REMARKS ON THE EXHIBITION OF THE ETCHED WORK OF REMBRANDT AT THE BURLINGTON FINE ARTS' CLUB, IN 1877.

BY THE REV. CHARLES HENRY MIDDLETON.

This exhibition, held in the months of May and June last, was, through the generosity of the several contributors, an exhibition of such unusual excellence, illustrating in so great perfection the genius of Holland's greatest painter, that it may fitly be chronicled. The Committee, to whom was entrusted the selection, made it their chief endeavour to bring together the finest procurable examples of the Rembrandt etchings, and generally speaking their endeavour was crowned with success; for although in so extensive a collection there were, undoubtedly, several prints of little merit, yet, as a whole, the collection well deserved the encomiums of artists and amateurs, containing as it did not only early states and impressions excessively rare, in some instances unique, but also, what was of far greater importance, impressions so infinitely superior to the average of what are usually seen, that a standard of comparison was afforded, by which all other impressions might be tested.

A marked feature of the exhibition was the arrangement of the prints in what is believed to have been the order of their execution. When it is remembered that about one half of what are attributed to the master are undated, and that only about one third of those undated prints were hung upon the walls, it will be seen that the Committee had undertaken no idle task. To place these in order among the dated prints it was necessary that the whole series, whether exhibited or not, should be arranged; the work was surrounded with difficulties; but the labour was not ill bestowed, adverse criticisms from competent critics were few, and the corrections suggested were of value to those who, like ourselves, think the consecutive arrangement of a great artists' works a matter of importance.

A question of considerable interest was raised as to the extent to which the handiwork of pupils or assistants appears in certain of the larger and more elaborate plates. The idea that Rembrandt was so assisted is not a new one. P. J. Mariette in his Abecedario refused to recognize Rembrandt's hand in the harsh burin work which contrasts so painfully with the finer parts of the "Descent from the Cross." The opinion that the master entrusted much of the detail in the "Ecce Homo" to another has almost become traditional in the British Museum Print Room. I have, myself, no hesitation in attributing the inferior workmanship in the large "Resurrection of Lazarus" to Van Vliet; but in all discussion care must be taken not to lose sight of the fact that only comparatively unimportant parts of the several plates have
been thus entrusted to inferior hands, and that we are not called upon to repudiate a print, because an artist of less ability has been allowed to execute a part, any more than we should refuse to recognize a Rembrandt, for instance, because we had clear evidence that he did not cover every inch of his vast canvasses with his own brush.

Among so many works of the highest class it is difficult to make a selection, but for rarity and excellence, or both combined, the following deserve to be recorded:

**Contributed by S. Addington, Esq.—**

The Spanish Gipsy, a finer impression than the one which appeared at the Hume sale last year.

**Contributed by Henry Brodhurst, Esq.—**

The second (really the third) state of the "Ecce Homo," very fine impression.

**LARGE LANDSCAPE WITH THE MILL SAIL.** I only know one impression of the plate which could be compared with this, it is in the collection of Monsieur Dutuit. Mr. Brodhurst's LANDSCAPE WITH COTTAGE AND DUTCH HAY BARN is of nearly equal merit.

**COTTAGE WITH WHITE PALES**, first state, extremely fine and in good condition.

**THE THREE TREES, on India paper**, of the highest excellence.

**A Grotto**, first state, a brilliant impression.

**Rembrandt Drawing**: the late Mr. William Smith considered this one of the best impressions of the plate he had ever met with.

**THE THREE CROSSES**, first state, superb.

**The Old Haaring**, a finer impression does not exist. This is the impression with broad untrimmed margin which appeared at Manchester in 1857, and again at Leeds in 1868.

**Contributed by Edward Cheney, Esq.—**

**JAN ASSELYN**, first state, completed in crayon by Rembrandt.

**JANUS LUTMA**, also thus completed. Two very valuable prints of the greatest interest and beauty.

**From the Collection of St. John Dent, Esq.—**

**The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds**, finished state, *perfect*.

**The Three Trees**, on white paper, a magnificent impression.

**The Presentation**, in Rembrandt's dark manner, unusually rich in colour.

**From Monsieur Eugène Dutuit's Collection.—**

The small grey landscape called **The House with a Large Tree**, Wilson 204, Bl. 310. Extremely rare and not less lovely.

"**The Hundred Guilder;"** first state, from the Palmer and Price collections.

**Portrait of Rembrandt on a High and Narrow Plate**, a print not known to Bartsch or Wilson, and hitherto supposed to be unique.
From Richard Fisher, Esq.—

A very fine impression of the Presentation in the Vaulted Temple, second state.

LARGE LANDSCAPE WITH COTTAGE AND DUTCH HAY BARN, of equal merit to the one exhibited by Mr. Brodhurst.

"THE HUNDRED Guilder," second state, of the greatest excellence.

The Rev. D. Griffiths, Warden of Wadham.—

"THE HUNDRED Guilder," second state, white paper, a singularly beautiful impression, without exception the finest I have seen in this state, thought by some even superior to the impressions of the first state.

PORTRAIT OF VAN TOLLING, first state. This came from the collection of Baron Verstolk de Soelen. Only four impressions of this state are known.

Among those contributed by F. Seymour Haden, Esq. were:—

PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT WITH MOUSTACHES, Wilson 2.
PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT LEANING ON A STONE SILL, first and second states, both extremely fine and possessing the additional interest of having been worked on in pencil by Rembrandt's own hand.
REMBRANDT'S MILL, probably the richest impression existing of this plate.
A WOMAN IN A LARGE HOOD, Wilson 353, two impressions. Charles Blanc calls this "La femme de Rembrandt malade;" the second impression worked on in bistre by the master.
ST. FRANCIS PRAYING, second state.
THE WOMAN WITH THE ARROW, an impression of great excellence.

From the Collection of R. S. Holford, Esq.—

REMBRANDT IN TURNED-UP HAT AND EMBROIDERED MANTLE, a most interesting and rare impression, with Rembrandt's name and age written in pencil by himself.
REMBRANDT IN AN OVAL, first state, the uncut plate, the only impression of this state in private hands.
GREAT JEWISH BRIDE, first state.
A PAINTER DRAWING FROM A MODEL, first state, unique.
VIEW OF OMVAL, an unequalled impression.
JOHN CORNELIUS SYLVIIUS, first state. I have seen no impression at all equal to this in any collection. Wilson described it as the finest known.
THE BURGOMASTER SIX, second and third states.
EPHRAIM BONUS, first and second states.
"THE HUNDRED GUILDER," first state.
VILLAGE NEAR THE HIGH ROAD; or, THE THREE COTTAGES, first, second and third states.
The series of small landscapes; first and second states.
OUR LORD BEFORE PILATE, first state.

PORTRAIT OF COPPENOL, Wilson's second state. All these impressions were of the very greatest beauty and in splendid condition, among the richest gems of the exhibition.

From the Collection of R. P. Roupell, Esq., Q.C.—

A MAN MEDITATING, in Rembrandt's dark manner; this and an equally fine impression from the same plate, from the collection of J. Webster, Esq., were hung together. Mr. Webster also sent two rich impressions of the ST. JEROME, in the dark manner, first and second states.

From the Collection of the late Danby Seymour, Esq.—

The first and second states of JESUS CHRIST ENTOMBED, very fine.

A superb portrait, in oil, of REMBRANDT by himself, was kindly contributed by Lord Portarlington; and a grisaille of the "Ecce Homo," the design for the etching, by Lady Eastlake.

Visitors who acquainted themselves with the treasures displayed, will think this list far too short. I am aware that many are omitted which might well have been introduced, but to enumerate them all would have unduly lengthened this notice. Probably such a collection has not been seen before or will ever be brought together again.