy. Rubens's father was a scholar and a gentleman, and he made his sons the same. When Peter Paul returned to his mother's house after a few months' servitude, she well understood the lad's reasons for so doing; for she was also no ordinary person, and her affectionate education and wise council were as lovingly acknowledged by her son in after life as any mother could wish; for when, prosperous and happy in the palaces of Genoa, the painter was in full enjoyment of fame, profit, and pleasure, he broke away from all, to hurry post-haste to her sick-room. Alas! she died before he reached it, and the disconsolate young artist shut himself up for four months in the Abbey of St. Michael, where she lay buried, mourning thus long a loss that was irreparable to him.

Thanks to the innate goodness of the female sex—unspoiled by that closer business connection with the world which sometimes hardens a man's heart—there are few among us that cannot testify to the holy care of a mother's loving guidance. There is nothing so precious while it remains with us; there is no loss so great as that loss. Rubens always felt it was to his mother's judgment, prudence, and care he owed the due appreciation of his intellectual struggles. Freed from the servile duties of a page, he was placed to study law, that he might follow his father's profession; but, as he showed much love for drawing, his tendency was indulged by permission to relax his mind in the art he loved. That love became a passion, and he earnestly petitioned that his future profession might be that of a painter. On due consideration, it was allowed him; but he was unfortunate in the selection of his first master, the landscape painter Verhaegt, with whom he had little sympathy; and still less with his second one, Van Oort, the historical painter, a man of dissolute life and coarse manners, repulsive to a gentle and gentlemanly mind, like that of Rubens. His third master was in every way fitted for him—a well-educated man, with elegant tastes, and kindly and refined manners. Otto Venius* became the tutor and friend of the great scholar committed to his charge. This artist was court-painter to the Archduke Albert, the governor of the Netherlands, and he has received the honourable appellation of "the Flemish Raphael," and not without reason, as his graceful pictures will show, many of which are the treasured decorations of the Antwerp churches to this day. In that of St. Andrew are several; the best being "St. Matthew called by the Saviour from the Receipt of Customs;" it has more of Raphael's simplicity of design, purity of colour, and unobtrusive beauty than we see in any of his followers. He was a very perfect draughtsman, and designed a large number of book illustrations.† To all his early masters, therefore, we may trace some of the peculiarities of Rubens's manner, though his genius surpassed them all and was trammelled by none. His power of landscape painting, which—unlike historic painters—he occasionally practised for itself, and not for his backgrounds merely, he may have imbibed from Verhaegt; his love of bold and vigorous colour in figure-painting from Van Oort, who was chiefly remarkable for that quality; and his fondness for graceful infantine forms from

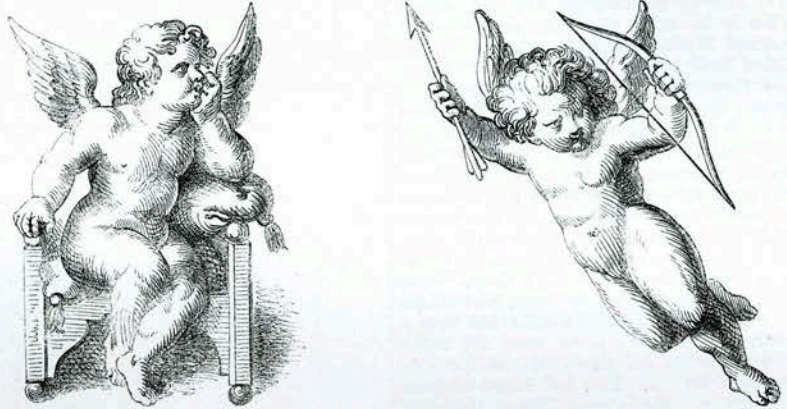
* His proper Flemish name, Otto Van Veen, he had thus Latinized, in conformity with a custom popular at that time in the Low Countries, and which induced Gerritz of Rotterdam to alter his into that of Erasmus, by which only he is now known.

† His principal works are the "Roman Wars," engraved by Tempesta; the "Historia Septem Infantum de Lara," with forty spirited engravings by the same artist; a folio of emblematic pictures of Human Life; and a small oblong quarto volume of Emblems of Love, the most graceful and beautiful of all which he designed. The latter is now very rare and much valued (as indeed are all his works) in the Low Countries.

Venus. We copy from the "Emblems of Love,"* by that artist, two figures. One which he calls "Love untrammelled," has just spurned a bridle on the ground, and is flying upward joyfully: the other, termed "Contented Thoughts," shows Cupid in a well-cushioned chair, contemplating his fair one's picture with secret satisfaction. Both call to mind similar figures by Rubens, who delighted in such quaint imaginings, offsprings of poetic thought.

Happy in the house of a noble-minded and

accomplished man, the scholar-days of Rubens passed cheerfully onward. No painter possessed greater industry than he, none laboured more unceasingly at the technics of Art; he fortunately had a friend and a master in Venius, who, less great than his pupil ultimately became, was naturally of more refined mind, and had a purer and less sensuous love of beauty. It is impossible to over-estimate the utility of judicious control and criticism such as he would give to a young man like Rubens, whose natural

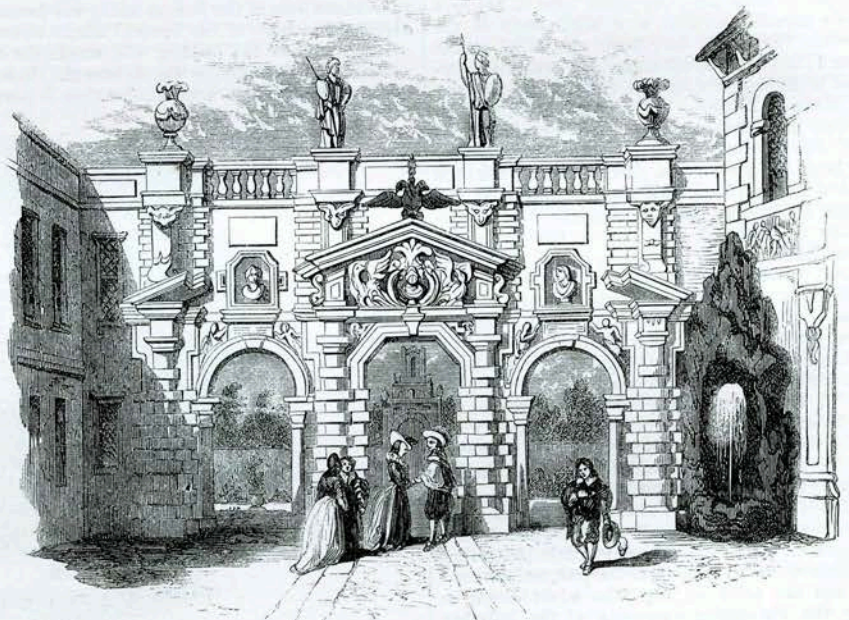


CUPIDS, AFTER OTTO VENIUS.

vigour and bold conception wanted just such wholesome correction as Venius could impart. The refinement of manners, the courtier-like air, and the cultivated tastes of the master were all fully appreciated by the scholar: and his example, no doubt, confirmed Rubens's own love for collecting and studying the best works, ancient and modern. There is no better instance of a man who more generally profited by the experiences of life in its upward and onward course than Rubens presents. He may be said to have spent his days in constant self-improvement, so that he became not only a great painter,

but a learned man; not only an artist of world-wide renown, but an ambassador from his own sovereign to other kings, and their companion and friend. Surely no man ever upheld the artistic character more nobly than he.

Venius having fully instructed Rubens in the arcana of his profession, and seeing he was as well grounded in general knowledge, advised him to visit Italy. The advice was taken, and, in the middle of the year 1600, he started on his journey, well provided with due introductions from the Archduke Albert, who already esteemed him. His journey



COURTYARD OF RUBENS'S MANSION.

lay through Venice to Mantua, where he presented himself to the Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, who received him most favourably; and on better acquaintance, offered to attach him to his service as gentleman of his chamber; a position Rubens readily accepted, as it allowed him full liberty of studying the ducal collection, then celebrated as one of the

finest in Italy. It was this that gave the painter his peculiar knowledge of antique Art, more particularly as exhibited on medals, coins, and intaglios, minor works as regards size, but often as great in treatment as colossal marbles. It was this that led him in after life to collect such objects for himself, and it was this that gave him his great facility in designing an abundance of works now comparatively little known, such as book illustrations, designs for pageantry, triumphal arches, &c., which he was often called on to execute; and all of them show how his fertile fancy was grounded on the best

* The original title of the work ran thus, "Amorum Emblemata, figuris aeneis incisa studio Othonis Veni. Antwerpum venalia apud auctorem M.D.C.IX." (1608). Prefixed are commendatory Latin verses by Daniel Heinsius and Philipp Rubens, the painter's elder brother.

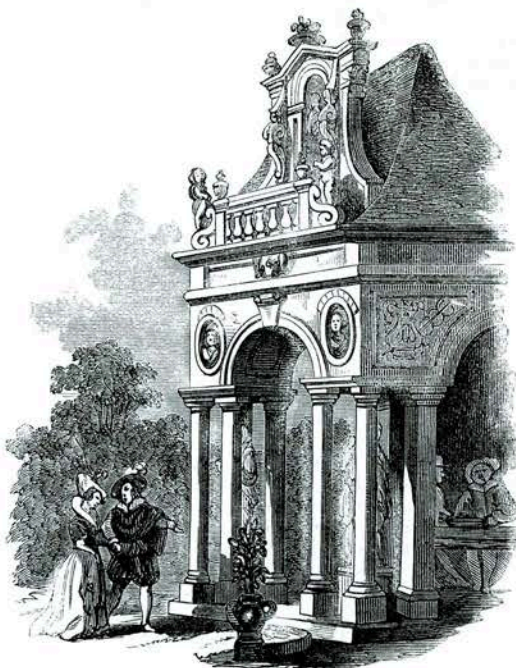
works of the ancient artists, though he never allowed them to cripple his own native genius. His classic tastes led him to reflect with pleasure on such works as depicted scenes from their history; but his native bias led him to delight chiefly in the gorgeous richness of their ceremonial observances. Hence Andrea Mantegna's "Triumphs of Cæsar"* riveted his attention most; there was a wealth of display in this scenic work which accorded with the young Fleming's mind, and he copied one of the compartments, not, however, without some vigorous variation, the creation of his own warmer imagination. With permission of the duke he visited Rome, but necessarily stayed there but for a limited time; he afterwards visited Venice, and his experience of the greatness of their colourists had a strongly marked effect on his after works. On his return to Mantua, the duke gave him the greatest proofs of his esteem and confidence; he had in Rubens a gentlemanly companion as well as a highly-informed artist; and he selected him as the most fitting person to convey to the king, Philip the Third of Spain, a present of a state carriage and horses he had obtained for that purpose. The artist accepted the charge; and became as popular at the court of Madrid as he was at that of the Duke of Mantua. He painted while there several portraits of the king and the nobles, and returned loaded with presents and compliments to the duke, whom he left soon afterward, to return to Rome, and finish the commission he had given him to copy the works of the greatest masters there. Rubens's elder brother Philip accompanied him to "the eternal city," and studied its antiquities with him. Their conjoined labours appeared in a volume; the literary part being by the more learned Philip, but in which Peter Paul had a share, and he executed the designs which embellish it. We have before noted Rubens's connection with the press, which continued all his life; and when he left Rome and got back to Genoa, he busily sketched the ancient buildings of the noble old city; on his return to Antwerp they were published in a folio volume.†

This return to Antwerp was expedited by the melancholy news of his mother's last illness. How it affected him we have already noted; on his slow recovery from the mental blow, he thought of again going to Mantua. He visited Brussels, to take leave of his patrons, the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife the Infanta Isabella; they received him most graciously, and gladly welcomed him to his country; and he ultimately decided on staying there; but, anxious that the pompous nothings of a courtier's life should not distract him from his Art, he decided on making the quiet old city of Antwerp his home; and that it might be a home in its most perfect sense, he married the daughter of one of its magistrates, Elizabeth Brant, and built himself a house in the city of his adoption.

His marriage took place in November, 1609; the building of his house was not so quickly effected. The love of Italy and its home-life induced a desire on his part to construct his new home more in the Italian than the Flemish taste. He obtained a piece of ground of the guild of Arquebusiers, who then possessed it,‡ and upon it erected, from his own designs, a palatial house, such as fell to the lot of few artists to obtain. It still exists, but it is much shorn of its exuberant ornament; this, which was its great fault, was still characteristic of the mind of its master. He had a taste for the fanciful combination of forms which produce the sensation of splendour, and in his works he constantly shows a tendency to obtain this, even at the sacrifice of consistency. It was so in his house: and though its details were

founded on the classic style of the ancients, it was overloaded with the debasements of the Italian Revivalists, upon which Rubens added his own fanciful displays, which no architect would probably countenance. He succeeded, however, in defiance of rule, in "composing" a very stately and highly-decorated mansion. It stands in a narrow street

leading from the principal thoroughfare, the Place de Mer, nearly opposite the Exchange, and in the best part of the city. The courtyard was connected with a large garden by a triumphal arch; on the right was the mansion, on the left the offices. We engrave this part of the building, as it affords the best idea of Rubens's general taste in sumptuous design.

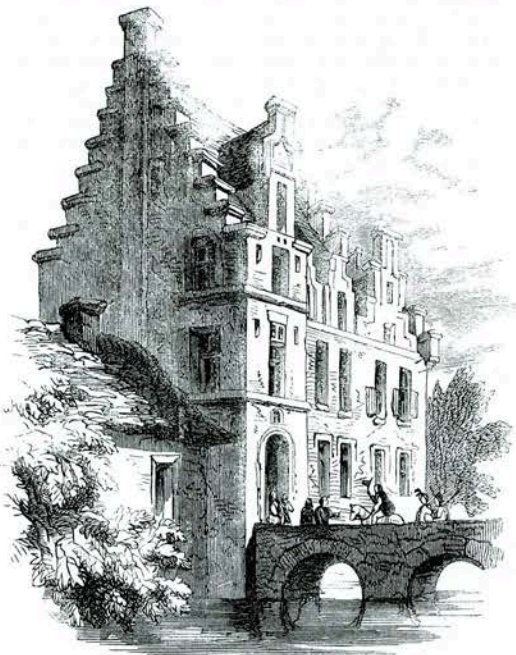


RUBENS'S SUMMER-HOUSE.

The garden of Rubens's house, though confined, as all town-gardens must be, was nevertheless large for its situation, and comprised green alleys, pleasant parterres, and a summer-house he has immortalized in many pictures. The situation of this summer-house, opposite the courtyard, may be noted in our view of that part of his establishment. Harrewyn published views, in 1692, of the house and grounds, and from that print we copy the enlarged represen-

tation of this building, where Rubens and his friends passed many happy hours. Like all other architectural designs of the painter, it is extremely fanciful—a style which may be termed "Rubenesque" pervades it; but it is a style that met with much favour in the Low Countries, and may be seen very frequently repeated in Belgium and Holland.

Rubens also possessed the château at Stein, on the road between Malines and Vilvorde, a country-house



RUBENS'S CHATEAU AT STEIN.

equally fitted for the residence of a noble. It is a characteristic building, now fast decaying, surrounded by a moat, which adds to its damp and gloom; but has been immortalized by its master, during its best days, in several good pictures; one of the best, embracing the rich view over the fertile country obtained from its windows, now graces our

National Gallery. It must be owned that Rubens has made the scene a little more poetic than it appears to an ordinary eye, but he certainly studied for his charming landscapes in the immediate vicinity of his own residence.*

* To be continued.

* These pictures passed into the collection of our King Charles I., and are still upon the walls of the palace at Hampton. Outline engravings from them were recently noticed in our pages.

† It comprises 139 views, and was published in 1622. A second series was published thirty years afterwards.

‡ The arrangement he made with them was, that he should, in return for the land, paint a picture for them representing their patron, St. Christopher. Rubens seems to have felt their arrangement as a liberal one, and was anxious to carry it out as liberally on his own part. He gave them in return the far-famed work, now the glory of Antwerp Cathedral, "The Descent from the Cross," considered as his master-piece. This great picture is the centre of a large triptych, or double-winged altar-piece, the wings acting as shutters to close over the picture. The back and front of each wing is painted in other subjects, the outer ones exhibiting the story of St. Christopher, which would always be seen when the whole was closed. The painter thus gave them five pictures instead of the promised one.

RUBENS AND HIS SCHOLARS.*

BY F. W. FAIRHOLT, F.S.A.

The Illustrations from Original Sketches by the Author.

THE great Fleming, now well established in his picturesque home in the old city of Antwerp, gave scope to the tastes which governed his mind. His house and its appurtenances had that sumptuous and fanciful style which characterized his pictures; † its interior was further enriched by masterpieces of Art, selected with judgment wherever he could obtain them; and in collecting he was guided by the advice of the best men, who were constantly aiding him to increase his store.

Rubens' home-life has thus been narrated by his biographers: He rose very early, and made a point of commencing his day by religious devotion. After breakfasting, he went to his painting-room, and while at work received visitors, and talked with them freely; or, in their absence, listened to some one who read to him from the pages of the finest writers, his love for the classics inducing him to give preference to the best Roman authors, he himself being a thoroughly good Latin scholar. At midday he took a frugal dinner; for he had taught himself to think that loading the stomach clogged the fancy. By this custom he was enabled to go to work again after his meal, and continue till the evening; and but for this rule he could never have executed one tithe of his commissions. At the close of the day he rode for several miles, and on his return passed the evening in agreeable converse with the friends who visited his house: they comprised the best society of the day, and in their company he would examine and descant on his fine collection of coins, prints, and antiques, or take steps to increase it by any means they could point out,—for Rubens was an ardent "collector" and a liberal purchaser, esteeming money, not for itself, but for the intellectual pleasures it procured him. Thus the artist of princely mind lived like a prince, except that his courtiers were not the self-seeking parasites of courts in general, but the friends who loved him for his own sake, and for the pleasure his society gave them, binding them by his countenance into one brotherhood.

The print published by Harrewyns, in 1684, exhibits the studio of Rubens, at that time converted into a bed-chamber, and which we here copy. It is lighted from the roof. Disraeli thus speaks of it: ‡ "This princely artist perhaps first contrived for his studio the apartment with a dome, like the rotunda of the Pantheon, where the light, descending from an aperture or window at top, sent down a single equal light—that perfection of light which distributes its magical effect on the objects beneath. This was his precious museum, where he had collected a vast number of books, which were intermixed with his marbles, statues, cameos, intaglios, and all that variety of the riches of Art which he had drawn from Rome. § But the walls did not yield in value, for they were covered by pictures of his own composition, or copies by his own hand, made at Venice and Madrid, of Titian and Paul Veronese. No foreigners, men of letters, lovers of the Arts, or even princes, would pass through Antwerp without visiting the house of Rubens, to witness the animated residence of genius, and the great man who had conceived the idea. Yet great as was his mind, and splendid as were the habits of his life, he could not resist the entreaties of the 100,000 florins of our Duke of Buckingham to dispose of his studio. The great artist could not, however, abandon for ever the delightful contemplations he was depriving himself of, and as substitutes for the miracles of Art he had lost, he solicited and obtained leave to replace them by casts, which were scrupulously deposited in the places where the originals had been." There can be no higher compliment paid from man to man than

was paid by Sir Dudley Carleton, after the amicable exchange he made with Rubens of his own antiques for some of the artist's pictures:—"I cannot subscribe to your denial of being a prince, because I esteem you the prince of painters, and of gentlemen, and to that end I kiss your hands." Such language from an ambassador to an artist, on the conclusion of a bargain, sheds honour on both.

Rubens always felt the true dignity of his own character; he never forfeited it by any unworthy act, nor would he ever allow it to be lowered by any

false estimate from any source. When John, Duke of Braganza, afterwards King of Portugal, desired him, during his stay at Madrid, to pay him a visit, at his famed hunting-seat, the Villa Viciosa, the artist accepted the invitation; and set out with so large a number of servants, that the noble duke took fright at the expenses so large a retinue might impose on him; and dispatched a messenger to meet Rubens half-way, with an apology of "sudden and unavoidable absence," on the part of the duke, and an offer of a purse of fifty pistoles to indemnify the artist

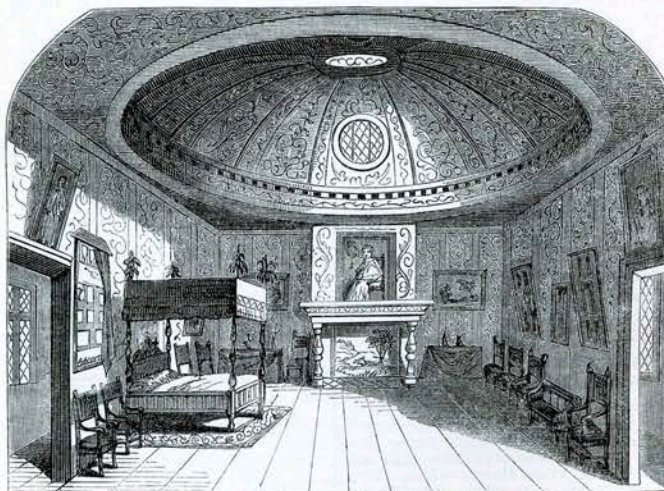


RUBENS'S CHAIR.

for the expenses of his journey. Rubens met the meanness with a dignity that reversed the position of the artist and the prince. "Give the duke my most dutiful regards," said he, "and assure him of my great regret at not personally paying those respects his invitation led me to hope to do. It was to assure his highness of my best services that I set out, and so far was I from expecting fifty pistoles toward paying my expenses, that I have already with me one thousand such pieces, which will more than serve my need."

It was this princely mind, and clear honesty of conduct, combined with the style of an educated

gentleman, that made Rubens the companion of princes, and ultimately an ambassador of state. He had met our Duke of Buckingham in Paris, in April, 1625, and afterwards at Antwerp, in the September of the same year; and the intimacy led to the employ of Rubens, in state affairs, by the Infanta Isabella, who had often found his advice useful, and felt that the painter could negotiate best in her affairs, and endanger their issue less than any other person, as his ostensible mission was Art, not politics. He conducted his business with remarkable tact. In our own State Paper Office his letters are still preserved, and have recently been edited by Mr. Sains-



ROOM IN RUBENS'S HOUSE.

bury, who says of them, that they possess "a high and noble tone, dignity, firmness, and cautiousness, exquisitely united to the most polite courtesy, elegant composition, and elevated sentiment, and at once show the education of the gentleman, and the mind of the man." In 1628 the Earl of Carlisle met Rubens in the house of Vandyke, at Antwerp, and he has written a very graphic account of the interview to the Duke of Buckingham, which

gives a good idea of the painter's earnest diplomacy in aid of a peace between England and Spain. The Abbé de Seaglia writes to the Earl of Carlisle:—"The King of Spain, the more to qualify the Sieur Rubens, and to give the greater reputation to his negotiation, has declared him secretary of his privy council, a reason why his Majesty should esteem him the more and yourself also." All this led to a journey to Spain, after the assassination, in the

* Concluded from p. 23.

† Houbraken tells us that upon the construction of this mansion Rubens spent 60,000 florins.

‡ "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii.

§ In the appendix to Carpenter's "Pictorial Notices of Vandyke" is printed the correspondence between himself and Sir D. Carleton, offering to exchange some of his own pictures for antiques in possession of the latter, who was ambassador from England to Holland, and who collected also for the Earl of Arundel.

same year, of the Duke of Buckingham, its implacable enemy, and the ultimate happy settlement of a peace. Rubens, on his return, immediately started for England, which he reached in May, 1629, in a ship expressly sent to Dunkirk, by King Charles I., for his use. In England he was most honourably received, lodged in the house of Sir Balthazar Gerbier, and all his expenses paid by Charles, who knighted him on the 21st of February, 1630, allowing him to add to his coat of arms a canton containing the lion of England: the University of Cambridge also conferred on him the honorary degree of master of arts.

His political career ceased with the life of the Infanta Isabella in 1633, and he henceforward gave his undivided attention to Art, although Charles had offered him a pension if he would remove to Brussels, and act there as political agent to the English Government—an offer he at once refused, as it would depose, or interfere with, his respected friend Gerbier. Of his industry in his art we have already spoken; but it took a more discursive range than among most artists. He did not paint only, but furnished an abundance of designs for varied purposes. One of Gerbier's letters tells of "certain drawings of the said Sir P. Rubens for carving of cups," intended for the use of the celebrated collector of Art and *virtu*, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. He also furnished numerous designs for books; and the productions of the world-renowned press of Plantyn, of Antwerp, were frequently decorated with emblematic title-pages, full of originality and power. Like Raphael, he employed the best engravers to copy his works under his own superintendence, and he drew upon wood many good designs, fully aware of the large renown that Albert Durer had achieved by the same process.* We also find him working on missals, and never avoiding anything that could promote the general love of Art among all classes of society. Of his architectural tastes we have already spoken. He furnished the design for the façade of the Church of St. Charles Borromeo, at Antwerp, one of the most striking relics of the past grandeur of the old city preserved for our time: it was constructed by the Spaniards from an Algerine corsair which was conveying them to Constantinople for the erection of a mosque, brought to Cadiz, and sold to an Antwerp merchant. Rubens enriched this structure with many fine paintings; of these, thirty-nine upon the vaulting, the subjects taken from sacred history, afford extraordinary proof of his talent at foreshortening. They were fortunately copied by De Witt, and afterwards engraved by Jean Punt, and published at Amsterdam in 1751, for the church was almost destroyed by fire, occasioned by lightning, in the year 1718—the façade in part, and the chapel of the Virgin adjoining, are all that remain as Rubens designed them. The latter is exceedingly picturesque in its arrangement, covered with paintings, decorated with statuary, and enriched with costly marbles.† Though the architect may justly consider the works of Rubens meretricious, they hit the popular taste of the day; and his love of display, and fondness for mythological embodiment, led to his employ by the town-council of Antwerp, when Ferdinand and Isabella made their triumphal entry into that city in 1642, to design the triumphal arches, and other pageants with which the senate of Antwerp greeted its imperial rulers; and they all exhibit, in a striking manner, the painter's love for scenic effects. Unlike Raffaele, who studied the frescoes of the Baths of Titus, and founded on them a style of ornament refined by his own gentle graces; the Antwerp artist saw only as much in the

grand remains of ancient architecture as would allow him to indulge in a bold and bizarre combination of its most striking features with his own powerful imaginings.* Though now we test these works by a purer standard of taste, there is little doubt that it was necessary, in the first instance, to popularize the style, and prune it of redundancies

afterwards. Rubens aided the general movement, and, by gaining attention to the picturesque, paved the way for a chaster study of ancient architecture.

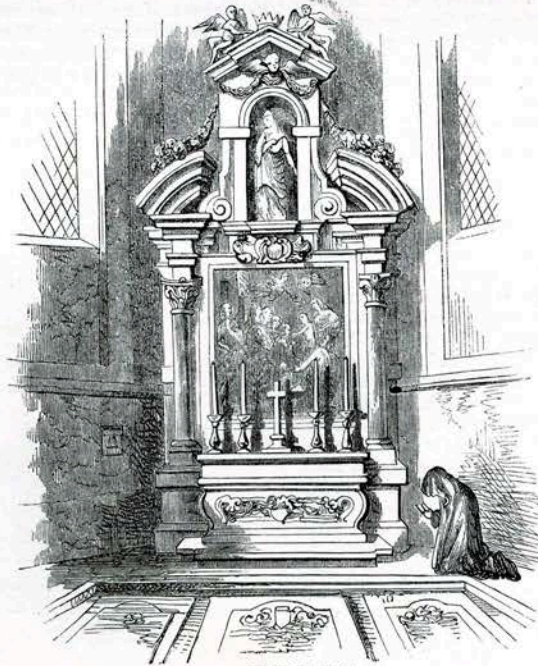
In all these labours he was aided by many assistants, and his school embraced the best men of his age and country, who, after his death, nobly upheld Flemish art. Rubens never disowned their



VANDYKE'S HOUSE.

assistance, or concealed its true character. Thus, in the list of pictures sent to Carleton, he notes "Prometheus bound on Mount Caucasus, with an eagle, which pecks his liver. Original by my hand, and the eagle done by Snyders.—Leopards, taken from life, with satyrs and nymphs. Original by my hand, except a most beautiful landscape, by

the hand of a master skilful in that department." When not his own, he notes, "by one of my scholars, the whole, however, retouched by my hand." His pictures have been trebly classified by Dr. Waagen, as—painted by himself; by his pupils after his sketches, and retouched by him; or copies of well-known pictures by him, similarly corrected,



RUBENS'S MONUMENT.

Van Dyke and Jordaens were his greatest assistants; the former stood alone after Rubens's death, and the latter enjoyed the reputation of being the greatest

successor in the master's peculiar style; Snyders took his independent course as a vigorous painter of hunting-scenes; and his other pupil, David Teniers, the elder, struck out a new path—the delineation of the manners of the peasants of the Low Countries. They again had their followers, and thus the genius of Rubens, like a fruitful tree, branched forth and blossomed over the land, when its root laid low in the ground.

* These woodcuts are generally much larger than Durer's, but do not possess that cleanness of line and knowledge of pen-drawing which Durer's evince. They have more solid shadow, and their painter-like style has been sometimes aided by tint-blocks printed over them, after the manner of the Italian, Ugo da Carpi. The largest of his cuts is the somewhat offensive subject, Susannah and the Elders; it measures 22½ inches in breadth by 17 in height. The next in size, and the best in treatment, is a *Repose of the Holy Family*, remarkable for the freedom and beauty of the trees and landscape; it is a copy of one of his best known pictures. But perhaps the most characteristic is a group of Fauns supporting Silenus; it is admirably rendered. All were engraved by Christopher Jegher, whose chief ability lay in the preservation of Rubens's powerful *chiar'oscuro*.

† This church was used as an hospital for the wounded English soldiers after the Battle of Waterloo.

* His friend Gevartius has published a noble folio volume descriptive of the great doings on this occasion, with admirably executed plates by Sandrart and Bolswert, under Rubens's superintendence. In the public picture gallery of Antwerp are still preserved the original designs for some of these gorgeous pageants, boldly painted by the hand of Rubens himself.

In the picture gallery of Antwerp is still preserved the chair in which the painter usually sat. It is mounted on a pedestal within a glass case, and appears to have been subjected to daily wear, with all that constancy with which an artist uses a piece of furniture to which he is habituated: the leathern seat has been broken through in many places, and has been carefully drawn together by strong threads. The leathern back is ornamented with gilding stamped upon it, and in the centre are the arms of Rubens, above which appears his name, thus:—Pet. Paul. Rubens; below is the date 1623.

Rubens was twice married; * his second wife was a beautiful girl of sixteen, his niece, Helena Fourment, whose features are well known by their endless multiplication in his works; for he was not only fond of painting her portrait, but adopting her features for the beauties of his fancy subjects. The painter, at the period of his second marriage, had reached the somewhat advanced age of fifty-four, but he had manners which concealed his years, and in the paintings where he is represented with his young wife we are never struck by the discrepancy of their ages. Rubens had a somewhat *soldatesque* style, and his wife had a comeliness beyond her years; the picture at Blenheim, in which she is depicted in all the glory of her beauty, attended by a page, sufficiently attests this; as another picture in the same collection, and which was presented by the city of Brussels to the great Duke of Marlborough, tells of the painter's happy home. The scene is the garden of his house at Antwerp; Rubens is proudly and lovingly walking beside his wife, who conducts their child in leading strings. The painter wisely made his home his world; he gathered there, with no niggard hand, all that could make life pleasant, and few passed life so happily.

There is a good anecdote told of him, which well illustrates the felicitous common sense of the man. An English student of alchemy made the painter magnificent promises of fortune by aid of the science, if he would furnish the necessary funds for his laboratory. Princes were found at this time to seriously entertain hopes of thus enriching themselves. The painter merely replied, "You are here too late, by full twenty years; for since that time I have found the art of making gold by aid of this palette and pencils."

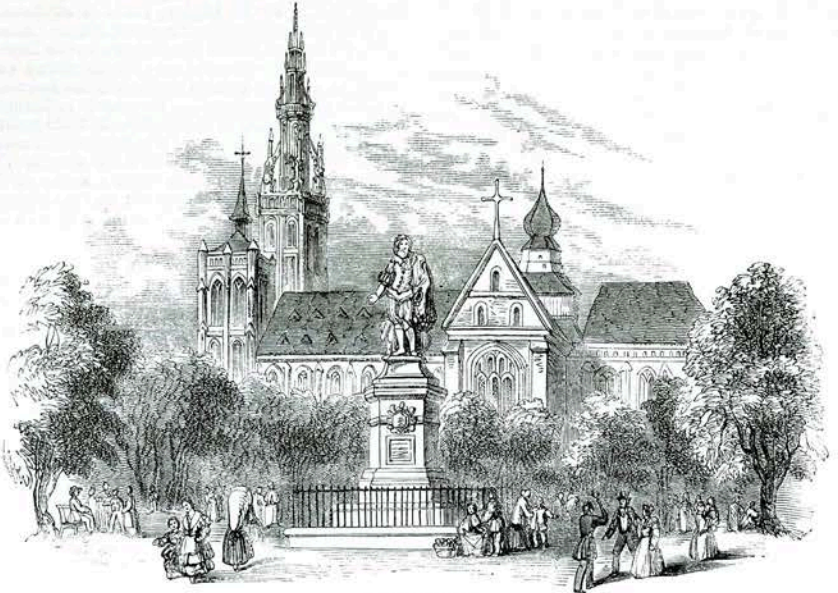
In 1640 Rubens died. A letter from his old friend, Sir B. Gerbier, dated Brussels, May 21, 1640, notes, "Sir Peter Rubens is deadly sick; the physicians of this town being sent unto him for to try their best skill on him." In another letter, written to King Charles I. on the same day, he adds a postscript—"Since I finished this letter news is come of Sir Peter Rubens' death." He had died on the 20th of May, 1640, † aged sixty years, "of a deflection which fell on his heart, after some days of indisposition and gout. He is much regretted and commended: hath left a rich widow and rich children." He was buried on the 23rd of May, in the vault belonging to his wife's family, in the Church of St. James, at Antwerp. His funeral was conducted with much pomp, attended by the chief personages in Antwerp, the officers of the city, and the members of the Academy of Painting. Sixty boys of the Orphan Asylum walked beside the bier, each carrying a lighted taper. The church was hung throughout with black velvet, the service being performed in the sumptuous manner usually adopted for the nobility. His widow afterwards endowed the chapel given in our view, and erected in it the altar there represented. The picture above the altar-table is from the painter's own hand. It represents the Virgin with the Infant Saviour in her lap, surrounded by saints, among whom stands

* His first wife died in the summer of 1626. He remained a widower until December, 1630, when he again married. His political travels occupied much of his time while single, and calmed his mind by a change of scene. It was during this time that he visited France, Spain, and England.

† Mr. Sainsbury, in a note to his book, adds,— "It has always been said that Rubens died on May 30, 1640; but the ten days' difference between the old and the new style, from the year 1582 to 1699, must always be taken into account when fixing the date of an event which occurs in a Roman Catholic country. The Gregorian, or reformed calendar, was not used in England until September, 1752. An act was then passed, ordering the day following the 2nd of September, to be reckoned the 14th, which allowed eleven days for the discrepancies of the old and new styles during the eighteenth century."

St. George in full armour, which is a portrait of Rubens, the female saints beside him being portraits of his wives, and St. Jerome that of his father. It is a family group as well as a sacred picture. Above it is a marble statue of the Virgin, which is attri-

buted to Du Quesnoy, better known as Fiamingo. The small crucifix standing upon the altar-table is said to be that which was used by Rubens himself in his private devotions. The central slab in front of the altar covers the grave of the master; it has

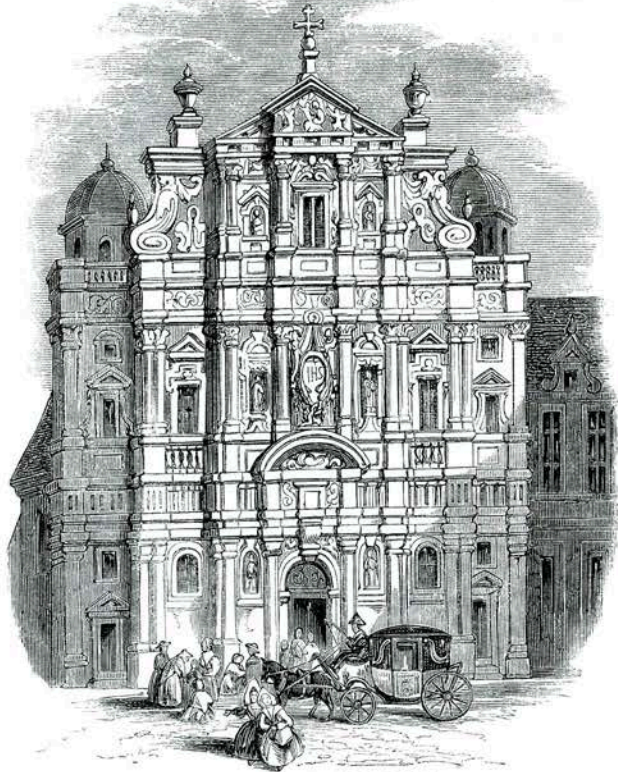


RUBENS'S CHAPEL.

a very long inscription from the pen of the learned Gevartius, the intimate friend of the painter, celebrating his ability as a painter, and his knowledge as a man "of all the arts and elegancies of every age," and that he "happily laid the foundation of the peace" between England and Spain. Beneath are a few lines to record the restoration of this

monument in 1755 by Jacques de Parys, a canon of this church, "a descendant of Rubens through his mother and grandmother—descendants of Rubens in the male line having become extinct."

An inventory of the pictures in his house at his death was sent by Gerbier to Charles I. The late Dawson Turner published a limited number of copies



CHURCH OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO.

for private distribution, and Mr. Sainsbury has recently reprinted it; * he says, "the number and value of these works of Art are strikingly illustrative of the character and position of the man: they

* In his recently published volume of papers illustrating the life of Rubens as an artist and a diplomatist.

equally show his attachment to his profession, and the extent of his pecuniary resources. They are said to have produced the sum of £25,000. It was the intention of the family to have sold them by auction, but they were sold separately by private contract, having been valued by Snyders, Wildens, and Moeremans. The King of Spain secured the gems, medals,

and carvings, as well as some of the best pictures; the Emperor of Germany, the King of Poland, the Elector of Bavaria, and Cardinal Richelieu were the next most important purchasers. The collection was particularly rich in pictures by Titian, Paul Veronese, and Tintoretto, and a very many copies—"made in Spaine, Italie, and other places, as well after Titian as other good masters." There were ninety-four pictures by his own hand, among them that which his widow presented to adorn the chapel of the tomb of her husband—the famous "*Chapeau de Paille*;"* many landscapes, portraits, and other subjects, probably kept as studies by the painter, or from some interesting association—for he had more demands for his work than he could satisfy. His collection of pictures by the old masters comprise specimens by John Van Eyck, Albert Durer, Lucas Van Leyden, Holbein, Quintyn Matsys, &c., proving the catholicity of his tastes. Of the masters of his own era, he had many fine Vandykes,† Snyders, Jordaens, De Vos, Breughel, &c. In short, it was the gallery of a noble of refined taste.

The solemn old city of Antwerp feels still honourable pride in its great painter, of whom it has been well said, "there was the same breadth and magnificence in his character as in the colour of his compositions, and his mind was as free from littleness as his works." In 1840, at the great fête in honour of Rubens, his statue, of colossal proportions, by Geefs, was uncovered. It stands in the centre of the Place Verte, the great public square immediately beside the old cathedral, whose picturesque towers form an admirable background to the scene. England may learn a useful lesson here, and not practically deny her own intellectually great sons, by refusing them that public recognition which she so willingly accords to statesmen and warriors. While they are often forgotten or uncared for by another generation,

"The artist never dies."

His works reflect greatness and glory on his country for ever; his victory is one of peace and goodwill, appealing to, and conquering by, the best feelings of our nature; and when presented to our view in the many type of Rubens, commands honour and esteem from all.

ART IN CONTINENTAL STATES.

PARIS.—We have at length seen the so-called famous pictures purchased, for the Louvre, of the Soult family, for £12,000: they consist of "The Nativity of the Virgin," by Murillo, bought in at the sale for 95,000*fr.*, for which the Government has paid 150,000*fr.*; "The Miracle of Saint Diego," named the "Angel's Kitchen," by Zurbaran, bought in for 89,775*fr.*, sold to the Government for 80,000*fr.*; "Saint Peter Nolasque and Saint Raymond Penafior," by Zurbaran, 19,500*fr.*, sold for 25,000*fr.*; "A Bishop lying in State," by Zurbaran, bought in for 5,000*fr.*, sold for 25,000*fr.*; "Saint Bazile describing his Doctrine," by the elder Herrera, 20,000*fr.* These paintings have been painted, repainted, cleaned, varnished—in short, got up, and are in a most deplorable state of *retouch*. The best is the "Nativity," in which the remains of some very fine painting are visible, although it is so much repaired: the others are totally unworthy of the Louvre. The "San Diego" looked much better at the Soult sale than at present: a cleaning mania possesses unfortunately the directors of the Louvre, and if continued, many fine works will be ruined.—The Salon is to open on the 15th of April next: the paintings and other works of Art are to be sent in from the 15th of February to the 15th of March.—The French painters who died during the past year, are Ary Scheffer, Roche Latila, Correard, Léon Fleury, René Cadeau,

* Described in the catalogue as "The picture of a woman with her hands one upon another." Rubens would never part with this picture, which he had painted from a Mademoiselle Lundens, to whose family it passed after the death of his widow, and remained with their descendants until the year 1822, when it was purchased by M. Niewenhuyts for 36,000 florins, and brought to England. After being offered in vain to George IV., it was bought by the late Sir Robert Peel for 3,500 guineas.

† Among them was the "Betrayal of Christ," which the painter had presented to Rubens as a love-gift before he went to Italy. It is still in Antwerp. Rubens had found young Vandyke poor; he had made him rich by purchasing his unsold pictures, taking him into his own studio, and ultimately enabling him to start for study in Italy, giving him a horse for the journey. Rubens hung his parting gift in the best position in his house, and took constant pleasure in pointing out its merits to his visitors.

Gamen du Pasquier, P. Thuillier, and Jules Geoffroy: the sculptors whose decesses has been recorded during the same period, E. Seurre and R. Gayraud.—The fountain of the *Place du Châtelet* is now uncovered: it has received a new, richly ornamented base.—The Government has purchased the "Souper Libre" by M. Levy, and the "Lydia," a marble statue, by M. Lépère, students at Rome.—The fine painting of "Jupiter precipitating Crime," by Paul Veronese, which was formerly in the Louvre, and injudiciously taken thence, to be placed on a ceiling, is about to be brought back to the Louvre.—An interesting discovery has been made in Hungary of 48 paintings, said to be by Michel Wohlgenuth, Albert Durer's master, 12 of which represent scenes in the life of "Saint Elizabeth of Hungary."—Rumour says an exhibition of the works of Ary Scheffer will shortly be opened: the Government has bought his fine work, "Saint Augustin and Saint Monica."

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY.

THIS Portrait Gallery, in the third year of its administration, has at length taken the bolt from its door, in Great George Street, and let in the public. Not that the door stands open, as in other of the national collections, and the public may walk in, whoever will, and on most days when they will. Two days only in the week are conceded to the public impatience for a view of that reflected galaxy of British worthies which the trustees have been preparing, with a leisure that might seem designed to whet the eagerness now sought to be restrained. To the same end of restraint, other measures of precaution have been devised; and as, in moments of popular excitement, the authorities erect barriers at a distance from the centre of interest, in order to check the rush of the human tides, it is contrived here that the public pressure towards Westminster shall break first against certain printsellers' shops sufficiently removed from the neighbourhood of the abbey. From whatever point of the great metropolis—the way to 29, Great George Street is made to be round by Pall Mall or Bond Street. In a word, since the 15th of last month, the pictures constituting the National Portrait Gallery are to be seen, at stated hours, on Wednesdays and Saturdays only, by virtue of tickets to be delivered by Messrs. Colnaghi, Pall Mall East, Messrs. Graves, Pall Mall, or Mr. John Smith, New Bond Street.—The reason of this round-about way into George Street does certainly not at first sight seem very obvious. Whether it is, that the trustees, having somewhat neglected the principle of selection in the getting together of their examples, are desirous to recover themselves by enforcing selectness in the audience,—or whether a real fastidiousness, arising out of the nature of their charge, suggests to them, that they must be particular as to the company from without whom they introduce to the company within, is, at any rate, not expressed. We can well understand, how a courtly master of the ceremonies in attendance on the British worthies should think that some of the rough aprons and paper caps which make their way into the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square and the British Museum are scarcely the fit persons to bring into the presence of La Belle Hamilton, Duchess de Grammont;—but then, we should question, in turn,—and as we have before done,—whether La Belle Hamilton, Duchess de Grammont, though a perfectly respectable individual in her way, is exactly the sort of person whom Parliament intended that the trustees should offer to the working public as one of the first and most illustrious examples of British worth?—We see, at any rate, that the restrictions instituted will have the effects supposed. The barrier of the printseller will thin the numbers seeking admission at the gallery doors, even amongst the wearers of broad-cloth:—whilst it may well be doubted if the man in the apron will often enter Mr. Colnaghi's shop to solicit a ticket for George Street. We question if Lord Stanhope has any objection to aprons:—and we are certain, that the arguments used in Parliament when this new establishment was applied for were expressly of the kind that do not exclude the paper cap.—The moral of the whole matter is unsatisfactory. It seems to us, that the trustees of the National Portrait Gallery have not a perfectly clear idea either of what a national institution, in general, is, or what a collection of British worthies, in particular, *should be*.

THE ROYAL PICTURES.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

Guercino, Painter. B. Meunier, Engraver.
Size of the Picture, 3 ft. 9½ in. by 2 ft. 9½ in.

GIOVANNI FRANCESCO BARBIERI, surnamed Guercino du Cento, was born at Cento, in 1592; he received the name of Guercino, by which he is now generally known, from a defect in his eye. Guercino belongs to the Bolognese school of painters; he was a follower, but not a disciple, of the Caracci,—in fact, was a self-taught artist. His father used to carry wood to the neighbouring towns, and took his son with him; in these visits the lad found opportunities for acquiring the rudiments of Art. After studying for some time at Bologna and Venice, he went to Rome, where he remained several years, with many of the most eminent followers of Caracci, and contracted an intimate acquaintance with Caravaggio. "His taste," says Vasari, "is mainly founded in the style of this last master, displaying strong contrast of light and shade, both exceedingly bold, yet mingled with much sweetness and harmony, and with powerful art of relief,—a branch so greatly admired by professors." In 1623 he returned to Cento, and lived there during twenty years, till the death of Guido induced him to remove to Bologna. Guercino died in 1666, leaving considerable wealth.

The works of this painter exhibit three distinct styles; the first, formed on that of his friend Caravaggio, is characterised by extreme depth of shadow, so that he became one of the most decided of the so-called *Tenebrosi*, a term given to those who followed this practice. His second manner is by far the more pleasing and valuable, and appears to have been the results of his visits to Venice and to Bologna; it is distinguished by less violent contrasts, more delicacy of colouring, and greater correctness of design. In his third manner he endeavoured to imitate the style of Guido, but his early training had left too strong an impress on his mind to allow of a successful transition from either of his preceding styles to the elegance of Guido; and in the attempt he lost his own original vigour, and became feeble and insipid.

The numerous commissions given to Guercino is generally supposed, to quote the words of Vasari, "to put him upon a more easy method, no less than his own incredible genius for execution and despatch." It is recorded that he painted one hundred and six altar-pieces for churches, one hundred and forty-four large historical pictures for princely patrons, besides numerous frescoes, and very many Madonnas, portraits, and landscapes. His principal works are—"St. William of Aquitaine, kneeling before St. Bernard," and "The Virgin appearing to St. Bruno," both in the Academy of Bologna; "The Last Moments of Dido," in the Spada Gallery, Rome; "St. Pedronella," his *chef-d'œuvre*, in the Capitol; "Aurora," in the Palazzo Ludovisi; "The Incredulity of St. Thomas," in the Vatican. In the Pitti Palace, Florence, is "St. Peter raising Tabitha;" in the Palazzo Brignole Sale, at Genoa, is "Cleopatra," "The Virgin Enthroned," and others. The Cathedral of Ferrara possesses "St. Lawrence," the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, a "Madonna and Child," and "Christ and his Disciples;" the Royal Palace at Turin, "The Prodigal Son," and others; in the Brera, at Milan, is "The Dismissal of Hagar," reckoned among the best of Guercino's later works. The churches in Cento contain some excellent pictures, among which "The Resurrection" is entitled to especial notice.

His finest frescoes ornament the cupola of the cathedral at Piacenza; these works were executed when the artist's powers were in full vigour. The cupola is divided into eight compartments, in the upper part of which he has represented the Prophets accompanied by Angels; and in the lower, the Sibyls, and subjects from the New Testament. These paintings certainly place Guercino among the greatest artists of his time.

The "Woman of Samaria" is a repetition of a figure frequently painted by Guercino, sometimes in conjunction with that of Christ, and sometimes as we see it here; it is a carefully painted picture, executed, it is presumed, in his best time; the face of the figure is highly pleasing, and the colouring throughout rich but not extravagant.

It is in the Collection at Windsor Castle.