

tunes of Marie de' Medici; the second represents her birth at Florence, in 1575, Lucina, the goddess of births, being present with her torch, while Florentia, the goddess of the city, holds the new-born infant; the third, her education, conducted by Minerva, Apollo, and Mercury; fourth, Love shows the princess the portrait of Henry IV., whom she married in 1600, after he had been divorced from Margaret of Valois, in the preceding year; above are Jupiter and Juno; beside the king appears Gallia; fifth shows the nuptials; the Grand Duke Ferdinand of Tuscany acts as proxy for his niece's husband; sixth, the queen lands at Marseilles; seventh, the wedding festival, at Lyons, with Henry IV. as Jupiter, and Marie as Juno; eighth, the birth of Louis XIII., in 1601, with Fortuna behind the queen; ninth, Henry IV. starting on his campaign against Germany, in 1610, when he makes the queen regent; tenth, coronation of the queen at St. Denis; eleventh, apotheosis of Henry IV., who was stabbed by Ravallac, it is said, not against the queen's wishes, who, nevertheless, in the picture is enthroned in mourning robes between Minerva and Wisdom; twelfth, regency of the queen under the protection of Olympus; Mars, Apollo, and Minerva drive away the hostile powers, while Juno and Jupiter cause the chariot of France to be drawn by gentle doves; thirteenth, the queen in the field during the civil war in France; fourteenth, treaty between France and Spain; fifteenth, prosperity during the regency, the queen bearing the

scales of justice with Minerva, Fortuna, and Abundantia on the right, Gallia and Time on the left, while below are Envy, Hatred, and Stupidity; sixteenth, the queen commits the rudder of the Ship of State, rowed by the Virtues, to Louis XIII., who certainly must have deserted these virtues early in his career; seventeenth, flight of the queen, in 1619, to Blois, where the wily Cardinal Richelieu joined her as a pretended friend; eighteenth, Mercury presents himself to the queen as a messenger of peace; nineteenth, the queen is conducted into the temple of peace; twentieth, Marie and Louis XIII. on Olympus, with the dragon of rebellion below them; twenty-first, the king giving his mother a chaplet of peace; twenty-second, portrait of Marie; followed by portraits of her parents, Grand Duke Francis and Johanna, Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

Fortunately, Rubens could not paint the sad future of Marie de' Medici. She died in a poor apartment at Cologne, deserted by her family. The queen was delighted with Rubens's pictures, taking lessons of him in drawing, and often conversing with him while he made the sketches, the painting being done by himself and his pupils in his studio at Antwerp, in about two years and a half.

The queen had intended to adorn another gallery at the Luxembourg with the life of Henry IV., but the project was abandoned in consequence of the quarrel between Marie and Cardinal Richelieu.

Rubens painted other pictures while at work on the Medici allegory: "Susannah and the Elders,"



"Lot's Daughters," a beautiful "Virgin and Child" for Baron de Vicq, who had recommended him to Marie de' Medici, and several other works.

In his "Kermess" now in the Louvre, a peasant festival in Flanders, "in front of a village inn about fourscore persons of both sexes are depicted, intermingled in varieties of groups, in the full swing of boisterous enjoyment after a better meal than peasants are used to, singing, dancing, talking, shouting, gambolling, love-making. A large, serious dog tries to get his share by prying into a pail half filled with empty platters. An abounding scene of rustic revelry, in the groups and individuals a character and expression which only warm genius animating rich intellectual resources could give."

Rubens delighted in painting animals. "It is related," says Calvert, "that he caused to be brought to his house a very fine and powerful lion that he might study him in his various attitudes. But what he had still greater delight in painting than animals was children. Here, too, as with animals, and in a higher form, he had what a healthy, juicy mind like his revelled in, nature unsophisticated. It may have been in front of one of his canvases glowing with the luminous rosiness of half a dozen of these happy soul-buds that Guido exclaimed, 'Does Rubens mix blood with his paint?' The mobility of children, their naturalness, their unveiled life and innocence, humanity in its heavenly promise, laughing incarnations of



LE CHAPEAU DE POIL.  
Rubens. London, N. G.



hope, all appealed to his liveliest sympathies, as to his artistic preferences."

He was skilled, also, in portraits. Mr. Kett says the picture of his mother, in the Dulwich Gallery, the "Spanish Hat," in the National Gallery, and the portrait called "General Velasquez" "are three that could scarcely be excelled by any master of any time."

Dr. Waagen says of "*Le Chapeau de Poil*" ("The Spanish Hat"), "No picture justifies more than this the appellation which Rubens has obtained of 'The Painter of Light.' No one who has not beheld this masterpiece of painting can form any conception of the transparency and brilliancy with which the local coloring in the features and complexion, though under the shadow of a broad-brimmed Spanish beaver hat, are brought out and made to tell, while the different parts are rounded and relieved with the finest knowledge and use of reflected lights. The expression of those youthful features, beaming with cheerfulness, is so full of life, and has such a perfect charm, that one is inclined to believe the tradition that Rubens fell in love with the original (a young girl of the Lunden family, at Antwerp) whilst she was sitting to him."

Mrs. Jameson says, "The picture as a picture is miraculous, all but life itself. . . . Rubens, during his life, would never part with this picture. . . . After the death of his widow, it passed into the possession of the Lunden family, whose heir,



M. Van Havre, sold it in 1817, for sixty thousand francs, to another descendant of the family, M. Stier d'Artselaer. At his death, in 1822, it was sold by auction and purchased by M. Niewenhuys for seventy-five thousand francs, and brought to England, where, after being offered in vain to George IV., it was bought by Sir Robert Peel for three thousand five hundred guineas. . . .

"To venture to judge Rubens, we ought to have seen many of his pictures. His defects may be acknowledged once for all. They are in all senses gross, open, palpable; his florid color, dazzling and garish in its indiscriminate excess; his exaggerated, redundant forms; his coarse allegories; his historical improprieties; his vulgar and prosaic versions of the loftiest and most delicate creations of poetry; let all these be granted, but this man painted that sublime history (a series of six pictures), almost faultless in conception and in costume, the 'Decius' in the Liechtenstein Gallery. This man, who has been called unpoetical, and who was a born poet, if ever there was one, conceived that magnificent epic, the 'Battle of the Amazons;' that divine lyric, the 'Virgin Mary' trampling sin and the dragon, in the Munich Gallery, which might be styled a Pindaric Ode in honor of the Virgin, only painted instead of sung; and those tenderest moral poems, the 'St. Theresa' pleading for the souls in Purgatory, and the little sketch of 'War,' where a woman sits desolate on the black, wide heath, with dead bodies and imple-

ments of war heaped in shadowy masses around her, while, just seen against the lurid streak of light left by the setting sun, the battle rages in the far distance. . . .

"Though thus dramatic in the strongest sense, yet he is so without approaching the verge of what we call theatrical. With all his flaunting luxuriance of color, and occasional exaggeration in form, we cannot apply that word to him. Le Brun is theatrical; Rubens, never. His sins are those of excess of daring and power; but he is ever the reverse of the flimsy, the artificial, or the superficial. His gay magnificence and sumptuous fancy are always accompanied by a certain impress and assurance of power and grandeur, which often reaches the sublime, even when it stops short of the ideal."

A few months after the paintings were finished for Marie de' Medici, a great sorrow came to the Rubens mansion. Isabella Brandt, his wife, died in the middle of the year 1626, leaving two sons, Albert and Nicholas, twelve and eight years of age. She was buried with much display in the Abbey Church of St. Michael, where she had been married,—in the same tomb with his mother and his brother Philip, and her husband dedicated a beautiful "Virgin and Child" to her memory. He wrote to a friend, sadly, in regard to her whom he had lost, as one "not having any of the vices of her sex. She was without bad temper or feminine frivolity, but was in every way good and honorable



—in life loved on account of her virtues, and since her death universally bewailed by all. Such a loss seems to me worthy of sympathy, and because the true remedy for all evils is forgetfulness, the daughter of time, one must without doubt hope for relief; but I find the separation of grief for the departed from the memory of a person whom I ought to revere and honor whilst I live, to be very difficult."

Partly to distract his mind from his grief, and partly to assist his own country, to which he was devotedly attached, to keep peace with the powers at war, which made Belgium their battle-ground, at the request of the Infanta Isabella he visited Holland on a diplomatic mission, and, a little later, Spain and England. The King of Spain had already ennobled Rubens. "Regard being had to the great renown which he has merited and acquired by excellence in the art of painting, and rare experience in the same, as also by the knowledge which he has of histories and languages, and other fine qualities and parts which he possesses, and which render him worthy of our royal favor, we have granted and do grant to the said Peter Paul Rubens and his children and posterity, male and female, the said title and degree of nobility." In consequence of this, Isabella had made him "gentleman of her household."

In this his second visit to Spain, he is said to have painted forty pictures in nine months. Rubens and Velasquez became intimate friends,

although the former was fifty-one, and the latter twenty-eight.

A little later he was sent by Philip IV. of Spain, who had appointed Rubens secretary to his privy council, on a mission to England. Here he was discovered by a courtier, one morning, busy at his painting. "Ho!" said the courtier, "does his Most Catholic Majesty's representative amuse himself with painting?"

"No," answered Rubens, "the artist sometimes amuses himself with diplomacy."

Rubens painted for King Charles I., "Diana and her Nymphs surprised by Satyrs," and "Peace and Plenty," which latter, after remaining in Italy for a century, was finally bought by the Marquis of Stafford, for fifteen thousand dollars, and by him presented to the National Gallery. Rubens also made nine sketches for pictures ordered by the king to decorate the ceiling of the throne-room of Whitehall, illustrating the deeds of James I. These cost fifteen thousand dollars.

King Charles knighted the famous painter, and after the ceremony presented him with the sword, a handsome service of plate, a diamond ring, and a rich chain to which was attached a miniature of the king; this he ever afterwards wore round his neck.

At Cambridge University he was received by Lord Holland, the Chancellor, and admitted to the honorary degree of Master of Arts.

As a diplomatist, M. Villoamil says, "Rubens



had great tact, was prudent, active, forbearing, and patient to the last degree, and, above all, throwing aside all personality, how exclusively careful he was neither to exceed nor fall short of the line laid down to him from Spain, softening, when it seemed harsh, what the Count Duke (Olivarezs) had charged him to communicate, and even taking on himself faults and errors which he had not committed, when by such assumption he could advance his objects and gain the ends he had in view in the service of Spain."

How few in this world learn the beauty and the power of being "patient to the last degree!" How few learn early in life to avoid gossip, to speak well of others, and to make peace!

In 1630, four years after the death of Isabella Brandt, Rubens married her sister's daughter, Helena Fourment, a wealthy girl of sixteen, while the painter was fifty-three. He seems to have thought her beautiful, as she appears in nearly all his subsequent paintings. At Blenheim are two portraits of the fair Helena: one, representing himself and his wife in a flower garden with their little child, Dr. Waagen regards as one of the most perfect family pictures in the world.

In the Belvidere, Vienna, is a magnificent portrait of Helena Fourment. She bore to Rubens five children in the ten remaining years of his life.

He soon bought a lovely country home, the Château de Steen at Elewyt, which was sold at his death for forty thousand dollars. "It was,"

says Huet, "a feudal castle, surrounded on all sides with water. Rubens, though nothing need have prevented him from demolishing the castle and erecting an Italian villa on its site, respected its mediæval architecture. One may take it that the mediæval turrets and the mediæval moat made up, according to him, an agreeable whole with the sylvan surroundings. An imagination like his felt at home everywhere. The principal charm of 'Steen' lay in its being but a day's journey from Antwerp,—that there wife and children could breathe the beneficent country air in unstinted draughts, and the artist himself could indulge his leisure and find new subjects. It is all but certain that the idyl of 'The Rainbow' and the bacchanalia of 'The Village Fair' were painted nowhere else but at Steen. . . .

"Though the two centuries and a half that have elapsed since then have altered the means of locomotion and communication so thoroughly as to make them difficult of recognition, it needs no great effort of the imagination to follow the Rubens family from stage to stage on its flitting to the summer quarters. We can fancy him sitting one of those splendid horses he so magnificently bestrode. A team of four or six less costly, but well-fed, well-groomed, and well-equipped cattle drags through the loose sand or heavy clay the still heavier coach, where, between children and nursemaids, thrones the mistress of the house, not very securely; for she, like the rest, is considera-



bly jolted. She wears the large hat with feathers, beneath which the charming face meets the spectators, as in the picture in the Louvre. A solid train with provisions for the long journey brings up the rear of the procession. Proud of his young wife, anxious as to her every want, the great artist, whose hair and beard are plentifully besprinkled with gray, does not leave the carriage door by her side."

During the last years of his life Rubens suffered much from gout, but, with the help of his pupils, he accomplished a great amount of work. Many of his scholars became famous: Van Dyck, Jordaens, Snyders, Teniers, and others.

Van Dyck was twenty-two years younger than Rubens, and entered his studio when he was seventeen. In four years his works began to be almost as much esteemed as those of his master. It is said that one day, during the absence of Rubens from his studio, the pupils, crowding around a freshly painted picture, pushed against it, thus effacing the arm and chin of a Virgin. They were greatly distressed over the matter, when Van Hoeck cried out: "Van Dyck is the handiest; he must repair the mischief." The restoration was so deftly made that Rubens did not observe the accident.

Later, when Van Dyck came back from Italy, after five years of study there, he found little sale for his pictures, and was depressed. Rubens went to his studio, comforted him, and bought all his

paintings which were finished. He did the same thing with a rival who had maligned him because he was not as successful as the great painter. When Rubens died, he owned in his gallery over three hundred pictures, many by Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoretto, and Van Dyck, and ninety by his own hand.

In 1635, when Philip IV. of Spain had appointed as governor of the Netherlands his own brother, the Cardinal Infanta Ferdinand, Sir Peter Paul Rubens was deputed to design the triumphal arches and ornamental temples for his solemn entry into Antwerp. These beautiful designs were afterwards engraved and published, with a learned Latin description by his friend Gevaerts, though they were not ready for the press till the year after Rubens's death. On the day when Ferdinand entered Antwerp, Rubens was ill at his house, but the new governor showed his appreciation of his talent and learning by calling upon him in his own home, as Queen Marie de' Medici, the Infanta Isabella, and other famous persons had done.

His last piece of work was the "Crucifixion of St. Peter," for St. Peter's Church at Cologne. He asked for a year and a half to complete the picture, but death came before it was finished. It represents the apostle nailed to the cross with his head downwards, surrounded by six executioners. "He has proved," says Gustave Planche, "over and over again that he knew all the secrets of the



human form, but never has he proved it so clearly as in the Crucifixion of Peter."

May 30, 1640, Antwerp was in mourning for her world-renowned painter. He was buried at night, as was the custom, a great concourse of citizens, all the artistic and literary societies, and sixty orphan children with torches, following his body to the grave. It was temporarily placed in the vault of the Fourment family, and March 4, 1642, was removed to a special chapel built by his wife in the Church of St. James in Antwerp. At his own request, made three days before his death, a "Holy Family," one of his best works, was hung above his resting-place. In the picture, St. George is a portrait of himself, St. Jerome of his father, an angel of his youngest son, and Martha and Mary of Isabella and Helena, his two wives. "A group of tiny angels, floating in the air, crown the Holy Child with a wreath of flowers."

The learned nephew of Rubens, Gevaerts, wrote the following epitaph, in Latin, now inscribed on his monument:—

"Here lies Peter Paul Rubens, knight, and Lord of Steen, son of John Rubens, a senator of this city. Gifted with marvellous talents, versed in ancient history, a master of all the liberal arts and of the elegancies of life, he deserved to be called the Apelles of his age and of all ages. He won for himself the good will of monarchs and of princely men. Philip IV., King of Spain and the Indies, appointed him secretary of his Privy

Council, and sent him on an embassy to the King of England in 1629, when he happily laid the foundation of the peace that was soon concluded between those two sovereigns. He died in the year of salvation 1640, on the 30th of May, aged sixty-three years."

The wife of Rubens afterwards married John Baptist Broecheoven, Baron van Bergeyck, an ambassador in England in the reign of Charles II.

Rubens left his large collection of sketches to whichever of his sons might become an artist, or whichever of his daughters might marry an artist, but not one fulfilled the conditions.

Two hundred years after Rubens's death, in 1870, a monument was erected to his memory in one of the public squares of Antwerp, and in 1877 a memorial festival was held in his honor in the same city.