

DYKE JOHN VAN

THE MENTOR:
REMBRANDT, VOL. 4,
NUM. 20, SERIAL NO. 120,
DECEMBER 1, 1916

John Dyke

**The Mentor: Rembrandt, Vol. 4, Num.
20, Serial No. 120, December 1, 1916**

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Содержание

Christmas Giving	5
REMBRANDT	7
REMBRANDT	9
REMBRANDT	11
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	12

John C. Van Dyke
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Christmas Giving



The old question – What shall we give? Too often answered by giving the easiest thing. “There, that’s off my mind for another year!” Yes, off your mind – but how does your heart feel when your friend sends *you* something that shows that he has cherished a little special thought of you?



Christmas giving may be a blessing or a blight – according to the spirit of the giver. It is a blessing when it carries with it a thought that honors the one that gives and benefits the one that receives.



“Benefit is the end of Nature,” says Emerson, “and he is great who confers the most benefits. Beware of good staying in your hand. Pay it away quickly to someone.”



Thousands of you tell me in the daily mail how The Mentor benefits you. Can you give a better gift to your friend than this same benefit? If we benefit you, we can also benefit him. With whole heart we pledge full service to him as to you. Give, then, this Christmas, The Mentor and all its service to your friend. Your message of friendship will be repeated to him twice a month throughout the year.

THE EDITOR.



IN THE HERMITAGE, PETROGRAD
SOBIESKI – Portrait by Rembrandt

REMBRANDT

Early Years

ONE

Sometimes it is difficult to learn the truth about a great man. This is particularly so in the case of one who lived three centuries ago; for in those days people were not as careful to keep records as they are today. For years the great painter Rembrandt was regarded as having been ignorant, boorish, and avaricious. Fables making him out to be such a character sprang up without any foundation. It is only within the last fifty years that we have come to know the true Rembrandt, and to realize that he had profound sympathy, a powerful imagination, and originality of mind, and that he was a poet as well as a painter, an idealist and also a realist. He has justly been called “the Shakespeare of Holland.”

Rembrandt Harmens van Rijn – for that is his full name – was born at Leyden, a town near Amsterdam, in Holland, on July 15, 1605. Leyden is famous in history as the birthplace of many great artists and other men of renown. Rembrandt’s home overlooked the river Rhine. He was the son of a well-to-do miller, and his parents were ambitious that Rembrandt enter the law, for his older brothers had been sent into trade.

At that time Holland was entering upon her great career of national enterprise. Science and literature flourished, poetry and the stage were cultivated by her people, and art was made welcome in every town, large and small. So Rembrandt, after he had been sent to the high school at Leyden, decided to become a painter. For already within him he felt the first urgings of genius.

Accordingly, when Rembrandt was only twelve or thirteen years old, his father allowed him to become a pupil of Jacob van Swanenburch, a painter of no great ability, who, however, enjoyed some reputation because he had studied in Italy. Three years later the boy was placed under Pieter Lastman, of Amsterdam, who was a much better artist and teacher. Authorities differ as to how long Rembrandt remained with Lastman. One says that he was his pupil until he was nineteen years old; another believes that he studied with him for only six months. At any rate, sometime after 1623 Rembrandt returned to the home of his parents at Leyden.

During these first years of his artistic life, Rembrandt worked hard. He painted pictures of almost everyone he saw – beggars, cripples, and in short every picturesque face and form of which he could get hold. Life, character, and special lighting effects were his principal concern. Frequently he used his mother for a model, and from these portraits we can trace his strong resemblance to her. The young artist also liked to paint his father and sisters; and by the number of portraits he painted of himself, we can see that from the very beginning he worked hard to master every form of expression, learning to draw the human face as it appeared not only to the casual observer, but also to one who read the character within. It is said that during his lifetime Rembrandt painted nearly sixty portraits of himself.

Time went by, and the young artist of Leyden was attracting the attention of art lovers in the great metropolis of Amsterdam. Some of them urged him to move there; and feeling that he was now strong enough to stand alone, Rembrandt rented a large house in Amsterdam and removed there in 1631. He divided the upper part of his house into small studios, and there he worked and taught. His pupils were many and from wealthy families. From this teaching Rembrandt derived a large income.

Fortune smiled upon him. At one bound he leaped into the position of the leading portrait painter of Amsterdam. Numerous commissions for portraits flowed in upon him, and during the first few years of his residence there he painted at least forty. When he was only twenty-six years old, in

1632, he painted the “Anatomy Lesson,” a picture that made an enormous sensation, and holds its place today as one of Rembrandt’s masterpieces.

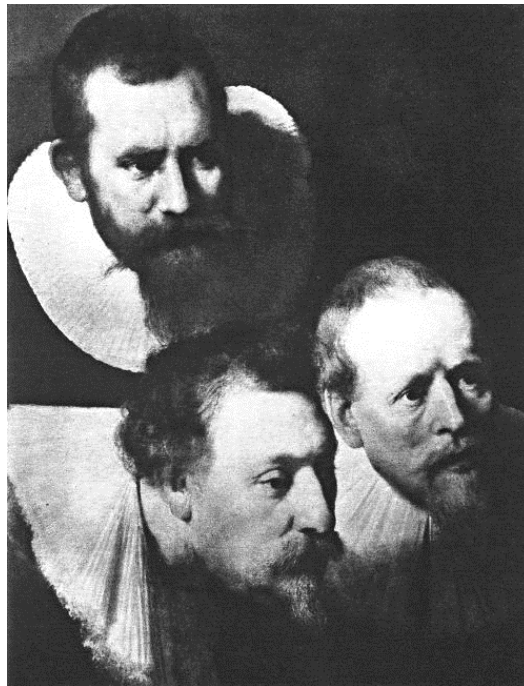
The year 1634 was one of the happiest in Rembrandt’s life. He was then at the beginning of a successful artistic career, and it was at that time that he married Saskia van Ulenburg, a beautiful Frisian maiden. Saskia brought him love and wealth. Eight years of prosperity and sunshine followed their union.

Rembrandt and his wife were a joyous pair. They had four children, a boy and two girls who died in infancy – and a son, Titus, who grew to man’s estate.

PREPARED BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE MENTOR ASSOCIATION

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DETAIL OF THE ANATOMY LESSON
By Rembrandt
IN THE HAGUE MUSEUM

REMBRANDT

The Master Painter

TWO

The year 1640 marks the beginning of what may be termed the second period of Rembrandt's life and work. It was during these years that success and happiness were his. From then until 1654 Rembrandt worked in what has been called his "second manner." His art grew in power, and the coldness of his "first manner" had disappeared. He had passed through a period of exaggerated expression and had come to a truer, calmer form of painting. It is interesting to compare his own portrait painted in 1640 with the earlier portraits of himself. This painting portrays a man strong and robust, with powerful head, determined chin, and keen, penetrating eyes. This was the Rembrandt of that period, the man confidently independent and careless as to his popularity as an artist.

Rembrandt had now many pupils. He had bought a house in Amsterdam, and had placed in it a great collection of paintings and engravings. At that time the artist was living a life of simple domesticity, happy with his wife and children. His friends were many, and his interests were large.

Rembrandt's mother died in 1640, and two years later the great sorrow of his life came upon him. His wife Saskia died. This changed everything for him. The events of his latter days are clouded in obscurity.

The terms of Saskia's will are interesting, in that they may throw some light upon a later action of the artist's, which will be related further on. She left her money to their son Titus, with Rembrandt as sole trustee, and with full use of the money until he should marry again or until the marriage of Titus.

It was in 1642 also that Rembrandt painted his most famous picture – the "Night Watch." This is one of the landmarks of Rembrandt's career. However, it is not a night watch at all, but a call to arms by day, and more properly should be named the "Day Watch."

The artist's life was changed after the death of his wife. No longer does he appear to have been the buoyant, carefree painter and art lover. There is a pathetic sadness in many of his works done at this time. This is well illustrated in his pictures of the Holy Family, a subject which was a favorite with him during this period of his life.

One reason for Rembrandt's unhappiness was his waning popularity. The "Night Watch," which was painted to order as a collection of portraits in one composition, did not prove satisfactory to his customers. Some of them complained of being put in the background and obscured. Naturally, the artist could not give places of prominence to every person in the picture. Not understanding this, however, these people took offence at his disposition of the characters, and transferred their patronage elsewhere.

It was at this time that Rembrandt did a great deal of landscape painting, and genius that he was, he made a success of it. It is to this period that the famous painting, "The Mill," is ascribed.

But though he was still the great artist, a cloud of adversity was slowly coming over Rembrandt's life. Evil days were at hand.

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IN THE WIDENER COLLECTION, PHILADELPHIA
THE MILL, By Rembrandt

REMBRANDT

Last Years

THREE

During the last part of the seventeenth century money was scarce in Holland. Long continued wars and civil troubles had worn out the country. Financial depression overwhelmed Amsterdam; and in addition to this the taste in art changed, and Rembrandt and his pictures were neglected.

Most of Rembrandt's money was tied up in his house and in his large collection of valuable pictures; and when his paintings ceased to be in demand, he was forced to borrow money. Very little is known of the artist's life at this time. He was living with his servant, Hendrickje Stoffels, and in 1654 a child was born to them. To her Rembrandt gave the name of Cornelia, after his much loved mother. It has been asserted that he married Hendrickje, but it is probable that he did not, for in such a case the money left by Saskia would have gone at once to her son Titus, according to the will.

In 1656 Rembrandt's financial affairs went crashing down to ruin. By a process of law his house and land were transferred to Titus. But as his son was still a minor, Rembrandt was allowed to remain in charge of Saskia's estate. And then ruin stared him in the face. In July, 1656, Rembrandt was declared bankrupt, and an inventory of his property was ordered. Two years later the larger part of his collection of etchings and drawings was sold. The sum realized was only a small fraction of their value.

Rembrandt, driven from his house, stripped of everything he possessed, without friends or money, took a modest lodging in Amsterdam. The city which once had acclaimed him as its greatest portrait painter now passed him by and left him alone to wait for death.

During all these dark years, however, Rembrandt was painting some of his greatest pictures. Even amid the ruins of his affairs he could go calmly on working; and for this he deserves the highest respect. Among the works of this time are the portrait of Jan Six, the "Adoration of the Magi," and "John the Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness." At the same time he continued to paint his own portrait; but in these pictures of the artist in his old age we see a man broken by misfortune.

Titus, Rembrandt's only son, had married. He died in 1668, leaving one child. A year later, on October 8, 1669, Rembrandt himself passed away. In the "Livre Mortuaire" of the Wester Kerk in Amsterdam appears the following simple entry, relating to his death: "Tuesday, 8th Oct., 1669, Rembrandt van Rijn, Painter on the Rovzegrift, opposite the Doolhof. Leaves two children."

Rembrandt outlived his popularity, although he was the greatest genius of his time and country, and in fact one of the great geniuses of all time and all countries. He was left to die alone and neglected by his fellow-countrymen, who had they foreseen the fame that the future held in store for him, might have sought his humble lodging to honor him on bended knee.

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