Rembrandt

Jane Blanchard

Why did a man, unhandsome, often turn
to painting from a mirror? Was he vain,
or not, to focus on someone so plain?
What made an eager spender choose to spurn
a model’s fee? Did earnest students learn
more easily to copy the mundane?
Were good commissions hard enough to gain
that money was a matter of concern?

Could he have known that these original
self-portraits would be counted treasures all
in due time? What a record of resilience—
such talent, soon of age, then elderly—
each face illuminated with a brilliance
against the shadows of obscurity.

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