

**REMBRANDT AND HIS  
ETCHINGS. A COMPACT  
RECORD OF THE ARTIST'S  
LIFE, HIS WORK AND HIS TIME**

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Rembrandt and his etchings. A compact record of the artist's life, his work and his time by  
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**LOUIS A. HOLMAN & A. M. HIND**

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No. 168. *Rembrandt Leaning on a Stone Sill.*

# REMBRANDT AND HIS ETCHINGS

A COMPACT RECORD OF THE ARTIST'S LIFE,  
HIS WORK AND HIS TIME. WITH THE COM-  
PLETE CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF  
HIS ETCHINGS COMPILED  
BY A. M. HIND, OF  
THE BRITISH  
MUSEUM

By  
LOUIS A. HOLMAN

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## REMBRANDT AND HIS ETCHINGS



No. 116. Two Tramps.

“A FAIR & bewtiful citie,  
and of sweete situa-  
tion” and famous for  
“ye universitie wherwith  
it is adorned;” such was  
Leyden as the fresh eyes  
of the youthful William  
Bradford saw it when the  
little company of Eng-  
lish exiles, later revered  
as the Pilgrim Fathers,  
sought asylum in Hol-

land. The fame of Leyden was to be further perpetuated, although Bradford knew it not, by one who had but just been born there when the English pilgrims came to the friendly university town; one who has added to the fame of his native place chiefly because he did not attend that university, which seemed so attractive to young Bradford. The father of this boy determined that he should have a collegiate education that he might sometime hold a town office, and fondly hoped that he was preparing him for it (in, perhaps, the very schools attended by the English children), when the lad made it clear to all men that he had no head for Latin and a very decided talent for drawing. So it came to pass that at the time Bradford and his friends set their faces toward America, and perforce turned their backs upon that “goodly & pleas-

ante citie which had been their resting place near twelve years," Rembrandt Harmens van Rijn, the youngest son of a miller of Leyden, turned his face, too, from the old toward the new. They sought liberty to live and to worship according to the bright light in their hearts; he, too, sought liberty to follow in a no less divinely appointed path, impelled thereto by an irresistible force which, after half a century, retained all its early vigor. They broke from the ways of their fathers and bore an important part in the development of the great American nation. He emancipated himself and his art from the thralldom of tradition and conventionality and became the first of the great modern masters of art.

The twelve-years' truce between the humiliated Dons and the stocky Dutchmen was now nearing its end, and Bradford says, "There was nothing but beating of drums, and preparing for warr." This was one of the reasons why the peaceable Pilgrims sought a new home beyond the sea. But Rembrandt, already absorbed in his art-studies, saw nothing, heard nothing of these preparations; his ears were deaf to the drum-beats, his eyes were seeing better things than the "pride, pomp and circumstances of glorious war." There can be no question about his utter lack of interest in things military. When, at long intervals, he tried war-subjects (as most men sooner or later try their hand at the thing they are least fitted for) he failed pitifully. He could create a masterpiece of a "Man in Armor," or a "Night Watch," where the problems



were purely artistic, and swords and flags were simply bits of fine color, <but the painting or etching that breathed the actual spirit of war he could not produce.> There is matter here for rejoicing. War and her heroes have had their full quota of the great artists to exalt their work. And now comes one who loved the paths of peace. With brush and etching-needle he made record for all time of the dignity and rare beauty which he found in ordinary hum-drum walks of life. We may even say that he exalted doctors and artists, housemaids and shopkeepers, yea even the very street-beggars, into such important personages that their portraits are still eagerly sought after by the great ones of the earth.

It was during the lifetime of Rembrandt (1606-1669) that much of the wonderful development of Holland took place. She had come to her greatness gradually, but by the middle of the seventeenth century she occupied a leading place among the independent nations of Europe. Great discoverers, like Henry Hudson, had given her new dominions east and west, and colonization had begun. On the sea her flag was supreme; her merchant marine, going to and from her own possessions was seen in every port of the world; her admirals, Ruyter and Tromp, had won her an illustrious place forever in the annals of naval warfare. These were the days of Milton and Ben Jonson; of Cromwell, Gustavus Adolphus and Richelieu; of Murillo, Rubens and Van Dyck — days when Holland had within her own borders such men as Barneveld, the great statesman;

Grotius, the father of international law; Spinoza, the philosopher and John de Witt, the Grand Pensioner — besides that noble group of artists: Hals, Cuyp, Ruysdael, Potter, Steen and Ostade. These days, too, saw the settling of many states in America, the founding of Quebec, New York and Boston.

Strangely apart from all these history-making movements, and from his peers among men, dwelt Rembrandt, the great master, in Amsterdam, serenely happy to-day in painting a portrait of his loved Saskia, to-morrow in etching the features of a wandering Jew. He had given himself, body and soul, to his art, and no man or movement of men could distract him from his work. Year by year his busy brain and dexterous hand produced paintings, etchings, drawings, in slightly varying proportion, but always in amazing quantity. For his forty-one productive years we find to his credit the average annual output of thirteen paintings, nine etchings, and thirty-nine drawings. And these numbers would be materially greater, doubtless, had we a full record of his work.

A few decades ago the ordinary person thought of Rembrandt only as a great painter; that time has fortunately passed. Modern engraving methods have made it possible to spread broadcast reproductions of his etched work. Thanks to these mechanical engraving-processes some of Rembrandt's etchings are now familiarly known and, to a degree at least, they are appreciated. No reproduction, however, can ever give the subtle quality of the original,

and a revelation comes to one who looks for the first time on some brilliant, early impressions of his famous plates. <The ink is still alive; the Chinese or Japanese paper which Rembrandt generally used, has sometimes gone very yellow and spotted, but oftener it has the fine mellowness of age.> We treat



No. 1. Rembrandt's Mother.

it with respect, almost with reverence, for we recall that these very sheets of paper were dampened and laid upon the etched plate, already prepared by the hands of the great etcher himself. Each impression he pulled was as carefully considered as the biting of the copper plate. He varied the strength of the ink, the method of wiping, the pressure used;