

When the French took Mantua in 1797, this church was used as a storehouse for food for the horses. A French commissary cut this picture in pieces, the better to carry it, and, when about to send it to France, was prevented by the Academy of Mantua. Some of the pieces have disappeared.

Rubens also painted, for the Church of Santa Maria in Valicella, Rome, an altar-piece, representing the "Madonna and Child," with side pictures of the pope and several saints. In co-operation with his brother Philip, he published, in 1608, a book on Roman antiquities, with six copper-plate illustrations. The pope was so pleased with Rubens that he desired to keep him in Rome permanently.

For the Grand Duke Ferdinand I. of Florence, Rubens painted several pictures, among them a "Hercules between Venus and Minerva." In Spain he executed a series called "The Labors of Hercules," besides three separate ones, representing the slaying of the dragon, the struggle with Antæus, and the combat with a lion. He also copied the celebrated cartoon of Leonardo da Vinci, called "The Battle of the Standard," and made a valuable portrait of himself for the Grand Ducal collection of self-painted heads of artists. At Genoa he made drawings of her remarkable palaces and churches, which he published later in a volume with one hundred and thirty-nine illustrations.

After an absence of eight years in Italy, Rubens was recalled to Antwerp by the illness of his

mother. He started homeward October 28, 1608, with a heavy heart. On his way he learned that she had died nine days before he began his long journey.

On reaching Antwerp, he shut himself up for four months in the Abbey of St. Michael's, where she had been buried. He had given her no ordinary affection, and his was no ordinary loss. He met this loss in the silence of his own thoughts in the abbey, and when he had gained the self-control necessary for his work, he came out into the world. Most of us learn to bear our sorrows in our own hearts, without laying our burdens upon others, finding, sooner or later, that the world has enough of its own.

He talked of returning to Italy, but Archduke Albert and Isabella, proud of his genius and his attainments, invited him to court, sat for their portraits, and made him their official painter. One of his first works for them was a "Holy Family," which was so much admired that the Society of St. Ildefonso of Brussels, Archduke Albert being its head, ordered an altar-piece for the Chapel of the order of St. James. "This picture," says Dr. Waagen, "which is at present in the Imperial gallery at Vienna, represents the Virgin Mary enthroned, and putting the cloak of the order on the shoulders of St. Ildefonso. She is surrounded by four female saints. On the interior of the wings are the portraits of Albert and Isabella, with their patron saints. This work, one of the most admira-

ble ever painted by Rubens, displays in a remarkable degree the qualities praised in the one painted for the Archduke."

The association were so pleased that they offered the artist a purse of gold, which, having been made a member, he would not receive, saying that his only desire was to be useful to his brother members.

Lonely from the death of his mother, a new affection came into his heart to sustain and console him. Philip, his brother, now secretary of Antwerp, had taken as his wife Maria de Moy, whose sister, Clara, much older, had married a former secretary of Antwerp, Jan Brandt. Their daughter, Isabella Brandt, was a young woman of attractive face and sweet disposition. Peter naturally met the niece of his brother Philip's wife, loved her, and married her October 13, 1609, in the Abbey Church of St. Michael, when he was thirty-two.

He soon built a house, costing sixty thousand florins, in the Italian style of architecture, with a spacious studio, and a separate building or rotunda, like the Pantheon at Rome, lighted from the top, where he arranged the pictures, marbles, vases, and gems which he had collected in Italy. Adjoining this he laid out a large garden, planted with flowers and choice trees.

"The celebrated picture of Rubens and his first wife," says Mr. Kett, "now in the Pinakothek at Munich, must have been painted within the first



RUBENS AND HIS FIRST WIFE.
Munich, Pinakothek. Painted by himself.

few years of their married life, and is a striking example of the painter's manner at this period. His calm serenity and thoughtful expression, combined with beauty and force of character, are well balanced by the placid contentment and happy dignity of his wife, as the pair sit under their own vine and fig-tree, prepared to receive their visitors. There is no affected demonstration of feeling, no bashful restraint. A couple well-to-do and able to enjoy themselves are happy to share their pleasure with others."

In 1611, Rubens met with a severe loss in the death of his greatly beloved brother, Philip. All the seven children of Jans Rubens and Maria Pypelinx were now dead save Peter Paul.

In 1614, Rubens's heart was made glad by the birth of a son, to whom Archduke Albert became godfather, and gave him his own name. Four years later his only other child by Isabella Brandt was born, both of whom survived their father. A beautiful painting of these two children is now in the Liechtenstein Gallery, in Vienna.

The rich and famous painter was now happy, surrounded by his loved ones, busy constantly with his work, which poured in upon him. In summer he rose at four o'clock, heard mass, and went to work early. Says Dr. Waagen, "This was the time when he generally received his visitors, with whom he entered willingly into conversation on a variety of topics, in the most animated and agreeable manner. An hour before dinner he always

devoted to recreation, which consisted either in allowing his thoughts to dwell as they listed on subjects connected with science or politics, which latter interested him deeply, or in contemplating his treasures of art. From anxiety not to impair the brilliant play of his fancy, he indulged but sparingly in the pleasures of the table, and drank but little wine. After working again till the evening, he usually, if not prevented by business, mounted a spirited Andalusian horse, and rode for an hour or two.

"This was his favorite exercise; he was extremely fond of horses, and his stables generally contained some of remarkable beauty. On his return home, it was his custom to receive a few friends, principally men of learning or artists, with whom he shared his frugal meal, and afterwards passed the evening in instructive and cheerful conversation. This active and regular mode of life could alone have enabled Rubens to satisfy all the demands that were made upon him as an artist, and the astonishing number of works that he completed, the genuineness of which is beyond all doubt, can only be accounted for by this union of extraordinary diligence with his unusually fertile powers of production."

In building his home, Rubens encroached a little on land owned by the Company of Arquebusiers of Antwerp. A lawsuit was threatened, but finally a compromise was effected whereby Rubens agreed to paint a triptych, that is, a picture in three parts,

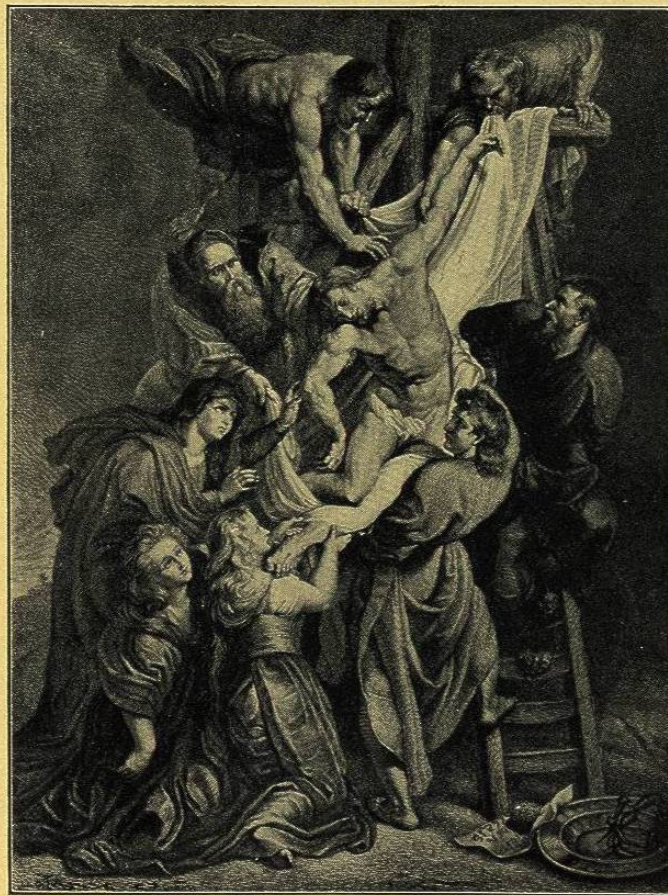
of their patron St. Christopher, to be hung in the cathedral. In fulfilment of this contract, he painted the renowned "Descent from the Cross," now in the south end of the transept of the cathedral, with St. Simon on one wing of the triptych, and "The Visitation" on the other, with St. Christopher in person.

Says Huet: "Playing upon the name of a patron saint, he has represented a threefold 'bearing of Christ'; Christ borne from the Cross in the centre; Christ borne by old Simon on the right; Christ borne 'neath his mother's heart' on the left wing. . . . There is no need to insist as to how Rubens acquitted himself of his task in the centre piece. Da Vinci's 'Last Supper' and Rubens's 'Descent from the Cross' are the two most popular altar-pieces of Christianity, admired alike by Protestant and Catholic. For the history of Flemish art this 'Descent' possesses as much value as does Goethe's 'Faust' for the history of German literature. No one has succeeded in painting subsequent to Rubens a 'Descent from the Cross' without paying toll to the master. . . . It is the triumph of human sympathy expressed in accordance with the theory of line and color. The painter had no other aim than to limn a perfect group of loving people, occupied in taking down the body of Christ. He does not portray your sorrow, but theirs. What he tenders us is sentiment, not sentimentality; emotion, not intellect. The allusion to St. Christopher must be disinterred from encyclopædias;

the recollection of John in his red cloak, carrying his burden, of the fair-haired Mary Magdalen, of the disciple with the winding-sheet betwixt his teeth, has become immortal.

"The lovely mother-virgin of the left-hand side leaf deserves particular attention. . . . I know of no more fascinating female figure from Rubens's brush; none which in its Flemish guise is so original, so wholly his. The 'Descent from the Cross' itself one might still believe to be the work of one of the great Italians. No such mistake is possible with the side leaf. What excites our wonder in Goethe is his succeeding in raising a Leipzig girl of the lower classes to the rank of a tragic heroine, the very mention of whose name suffices to remind us of an imperishable type. Rubens's pregnant Mary is an honorable Gretchen. He created her out of the most hidden depths of human nature, where blood and soul, mind and matter, melt into one. When Jordaens wishes to paint fertility, he resorts to the allegory of the schools. To Rubens life itself is the best of all allegories. Mary's clinging for support to the railing of the staircase, as she ascends it, is a hymn in honor of maternity. In the course of ages pictorial art has produced many beautiful works, none more beautiful than that scene."

About this time Rubens painted some of his greatest works. "Our Saviour giving the Keys to St. Peter" was originally placed in the Cathedral of St. Gudule; it was sold in 1824 to the Prince of



THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS.

From the painting in the Cathedral of Antwerp. P. P. Rubens.

Orange, for one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. An "Elevation of the Cross," an immense picture, executed for the Church of St. Walburg, at Antwerp, is now in the north transept of the cathedral. He painted an "Adoration of the Magi" for the choir of the Abbey Church of St. Michael, dear to him from the burial of his mother and his own marriage, and a similar picture for the Church of St. John at Malines.

Of an "Adoration of the Magi" in the Museum at Antwerp, Eugène Fromentin says: "It is truly a *tour de force*, especially if one recalls the rapidity of this work of improvisation. Not a gap, not a strain; a vast, clear half-tint and lights without excess envelop all the figures, supporting one the other; all the colors are visible and multiply values the most rare, the least sought and yet the most fit, the most subtle and yet the most distinct. By the side of types that are very ugly swarm superior types. With his square face, his thick lips, his reddish skin, big eyes strongly lighted up, and his stout body girt in green pelisse with sleeves of peacock blue, this African among the Magi is a figure entirely new, before which, assuredly, Tintoretto, Titian, Veronese would have clapped their hands.

"On the left stand in dignified solemnity two colossal cavaliers of a singular Anglo-Flemish style, the most extraordinary piece of color in the picture, with its dull harmony of black, greenish blue, of brown and white. Add the profile of the

Nubian camel-drivers, the supernumeraries, men in helmets, negroes, the whole in the most ample, the most transparent, the most natural of atmospheres. Spider-webs float in the framework, and quite low down the head of the ox, — a sketch achieved by a few strokes of the brush in bitumen, — without more importance and not otherwise executed than would be a hasty signature. The Child is delicious; to be cited as one of the most beautiful among the purely picturesque compositions of Rubens, the last word of his knowledge as to color, of his skill as to technique, when his sight was clear and instantaneous, his hand rapid and careful, and when he was not too exacting, the triumph of rapture and science — in a word, of self-confidence."

Rubens had courage. He used to say: "Every one according to his gift; my talent is such that never yet has an undertaking, however extraordinary in size or diversity of subjects, daunted my courage."

The "Assumption of the Virgin" in the Antwerp Cathedral, Dr. Waagen says, "may be said to produce the same effect as a symphony, in which the united sounds of all the instruments blend together joyously, divinely, mightily. No other painter has ever known how to produce such a full and satisfactory tone of light, such a deep *chiaroscuro* united with such general brilliancy."

"St. Theresa pleading for the Souls in Purgatory," "St. Anne instructing the Virgin," and the "Dead Saviour laid on a Stone," are now at Ant-

werp. Five of the above pictures and three others, "Christ on the Cross," "The Resurrection of our Saviour," and "The Adoration of the Shepherds," were painted in eighteen days, Rubens receiving as compensation fifty dollars per day, his usual price.

For a magnificent church built by the Jesuits, Rubens painted two works for the high altar, pictures for two other altars, and thirty-nine ceilings with Bible scenes, including the "Assumption" and "Coronation of the Virgin," the "Translation of Elijah," and the "Archangel Michael triumphing over the Serpent." These works with the church were all destroyed by fire, caused by lightning, in 1718.

With all this prosperity it was not strange that envy and jealousy should now and then confront Rubens. One of his rivals invited him to paint a picture on some chosen subject, and allow umpires to decide which was the better work. Rubens replied to the challenge: "My attempts have been subjected to the scrutiny of *connoisseurs* in Italy and Spain. They are to be found in public collections and private galleries in those countries; gentlemen are at liberty to place their works beside them, in order that the comparison be made."

The great artist used to say, "Do well, and people will be jealous of you; do better, and you confound them."

He employed several pupils to help him constantly. He would make sketches and superintend

the work, adding the finishing touches. Having been asked to paint for the Cathedral of Malines a "Last Supper," Rubens made the drawing and sent it to one of his pupils, Juste van Egmont, to lay on the ground color. The canon of the cathedral said to Van Egmont, "Why did your master not come himself?" "Don't be uneasy," was the reply. "He will, as is his custom, finish the picture."

Egmont went on with the work, when finally the canon, in a rage, ordered him to stop, while he wrote to Rubens: "'Twas a picture by your own hand I ordered, not an attempt by an apprentice. Come, then, and handle the brush yourself: or recall your Juste van Egmont, and tell him to take with him his sketch; my intention being not to accept it, you can keep it for yourself."

Rubens wrote back: "I proceed always in this way; after having made the drawing, I let my pupils begin the picture, finish even, according to my principles; then I retouch it, and give it my stamp. I shall go to Malines in a few days; your dissatisfaction will cease." Rubens came, and the canon was satisfied.

Mr. Kett says: "Rubens's method of painting was his own. Some of his fellow-countrymen, who were jealous of him, said he did not use paints, but colored varnishes, and that his pictures would not last; of the latter point we are the better judges. He used light grounds, almost, if not quite white; his outlines were drawn with a brush

in color (often red for the flesh), and very transparent glazes were laid over all the shadows, the lights being sometimes, not always, painted thicker. He exposed his pictures to the sun for short spaces of time, between the paintings, to dry out the oil. They received several coats of color, and then, finally, he put in the stronger touches himself, the light ones now thick. All his works, however, do not seem to have been done in this way, but many have solid painting from the first."

Rubens had become both rich and famous. When an alchemist visited him, urging that he furnish a laboratory and apparatus for the process of transmutation of metals, and share the profits, the painter replied: "You have come twenty years too late; I found out the secret long ago;" and then, pointing to his palette and brushes, he added, "Everything I touch with these turns to gold."

A new honor was now conferred upon Rubens. Marie de' Medici, the sister of the Duchess Leonora of Mantua, wished to adorn her palace of the Luxembourg, in Paris, with great magnificence. Henry, Baron Vicq, the ambassador of the Archduke Albert and Isabella, spoke to Queen Marie of Rubens. She must have known of his work, also, when he was the court painter of Mantua. He was summoned to Paris, and took the order for twenty-two immense pictures, illustrative of her life. These are now in the Louvre, full of vigor, brilliant in imagery, and rich in color.

In the first picture the three Fates spin the for-