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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRANZ HALS ***

Transcriber's Note:

Every effort has been made to replicate this text as faithfully as possible. "Scherijver" has been changed to "Schrijver" at each occurrence.

The plates and their captions have been moved to paragraph breaks.

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FRANZ HALS

IN THE SAME SERIES

ARTIST.	AUTHOR.
VELAZQUEZ.	S. L. BENSUSAN.
REYNOLDS.	S. L. BENSUSAN.
TURNER.	C. LEWIS HIND.
ROMNEY.	C. LEWIS HIND.
GREUZE.	ALYS EYRE MACKLIN.
BOTTICELLI.	HENRY B. BINNS.
ROSSETTI.	LUCIEN PISSARRO.
BELLINI.	GEORGE HAY.
FRA ANGELICO.	JAMES MASON.
REMBRANDT.	JOSEF ISRAELS.
LEIGHTON.	A. LYS BALDRY.
RAPHAEL.	PAUL G. KONODY.
HOLMAN HUNT.	MARY E. COLERIDGE.
TITIAN.	S. L. BENSUSAN.
MILLAIS.	A. LYS BALDRY.
CARLO DOLCI.	GEORGE HAY.
GAINSBOROUGH.	MAX ROTHSCHILD.
TINTORETTO.	S. L. BENSUSAN.
LUINI.	JAMES MASON.
FRANZ HALS.	EDGCUMBE STALEY.

In Preparation

VAN DYCK.	PERCY M. TURNER.
WHISTLER.	T. MARTIN WOOD.
LEONARDO DA VINCI.	M. W. BROCKWELL.
RUBENS.	S. L. BENSUSAN.
BURNE-JONES.	A. LYS BALDRY.
J. F. MILLET.	PERCY M. TURNER.
CHARDIN.	PAUL G. KONODY.
FRAGONARD.	C. HALDANE MACFALL.
HOLBEIN.	S. L. BENSUSAN.
BOUCHER.	C. HALDANE MACFALL.
VIGÉE LE BRUN.	C. HALDANE MACFALL.
WATTEAU.	C. LEWIS HIND.
MURILLO.	S. L. BENSUSAN.

And Others.



PLATE I.—THE LAUGHING CAVALIER. Frontispiece

(Wallace Collection, London)

Painted in 1624. Hals called it "Portrait of an Officer," and why, and how, it gained its present title, no one knows. On the back of the canvas we read—"Aeta Suæ 26 A^o. 1624." The "officer" is *not* laughing; he is merely showing good conceit of himself in particular, and disdain of the world in general! It is a rare study in expression, now a scowl, now a leer, alternating as one looks upon the handsome young face. Whilst the details of the costume are as rich as may be, the colours are few and beautifully blended, a *tour de force* in technical skill. The picture was purchased by its original owner, Mijnheer M. Meuwlehuys of Haarlem, for £80; at the Pourtalès sale, in 1865, Sir Richard Wallace gave £2040 for it.

Franz Hals
BY EDGCUMBE STALEY
ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT
REPRODUCTIONS IN COLOUR

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LONDON: T. C. & E. C. JACK

FOREWORD

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"Franz Hals was a great painter; for truth of character, indeed, he was the greatest painter that ever existed.... He *made* no beauties, his portraits are of people such as we meet every day in the streets.... He possessed one great advantage over many other men—his mechanical power was such that he was able to hit off a portrait on the instant. He was able to shoot the bird flying—so to speak—with all its freshness about it, which even Titian does not seem to have done.... If I had wanted an *exact likeness* I should have preferred Franz Hals." So said James Northcote, the Royal Academician, talking with his friend James Ward, upon Art and artists, in the little back parlour of his humble dwelling, 39 Argyll Street, long ago absorbed in the premises of a great drapery establishment.

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Hals was an ancient and honourable patrician family, intimately connected with Haarlem for well-nigh three hundred years. The name first appears in the annals of the city in 1350, and again and again individuals bearing it held the offices of Burgomaster, Treasurer, and *Schepen*—Alderman or Magistrate.

Pieter Claes Hals, Franz' father, was appointed a magistrate in 1575. In 1577 he was one of the *Regenten*, or Governors of the city Orphanage, and in 1578 he became President of that famous institution.

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His profession has not been indicated, but that he was a loyal and influential citizen is proved by his holding a command in the garrison which so heroically defended the city against the Spaniards in 1572.

Wholesale pillage by the hated invader, however, reduced many a wealthy burgher family to penury, and compelled them to seek the recovery of their fortunes elsewhere.

The venerable city of Antwerp, by reason of the enterprise of her merchants, offered great attractions. Thither fled many a Haarlemer, and among them went forth Mijnheer Schepen Hals and his newly married wife. It must have been a great trial to domesticated Lysbeth Coper to have to pack up what was left of their household crocks and seek a new home.

It was in the spring of 1579, a little more than a year after their wedding day, that they started upon their journey. They made first for Mechlin, where a branch of the family was settled, and they were welcomed with cordial hospitality by their relatives.



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PLATE II.—OLD HILLE BOBBE

(Royal Museum, Berlin)

Painted in 1650. This ancient, wrinkled dame was what they call in seaport towns "a sailor's mother," rather a dubious compliment to mariners! She was a "merry toper," like many of Hals' companions, and went from tavern to tavern to get a drink. Her real name was Alle, or Alice Boll—easily transposed. The owl is probably a painter's skit of the screeching, scolding old hussy! The portrait is quite remarkable for poverty of colour. Franz was out of funds and out of paints, but he has made the old bloodless flesh look like life. He often painted her: he loved her odd look, if he liked not well her scorn!

One whole year the couple spent in the city of lace, and a little son was born to them, whom they registered in the name of Dirk. The greater opportunities offered to labour and capital in the city on the Scheldt, however, were so evident, that they once more packed up their goods and chattels and resumed their pilgrimage.

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Antwerp was already renowned as an Art city—its painters and engravers were of wide world fame; and Pieter Claes Hals, in full possession of certain artistic proclivities of his family,

considered that he might more profitably make use of them there. Besides this, another branch of the family was established in Antwerp, and members thereof were in good positions.

The journey from Mechlin, short as it was, partook of the pathetic character of that of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, inasmuch as they were no sooner housed in temporary lodgings than Mevrouw Lysbeth brought into the world another little son. Vincenzius Laurenszoon Van der Vinne—a devoted pupil in after years of this very baby boy—says he was born late in 1580. There is no official record of the day of birth, but he was registered in the good old family name of Franz.

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"Franz of Antwerp" was a designation which stuck to the great painter right on to the end of his long career. Nothing whatever is known of his youth, his education, or his pursuits. For twenty years neither he, nor his parents, are named by biographers or historians.

In 1600 Mijnheer and Mevrouw Hals found themselves once more at Haarlem, with what thankfulness it would not be difficult to narrate. Their two sons accompanied them, but two baby girls—Cornelia and Geertruid—were left buried in Flemish soil. Both lads—they were grown men—at once entered painters' studios—Dirk that of Abraam Bloemaert, and Franz that of Karel Van Mander.

This statement brings us up smartly, for there has been nothing to indicate that the brothers had served apprenticeships in Art. We must then proceed by presumption and surmise in the story of their training, for we may be quite sure that these eminent artists would not accept raw, untaught youths as pupils.

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Dirk and Franz had, of course, been reared in Antwerp, where the most conspicuous teachers of painting were Otho Van Veen (1518-1629), a painter of churches and portraits; Adam Van Noort (1557-1641), history, large portraits, and genre; and Tobie Verghaegts (1566-1631), landscape and architecture.

The brothers profited by their studies under such able masters, and at Van Noort's they doubtless made the acquaintance of their fellow-pupils, Pieter Paul Rubens and his friend, Hendrik Van Balen.

At Antwerp the two Hals would also be thrown into the company of Martin de Vos, Erasmus Guellinus, Crispin Van der Broeck, the Galles, the Van de Passes, the Wieriexes, Antonie Van Liest, Geenart Van Kampen, and other draughtsmen, painters, and engravers.

Probably Mijnheer Pieter Hals himself was one of the company of specialists—scholars, writers, readers, correctors, draughtsmen, painters, etchers, scratchers, cutters, and the like, gathered together by the enterprise of Christopher Plantin and other leading publishers. The two sons, therefore, had great opportunities for the development of their family talents.

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Karel Van Mander, Franz Hals' master, the son of a noble family, was born at Meulebeke, in Flanders, in 1548. He settled at Haarlem in 1583, where he established himself as a teacher of drawing, and founded an Academy of Painting in 1590. His style was historical, and he did large-sized portraits and groups as well.

In addition to his celebrity as a painter Van Mander was noteworthy as a man of many parts: a historian of the Netherlands, an annotator of the classics, a poet in the vernacular, a musician, a linguist. His most valuable contribution to literature was his splendid "Het Schilder Boeck" or "Book of Painters," Dutch and Flemish.

His poem on Art, entitled "Den Handt der Edelvry Schilderconst," is full of sage advice with respect to the manner and spirit in which a student should approach his work; and he sums up his exhortations by saying: "Success is only to be found in painstaking and constant observation of all externals." He gives, as a wholesome motto to an aspiring artist, "I will be a good painter," and, as a salutary warning against carnal excess, the opposite reflection: "Hoe Schilder—hoe wifder"—"As demoralised as a painter!"

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Van Mander's "Counsels of Perfection" for the behoof of his pupils are as excellent as they are characteristic. "Avoid," says he, "little taverns and bad company.... Don't let anybody see that you have much money about you.... Be careful never to say where you are going.... Be straight and courteous, and keep out of brawls.... Get up early and set to work.... Be on your guard against light-hearted beauties!"

Three years before the Hals left Antwerp for their dear old home, Karel Van Mander had been joined by two assistants in the work of the Academy—Cornelis Cornelissen (1562-1637), and Hendrik Goltzius (1558-1617). The former was a painter of allegory, mythology, and portraits, a member of a celebrated artist family, and a native of Haarlem; and the latter, the celebrated Flemish engraver, a native of Meulebeke, famed too as a painter of landscape, history, and the nude.

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At Haarlem were flourishing, at the time of the return of Mijnheer and Mevrouw Hals, several distinguished artists, and among them Cornelis Vroom (1566-1640), a marine painter, gifted in seafaring genre—a merry fellow, and an habitu  of low taverns, although he lived in a fine house, with a frescoed front, in the Zijlstraat. He introduced the young Hals to his friends and models.

Very many of the well-to-do citizens affected artistic studies, and several became efficient painters. Of these Jan Van Heemsen (1570-1641), a wealthy burgher and a friend of the Hals

family, patronised Van Mander and his pupils. He had considerable skill in painting life-size figures, remarkable for easy pose, and animated manner—very much in the style adopted by Franz Hals.

These Antwerp and Haarlem worthies were the "makers" of Franz Hals in the elementals of his art; but no sooner did he pass within the portals of Van Mander's Academy than the door was shut and fast-barred—for all we know of him, his life, his work, and his associates, for eleven years; and then, we behold him assisting at a homely and interesting function.

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In the Baptismal Registers of the Groote Keerke is the entry of a new-born child—Herman, the son of Franz Hals and Anneke Hermanszoon, in March 1611. Apparently he had been in no hurry to unite the bonds of matrimony, and yet he had cause to repent at leisure, for his early married life does not appear to have been very happy.

Within five years, namely, in February 1616, the name of the unfortunate Anneke crops up again, and this time in the police records. Franz is charged with ill-treating his wife, and with intemperance; and the charges seem to have been proven, for he was reprimanded, and only released under solemn promise of amendment of conduct, and, further, he was admonished to forsake drunken company!

Poor Anneke died that self-same year, but we must not charge Franz as the direct cause of her premature death; if he had become something of a wastrel, as many affirm, she was probably a weakling, and they had little in common.

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Twelve months passed, and then, with due regard to mourning conventions, Franz Hals married Lysbeth Reyniers, of Spaedam, and took her to live in the Peeuselaarsteeg. They were kindred souls, and lived happily together for fifty years.

To them were born many children—pledges of mutual love and home restraint—Sara, in 1617; Jan, in 1618; Franz, in 1620; Adriaenjen, in 1623; Jacobus, in 1624; Reynier, in 1627; Nicolaes, in 1628; Maria, in 1631; and Pieter, in 1633; Herman, Anneke's son, making up the ten olive branches.

What a happy, merry home must that have been in the Peeuselaarsteeg! How greatly must his domestic joys have heartened the worthy father, and given vein and tone to his work!



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PLATE III.—THE MERRY TRIO

(In America. A copy by Dirk Hals, Royal Museum, Berlin)

Painted in 1616. A girl of the town gaily dressed, with open bosom—a thing abhorred by all worthy Dutch *vrouwen*—sits willy-nilly between the knees of a

Falstaffian lover. He was probably the very pork-butcher who, in after years, became one of Hals' heaviest creditors. A saucy apprentice is holding over the amorous pair a coronal, not of orange-blossom but of sausages! He has gripped his master's shoulders to make him release his hold upon the girl's arm. Hals' treatment of the group was doubtless a remembrance of an allegorical picture he had seen at Antwerp, "The Feast of Love," by Franz Pourbus (1540-1601), and which now hangs in the Wallace Collection.

Haarlem story is blank—Haarlem tradition is silent with respect to Franz Hals' young manhood. The only hint that we have of his existence is in 1604, when it is recorded that he was working still in Van Mander's Academy. There is not the least tint of local colour, nor the faintest trace of romance to be seen or heard until we are brought face to face with the "Portrait of Dr. Pieter Schrijver," now at Monsieur Warnecks' in Paris.

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Upon the picture we see "F. H." and the date, 1613. This then is the first intimation that Franz Hals had blossomed out as a painter of portraits! The doctor was a well-known Haarlem poet, writer, chemical student, and art critic. He flourished between the years 1570 and 1640. The portrait shows us a middle-aged man of serious mien, but with no peculiar characterisation of expression or figure. It is a sombre production—black and grey, with merely a little brick-red here and there; but the shadows upon the skin strike one as clever.

Franz Hals was thirty-three years of age in 1613—an age when artists have either dismally failed and turned aside to more suitable employment, or when they have established some sort of reputation and their work is recognised, and examples of their style are broadcast. Not so Franz Hals; but then there are, to be sure, scores of portraits "attributed" to him of men and women and children to which no dates are attached, and many of these are comparable with the portraits of Schrijver in technique, colour, and finish. That he worked laboriously to maintain his family, if for no other reason—and artists had to work hard in those days of small payments—is evident both directly and indirectly.

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A few—very few—studies are extant, in black crayon upon dull blue paper, which are noteworthy for simplicity and firmness. Two of these are in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem, but they are evidently sketches for his first great "Group of Shooters," in the Stadhuis. Three or four are in England—one at the British Museum, and the Albertina Collection at Vienna has a few, and that seems to be all.

Where, may we ask, are his studio canvases, his early panel portraits, and all the thousand-and-one sketches and freaks of a young artist? Perchance destroyed—possibly otherwise attributed—probably hidden away in the high-pitched lofts of old Haarlem houses and *hofjes* or asylums, and in many an oaken chest and press.

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Indirectly we are assured that he had been, all the thirteen years of his residence in Haarlem, an indefatigable worker in the art of portraiture—from the simple fact of his intimacy with Mijnheer Aert Jan Druivesteen (1564-1617), who five times served the high office of Burgomaster of Haarlem. He was a man of independent means and refined tastes, a lover of artists, and himself also a very passable painter of landscape and animals, which he painted solely for amusement.

Druivesteen was a personal friend of Franz Hals' father, and a constant visitor at his house. From the first he greatly encouraged the young art student, and many a time sat to him for his portrait. Alas! those portraits have all disappeared or are undistinguishable.

From the influential position of his patron it is only a fair deduction to suppose that other city magnates and leading townspeople also sought their portraits at the hands of the Burgomaster's *protégé*.

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The vogue of portraiture has always been the token of worldly success, and eminent personages—and the reverse—from the days of the Pharaohs to our own, have been eager that their physiognomies should be handed down to posterity. This fashion took fast hold upon the opulent burghers of the Netherlands, and they valued a painter in proportion as his work ministered to their self-esteem.

Franz Hals, we may be sure, became very soon quite alive to this, perhaps pardonable exhibition of personal vanity. No doubt the favourite pose in his serious portraits—arms akimbo, and his favourite facial expression—contemptuous satisfaction, were the natural, yet tactful, outcome of his observations of men and manners!

But we are getting on a little too fast, for we must turn aside for a moment and look at the "Portrait of Professor Jan Hogaarts" of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Leyden, who was an able teacher and protagonist, and a considerable student and writer of Latin. Franz Hals painted his portrait in 1614, with similar treatment as that of Dr. Schrijver. These are the only two works, signed and dated, during fourteen years, and then our eyes are fastened in mute astonishment upon the walls of the Haarlem Stadhuis, where, in 1616, was unveiled a stupendous composition.

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This is a revelation unique and overwhelming. We are in the grip of a master-hand, and we must bow down before a genius who has, comet-like, flashed upon us from the great unknown! There is nothing tentative, nothing meretricious, in this masterpiece. It is a portrait group, half-length, life-size, of eleven "Officers of the Shooting Guild of St. Joris" (St. George).

The demand for great group portraits had just set in. The men who had ridden in on the top of the waves of new institutions looked to have their personalities placed in juxtaposition to those of monarchs, rulers, and generals. Hence, go where you will in Holland—through churches, museums, galleries, or Town Halls, you are faced by portrait groups of life-size figures, whether they be of Governments and Corporations, or Guilds and Institutions.

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But, we are standing just inside the great Audience Hall of Haarlem Stadhuis, and we hesitate to advance, for eighty-four vigorous and solemn gentlemen and ladies are bending their steadfast gaze upon us, as though resenting our intrusion! Eight picture groups by Hals cover the walls—a pageant of portraits—five are *Schutters-stuken* (Shooting Groups), and three *Regenten-stuken* (Governors of Alms Houses).

Guilds of marksmen in the Netherlands originated at a period when there were no standing armies, and when the Trade Guilds were at the full height of their prosperity. They served as rallying bases in times of public danger, and as happy *rendezvous* in days of pleasure—"Soldier-Socials" we might call them.

Annual shooting contests for prizes were held at the *Schutters-Doelen*, or butts—hence the name usually attached to the portrait-groups—and periodical banquets provided, where good fellowship accompanied good cheer, and where the toast of "Women, Wine, and Wit" never sated!

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The commission to paint the first of these groups, "The Annual Banquet of the Officers of the Shooting Guild of St. Joris" (St. George), was, no doubt, given to Hals at the instance of his good friend Burgomaster Druivesteen, who was himself a member of the Guild.

There are twelve Officers, including *Overste*, or Colonel, Pieter Schoutts Jacobsen, who sits in front of the table with his arms akimbo. They are middle-aged men, some aging, and are full-bearded and moustached, except the two smart young standard-bearers. The party has just finished dinner and toasts are being drunk. Through the window of the room is a view of trees and buildings. The blacks and greys and greens of the picture are relieved by the brilliant scarlet silken scarves.

The effect of this splendid picture upon the men of Haarlem was emphatic, and every Shooting Guild wished to follow suit; but the painter was in no humour to wear himself out with toil, he preferred the relaxation of convivial society.

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In all the Dutch centres of population were numbers of "social" and political clubs—some perhaps were merely drinking clubs. Among their guests the most popular was the "Rederijkers-kammer de Wijngaar-dranks," which had branches everywhere. Although nominally "The Guild of Rhetoricians," the study of rhetoric *per se* had nothing whatever to do with its objects. It was, in short, a free-and-easy Artists' Club. As "Heminnaars," or Fellows, Franz and Dirk Hals were admitted to membership in 1617.

The men of Haarlem were merry fellows—they only put on their serious manners with their Sunday clothes—and every tavern had its clientèle, with flute, viol, and mandoline. They entered impromptu into the ranks of entertainers. No *kermis*, or fair, the country round, but had its rollicking company of students. They played high jinks with jolly gipsy girls, and drank with festive yokels. This life exactly suited the two Hals brothers; moreover, it gave them opportunities, which Franz used significantly, for studying character, and he gathered golden laurels in his orgies.

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PLATE IV.—FRANZ HALS AND HIS WIFE

(Rijks Museum, Amsterdam)

Painted in 1624. No painter has left a more charming and more characteristic portrait of himself and his wife than this. There they sit, all in a garden green, as happy as happy can be. The "idea" was Lysbeth's. She knew Franz was painting other couples and getting wealth and fame—why not their own? She put on her best go-to-Groote-Keerke gown and a new cap, and made Franz don his Town Hall suit; she gauffered very carefully his cuffs, and tied round his neck his finest Van Dyck collar. The pose is splendidly realistic—good-humouredly she smiles, but he is in restless mood, as was his wont, and so she just grasps his shoulder—a reminder of the sweet restraint of happy married life! For fifty years they lived together, sharing their sorrows and their joys.

Still the Hals, and their companions of the tankard and the brush, were downright, loyal honest citizens, and all were enrolled in the ranks of the Civic Guard—Franz and Dirk in 1618.

"The Banquet of the Shooting Guild of St. Joris" was not the only work which Franz Hals signed and dated in 1616; at least two other very striking portraits were finished. "Pieter Van der Morsch," now labelled "The Herring Seller," was a beadle in the service of the Municipality of Leyden, and a member of the "Guild of Rhetoric" of that city—an oldish man with sparse locks and furrowed face. He is holding up a herring, and on the canvas some one has scratched, "WIE BEGEERT?"—"Who'll buy?"

This portrait is the earliest dated work which exhibits Hals' speciality—*characterisation*. It now belongs to the Earl of Northbrook, but it sold in 1780 at a public auction in Leyden for the ridiculous sum of £1, 5s.

"[The Merry Trio](#)" belongs to the same year, 1616. A girl of the town in gala dress is seated, willy-nilly, between the knees of a Falstaffian lover, whilst a saucy apprentice boy holds over the couple a mock coronal of sausages! The man was evidently a pork butcher; probably one of Hals' creditors later on. The pose and play were probably suggested by an allegorical picture which had charmed the young artist in Antwerp—"The Feast of Love," by Frans Pourbus (1540-1601), now in the Wallace Collection. This humorous composition is in America; but a good copy, said to be by Dirk Hals, hangs in the Royal Museum in Berlin.

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But years pass on once more, and there is little enough of episode to record in the life of our accomplished, jovial painter. Hals was now a happy father, and his heart went out to children—his own were growing fast, and their infant moods arrested him. Down by the sea-dunes, too, were lads and lasses—strong and lithe of build, bronzed with the sun and spray, full of life's gaiety. Of these he took liberal toll—just as did Leonardo da Vinci of posturing peasant youths and maidens in Tuscan villages. A merry suite of "Fisher-boys" and "Fisher-girls" danced off his palette, and now they display his genre delightfully in many a picture gallery.

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There were also dignified patrons of Hals' brush in Haarlem, and rich burghers and their wives sat to him by scores. At Cassel, dated 1620, are portraits of a Haarlem gentleman and his spouse—the leading pair in his procession of full-dress Mijnheers and Mevrouws "posed for posterity," but rich in characterisation of face and hands—the latter a very marked feature.

The years 1622, 1623, and 1624 are "red-lettered" for the historian of Franz Hals, for among the portraits he dated then are three of surpassing interest—"His own Likeness," "[Himself and his Wife](#)," and "[The Laughing Cavalier](#)." The first of these belongs to the Duke of Devonshire; it hangs at Devonshire House in Piccadilly, and has never been exhibited.

This is "Franz Hals" as he wished to be known to posterity. His head, slightly on one side, is marked by strong features—a nose which shows strength of purpose, a mouth which indicates quiet decision, and dreamy eyes, looking craftily for new impressions. It is a self-satisfied, reflective face, with nothing base about it. The folded arms show grasp of purpose and individuality of action, whilst the figure of the man is in repose. The costume is sumptuous, full sleeves of heavy black silk brocade, with the latest conceits in buttons and ruffled cuffs. He wears the jewelled token of his Shooting Guild and the be-buttoned cloak of a gentleman of the period. His frill is full, and it is of the finest edged cambric—quite an ultra-mark of fashion! His hat is black velvet—slouched, and steeple-crowned.^[1]

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[1] See [page 11](#).

Merry groups and jovial couples were, of course, quite in Hals' way, though probably he painted them for his own pleasure rather than for love of gain. "Junkheer Rampf and his Lass" (1623)—somewhere in Paris, Mons. Cocret's "Merry Supper Party," and a number of "Rommel-pot-speelers"—perhaps "Drinks all round!" in English—at the Hague, Berlin, and elsewhere, offer ample evidence of the painter's free-and-easy manners and humorous genre.

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PLATE V.—THE OFFICERS OF THE SHOOTING GUILD OF ST. ADRIAEN

(Town Hall, Haarlem)

Painted in 1633. This, the second group of the St. Adriaen Officers, is the finest of all the five "Schutters-Doelen" at Haarlem. For clever arrangement of the figures and instantaneous catch of character it is unsurpassed. The armourer had furbished up the old halberds of the Company, which, with the banners, are quite significant features. The costumes are peculiarly rich and the sashes gaily ample; whilst the variety of ruffs and collars, and the trimming of the beards, indicate the vagaries of fashion. The Colonel—Jan Claesz Van Loo, with his hunt-stick—no doubt he was getting gouty!—sits, looking at you full in the face. The other Officers have all their eyes upon you; they are inviting you to join in their conviviality. The background of trees and farm-buildings suggests the delights of a picnic in the open air.

Mevrouw Lysbeth knew all about these junketings, and, good soul, she made no complaint, but on the contrary she challenged Franz to add his own portrait with hers to the suite of jolly partners. [Pg 41]

She put on her best black brocade gown, with its modish heliotrope bodice, and went to the expense of the newest things in ruffs and cuffs. Her hair—she was not richly dowered that way!—she coiffed neatly round her head, and tied on the nattiest of little lace caps.

With Franz, no doubt, she had some trouble. He disliked very much fashionable garments, but inasmuch as he had something of a position to keep up as a member of the Haarlem municipality, she persuaded him to get into his Groote Keerke and Stadhuis suit of black silk and stuff. She brushed well his best beaver hat, carefully gaufered his cambric cuffs, and pinned round his throat the best Mechlin lace collar he possessed. His shoes were new and neatly bowed, and he, worthy fellow, responded to his loving wife's playful whim by putting on—a thing quite unusual for him—a pair of white kid gloves.

And there they sit, Franz and Lysbeth, all in a garden green, under a shady oak tree, with a vision of architectural gardens and open fertile country beyond. The pose was most certainly her idea, not his, for she is smiling most good-humouredly at having gained her end! He would be up and off, but she checks his movement, and the hand-grasp upon his shoulder is a reminder of the sweet restraint of happy married life. [Pg 42]

When this masterpiece was painted, the Hals were in comfortable circumstances. The success of the "Group of Shooters" had greatly enriched Franz, and his studio was thronged by opulent patrons, each clamouring for his portrait.

The third picture of note in 1624 was "[The Laughing Cavalier](#)." Why, and when, it gained its title nobody knows—in most catalogues it is correctly called "Portrait of an Officer," a member of one of the Shooting Guilds.

Whoever the gentleman may be, he had an uncommonly good conceit of himself. He is not laughing, but expressing disdain of the world in general, and amused contempt of you and me, who go to look at him, in particular. The characterisation is so cleverly managed that one almost fancies his expression changes; he appears to scowl and then to relax, just as in actual life our features involuntarily keep up an incessant play. His dress is unusually decorative, the colours are few but superlatively arranged, the whole effect is wonderfully lifelike. It was the happiest of happy thoughts which suggested the placing side by side, at the Wallace Collection, masterpieces of the three greatest portrait painters the world has seen—Velazquez, Rembrandt, and Hals. "The Laughing Cavalier" loses nothing by proximity to "The Lady with a Fan" and "The Unmerciful Servant." [Pg 43]

But Hals had a mind to paint simpler subjects than these, and he turned to children once more, as exhibiting most naturally and spontaneously variety of character and expression. "Singing Boys," "Singing Girls," "Flute Players," "Mandolinists," and others, playing only pranks and tricks, he welcomed to his studio—another Leonardo da Vinci trait!

He noted their expanding cheeks, he heard their melodious notes, he understood the motions of their limbs, and fixed them all. They make us smile with pleasure, so natural and lifelike are they at Haarlem, Berlin, Brussels, Cologne, Cassel, and Königsberg—many of 1625, and more elsewhere undated, but similarly characterised.

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Two or three "*Zechbruders*" or "Jolly Topers," and some gay young sparks with mandolines—"*Schalks naar*" or "Buffoon," as each is quite erroneously styled—walked out of Hals' studio in 1625. Doubtless they were skits or caricatures of fellow-artists, for the clever painters of Haarlem were not quite "Fools" or "Buffoons," nor were they all only "Jolly Topers."

All this time Hals was making arrangements with his old patrons of St. Joris' Guild for another great portrait-group to be put up in the Stadhuis. This was finished in 1627—it represents eleven Officers.

On comparing this Group with its predecessor we are struck with its greater freedom and freshness. Hals was now painting more brilliantly, and his colours blend more naturally. The success of the first St. Joris' Group had fired the imagination of members of a rival Company, the St. Adriaen's Guild; and it was determined that their Officers should also adorn the walls of the Stadhuis. Consequently Hals had two great groups to do, and no sooner had the carpenter hangers got St. Joris No. 2 into position than their services were requisitioned for the St. Adriaen's Group.

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If profitable, nevertheless the painting of such portrait groups was very troublesome, and no doubt Hals was very thankful to see the last in his studio of these pictures. The jealousies, the corrections, and the interruptions, in dealing with a lot of conceited Officers, must have almost maddened him. Each man had his own ideas—and Hals had his. Each wished to be as prominent as possible, and to cut a dash at his brother officers' expense. Arrangement after arrangement failed.

At last Hals decided the matter once and for all. He declined positively to paint a row of figures—he intended to make a picture. Therefore he proposed an admirable plan, and one which recouped him well to boot—those who paid most should have the places of honour!

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The Colonel—generally one of the wealthiest members of the Guild—paid the highest fee, and he is the most conspicuous figure in all the "*Doelen*" pictures. Captains paid for second places, Lieutenants for third, and Sergeants looked out from the back. The Standard-bearers were exceptional individuals—the sons of rich fathers, who paid well for good stations.

Again, a Shooting-brother was mulcted higher for a full-face than one who had to put up with a three-quarter likeness—profiles were ruled out. Once more, notice the cunning of the painter, every one of his "*Schutters*" is an athlete, with a striking face! Each wears his best dress, his sword hilt is of the latest Italian pattern, and each is showing himself off to the greatest advantage—all the drakes are swans!

The St. Adriaen's Group of 1627 consists of twelve Officers, with Colonel Jan Claesz Van Loo in the place of honour. Dinner is over, and the diners are discussing the latest bit of gossip before separating. One of the sergeants has been caught in the act of pocketing a bunch of grapes, and his fellow is holding out a silver dish for its restoration.

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Fashions, both of hair and clothes, of course, are similar to those worn by the St. Joris' Schutters, except that the younger men are quite *à la mode* with respect to their slashed and puffed full sleeves. Of the two groups this is the least mannered, and there is more atmosphere and greater animation. Crude contrasting colours are softened down, and luminous grey shadows make play around the men. Each individual's expression is personal and original, and the characterisation of each is so wonderfully full of life that, if any one of them was to walk off the wall and greet us, we should feel that we knew just what sort of a man he was.

This is perfect portraiture; it is more—it is clairvoyancy in paint.

In the decade 1630-1640 Franz Hals was acknowledged as first painter in Holland. He stood head and shoulders above everybody else in his freedom of treatment, unconventionality of pose, manipulative facility, fidelity of colouring, boldness of shadow, and the marvellous certainty of his flesh tones. His technique, in short, was unrivalled, and the emphasis with which he expressed feature and mood was astounding.

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His illumination was golden, and the animation of his figures extraordinary. Like Michael Angelo he preferred men to women, as exhibiting more character and less liable to affectation. He neither wasted time in making studies for his compositions, nor frittered it away in elaborate corrections. His brush knew one stroke only—his impasto was laid on at once. Simply in details of hair, lace, and brocade did he elaborate.

The same decade was the most brilliant period of the Dutch School generally; the greatest

painters were all working away on canvas and panel, making world's records in Art. Every town, and many a country place, had its studios and schools of painting, but Haarlem was easily first as the home and headquarters of painters. "Boldness and truth" was the municipal motto, and this is eloquent in all the work of Franz Hals.

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PLATE VI.—THE JOLLY MANDOLINIST (DER NAAR)

(Collection of Baron G. Rothschild, Paris. A copy by Dirk Hals in Rijks Museum, Amsterdam)

Painted in 1625. This is a very jolly fellow! It is a portrait of one of Hals' favourite pupils, Adriaen Brouwer, who was also renowned for his musical gifts and his love of practical jokes; he painted pictures too sometimes! His nickname in the studios was "*Der Naar*"—"Funny Man!" The "Jolly Mandolinist" must have caught sight of one of his lady-loves at a window, or a painting chum. His *staccato* note ends in a genial smile, and he is ready for a joke or a hand-tossed kiss. This has Hals splendidly fixed, a snapshot would not have had a more instantaneous effect. The Spanish costume suggests the celebration of one of the famous Haarlem masquerades.

And Haarlem was the most prosperous of cities. Between 1630-1640 the Tulip mania was at its height, and Haarlem was the metropolis of the bulb. It is said that in one year the florists of the city cleared twelve million golden florins.

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To Haarlem, as to an artists' Mecca, flocked teachers, students, and connoisseurs from all lands, and among the rest came a notable pilgrim, Anthonie Van Dyck.

Mincing along in his courtier-like manner, in search of impressions, he wished to see for himself the master about whom gossip had spun such wonderful stories, and to watch him at work. He was at The Hague, the honoured guest of Frederick of Nassau, Prince of Orange, painting princely patrons, and it was not more than a Sabbath-day's journey to Haarlem.

So one bright morning in June that year, 1630, Van Dyck, unannounced, knocked at Franz Hals' front door. Vrouw Hals greeted the stranger courteously—"My husband," she said, "is not at home, maybe he is at the Life School; will the gentleman step in and rest."

Jan, who was just twelve years old, was sent to look for his father, and at last discovered him, not at his studio, but with some boon companions in the little back room of his favourite tavern hard by. Perhaps among the "Merry Topers" there were famous Admiral Van Tromp, killed in 1653, and his jolly comrade, Jan Barentz, the entertaining cobbler—late a lieutenant in the fleet, whose portrait Hals painted many a time as a "Jolly Toper," with his great big hands and grinning face, squinting at the liquor level of his tell-tale glass.

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"There is a smart gentleman, all the way from Antwerp, to see you, dad, and he wants you to paint his portrait," so ran on the lad.

Hals bid his boy go home, finished his tankard and his pipe, and leisurely sauntered along. He was in no good-humour at the interruption, and gave the stranger a cool welcome. At first he demurred at being called upon to paint a man he had never seen before, and whose features and figure he had had no opportunity of studying.

Van Dyck, without revealing his identity, begged him to proceed, and offered him a tempting fee. Without more ado Hals snatched up the first old canvas lying on the floor, and in a couple of hours he had painted, in a manner which greatly astonished his sitter, a telling likeness. [Pg 53]

Van Dyck laid down the amount he had promised, but asked Hals whether he might, in return, attempt to paint his portrait. Hals was astounded, and more so as the visitor progressed, for it was borne in upon him that such a stylish *virtuoso* could be none other than his famous rival, the great Flemish master. "Who the devil are you?" he exclaimed. "Why, you must be Anthonie Van Dyck!"

Van Dyck was exigent that Hals should accompany him to England, where he had been summoned by the king. No words and no inducement could move Hals out of Holland—it was his home, it was his world; Dutch of the Dutch was he, bred in the bone!

Van Dyck departed much disappointed, but he charmed the Vrouw Lysbeth and the kiddies by leaving behind for them twenty silver florins. As for Hals, he went back to his pots and his paints. [Pg 54]

In the Schwerin Gallery is a "Portrait of a Man" with a good deal of Franz Hals about it, variously attributed to him and to Van Dyck. Maybe it is the one painted in Haarlem that hot June day in 1630.

Eight superb portraits by Hals were dated this self-same year: "The Group of the Beresteyn Family," and "[The Gipsy Girl](#)" (La Bohémienne), at the Louvre; "[The Mandoline Player](#)"—*Der Schalksnaar*, in Baron Gustave Rothschild's Collection in Paris; "[Nurse and Child](#)," and "The Jolly Toper," at the Royal Gallery in Berlin; "Portrait of a Man" ("*ætat suæ* 36") at Buckingham Palace; Mijnheer Willem Van Heythuysen, at the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna—the full-length, Velazquez-like standing portrait; and "Portrait of a Young Girl," of the Beresteyn family at Haarlem.

Der Schalksnaar—called also "The Fool," "The Buffoon," "The Jester," and, far more suitably, "[The Mandoline Player](#)"—is allowed to be the finest character-portrait in the world. Velazquez and Rembrandt never did anything so acutely life-like. [Pg 55]

It is a "snapshot," so to speak, of Adriaen Brouwer, one of Hals' favourite and most distinguished pupils, whose renown as a painter of peasant genre was equalled by his fame as an archplayer of practical jokes and as a brilliant musician and *improvisatore*. Here he is, in fancy Spanish dress, red and yellow, with a real old Hispano-Moorish mandoline. His nickname in the studios was "*Der Naar!*" "Funny Fellow!" His face—clean-shaven, but still something of a stranger to soap and water—reflects, with amazing truthfulness and vitality, the emotions of the moment.

He laid a wager that he would make his *innamorata* peep out of her window and wave her hand at him. The *staccato* notes of the serenade have not yet quite died away, the strummer's hand has not relaxed its tension on the strings of the instrument, as the singer throws up a rapid glance of recognition.

"[Nurse and Child](#)" is as charming as anything in all the works of Franz Hals. Nothing can be imagined more natural, more simple, more appealing. At first sight the woman—she may be thirty—appears posed, but her expression is that of momentary abstraction from the restless exigencies of nursing. She is goodness and gentleness personified, and her pinned-up cap lappels tell of busy little fingers close by. [Pg 56]

The baby is to the life. He is a vigorous youngster, the latest little son of the ancient North Holland family of Ilpenstein, prominent in Haarlem story. He has grabbed his nurse's brooch whilst he turns to have a good look at you, and, presto, he will bury his head in her kindly bosom with a merry laugh. His face is a *tour de force*—that of a rare critic, as all healthy babies are. I question whether any painter has painted a child's *coming* smile as Hals has done here.

The dress, a splendid piece of gold brocade in colours, must be an inspiration from Pieter Breughel, "le Velours" (1568-1625), whose mastery of glossy patterned stuffs is almost inimitable. The lace looks as if Hals had just cut lengths of rare Mechlin point and pasted them upon his canvas. Why, we can count every thread and knot!

The year that gave date to these widely differing, but admirably agreeing, character-portraits also witnessed the foundation of Franz Hals' Life School. Very soon after the death of Van Mander, in 1606, the famous Academy of Painting began to decline in popularity. The dissolution of partnership between Cornelissen and Goltzius, and their departure from Haarlem, caused its doors to be closed. [Pg 57]

Whether he wished it or not, a goodly company of artists looked to Franz Hals as their leader, and so the mantle of Van Mander fell upon the shoulders of his most distinguished pupil.

Among those who foregathered in the new Academy were Pieter Soutman (1580-1657), Pieter Potter, father of Paul (1587-1642), Willem Claesz Heda (1594-1680), Jan Cornelisz Verspronett (1597-1662), Hendrik Gerritsz Pot (1600-1656), Pieter Molyn (1600-1661), Pieter Fransz De Grebber (1610-1665), Antonie Palamedesz Stevaerts (1604-1680), Adriaen Brouwer (1605-1638), Dirk Van Deelen (1605-1671), Cæsar Van Everdingen (1606-1679), Pieter Codde (1610-1666),

Bartholomeus Van der Helst (1610-1670), Adriaen Van Ostade (1610-1685), Philippe Wouwermans (1620-1668), Isaac Van Ostade (1621-1649), Pieter Roestraeten (1627-1698), who married Sara, Franz Hals' eldest daughter; Vincenzius Laurenszoon Van der Vinne (1629-1702), and Job Berckheijde (1630-1693), with Hals' five sons and his brother Dirk. [Pg 58]

There is in Haarlem Stadhuis a very interesting painting by the last of these, which shows Franz Hals' Life School and some of his pupils in the year 1652. Work is in full swing, and five of the master's sons—the youngest, Nicolaes, being twenty-four years old—and Dirk Hals with Van Deelen, Molyn, Berckheijde himself, and his little brother Gerritsz, seated at a table, are drawing from a nude model. The master is by the door, chatting with Philippe Wouwermans, who has just popped in to see how things are getting on.

It is said that Hals "sweated" his pupils by making them draw and paint subjects for which he paid them little or nothing, and which he sold at fair prices to meet his weekly tavern reckonings. Adriaen Brouwer is named as "living-in" at the Halsian establishment, with an uncomfortable bed, insufficient food, and scanty clothing! Be these tales what they may, there is characteristic evidence that Hals and his pupils lived on good terms. An amusing story is told by the Haarlem historian and biographer, Jacob Campo Weyerman, in his "Sevens-Beschrijvingen der Nederlondsche Konst-Schilders," of the goings on at the Life School. [Pg 61]



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PLATE VII.—THE MARKET GIRL (LA BOHÉMIENNE)

(Louvre Gallery, Paris)

Painted in 1630. They call her "La Bohémienne" in Paris, but why we do not know. She is *not* a gipsy girl, but a slut out of Haarlem Fish-market, wholly bereft of all sense of appearance, and caring only for passing joke and gibe. The girl was a favourite studio model also, for studies of a figure and face like hers abound in the work of Haarlem painters. Thinly painted, in simple colours, this is a masterpiece of pigment snapshots. Its sauciness is as natural as may be. No doubt she and Hals exchanged many a bit of racy banter; perhaps she dared him to paint her just as she was.

The master's addiction to strong drink called for energetic action, and the older pupils were accustomed of an evening to take it in turn to fetch him home from his cups, undress him, and tuck him comfortably into bed.

"Now when Franz, lying in bed, thought he was alone in his room, his piety came to the surface; for however tipsy he might be he generally closed his halting prayer with this petition: 'Dear Lord, take me soon up into Heaven!' Some pupils who heard him repeat this request night after night decided to test one day whether their master was really in earnest, and Adriaen Brouwer—that ape of humanity—undertook to carry out the joke. Brouwer, in company with another pupil called Dirk Van Deelen, bored four holes in the ceiling, right above Franz' bedstead, and through these lowered four strong ropes, which they fastened to the four corners of the bed, and then [Pg 62]

waited eagerly for their master's return home. Hals returned towards night in merry mood, and his pupils helped him to bed according to their wont, took away the light, and then crept quietly upstairs to set their plan in motion. As soon as Franz began his usual orison, 'Lord, take me up soon into Heaven,' they drew him and his bedstead gently up a little, whereupon Hals, half dazed, fancying that his prayer was being answered literally, altered his tone, and began to cry out lustily: 'Not so fast, dear Lord! not so fast!'

Hardly able to restrain their mirth the mischievous young dogs quietly let their burden down, slipped off the ropes, and themselves slipped away, to tell their fellows the joke. "Franz," continues Weyerman, "did not discover the trick until several years after!"

The years 1631 and 1632 were lean years in Hals' output, but the year 1633, which gave us "Portrait of a Man" at the National Gallery—a fresh complexioned, easy going gentleman about thirty to forty years of age, in an astonishingly voluminous ruff, quite a bygone fashion in that year—saw a *chef-d'œuvre de chefs-d'œuvres*, another "*Schutters-stuk*," put up in the Stadhuis at Haarlem.

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"[The St Adriaen's Doelen](#)," No. 2, consists of fourteen officers, nearly all of whom are gazing good-humouredly right out at their visitors, and inviting all and sundry to join in the conviviality. Each face is a pleasant character-study, for each man has dined well and is content.

Colonel Jan Claesz Van Loo is seated on the left, holding a stout walking-stick—probably he has contracted gout since his appearance in 1627! Seven of the officers hold halberds—a decided novelty in accessories, which adds greatly to the picturesque effect. One wonders whether anybody had whispered to Hals the news that Velazquez had painted his "Surrender of Breda" with halberds and lances *galore*! Anyhow Hals would not be caught napping by an intrusive Spaniard!

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The Group is far and away the most easily arranged of all the *Schutters-stuken*. The waving foliage and smiling landscape predicate breeze and sun, for the gathering is *al fresco* in the gardens of Roosendaal, the Hampton Court of Haarlem. The officer seated upon the table is Lieutenant Hendrik Pot—a favourite pupil—a speaking likeness.

Fashions have changed, they are richer and more decorative with silken stitching and laced scarves. The colours, greys, greens, browns, and dull blues are softened by the leafy environment. "*En plein air*" is the cry of modern Impressionists, but here we have it, where, perhaps, we should not look for it. This is in truth one of the world's chief masterpieces, and the efforts its execution called forth told greatly upon its creator.

Certainly he went on painting, and probably he went on carousing too; but silence again settles down upon him, and a meagre list of fifteen signed and dated portraits completes his work until 1637.

We find him now not at Haarlem, but at Amsterdam; not drinking, but painting—painting what Dr. Bürger, the art critic, asserts is "the most astounding picture of the Dutch School." Probably Hals frequently visited the capital of the chief province, there to see what other artists were doing, and to sample the pleasures of its convivial life.

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His visit in 1657 was of considerable duration, for he was painting "The Officers of the Civic Guard" under their commander, Colonel Reynier Reaels. There are sixteen full-length, life-size figures, posed after the manner of the Haarlem *Schutters-stuken*. They are clad in dark-blue uniforms, with the exception of the Standard-bearer—a gorgeous individual in golden brown, with leggings, laced and bowed, his arms akimbo, bearing himself with such a swagger as only Franz Hals knew how to paint.

This splendid portrait group hangs at the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam, at no great distance from Rembrandt Van Rijn's "Night Watch," so we can take stock of both together.

It is not a little significant that Amsterdammers, famed for what the Tuscans used to call "*il Spirito del Campanile*," should have had to go to Haarlem for their man! Were there not painters on the spot, and what about Rembrandt, he was not very busy in 1637? No; no one could do this sort of thing so well as Hals.

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In 1639 he completed his quintet of *Schutters-stuken* or *Doelen*—portrait groups in Haarlem Stadhuis; his patrons were once more "The Officers of St. Joris' Shooting Guild."

Here we are in the open with the wind swaying the unfurled banners and rustling the leaves of the trees. The *rendezvous* is the orchard of the Hofje Van Oud Alkemude de XII. Apostelen, with its garden-pavilion, in the tower of which Hals is said to have painted a *Schutters-stuk*; beyond are the Haarlem woods.

The Group consists of nineteen Officers, with Colonel Jan Van Loo. The men are arranged in two somewhat stiff lines—perhaps they all asked front places and paid well! With his usual modesty Hals has put himself in the back row, but in much better guise than his next neighbour, a distinctly *blasé* individual. They are all well-set-up men, and dressed in the new fashion, tending rather to effeminacy.

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The atmosphere and illuminations are vibrant, but the colours are restrained, the shadows are grey, and the animation does not equal that of the 1633 Group. Perhaps Hals was degenerating with the passing age—certainly he was ageing.

However, he finished off his best decade with a remarkable little snapshot portrait, a fisher-lad of Katwyk. "*De Strandlooper*" he has called it; it hangs in Antwerp Museum. He saw the boy running up and down the dunes; he was an odd-looking bit of humanity.

"Sit down just where you are," said Hals, "fold your arms, and don't take your eyes off me." A rough drawing was soon knocked off, just to fix values, and then the master added, "Come along with me now to Haarlem, and half a Carolus guelder for you." Then he fixed the oddest of odd smiles, and the "*Beach urchin*" remains to prove that the old man, vigorous, had lost very little of his cunning after all.

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The last twenty-five years of Hals' life were marked by experiences wholly unlike the circumstances of the preceding decade.

If between 1630-1640 he approached Velazquez and painted dignified magnates and others, with a brush dipped in gold and a palette of luminous colours, in the end of his days he was near Rembrandt with no less characteristic groups and individuals, and his hues are silvery and his shadows impressive.

The *Regenten Stuken*, the "Five Governors of the St. Elizabeth Almshouse" or *Oudemaanenhuis*, exposed in the Haarlem Stadhuis in 1641, might, for all the world, be the work of the great Amsterdam master, just as the latter's "*Staalmeester's*" of 1661 might be his.

The Group in question consists of five most serious and reverent city fathers, seated comfortably at their Board table. Not a bit of worldly conceit, not a decorative adjunct of any kind, adorns the composition, but it is a perfect achievement. The sombre black garments and steeple-crown hats have a lustre of their own, and, standing well out of the greyish-green wall behind, they throw up wonderfully facial expression and manual dexterity. The plain linen collars and well-starched cuffs tone down the ashen-red shadows upon the skin, and the clustering locks of long black hair, tinged with grey, form halos around the wrinkles.

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PLATE VIII.—NURSE AND CHILD

(Royal Museum, Berlin)

Painted in 1630. This is one of the very best of all Hals' compositions. The Nurse is a buxom lass of North Holland, and the Child, the little son of Mijnheer Julius Ilpensteen, a wealthy German merchant, settled at Haarlem, and engaged in tulip-growing. The expression of the youngster, just about to explode with laughter at something droll which has caught his eye, and then shyly to bury his head in his crooning nurse's bosom, has been caught quite wonderfully. The dress is rich, and the Mechlin lace collar is so actual that it

might really be a "piece" cut off and pasted on the canvas! It is said that Hals had been twitted with his fondness for dirty, unkempt children as models for his snapshots of character, here he has vindicated his sense of elegance.

Compare this charming subject with the character-portrait of the "Strandlooper" at Antwerp, and Hals' grip of children's expressions is seen to be emphatic and unlimited.

Haarlem possessed many charitable institutions to which the general title "*Hofjes*" was attached. It became the happy custom, well on in the seventeenth century, for wealthy citizens to build and endow almshouses, hospitals, and the like—in the first instances as monuments of individual prominence and ultimately as memorials of family pride. Founders and their relatives were the earliest governors, and then administrative powers were merged in trusts and municipal offices, and foremost citizens formed their Boards.

Franz Hals' great good-nature and his merry haphazard way of life made him a favourite everywhere—he was everybody's friend. His appointment in 1643 as "Vinder" of the Haarlem Lodge of the Artists' Guild of St. Luke was very popular. The functions of the office exactly suited the free-and-easy master-painter; they were analogous to those which attached to the corresponding Italian office of *provvidetore*—controller, caterer, and perhaps toast-master, all rolled into one.

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Nobody has testified to Vrouw Lysbeth's satisfaction at this promotion; it was a real ray of sunshine in the gathering clouds of age and anxiety. No doubt she still smiled—not as naively as in that garden green in 1630, but hopefully.

But Hals was already beginning to grow indolent. Was it the natural change of life, or was it the effect of self-indulgence? Who shall say? Charity thinks and speaks kindly we know. Anyhow nine long years steal quietly along, and all the signed and dated work he did was just nine portraits and not one of them of marked excellence.

Poverty began to look in at the windows of the house in the Peeuselaarsteeg, what time silence or indolence settled there, but what cared the merry old painter, for love opened the door, and kept it upon the latch—Lysbeth did not chide Franz, and Franz did not vex Lysbeth.

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Twenty years or so before Hals had picked up many a splendid subject for his portrait-characterisation or portrait-caricature in Haarlem markets, and many a flighty *markt-deern*, besides the untidy fish-girl of 1630, had been his model. Then he loved young girls—at seventy his friends were *viele deerne* of the *Kraegs* or common taverns.

One old lady had for many a long day taken his fancy, not that she was comely, sober, or fair spoken, quite the reverse, nevertheless her striking play of features and the wrinkling of her leathery skin had an occult fascination for Franz.

They called her "[Hille Bobbe](#)," but her name was Aletta or Alle Bol or Bollij; and she lived in a hovel by the Fish-market. Nobody ever got the better of old Hille, but she let everybody know what she thought of him and his!

At Lille is a "Laughing Hussy," painted by Hals in 1645; at Berlin is the old lady with her tankard and an owl, done in 1650; and at Dresden the same *viele deerne* is scolding a yokel, who is smoking over her stall of unboiled lobsters, 1652 (?). They are all three most simply painted in black and grey, and just faint traces of ochre and red. The deep shadows point to a meagre palette and a brush worn down, but the result is striking and original. Nobody knows what the owl had to do with the old lady, probably a painters' joke at the model's expense.

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In ten more years Franz Hals signed and dated no more than ten pictures. Was he idle? Was he ill? Was he dissolute? We cannot say; we have no data to go upon. The next note we have is an alarm signal, for, in 1652, one Jan Ykess, a baker, obtained a warrant whereby he sued Hals for two hundred Carolus guilders on account of comestibles supplied to him and his wife. A distress was issued, and the forced sale of three thin mattresses and bolsters, a ricketty armoire, and an old oak-table, with five oil paintings, barely sufficed to clear the bill.

Other creditors, and there were not a few, got nothing; apparently there were no other assets. But two years later Hals gave his butcher of "The Merry Trio," a painting by Jan Razet, "St. John the Baptist preaching," by way of compensation.

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This is indeed a sad revelation, and its sadness is intensified by the apparent want of filial piety on the part of Franz' sons and daughters. They were all living, and, except Pieter, domiciled in Haarlem. Only Maria was unmarried. All were in good circumstances. Nicolaes, "*Vinder*" in 1662, had been a member of the Corporation since 1655. Why they did nothing to assist their parents in their distress nobody has recorded. There is no note of family feuds: perhaps Franz' pride refused natural assistance.

In 1655, and again in 1660, Hals painted and dated many portraits, as though he was forced to do something to keep the wolf from the door. Many of these are remarkable, not only as the work of an old man, but as exhibitions of new methods. "René Descartes," at the Louvre, and "Tyman Oosdorp," at Berlin—reminiscent perhaps of "Jan Hornebeeck of Leyden," at Brussels, painted in 1648—have fixed unhappy faces, all in dull black and grey, with dark shadows suffusing everything. Surely they are reflections of the painter's darkening view of life in grumbling, unmerry mood.

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The clouds, however, appear to have been at least partially dissipated, for in the latter year we have a smiling face again, and, perhaps, one of the last which smiled on "Hals of Antwerp!" The *Schlapphut*, "The Slouch Hat," now at Cassel, is a real *chef-d'œuvre*. A young man, seated sideways, with his arm across the back of his chair, looks out of the grey-green-black background with a saucy air. He is saying, "I wonder what you think of me!" It takes a little time to focus this impression, for Hals has dashed on his pigments almost too liberally, and he has gashed and smeared the mass with his hardest brush. When we do get the point of view, we feel disposed immediately to snub the young upstart for his impertinence.

In spite of these spurts, and others, misfortune fell the way of Franz and Lysbeth Hals. In the spring of 1662 the old man applied to the Municipal Council for assistance. His plea was not in vain, for, with characteristic good-fellowship, a dole was immediately forthcoming—fuel and aliment—and with them a benefaction of 150 Carolus guilders (circa £26).

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Old Hals could still, vigorous old fellow that he was, hold his palette and his brush—and to good use too—nor did he quite lack for patrons. Upon the Board of the *Oudevrouwenhuis* (Old Women's Alms House) were several old chums of his who, in solemn conclave met, agreed unanimously to commission the aged master to paint two portrait-groups—one of themselves, and the other of the Lady Governors of the Béguinage for old and reduced gentlewomen, which Mijnheer Nicolaes Van Beresteyn had founded in 1611.

This was a noble act of charity conceived in the best possible spirit, for any fear of Franz' ability was quite outweighed by the wish to minister, so as not to offend in any way, his *amour propre*. And Hals set to work upon the last efforts of his life, and finished and dated both groups in 1664. He was eighty-four; and thus they are in the Stadhuis, side by side with his five festive *Schutters-stuken*.

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The *Regentessen van der Oudevrouwenhuis* (The Lady Governors of the Old Women's Alms House) are not distinguishable for youth or beauty, and yet the five old faces are very attractive in their sternness. Probably they were quite prepared to resent any impropriety on the part of the jovial old artist. Their pursed-up lips, their peering gaze, and the muscular contraction of their hands convey this impression. Their garments are as plain as their persons, and there is nothing decorative in the composition—everything is subdued black and grey, but the illumination and animation are splendidly evident although held in check.

The *Regenten van der Oudemannenhuus* (The Governors of the Old Men's Alms House), on the other hand, has much less force, and, compared with the earlier group of 1641, it is nerveless and moribund. The five Governors are old, weary, and sad. The colours are greyish, the brushwork feeble, and expressionless faces match the ashen pallor of the skin. Their hands, too, have lost their grip, and there is no curl in their hair. Humour is no longer Hals' painting mixture, the pathos of "the passing" is upon him; and yet, with an evident expiring effort, the youngest of the five old men actually displays the gaiety of a scarlet knee-ribbon—it is the last impression of a parting touch!

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And now the brush falls from the painter's hand; the few colours left upon his palette are dry; and his enfeebled vigour is tired out. No doubt the emolument he received for these two most impressive, most touching portrait-groups was in the nature of a pension to keep him and his old wife in something like comfort till the end.

For that end Franz Hals had not long to wait. Perhaps it is as well that we have no account of his sufferings and his death. Only one more historical note can be adduced to complete the life's story of "Hals of Haarlem"—the notice of his burial. On September 1, 1666, all that remained of him was buried, with some amount of circumstance, in the Groote Keerke of St. Bavon. His body rests in the choir, with the ashes of Haarlem's most famous sons, and, if no meretricious sculptured memorial exists to fix the very spot, the monogram, upon a flat stone underfoot, "F. H.," reminds the pilgrim to the painter's shrine of all he was and all he did—simple and unaffected.

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Poor old Lysbeth survived her husband many years, as poor as poor could be. In 1675 she made a pathetic appeal for relief, and the miserable pittance of fourteen *sous* a week was accorded her. The dear old soul languished and died, with apparently no child at hand to comfort her. No record of her last hours tells where she died—probably in some *Oudevrouwenhuis* or other, and of her grave no man knoweth.

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