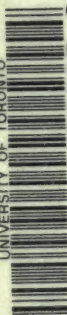


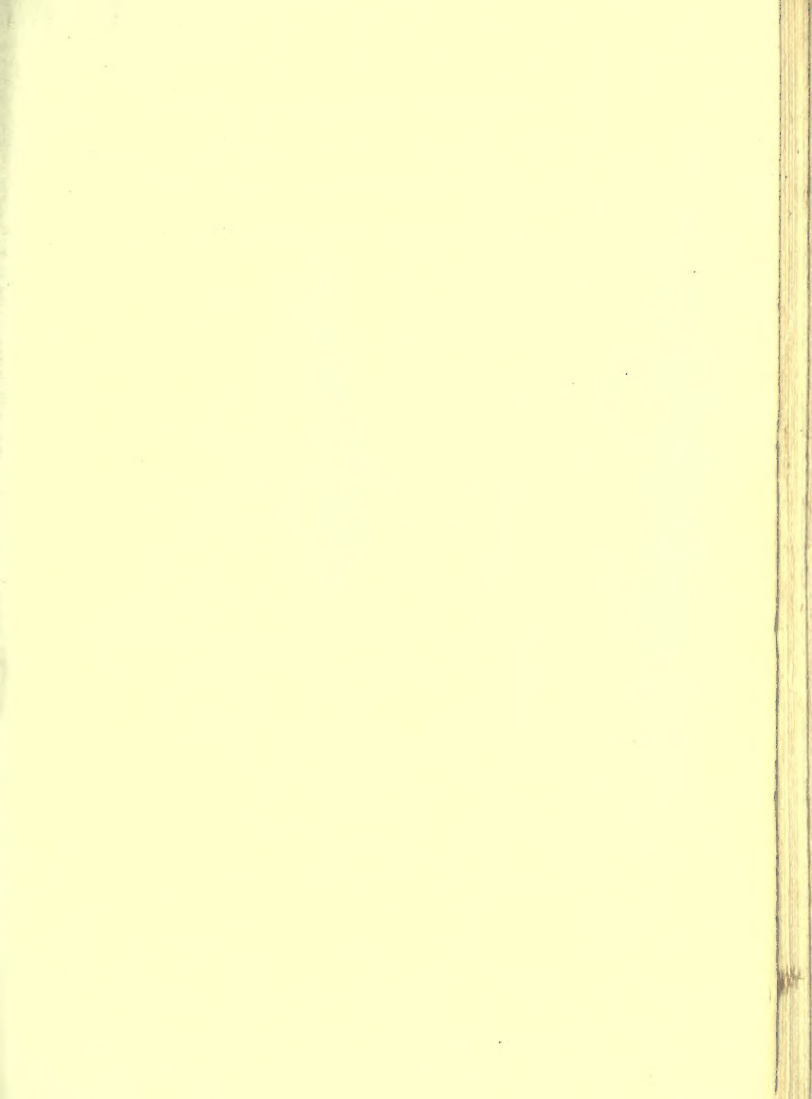
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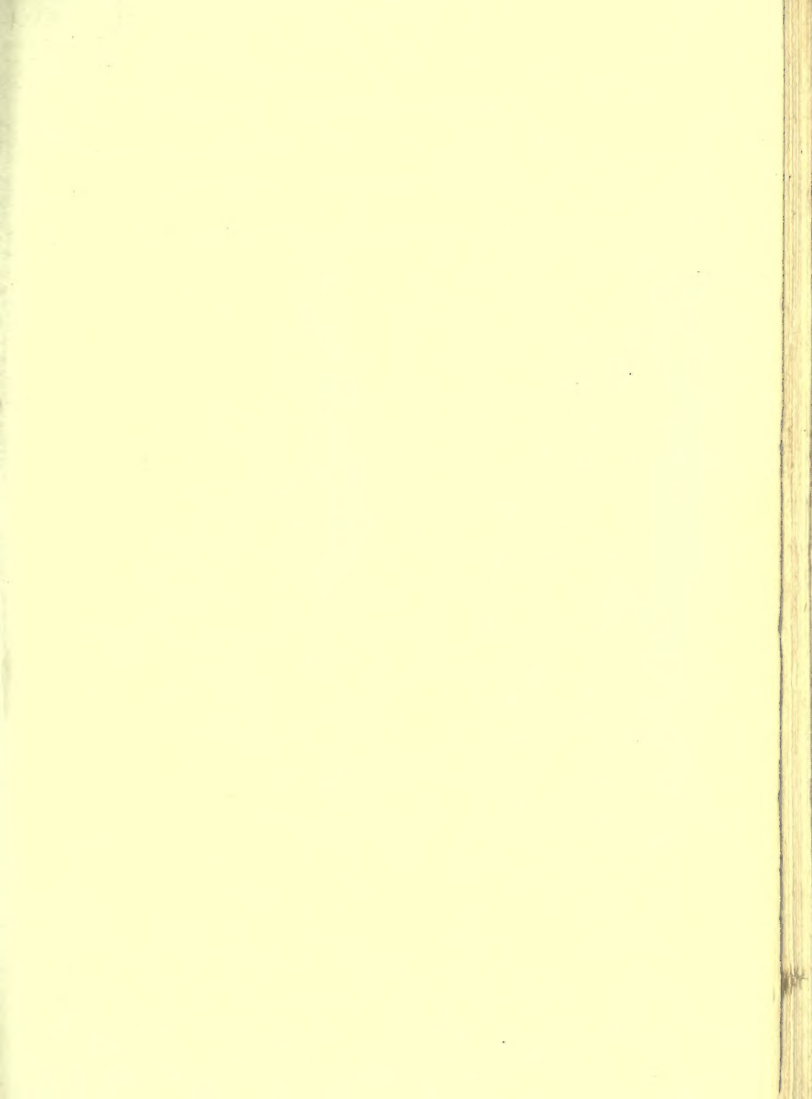
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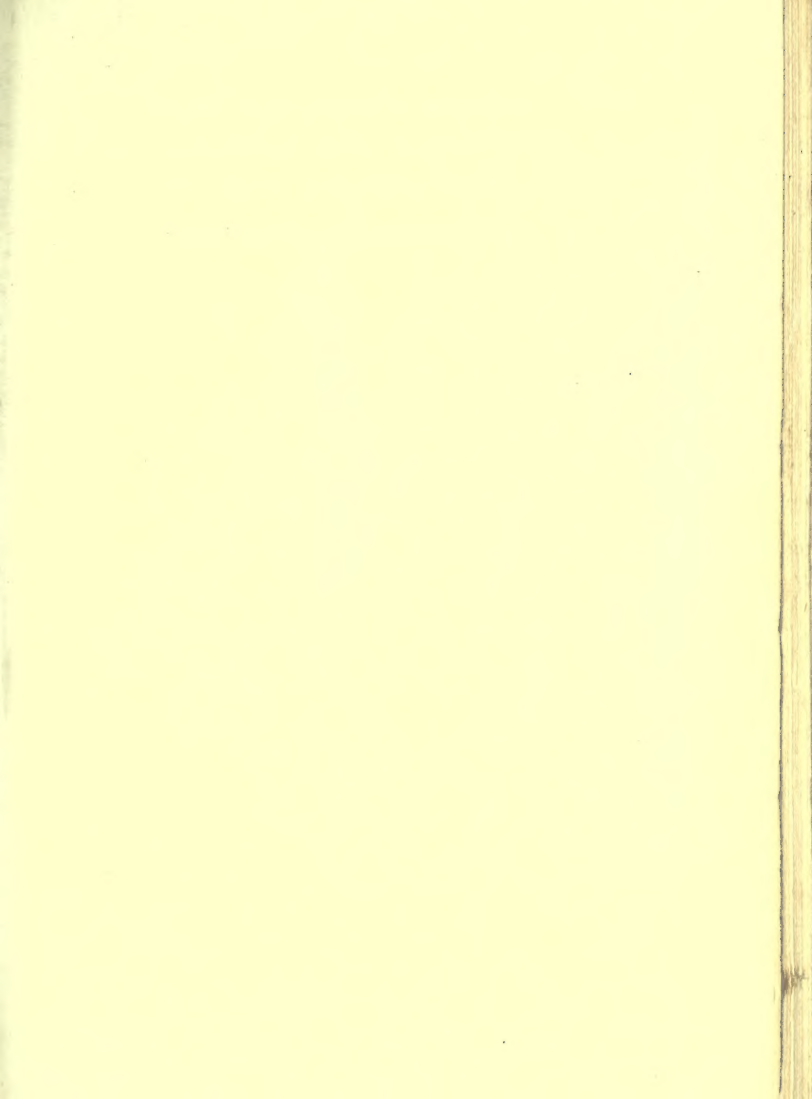














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L'ANGELUS DU SOIR

Loiret, Paris.

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET

BY
RICHARD MUTHER

Author of

“LEONARDO DA VINCI,” “VELASQUEZ,” ETC.

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2 LANGHAM PLACE, LONDON, W.

1905

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INTRODUCTORY

IN remote North-western France, at the extremity of that peninsula of the Cotentin which there projects its iron-bound ramparts far out into the troubled waters of the English Channel—hard by the coast, and facing the Isle of Wight—lies the village of Gréville.

From the summit of the cliffs, the eye surveys a rolling waste of waters ; turning inland, it encounters an equally monotonous plateau. Grey ploughed lands and arid meadows alone diversify that dreary expanse of wilderness, covered for miles, partly with the refuse of the sea and partly with brown heather. Here and there a crippled tree, distorted by the action of the keen sea-breezes, the outline of some squat church tower, or a mean thatched cottage, stands out against a sullen lowering sky. This region is the home of a simple patriarchal people, a race of fishers and husbandmen, wringing a scanty livelihood from the inhospitable soil, by dint of unremitting labour.

Contemplating this rugged, rawboned peasantry, so utterly devoid of the animation and elegant lightness of the French, so clumsy and rigid, so

intractable and silent, the visitor from Paris might almost imagine himself transported to Norway.

An outpost of Gréville, tucked away in the hollow of the cliffs, and consisting of a few scattered houses, is called Gruchy. Over the door of one of these sparse homesteads, built of undressed stone, we read the inscription :—

ICI EST NÉ LE PEINTRE JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET
LE 4 OCTOBRE 1814.

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET

MILLET'S family had been settled for generations in the place. All his forefathers were types of that patriarchal peasant stock, true sons of the soil, which is content with little, and has no ambition except to live and die on the plot of ground handed down from father to son. His grandmother, a simple pious soul, was ever exhorting the youthful Millet to do credit to his patron saint, St. Francis. His father, a plain and worthy man, when crossing the fields at eventide accompanied by the boy, would solemnly take off his hat, as the sun was setting, with the words, "My son, that is the work of God." His youth was that of every peasant's son—sowing and mowing, threshing and ploughing, tending the sheep and turning the hay. He received no artistic impressions

ERRATUM

Page 19, for "The Gallery of S. Maria Nuova" read "The Gallery of the Uffizi at Florence."

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to be her interpreters? It is related that Giotto, when a shepherd boy, executed his first drawings upon blocks of stone; and in like manner there awoke in Millet, as he sat by his flock, ideas and sensations to which a mysterious impulse urged him to give expression. Billows dashing against the granite cliffs, the breeze swaying the summits of hoary trees—these were the impressions that awoke the artist within him. Like Giotto, he beguiled his leisure by drawing. He endeavoured to reproduce, in simple pencil lines, the broad fields with their grazing kine, and the ever-changing effects of sea and sky. He even ventured on the delineation of figures. He saw around him harvesters bending over their sheaves, mowers whose powerful forms were sharply defined against the green of the meadows, shepherdesses sheltering from the blast under weatherbeaten oaks, wood-cutters panting under the burden of their faggots. All that he saw left its impression upon his mind: three hucksters, mounted on mules, who passed through Gréville on market days; an aged rustic with bent back, wending his way home from church on Sunday. Every peasant who saw the sketches was able to identify the originals by name. So, one day, Père Millet, in whom also there was perchance a touch of the artist—for we are told that he loved to carve in wood and model in clay—took his son aside, and announced to him: “We are going to Cherbourg, to inquire whether you have talent enough to be a real artist.”

In Cherbourg there dwelt an odd character of the name of Mouchel. He had been a pupil of the classicist Jacques Louis David, and yet was an enthusiastic admirer of Rembrandt. Having outgrown the Academy, he retired to the country, where he lived a hermit's life, taking as his models the pigs, ducks, and hens inhabiting his own courtyard. Two drawings—a shepherd standing upon a slope in the midst of his flock, and a peasant giving a piece of bread to his neighbour—were submitted to this expert. Having passed them in review, and critically surveyed the peasant youth reputed to be their author, he delivered his verdict: "*Eh bien! monsieur*; you have been wrong in keeping the lad so long at the plough. He has in him the making of an artist."

Thus Millet, at the age of 18, became a pupil of this M. Mouchel. The latter introduced him to the Musée, in which there were a few pictures by old Dutch and Flemish masters. It is true that this course of study did not last long. Millet was engaged in copying in the Musée, when a messenger came one day (November 29, 1835) from Gruchy and brought him the news of his father's death. Home duties claimed him. He was the eldest of the family, and it was now his place to take charge of the homestead. He spent the winter of 1835-1836 in the customary avocations of the peasant—labouring in the fields, the stable, the barn. It was almost more owing to the encouragement of his grandmother than by his own will that he returned

to the path which a voice from within so strongly urged him to pursue. In the spring of 1836 he repaired once more to Cherbourg, and this time placed himself under the guidance of a certain M. Langlois, who, after studying with Le Gros and making the obligatory journey to Italy, had lately joined the School of Art as a teacher. Langlois had been commissioned to provide various churches of the district with altar-pieces, in which work he utilised the assistance of Millet. He was also able to procure him a few commissions for portraits. It is noteworthy that this Langlois, too, felt that under the rough exterior of the peasant there were the makings of an artist, though he could hardly foresee the direction Millet's genius would take. Since historical painting then formed the foremost article of faith in the aesthetic catechism, he naturally regarded it as the legitimate goal of his pupil's ambition. In this he erred. Nevertheless, the letter he addressed on August 19, 1836, to the Town Council of Cherbourg contains, in one sense, a prophecy of Millet's future. "My pupil," he wrote, "during the six months he has been with me, has made such rapid progress that I shall soon have nothing more to teach him. He merits a wider sphere than our own town affords, better schools and models than we can offer him—in short, the advantages of Paris. As, however, he is the son of a widow—the eldest of eight children, all under age—and his mother's means are not sufficient, in spite of the most rigorous economy, for the needs



Photo, Kuhn, Paris

LE SEMEUR

Boston, U.S.A.



of her numerous family, I beg to urge you, gentlemen, to grant him some assistance. A sum of from five to six hundred francs would be necessary to enable him to pursue his studies in Paris. You may rest assured that the future will accord you a place in the memory of mankind, if our country should be indebted in part to your assistance for the glory of having produced a great artist." The Town Council granted the sum named; the Administration of the Department added a further contribution. Thus Millet, at the age of twenty-two, was enabled to set out on January 31, 1837, for Paris, which was to be his home during the next twelve years.

This migration to Paris, undertaken in accordance with the well-meant counsel of the good Langlois, was only useful to Millet in the same degree that a school is necessary for the acquisition of the mechanical art of writing. The use made of the art when acquired is a matter for the author alone, and Millet was not adapted for the life of the great city. Imagine the peasant of Gruchy in Paris! He was like a tree torn from its parent earth, and planted in soil where it could not take root. The letters he addressed to his home are full of complaints. The uproar and bustle, the *tohubohu* of the traffic confound him. He also feels repelled by the frivolous life of the capital. "It was on a Saturday evening in January that I arrived here, in the snow. The light of the lanterns, almost extinguished by the fog; the enormous numbers of horses and carriages jostling and crossing one another, the narrow streets, the

smell and the atmosphere of Paris—all beat upon my brain and heart till I was almost suffocated. A convulsion of weeping overcame me which I could not restrain.”

And is it within the power of art to compensate him for all that he is renouncing—the air and the soil of his native place? Everything that he sees is so different from the visions that floated before his eyes at home as he held his quiet communings with Nature. It is true that there is at least the Louvre. The Primitives captivate him by their simplicity—their homely, earnest faith. Before Michelangelo he bows the knee, and Poussin appears to him so great that he “could spend his life in the contemplation of his pictures.”

But granting that the mighty dead held converse with Millet, what had the living to say to him? It was the period of the struggle between the Romantics and Classicists, and the studios rang with battle-cries of “Ingres!” and “Delacroix!” Millet possessed not the faintest comprehension of either tendency. His memory had no room for aught besides the plains of Normandy, the husbandmen, shepherds, and fishers of his birthplace, amidst whom he still tarried in spirit. And what of that historical painting to which Langlois’ verdict had predestined him? Was there in the artificial pathos of such works even the slightest trace of the simplicity, of the single-minded earnestness, which he admired in the pictures of the old masters? Were not the contemporary artists mere uninspired virtuosi, who

practised stage effects of the most intolerable description in order to win the applause of the vulgar ?

Langlois had advised him to place himself under the direction of Delaroche, and Millet did so. He saw with what cold calculation the most moving themes were treated, and how hollow and superficial was this entire traffic in art. Delaroche interested himself in his pupil. He found a charm in directly testing his teaching powers on this child of nature, on whom his fellow pupils bestowed the nickname of "l'homme des bois"—the wild man of the woods ! He invited his assistance in the decoration of the Hemicycle of the École des Beaux Arts, and held up the Grand Prix de Rome as the possible reward of continued application and progress on his part. In his eagerness he was blind to the fact that what he took for awkwardness and incompetence was really the protest of a man who knew exactly what he wanted. Millet came to Paris with a perfectly clear idea on that point. The force that had pressed the charcoal into his hand did not spring from the contemplation of any work of art, but from the study of the face of Nature herself—that great universal Mother Nature by whom he was surrounded, with whom and through whom he lived. At home, while tilling his father's land, he had been absorbing impressions that determined the bent of his life's work. Thus all the arguments of his Parisian master failed to impress him. Yet from a technical point of view he owed him much, while forging

the instrument with which he was to give form to the ideas floating through his brain. But any desire to paint sprawling theatrical tableaux, such as the *Children of Edward IV. in the Tower* or the *Assassination of the Duc de Guise* was absolutely foreign to his nature. "I learned from Delaroche," he wrote in after years, "the mastery of technique, but my views on the fundamental principles of art, which I had already formed at my old home, without master or model, remained unchanged."

How often is life a direct contradiction of theory! Money determines the bent of all human aspiration, the fate of all human effort. Those who are free from financial cares can pursue their own course, declining all concessions to the prejudices of the world, while those who are not, *must* earn money. And the pictures that sell are not always those that a man would paint from choice. Millet was poor, and, like Böcklin, did not possess the practical mind that weighs every step in life before taking it.

After leaving the atelier of Delaroche, he remained for some time in Cherbourg. There he made the acquaintance of a young dressmaker, Pauline Ono, whom he married, and who shortly afterwards died. Incapable of living in solitude, he married in 1845 another Cherbourg girl, Catherine Lemaire, destined to be his companion during a period of thirty years. His first child was born on July 27, 1846, and was quickly followed by a second and third. He now had his family, as well as

himself, to provide for, and for a long time he continued to work in a style totally opposed to the spirit of his temperament, and to paint pictures that owed their origin to the pressure of his necessities, and not to inspiration. It was by painting signs for shops, at twenty or thirty francs each, that the *Grand Rustique* first earned his daily bread. For a dairy business, he would paint a milkmaid; for a veterinary surgeon, a horse; an athletic scene for a travelling circus; a lying-in for a midwife. Finally, commercial art inveigled him into its toils. He had made the acquaintance of Diaz, that fine landscape-painter, who, as he himself said, "had bound Success to his easel with a rose-coloured ribbon." The latter advised him to try his fortune with nudities in the style of Boucher and Fragonard. Thus Millet, the young peasant brought up in views of a puritanical rigidity, who stigmatised Boucher as an artist of the pornographic, and who, when he first came to Paris, turned away blushing from the "lascivious" lithographs he saw in the printseller's windows, became for some years a master of the nude, an imitator of Correggio and of the erotic masters of the Rococo period. Damsels disporting themselves in the bath or the dance, nude or in silken draperies, *amoretti*, nymphs, and fauns took possession of his easel. *The Music Lesson, A Day at Trianon, An Absorbing Novel, The Golden Age, The Nest Hunters, Daphnis and Chloe, Love the Conqueror, The Sacrifice to Pan*—such were the titles with which the picture

dealers labelled these works. It was only that he might fill the mouths dependent on him that he sold pictures of which he was inwardly ashamed. An artist needed also to be represented in the Salon, if he desired to attract the attention of the public and of the critics, so in 1847 he exhibited a pretentious production representing the youthful Oedipus discovered by the shepherds.

Any attempt to pick up stray threads connecting these pictures, produced between 1842 and 1847, with Millet's later works would be labour lost. In his imitations of the Rococo, he honestly strove after elegance and coquetry; he blended together greys, pale blues, and pinks quite in the manner of the masters of the Watteau period, but one feels that his heart was not in these pictures. The gift of expressing airy and piquant trifles in an airy and piquant manner was not his. His brush was not, like those of the Rococo masters, endowed with the grace that skims lightly over its subjects. His effects were uncompromising, oily, and smudgy. The silken draperies depended from the limbs of his figures with the heaviness of clay. "Your nymphs smell of the cow-shed," said Diaz, rallying his friend. These pictures are only interesting as evidence of the impression produced by the scented frivolous Rococo period on the imagination of a heavy and serious peasant.

The first indication of a new and decisive departure is afforded by two works included in the catalogue of the Salon of 1848, in which we see Millet

preparing to justify his erstwhile declaration to his master Delaroche: "Better be a bricklayer than paint in opposition to one's convictions."

One of these pictures, *Le Vanneur*, shows a peasant, whose action is full of power, winnowing corn in a basket, and was founded on a drawing Millet had made at Gruchy. The other, an historical work, depicted the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and Millet himself subsequently explained the connection of ideas that had led him to the choice of this subject. As the Israelites had yearned for Palestine, so he longed to be away from the captivity of the capital, back in his native fields, or at least breathing the free air of nature.

A consideration totally extraneous to that of art brought his resolution to maturity. In 1849 cholera was raging in Paris. Both Millet and his friend the animal-painter, Charles Jacque, at that time living opposite to him in the Rue Rochechouart, were anxious on account of their children. Millet had sold his *Vanneur* for 500 francs, and could thus indulge in the luxury of a rustic holiday; so one day he appeared in Jacque's studio, and they agreed to spend the summer in the country with their families.

The epoch of the Citizen King not only produced descriptive historical art, but landscape painting, too, entered during that period upon its definitive phase. At the same time that Delaroche was giving to the world his sentimental narratives, other artists were drifting from the salons of the Academy out into the

meadows and woods, where nature sits enthroned—eternal in her beauty and her grandeur. If landscape-painters had previously believed, under the influence of classicism, that subjects worthy of their skill were only to be found in Italy, since the thirties they had been discovering their native land. They sought the seclusion of a hermit's life in the villages surrounding the capital. Their farthest migrations extended to Croissy, Bougival, Saint Cloud, and Ville d'Avray, to the banks of the Oise, and the woodlands of L'Isle Adam. Yet one place was popular beyond all the rest. What Dachau is to the Munich landscape-painters of to-day, [the Parisians of 1830 found in Barbizon, a small village at the exit of the Forest of Fontainebleau, not far from that Castle which during the Renaissance played such an important part in the history of French art.]

The first artist to discover this cradle of modern French landscape-painting is said to have been Théodore Aligny, who visited a friend there in 1824. Later on it became, during the summer months, the favourite resort of Corot, Rousseau, Diaz, the animal-painter Brascassat, the sculptor Barye, and others. The pioneers of this departure at first took up their quarters, not at Barbizon itself, but at the "Cheval Blanc" in neighbouring Chailly. However, in 1830 the idea occurred to François Ganne, the Barbizon tailor, of fitting up a barn in the village as an inn. Père Ganne's hostelry soon became the rendezvous of a whole colony of painters, and Ganne could boast in after years that



Photo. Kuhn, Paris

FIRST STEPS
(Drawing)

he had sheltered beneath his roof the best artists of his time.

It is thus difficult to accept in its entirety the story of Millet's first excursion to Barbizon, in the setting Sensier has given it. For Barbizon was no longer unknown in artistic circles, as would appear from this account. Diaz, whom Millet knew, had been for years a regular visitor there, and Rousseau had already permanently established himself in the place. Millet and Jacque had no new world to discover, as they in their turn journeyed towards the "place that ends in *zon*." Nevertheless, even if Barbizon had already been discovered by the landscape-painters, Millet found there a world that was new to him, and where other beauties than those of nature still awaited their discoverer.

It was on June 13, 1849, that Millet and Jacque, together with their wives and children, mounted a rumbling omnibus, and at the end of two hours were deposited at Fontainebleau. Next day they set out, under the guidance of a woodcutter, in search of Barbizon. Millet went in front, one of his little daughters on either shoulder, his wife following with the older boy. "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, que c'est beau!" was ever and again on his lips. He had never suspected that there could exist, in such close proximity to Paris, a spot so vividly recalling his Norman home. For in those days Barbizon had not yet developed into the fashionable summer resort that we find it to-day, a rendezvous of cosmopolitan wanderers and elegant *Parisiennes*.

Nothing of the all-levelling life of the capital had as yet penetrated to that quiet spot where, as at Gréville, a homely and unsophisticated peasant race led a patriarchal existence. "The ancient cottages were crowned with mossy tiles or worm-eaten thatch. Lofty barn doors opened on the street, affording glimpses of farmyard interiors truly rural in character, whose inevitable features comprised pools of slimy water peopled by quacking ducks, primitive implements of husbandry, and crazy half-ruined wells, with ropes that ran over rust-eaten pulleys." In these words did Jacque's son in after years describe the Barbizon of 1850. And even so late as 1864, according to the account of Alexandre Piedagnel, it was still a quiet village where every one was in bed before nine o'clock at night, and awake, ready for the day's toil, by four o'clock in the morning. There were less than a hundred houses in the whole place. Every cottage was draped with ivy and wild vines, and in front of each, girdled by a hedge of sweetbriar, was a tiny garden, where roses grew luxuriantly side by side with purple cabbage and lettuce.

When Millet and Jacque arrived at Ganne's inn the mid-day meal was in progress, and about twenty visitors, artists with their wives and children, were seated at table together. Diaz, too, was among them. He limped forward on his wooden leg to meet the new arrivals, and greeted them with old-fashioned Spanish courtliness. "Classicists" and "colourists"—these were the two factions into

which artists, even in Barbizon, were divided. To which school did Millet belong? Unanimity on this point seemed hopeless. "Well," said he, "if you are in doubt, place me in a school of my own," and while the others were laughing at this retort, Diaz added, very seriously, "Laugh on; the fellow looks powerful enough to found a school that will bury us all!"

In the course of the next few days Millet commenced an exploration of the countryside. From early morn till dark he wandered through the fields. He drew the woodcutters and charcoal-burners, the reapers and gleaners. He watched the men digging and ploughing, the women hoeing and gathering faggots. He saw the little shepherdesses, knitting in hand, watching their flocks; he saw steaming horses straining at the plough, and exhausted labourers recruiting their energies whilst leaning on their hoes. All the impressions of his youth revived anew. The *cri de la terre* that he had heard at Gruchy rang once more in his ears.

Thus passed the entire summer. Millet's intention had been to spend but a short holiday in the country, but a couple of months grew into twenty-two years! For as the time of his departure drew near, he, like Rousseau, could not tear himself away from Barbizon—"I was born a peasant, and a peasant I will die." He purchased, for the sum of 160 francs, the cottage which, until his death, continued to be his home, and henceforth belonged unreservedly to the work for which he had felt in

his youth so unmistakable a vocation. The impressions his mind had retained of the days when he himself handled the spade and hoe, tended the sheep, and followed the plough, now became the theme—the spiritual essence of his art. The first to perceive in the peasant's toil a subject worthy of the artist's brush, he proclaimed truths that had never before been expounded; he annexed to the domain of Art a vast and untrodden region.

“The fellow looks as if he might found a school that will bury us all.” The deep meaning underlying these words of Diaz becomes evident when Millet's work is considered in its broad relation to the history of art. One strange yet salient fact inevitably rivets our attention. From the beginning of time, there have been tillers of the soil; the hoe and the rake were the portion of Adam and Eve from the moment that the Angel barred against them for ever the gates of the Garden of Eden; and yet countless ages elapsed before Art deigned to concern herself with the life of the peasant. Of a truth, in mediaeval art there was no place for him, since in those days art was devoted exclusively to the service of the Church. The utmost attention paid to the peasant lay in allowing him to do reverence to the Saints in pictures dealing with the adoration of the *Christ Child*, and similar subjects. Some masters, such as Hugo von der Goes and Lucas Cranach, frequently depict him in this connexion with considerable fidelity. Strenuous, sunburnt, and weather-beaten

are the figures that crowd around the Virgin in Goes' celebrated Portinari Altar-piece in the Gallery of S. Maria Nuova at Florence. Cranach, too, had he lived in the nineteenth instead of in the sixteenth century, would have made a peerless painter of rustic subjects. Abundant evidence of this is afforded by his cycle of paintings at Grimma, narrating the *Life of St. Nicholas*. There is an earthy heaviness, as though they were part of the soil, about these thickset peasants, as they handle sacks of wheat, or plod, cracking their whips, beside their cart-horses.

Still, as we have said before, there is here no question of independent pictures, with the peasant's life as their theme, but merely of figures accessory to paintings of a religious character. It was only the engraver's art that concerned itself in those days with the peasant, as such. In Adolf Bartels' book on the "German Peasant of the Past" there are numerous illustrations, dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that depict for us, to some extent, very realistically, the laborious life of the countryman. Many other drawings taken from the work of Albert Dürer and Lucas van Leyden, of Sebald Beham and Daniel Hopfer, have been brought together in Hirth's book illustrating the history of civilisation; but in these plates the traits destined to remain for centuries prevailing characteristics of all rustic delineations, are already prominent. Hans Sachs described the peasants of his day in the words:

“A joyless and rugged generation; scabby and lousy, shaggy and gnarled, tattered and torn, dirty and foul; coarse, clumsy, awkward, and dull; stupid, unruly, lazy and sly.”

The majority of artists, in like manner, have seen in the peasant simply a rude churl, worth drawing only on account of his grotesque appearance and coarse habits. He must be made to gorge and guzzle (with the natural consequence of such excesses) at church festivals, and shake a stiff leg at wedding dances; and these rôles he continued to fill until, at the close of the sixteenth century, he stepped out of the narrow confines of engraving into the broader domain of oil-painting. At that moment, secular and religious art had arrived at the parting of the ways, and talents that had hitherto been devoted to the service of Heaven, were being largely diverted to serve the purposes of earth. Pieter Brueghel was one of the first to make use of material hitherto treated only in woodcuts and copper-plate engravings, by German minor artists, as the subject of serious pictures. And Pieter Brueghel was, without doubt, a powerful master. His pictures are monumental in their colossal, grandiosely heroic hideousness. But are they real peasants that he portrays? Are they not rather the elemental spirits of the fields, incarnations of ghastly bestiality, awesome symbols of the *bête humaine*? Brueghel followed hard upon the “Late Renaissance,” which had barred the realm of art to all save beauty of form. Painting, ener-

vated by vapid idealism, languished under the need of a fresh infusion of rich animal blood. In his zealous endeavour to supply this want, Brueghel was not content with the simple rendering of reality ; he considered it necessary to distort it into the grotesque, with the idea of thereby rendering it all the more forcible and effective.

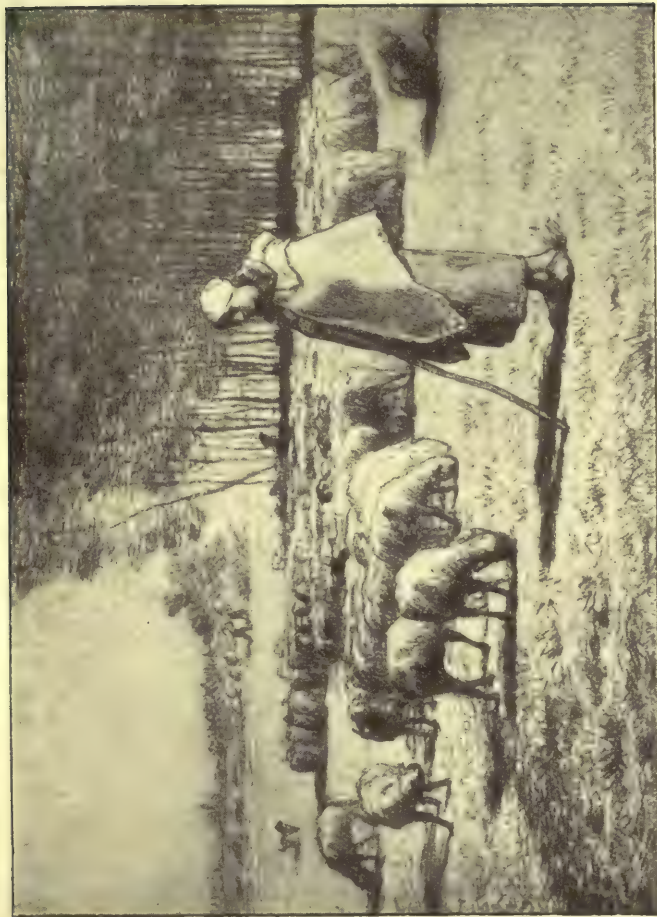
His successors of the seventeenth century reduced this monumental style to cabinet proportions, transformed the *terrible* into the humorous. Innumerable pictures of peasants were painted by the masters of the old Flemish and Dutch schools, and yet how little they have to tell us ! Under that plate in Holbein's *Dance of Death* which represents an old peasant at the plough, accosted by Death, are the words :

*“ In the sweat that beads thy brow
Thou shalt earn thy poor repast,
Weary and toil-worn, now
Death summons thee at last.”*

Beneath a woodcut by Jost Amman we read the inscription :

*“ A lowly tiller of the soil,
My lot is cast to slave and toil,
To harrow, plough, and eke to sow,
And rise betimes to reap and mow ;
To eat coarse bread, drink water plain,
As God to Adam did ordain.”*

Where do we find this toiling peasant in the art of the seventeenth century? It is true that it presents a few isolated examples. The Frenchman, Louis de Nain, was a plain observer of rustic life. In one of his pictures at the Louvre a peasant family is seated at table. In the foreground the man, wearing a woollen cap, raises, with great circumspection, his glass to his lips; while, near him, his wife, worn out with toil, looks straight in front of her. The second work, *The Return from the Field* is also remarkable for its colouring. While all his contemporaries were aiming exclusively at golden tones, we have here an artist who sheds the plain light of day on landscape and figures alike. Of the Dutch school, particular mention should be made of Isaac Ostade and Gerrit Bleeker, who painted with prosaic gravity the traffic of horses and vehicles in front of country inns. But it is precisely by the qualities we have noted in this small group of artists that the wide divergence of all others from the truth can be gauged. In the works of the latter, only two general tendencies are evident. Artists like David Teniers qualified the boor as subjects for their canvas by endowing him with the graces of the *salon*: making sprightly youths and trim maidens sing and dance, but with modesty and decorum, as befits persons of breeding. Varied as Teniers' repertory of characters may appear, it consists, in truth, of a mere handful of lay figures in peasant costume, dancing after the manner of marionettes, to the artist's piping. The besotted



Paris

SHEPHERDESS
(*Drawing*)

Photo, Durand-Kuel

louts of Brouwer, Adrian Ostade, Bega, and Dusart furnish a complete contrast to these drawing-room peasants of Teniers. In real life the peasant is a very serious individual. His mode of living, which compels him to earn his daily bread in the sweat of his brow, is occasionally—but very seldom—relieved by an outburst of extravagant joviality, at times strongly resembling intoxication. It was exclusively for episodes such as these, however, that the Dutch painters were on the alert. Their aim was to excite laughter by the drollery of their delineations, and to divert the correct Mynheers by proclaiming the gluttony, stupidity, and coarseness of the common herd. No one of them dreamed of studying the peasant in his field, with his plough and harrow, with his scythe, spade, and hoe. When neither tippling, carousing, brawling, nor smashing glasses, the boor ceased to be picturesque. Such painters even distorted rustic types into bottle-nosed blocks and addle-brained clods, so as to enhance the comic effect of their heroes of the knife (and fork) and knights of the tankard. Instead of the aroma of the soil, these pictures exhale only the fumes of brandy.

Those of the eighteenth century, on the contrary, are redolent of jasmine. No sooner was the age of obscene buffoonery past than the sports of pastoral Arcadia commenced; for the eighteenth century was in truth the classic era of philandering. The whole earth was metamorphosed into an Isle of Cytheraea, where nothing was heard but billing

and cooing ; and the erotic tone of the period was naturally reflected in its art. The first fruit of this influence was the creation of the *paysan enrubané*. Lords and ladies of high degree disguised themselves as shepherds and shepherdesses in order to surround their love-making with the glamour of rustic innocence. Ere long the peasant himself became the object of their caprice, but this reversion to a primitive state of society was the outcome solely of a depraved appetite. The country was an unexplored mine of amorous possibilities. Fashionable society found a piquancy in the frowsy charms of the youthful laundress, half revealed by her tucked-up skirts, as she leaned over the washtub ; a charm, too, in the brown arms and legs of the half-naked shepherd boy, as he reclined on a bank, roasting his sinewy young frame in the sun. Thus the peasant and his womankind became favourite subjects with the artist, for the reason that M. le Marquis and Mme. la Comtesse took their pleasure, when bored by the atmosphere of the salon, in breathing the aroma of the cow-shed and indulging their refined tastes in the society of lusty youths and bouncing wenches.

Later on, in the days of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the peasant in art acquires a fresh character. Now that a virtuous reaction has set in—now that everyone is wearied of a state of over-refinement, frivolity, and effeminacy, and yearns for a Utopia of primitive innocence—the peasant is envied for the simplicity of his wants, and his quiet domestic felicity. How sweet are the cares of home and children, of field

and garden ! How touching is the simple piety of these worthy creatures ! The gentle peasants of Greuze are nourished on the milk of pious principles. Youthful couples, full of tender thoughts, are seated by their child's cradle ; or aged grandparents are tended by their grateful descendants. Dogs, cats, and fowls lead an Eden-like existence in the good people's own kitchen. [The peasant was Rousseau's ideal child of nature, putting to shame by his purity and virtue the corrupt children of culture. And fashionable society, having through self-indulgence blunted its appetite for pleasure, gazing on these pictures dreamed itself back into the innocence of childhood, back into that blissful paradise from which the whirlpool of dissipation had torn it.]

The nineteenth century marked the dawn of no new era. Pursuing the paths which previous centuries had traversed, its rustic art, clinging to past conventions, merely repeated the old story. Although the sum total of its productions defied calculation, their fundamental principle remained that which had dominated the art of the seventeenth century. To the majority of artists the peasant remained simply a clown. His *rôle* was to make comic proposals of marriage, to behave awkwardly in the lawyer's office, to empty huge tankards without rhyme or reason, in order that the cultured patrons of art might be diverted by his antics. Instead of glimpses of life, we are given peeps into a mountebank's booth. The citizen would not as yet admit that the peasant might possess a poetry, a greatness

of his own, but viewed his shock-headed personality solely in its ludicrous aspect, just as the court circle of Louis XIV. had ridiculed the plebeian manners of the citizen Jourdain and Monsieur Dimanche in the Versailles Theatre two hundred years before.

So much for pictures of a humorous nature, utilising the peasant simply as a target for satire. On the other hand, we have those of a romantic character, still permeated with the ideas of Rousseau, in which the countryman figures as the inhabitant of a peaceful elysium, far removed from sorrow and want, and breathing only blissful content. The good old times! Their knell had sounded long, long ago in the city, but they still lingered on in the purer atmosphere of the sylvan glades. So this class of rustic composition took the form of hymns in praise of the past, of that golden age which had never known the struggle for existence. In a drawing by Schwind, entitled *Harvest*, angels descending from heaven fill the empty water-pitchers of the reapers, and twine garlands of roses for their children! Such is the tone pervading most of the works of Wilkie, Ludwig Richter, Eduard Meyerheim, and their imitators. In these pictures the peasant, whose existence is passed, not in ease and pleasure, but in arduous toil, is represented as a favourite of fortune who neither sows nor reaps, but is fed by his heavenly Father. He and his fellows, arrayed in the neatest and cleanest of garments, symbolise only the joys of a rustic life—not its laboriousness; the village swains sing, the old folks dance, maidens



Photo, Kitchin, Paris

LES FANEURS

are kissed, and grandsires, pipe in mouth, repose their aged limbs upon garden seats. Even the farm labourers are honest fellows, who never even dream of any amelioration in their lot, but are piously contented to play with their toddling youngsters by the light of wax candles. A good-natured, smiling optimism, that desires to behold only the roseate hues of life, becomes conveniently blind as soon as chance threatens to bring the seamy side before its eyes.

But such convenient blindness cannot be indefinitely prolonged. Art cannot continue to be gay when life is serious. All the advantages gained by the Revolution of 1789 had fallen to the share of the *bourgeoisie*. The feudal nobility were succeeded by the aristocracy of finance. The peasantry that had given the signal for the conflict emerged from it with empty hands. Henceforth the social question asserted its paramount claim, and those struggles of labour against capital, which led to the Revolution of 1848, commenced. It was at this period that Lamennais wrote his book, "De l'Esclavage Moderne," in which he did not forget the claims of the peasant. "The peasant bears the whole burthen and heat of the day, exposing himself to the rain, sun, and wind, in order to prepare by his toil the harvest that is to fill our granaries in the late autumn. If there exists a nation that esteems him the less on that account, and denies him justice and freedom, then build a high wall round about that nation, lest its pestiferous breath contaminate the air of Europe." And this

philanthropic trend of thought gave a new tinge also to the artistic treatment of rustic life. Whereas the peasant's existence had hitherto furnished only material for jokes or innocent idylls, stress was now laid in compassionate tones on his privations, his hardships, his burdens. Here, we are shown an aged widow seated on the humble sledge that is bearing her dead husband's coffin to the cemetery. There, a starving family is shivering on a winter's evening in a fireless room, amidst the scanty relics of their squalid and crazy furniture. Or, again, a bailiff is entering the cabin of some lowly peasant folk, in order to seize their last poor possessions ; or they are quitting house and home to seek a new existence in America. The pitifulness of the poor man's lot supplies the ever recurring refrain of all these works. It is the appeal of the disinherited to the sympathies of their well-to-do brethren. The artist supplies the arguments for the discourses of Socialist agitators.

And yet—huge as was the output, between the seventeenth and the middle of the nineteenth centuries, of pictures dealing with rustic life—one theme is conspicuous by its absence. We have the peasant as a whimsical clown, as the fortunate and enviable Adam of a rustic Eden, as a poverty-stricken tiller of the soil ; but the quality to which the peasant's life owes its true inwardness—its very essence—is very rarely touched upon. Hardly one of these innumerable works strikes the resounding chord of Labour. Even the German painter

Defregger, although he was himself a peasant, although he had herded cattle and followed the plough, sought his subjects in the joys and sorrows of the upland pastures, and never in the serious vocation of the husbandman. It is this that makes Millet's work so fresh, that places it in the forefront of a new era in the history of art—he was the first to make his own the theme that every artist had hitherto shirked. For centuries painters had portrayed only the humour or the pathos of rustic life. Then Millet arose, and painted the country folk in a manner devoid of humorous conceit, but at the same time with an absence of pathos. "Man goeth forth unto his labour and to his work until the evening"—such is the gist of his whole epic. First among artists to seek out the peasant at his toil, it was he who restored to him the right of independent existence.] Hitherto a mere puppet of the footlights, serving no earthly purpose but to excite the merriment or touch the compassion of the dwellers in cities, henceforth he stands erect—a monarch in his own realm. He has materialised from a phantom into a being of flesh and blood, a being of *primaeval*, heroic grandeur.

The entire cycle of the peasant's life, so far as it is concerned with labour, is depicted in the works of Millet. As early as 1850 he painted the *Semeur* (Sower). Twilight is closing in; in the background of a Chailly field a peasant is still ploughing with a team of horses. The foreground is paved with serried clods; flights of rooks swoop down into the

furrows. And across the field of vision there passes with measured tread a man, scattering the seed, with a gesture full of power, over the fertile soil that awaits impregnation. In the words of Victor Hugo's poem :

*“ Il marche dans la plaine immense,
Va, vient, lance la graine au loin,
Rouvre sa main et recommence ;
Et je médite, obscur témoin,
Pendant que déployant ses voiles
L'ombre où se mêle une rumeur
Semble élargir jusq'aux étoiles
Le geste auguste du semeur.”*

Le Départ pour le Travail (Going to Work) is the title of the second picture, also executed in 1850. A young rustic, pitchfork on shoulder, is plodding along to his daily labour, accompanied by his wife. In 1851 followed the *Faneurs*, a group of haymakers at a haystack, engaged in binding trusses, while a young girl is raking together the surplus hay with a fork. The year 1855 witnessed the production of the *Greffeur* (Grafter). Inside one of those walled enclosures—half-court, half-garden—which in villages separate the farm buildings from the dwelling-house, there stands a man who has just made an incision in a fruit tree, and is in the act of inserting a new graft. His wife, the child on her arm, is looking on with pious admiration.

The year 1857 saw the creation of two of his



LES GLANEUSES.
(THE GLEANERS)

Louvre, Paris.



most famous works, the *Glaneuses* (Gleaners) and the *Angelus*. In the former picture, a newly-reaped cornfield stretches before us. The background is occupied by wheat-ricks, heavily laden wains, and the cottages of the village. The binders are busy with their sheaves, flocks of birds skim through the air, while in the foreground three aged women are painfully stooping to glean from the earth the stray ears of corn. In the *Angelus* one of the earliest impressions of his Norman youth took shape. Often, when the bells of Gréville proclaimed their labours over for the day, had the child Millet seen his father bare his head, and his mother fold her hands in silent prayer. Even so in the gem of the Chauchard collection, two figures stand with bared head in quiet devotion—the man holding his felt hat, his female companion with folded hands, murmuring the Ave Maria. At the man's side a fork is sticking in the ground, while a basket of potatoes and a wheelbarrow with sacks stand on either side of the woman. They have been toiling the whole day in the potato-plot, and now at last the chiming of the bells, which steals across the fields from the distant church-tower of Chailly, has brought them respite from toil and—rest.

The picture of 1859, *La Mort et le Bûcheron* (Death and the Woodcutter), is the only work of Millet's that in any way recalls the old German master's *Dance of Death*. An aged woodcutter sinks down by a ditch, exhausted under his burden, while a veiled skeleton, with scythe and hour-glass,

softly lays its bony hand upon the old man's shoulder. *La Tondeuse* is Millet's principal work of 1860, a peasant girl shearing a sheep which is held by an old man.

In 1861 he painted the *Planteurs de Pommes de Terre* (Potato Planters). A labourer is turning the soil with a hoe, while his wife sets the potatoes. In the background, in the shade of an apple tree, is an ass with a basket on its back, in which lies the infant child of the couple. The year 1862 gave birth to the celebrated *Homme à la Houe* (Man with the Hoe). A stalwart peasant has just laid down his hoe at the close of a day's exhausting toil, and, worn out by fatigue, straightens himself with difficulty as he resumes his outer garment.

But it is impossible to enumerate the complete list of Millet's works. The subject of *travaux des champs* is treated with exhaustive comprehensiveness. Here, a vine-dresser, exhausted by his toil, sinks down to rest by the wayside. There, maidens are gathering sticks in the wood in preparation for the rigours of winter. He paints the women lifting potatoes, the men ploughing, manuring, and digging. Vapours rise from the earth; the eye roves over broad cornfields; one seems to inhale the earthy odour of newly-turned soil.

But, in addition to the labours of the field, his brush is busy with the domestic life of the peasant. He finds his way into the washhouse, watches the processes of baking bread and churning butter. He is present at the calf's entrance into the world, and

at the porker's exit therefrom. He watches the milking of the cows. He paints rustic housewives feeding their fowls at the threshold, spinning, mending their linen by the light of a dim lamp, administering soup to their children with a spoon, giving lessons in knitting, or seated with their sewing by the baby's cradle.

The shepherd's solitary life exercised a peculiar fascination upon Millet's imagination. Sensier relates that one evening, as they were crossing the meadows, Millet suddenly stopped, lost in earnest contemplation. "Is not that fine? Do not these beings seem to be knit by mysterious ties with boundless Nature herself? Observe that shepherd, wrapped in his coarse cloak, returning to the farm. His black silhouette against the sky has in it something out of the common. He seems to belong to another race than our own; he might be a descendant of the great shepherds of Scripture. From Easter till Martinmas he sleeps beneath the open sky. Like his forefathers, he reads the firmament as a never-ending book, whose letters are the stars." Millet was never tired of painting these tall gaunt forms, wrapped in their rough cloaks and accompanied by their dogs, leaning upon their shepherd's staves, in the midst of their closely serried flocks upon the downs. Here, we see a shepherd leaning against a tree, his collar turned up about his ears, gazing reflectively across the plain. There, a woman driving her cow to pasture. Here, again, a girl bending over the stocking she is knitting,

whilst the sheep graze about her feet. The peace of evening generally broods over these pictures. The starry vault of heaven majestically spans the silent expanse of plain. "Il faut percevoir l'infini" —one must realise the Infinite, Millet himself was accustomed to say. And these solitary beings, springing like statues out of the broad plains, do in truth loom vaguely through a mystic atmosphere.

This description indicates simultaneously in what manner Millet attained to his art, and the reason why he should be celebrated as the plastic poet of peasant life.

Millet sprang from the people. He knew from personal experience those field labours that make the husbandman's face brown and his hands horny. In Barbizon, too, he lived the life of a peasant. He was seen roaming fields and pastures in a blue smock-frock, with an old weather-beaten straw hat upon his head and *sabots* upon his feet. He built himself a fowl-house, planted vegetables, and ploughed his own strip of arable land. He associated with the peasants, not in the character of a casual visitor, but like a denizen of their own world. Thus it was Millet's mission to be the first of all artists to depict the peasant's life, not in those purely external aspects which alone are visible to the dweller in cities, but in its very essence, and from the point of view of the peasant himself. The peasantry to which he belonged became the creator of its own interpreter.

This explanation may well be the true one, and

Millet himself supports it in a celebrated letter that he wrote to Sensier, wherein he emphasises the vast difference between the country as it actually is and the visions formed of it by dwellers in cities. The man who spends a few hours there on a fine day sees it only under its fairest aspect. In the joyousness of his own mood, the peasants appear to him fortunate beings, leading a healthy and untroubled existence in the open air. Yet in truth Nature is no kindly and indulgent mother. She has her enervating and oppressive sultriness in summer, her biting frost in winter; and it is only after a bitter struggle that the human raider can force from her the scanty benefits that she grudgingly yields.

“At the risk of being taken for a Socialist, I must confess that to me the cheerful side of the peasant’s life is never apparent. I know not where it is to be found, for I have never seen it. Its brightest aspect known to me lies in the repose, the silence that one enjoys in the woods and fields; but exquisite as may be one’s reveries under such conditions, a note of sadness runs through them. One may be sitting beneath a tree replete with the consciousness of well-being. Suddenly a needy fellow creature appears, plodding through the narrow lane, bowed beneath a heavy load of faggots. The guise in which this figure presents itself to one’s vision instantaneously calls to mind the solemn fundamental condition of existence—the burden of labour. Scattered throughout the fields and plains we see figures hoeing and digging; every now and then

one of these will straighten himself and stand erect, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with the back of his hand. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread.' There is nothing frolicsome or joyous about this work, as some folks would have us believe."

Through all his reveries ran a note of melancholy! Millet's kindly spirit had never, as he himself confessed, known the bright side of the peasant's life, but only its weariness and toil. He was full of boundless sympathy with the weary and heavy laden. Yet, on the other hand, why, feeling so deeply this sadness, did he not paint it—did he not constitute himself the advocate of the human family? Why did he sedulously avoid those notes of complaint and accusation that predominate in the works of so many philanthropic painters? Why did he repudiate throughout his life the views which certain democrats ascribed to him, and the conclusions which were drawn from his works? Why, when a critic claimed him as an exponent of socialistic ideas, did he make the categorical declaration: "With all the force at my command I repudiate the democratic tendency, and have never dreamed of holding a brief for any cause?" Now, the answer to this question is supplied by the concluding sentence of the letter mentioned above. It runs: "Devoid though the peasant's toil may be of joyousness, to me it nevertheless stands, not only for true human nature, but also for the loftiest poetry." The loftiest poetry! Here we have the keynote to

Millet's work. It was not because he was himself a peasant, nor because he regarded the peasant with the eye of compassion, that he painted his pictures as they were. It is only the poet who speaks—not the artist. For the demonstration of this fact an historical retrospect is again necessary.

Comparing Millet's pictures with those of earlier painters of rustic life, it is evident that the distinction between them lies in the difference not only of subject, but also of conception. A picture by Wilkie or by Edward Meyerheim can readily be described in words. Peasants playing at blindman's-buff; a distraint in the cottage; a country shooting-match; giddy husbands, who have lingered too long at the village inn, fetched home by their spouses. This table of contents is a sufficient description; it repeats in words that which the artist has narrated in colour. For Millet's works such a description would not suffice, since in his case the subject-matter is quite subsidiary in importance to the manner in which it is presented. We do not learn to know the *Glaneuses* simply by grasping the fact that it represents three peasant women stooping over the stubble, nor the *Angelus* by hearing that it depicts a rustic couple at prayer in a field. And in many other of his pictures the subject is practically of no importance. A man in a field—putting on his coat, leaning on his spade, lighting his pipe with flint and tinder; a woman—churning butter, fetching water, wringing out clothes; or two shepherdesses watching a flight of birds of passage.

Such themes as these cannot awaken the faintest anecdotal interest : it is not the subject chosen, but the artist's manner of presenting it that is in question. That is to say, nearly all the earliest artists who sought their inspiration in rustic life were compelled to forage for subjects of material interest and literary value, for the reason that they addressed themselves to a public which insisted on considering their pictures not as works of art to be studied, but as narratives to be read. Thus they imparted to their paintings a humorous or a melodramatic tone ; or they recorded with lifeless accuracy, for the advancement of ethnographic knowledge, what manner of costumes were worn by Italian or Norwegian peasants at processions, weddings, and funerals. They avoided the theme of Labour, because it was powerless to rivet the attention of *dilettanti* seeking either amusement, pathos, or instruction ; or if from time to time they ventured upon it, their pictures were seasoned by accessories of a *genre* character : a farm lad must be romping with a maid servant, or a farmer stimulating the industry of an idle labourer. The importance of Millet consists in his having been one of the first to insist not upon the objective, but upon the artistic, value of this theme—in his having been one of the first to look upon life not with the eye of the story-teller, but with that of the artist.

To the artist who sets this ideal before him, his subject presents itself under very varied aspects. Should he be a colorist, he will love the country when summer has embroidered the green carpet of



Photo, Kudoh, Paris

LE PRINTEMPS

Paris, Louvre

the meadows with a glowing tracery of countless red, blue, yellow, and white blossoms ; when, in the tiny cottage gardens, golden vegetable-marrows, purple cabbages, deep red dahlias and bright yellow sunflowers, scarlet poppies and violet asters, blend their motley hues in a riot of colour. To an artist of this class the peasant will be merely an accessory to the polychromatic value of the landscape. The blue blouses and white shirt-sleeves of the lads, and the red kerchiefs and the yellow aprons of the lasses, will charm him, but only because they heighten still more the opulent colouring of nature.

The country offers, besides, innumerable problems of light. The luminist will paint the morning hour when the mist wraps the plains in its gauzy veil, and the early sunbeams ripple tenderly through the tree-tops. He will paint the evening sky when all things are bathed in crimson, and shine as with the glow of a furnace ; or he will strive to render the enchantment of night, when from the window of some quiet cottage the trembling rays of an oil-lamp steal out athwart the encircling gloom. And to such an artist, again, the peasant will be but a playground for his light effects, a note in that great chord of which light supplies the key.

Those who expect to find in Millet such technical elaboration of the purely picturesque, will be bitterly disappointed. His life, even in its later years, was notoriously one continuous tale of poverty and privation. A picture went for a bed, and a sketch

for a pair of boots. The baker refused him bread, the grocer sued him, and the tailor distrained upon his goods. Contrary to the experience of many great German artists, Millet had not to complain of want of appreciation on the part of the critics. Men like Théophile Gautier and Bürger-Thoré—nay, even Delécluze, the apostle of Classicism—followed him from the beginning, and their juniors, such as Paul Mantz, Paul de Saint-Victor, and Théodore Silvestre, later on joined the ranks of his adherents. And yet, diligently though they proclaimed the historical importance of Millet's work and the seriousness of his conception of life, they did not succeed in convincing the buying fraternity of the artistic value of his pictures. The dealers stood aloof, and the jury of the Salon rejected many of his works. Was this because Millet's pictures would not fit the frames of the reigning "official" art? And did the circumstance that, in spite of Millet's disclaimer of socialistic ideas, some persons professed to see in such pictures as *L'Homme à la Houe* an omen of the upheaval of the masses, contribute to this attitude? Possibly. Yet in the main it must be recognised that the jury's point of view was extremely practical, and that serious artistic considerations, not mere prejudices, were the determining cause of these rejections.

In matters of literature and art, the French are notoriously very fastidious. In like manner that the Academy jealously cherishes the purity of the

language, so the École des Beaux Arts makes the cultivation and propagation of sound artistic culture its special care. In all exhibitions, even though the intellectual standard be not a high one, the works of French artists command attention owing to their cultured taste and the sovereign mastery that even painters of the second and third rank possess over all the resources of their craft. Now this culture, which is in France as indispensable to the artist as a knowledge of spelling to the author, Millet did not possess. He did not commence to paint until he had arrived at an age when to most artists the management of the brush has become mere child's play. He, like Cornelius, often expressed the opinion in his letters that facility of execution spells ruin to the artist. And while the inward maturity to which he had attained while yet a farm labourer prevented his drifting into the shallow waters of a purely descriptive art, at the same time his irregular course of training, added to the indifference which he generally manifested with regard to *technique*, rendered it impossible for him to become a really good painter. Those barbarisms in his manner of expression, from which he was never able to free himself, caused other masters besides Delacroix and Fromentin, who possessed so exquisite a perception of the beautiful, to rank Millet the artist, highly as they valued his ethical importance, lower than the least of the Dutch School. Even at the present day the honest critic is bound to admit that the contemplation of Millet's pictures from a

purely artistic point of view, affords the eye absolutely no pleasure.

Think of the rustic scenes of Courbet, Bastien-Lepage, Pissarro. Courbet was a master whose works grew out of bold, broad sweeps of his brush. In his *Funeral at Ornans*, the lowering sky, the grey-green landscape, and the black and red draperies are all blended into a harmony that is in truth marvellous. We are listening to the voice of a painter whose sense of colour was inspired by the greatest masters of the past. Or consider the *Hay Harvest* or the *Potato Harvest* of Bastien-Lepage. In the one picture the June sun broods over the newly-shorn meadows; we seem actually to feel the heat as it quivers upwards from the baking soil. A pale autumnal tone pervades the other work. The sandy, dust-laden fields repose beneath the pallid and subdued noon-day light. Pale brown are the potato haulms, pale brown are the stalks of grass, dusty grey is the highway. So cold a breeze blows through the leafless trees that they seem to shiver, as though at the touch of frost.

And, lastly, Pissarro. He, like Millet, roamed the fields, painting the shepherds driving forth their flocks, the farm waggons clattering along the rugged roads, the women trooping homewards in the evening from the harvest-field, rake on shoulder, the little goose-girls seated with their knitting, tending their flocks. But he did not confine himself to similar figure studies. He painted the light, too, that plays upon the bronzed skin of the labourer,



Photo, Durand-Ruel

LA FEMME AU ROUET

Paris

the hides of the cattle, and the leaves and fruit of the trees. He characterises the season and the hour, the hazy freshness of a spring morning, the dull tones of an autumn afternoon, the clearness of a glittering winter sky, the tender green of the young buds, and the melancholy withering of the faded leaf.

In the works of Millet, all these charms of colour and light will be sought for in vain. If we admire in Courbet's pictures the individuality of their composition and their harmonious distinction of tone, Millet's works, on the other hand, appear laboured and tortured, patched and pieced. So unattractive is the superficial effect that so sincere a well-wisher as Théophile Gautier could not refrain from an allusion to "mason's work in colour." While the Impressionists charm by the daring with which they seize Nature's effects in their hazy freshness, Millet's pictures are pervaded by a uniformly dull, insipidly dirty tone. It is not atmosphere that envelops his figures, but a brownish-grey gravy; his draperies seem to be fashioned, not of linen or cloth, but of clay and mire! Observe the celebrated *Glaneuses* in the Louvre. The scene is laid amid the fierce heat of summer, but there is no vibration in the air; it is oily and greasy. The stubble does not reflect the noonday glare; it has the dirty effect of manure.

Or take the picture of *Spring* in the same collection. Does its muddy and ponderous tone convey to us, even in the faintest degree, the impression of

Spring in the country, with its budding trees, trilling larks, and chirping insects? He attempted on countless occasions to paint the sunset glow, but not one of these pictures renders the luminous haze of the sky—nothing but a ruddy-brown mass, substantial and impenetrable, suspended above the landscape.

Millet was no painter. Facility in brushwork was as deficient in him as the sense of atmosphere. In order to derive real pleasure from his pictures, it is better to study them in photographs, since the latter do not reproduce the unpleasing features of the originals. But almost keener enjoyment than that derived from black and white reproductions of Millet's oil-paintings is afforded by his pastels and drawings. It is in these that his power is most firmly rooted. It is they, and not his paintings, that contain the quintessence of his art. For in these he was not obliged to plunge amid the risks of a doubtful colour-scheme. He was able to confine himself to what appeared to him the one essential point, the only important consideration—Form. And thus we arrive at the quality which endows Millet's works, in spite of their indifferent execution, with artistic greatness.

In the annals of painting we have already encountered mighty masters, who, although they painted pictures, were really not painters at all. Michelangelo is the typical example of this phenomenon, for, although he executed his most comprehensive work in the ceiling-paintings of the Sistine Chapel, his genius lay essentially and entirely in the direction of plastic art. He only valued

painting inasmuch as it enabled him to conjure up, as far as the limitations of flat surfaces permitted, the world of statuary to which circumstances prevented his giving expression in plastic form. Hence he recognised colour only as a dull grey, and hence he avoided everything that was opposed to his ideas of form. But by this very onesidedness he produces such overwhelming grandeur of effect that, as Goethe wrote, even the majestic language of form which is native to Rome, has nothing further to teach those who have absorbed the lessons of the Sistine Chapel. What would Michelangelo have become had fate constituted him the delineator of peasant life instead of a painter of prophets and Sibyls? In such a case he would still have remained—Michelangelo! He would have passed over Nature's charms of light and colour with complete indifference, and would have seen, even in the country, nothing but human forms of primaeval massiveness and movements of Titanic grandeur. For is there not abundance of such artistic material in the country? Is there not a lofty rhythm in the wide sweep of the sower's arm as he strides across the field? Is there not majesty in the mighty swing with which the woodman raises his axe to deal the first blow at some hoary, decaying giant of the forest? Might not the mower, as he swings his scythe, represent one of those figures of the Apocalypse, sweeping away all living things? We cannot help feeling that these movements owe their majestic effect to the eternal rhythm that inspires them, to the fact that

they have been handed down unchanged through countless ages from generation to generation ; while the toilers themselves command our involuntary respect, because they are nearer to nature than we, because they are rooted as firmly as are the trees and rocks, in the soil on which they stand. Indeed, in the hour of twilight, when colour fades into invisibility and form alone is eloquent, the landscape, too, assumes this primaeval character. The cowherd crossing the downs up yonder appears gigantic to the eye—while the fisherman, erect and motionless in his bark, is but a phantom. Nature blends with her human creatures into lofty mystic harmonies ; she seems, as it were, the pedestal of the infinite, whereon their figures tower with the solemnity of statues.

This sense of Nature's elementary language of Form was the artistic gift that was laid in Millet's cradle. Too much stress should not be laid upon the fact that he was born a peasant. So was Defregger ; and so were many others, who nevertheless drew very different lessons from peasant life. The main point is that Millet came into the world with that very instinct—the "eye for greatness" which Goethe extolled in Michelangelo. And the natural conditions under which his youth was passed—that level country with its vast horizon and its sparsely scattered and still patriarchal population—afford the most appropriate soil imaginable for the further cultivation of his sense of form. What were the subjects of his childish drawings at Gruchy ?



Photo, Durand-Ruel

MOWER
(Drawing)

Only those dealing with problems of form. A peasant with bent shoulders slowly wending his way home from church; or a shepherd, standing on the edge of a declivity, sharply defined in silhouette against the sky. In these drawings of his boyhood, Millet's whole nature already stands revealed. Migrating to Paris, what did he find most repellent? The narrowness of the streets, and their formless rabble of humanity. And where did he seek consolation? In the works of those masters who translated for him into the language of art all that had so captivated him at home. In the Louvre he hastens past a thousand pictures, that he may loiter, as though under a spell, before the works of Poussin, or the drawings of Michelangelo. And again at Barbizon, in the after years, of what nature were the works of art with which he surrounded himself? Were they works of the modern school? or were they even, for the most part, paintings at all? They were casts from the metopes of the Parthenon and the reliefs of the Column of Trajan; an antique head of Achilles; a bust of Clytie. They were reproductions of the Paduan frescoes of Giotto, which a friend had brought him from Italy. And he took a peculiar pride in his engravings after Michelangelo, whom during his whole life he held to be the greatest of all artists. Thus we see that his tastes lay, partly in the direction of sculpture, and partly in the works of those painters who were actually draughtsmen and plastic artists, rather than painters, properly so-called. His gaze rested daily

on the mighty conceptions of form bequeathed by Phidias, Giotto, and Michelangelo. These masters appealed to him because they had looked into Nature with an eye akin to his own. With them he communed, not that he might copy them, but in order to probe their very souls. He entered into the great classical inheritance they had left behind them, not by dint of imitating them, but by the right of a kindred spirit.

The study of Millet's drawings is particularly instructive in this respect. They show that he possessed from the very beginning the gift of plain, clear, and simple vision; but the conscientiousness of the beginner militated at first against the suppression of the redundant. The exuberant details of the portrait still linger in the features of his figures, and the suggestive accent is wanting in their movements, however true to Nature the latter may be. Millet himself was conscious of this. It was for that reason that he hovered round the same subjects with a perseverance which is only paralleled by that of Bücklin in another direction. Innumerable drawings are in existence treating the theme of the *Sower* or the *Woman Churning Butter*, alone. And the oftener he attacks his subject, the simpler becomes his conception of it. Form is purged of all that is descriptive, everything acquires distance, repose, power.

His whole course of study seems to have consisted in the uninterrupted training of the eye to distinguish only essential lines, massiveness of

contour, rhythm of motion, in Nature and in human life. He became more and more observant of the hour best adapted for such studies. He grew more and more to seek inspiration from the twilight hours, when all detail vanishes and only the main outlines are present to the eye. "Note the action of those men, loading the sheaves with their pitchforks. It is wonderful how largely their figures bulk against the evening sky. Do they not appear gigantic in the gathering darkness? Do not the forms in motion there resemble spirits of the field? We know that we are gazing on needy human creatures, such as that woman bending beneath her burden, but at this distance are they not glorious? See her balance that load upon her shoulders in the twilight, how grand, how mysterious!"

All his works are conceived in this spirit. Others have painted, in compositions crowded with figures, the teeming life of the fields, when troops of men and maids swarm about the haystacks and strawricks. Millet elected to deal with one, two, or, at the most, three figures at a time; but the very essence of the theme, both in spirit and form, is concentrated with such consummate mastery in the delineation of these limited groups, that they express far more than any agglomeration of small separate studies could effect. To all appearance, Millet is a naturalist of the first water. He made merry over Breton's peasant girls, who had never handled a rake in their lives, and who were all so charming

as to be far more adapted for the life of a *cocotte* in town than for the rustic occupations of gathering sticks and pumping water. "I wish my figures to possess the qualities of dominating and compelling, that they should appear to be rooted in the soil, that they should be readily felt to be in tune with their calling." Therefore he avoided all re-touching—that delight of chartered idealism; he left his peasants with all their scars, with all the deformities and callosities that life-long toil stamps upon the frame; he painted their bowed shoulders, their distorted knees, their broad and uncouth feet, their sunburnt hands, and the animal expression on their weather-beaten, rugged features. Observe, for instance, this wine-dresser, staring straight in front of him, as though in bewilderment; or this wood-cutter, taking his rest with the laboured breathing of a beast of burden. In his draperies, too, he adhered strictly to realism. Those woollen coats and coarse linen smocks, those thick kerchiefs, coarse cloaks, and heavy nailed boots are the very same the peasant wears at his work. He lives in Millet's pictures in his entire rusticity, his uncompromising sturdiness. Each figure is a characterisation of condensed energy, of tense inflexible hardness. And yet—the longer we contemplate Millet's works, the more are we convinced that here we have to do, not with mere copies from Nature, but with an extract from reality itself. For he keeps far removed from the silhouettes of his figures everything that is trivial or distracting to the atten-

tion. If he does not alter the character of the drapery, he carries it back in such fashion to elemental forms, that it acquires a plastic moulding which is unique. Coats hang in sculptural folds, and wooden shoes produce the effect of a pedestal supporting a statue. If he does not alter the character of the faces, he eliminates all that is trivial, all that suggests the individual portrait, and only conveys the broad accent of angular, purely typical features. In like manner he knows how to seize with unrivalled certainty every action at its most forceful moment. In these matters Breton had not the slightest consideration for actuality. His theatrical village maidens trip along in as elegant and light-footed a fashion as though the heavy faggots they carry on their shoulders were made of cotton-wool. Millet always conveys to us the sensation of exertion, of heavy weight. How the knees of the *Vanneur* bend beneath the burden of the basket! How the *Tueurs de cochon* brace themselves against the ground in forcing the obstinate animal onwards! And yet this absolute truthfulness is by no means that of instantaneous photography, which is more accurate than expressive. In all truth Millet, like Giotto, possesses the art of always representing action in such matter that it conveys without the slightest loss of force the idea it was intended to express. Even the unison of the same gestures—and of this the *Glaneuses* afford a striking instance—serves him sometimes, in the simplest manner, to

convey the impression of the infinite, the ever-recurring.

The elemental feeling of space with which the figures are placed in the landscape heightens still more the primitive and grandly solemn effect. We have previously spoken of those refined artists who had settled, even before Millet's time, in the neighbourhood of Barbizon. They are rightly honoured as the classic masters of modern landscape-painting, for they were the first to give expression in their works to that feeling which constrains us to seek refuge from the uproar, the dust, and the grime of the town in the calm peacefulness of Nature. It was in the very fact that they sang the praises of Nature only when unprofaned by human touch, that their limitations were revealed. For there is another side of Nature, ever toiling in the service of man. "Our hands rest upon this terrestrial ball like those of a potter or a sculptor upon a lump of clay. We model and knead the flesh of Nature, adapting her to our wishes and necessities." This workaday Nature, ruled by and serving mankind, was as yet unknown to the landscape-painters of Barbizon. Rousseau painted his mighty oaks, stretching their majestic branches to the skies. Corot loved those quiet pools, whose tremulous aquatic mirror is ruffled only by the dipping branches of the tender grey bushes. Diaz vanished like a miner into the green tunnel of the forest, where the branches met above his head, and where no sights or sounds from the outside world could

penetrate. "The world is perfect wherever it is untainted by man and his misery," is the refrain of all their works.

Millet, too, delighted in the forest. "I often hasten thither in the evening, when my day's work is over, and always return quite crushed. There is such a hush, such an awe-inspiring grandeur about the place, that I am often astonished to recognise how really frightened I feel." But he never occupied himself with the forest from an artistic point of view. It was too full of detail, too confined for him; it cramped the sweeping gestures of his figures. "Space" and "infinity" are the words that recur oftenest in his letters. "O ye infinite distances, that so often furnished food for my childish dreams, shall I ever succeed in even faintly suggesting you?" It was Millet's great achievement that he was the first to discover the possibilities of the flat plain. Every morning Millet and Rousseau, in repairing to their daily task, took exactly opposite directions. Rousseau left Barbizon by the road leading to the forest, while Millet took that which led to the fields. *La terre!* The soil, as such—the soil that is made productive by man, and that yields him bread—is the ever recurring theme of all his landscapes. And as the first to proclaim the poetry of the plain, the poetry of Nature as the handmaid of man, he prepared the way for that feeling for Nature which subsequently found such powerful expression in Zola's novels.

Apparently the wide expanse is empty! A flat,

deeply furrowed, steaming expanse of ploughed land stretches slowly in broad waves away to the horizon, where it meets the sky in a well-defined line. Emptiness everywhere! Only a plough, a harrow, a potato-sack, a bucket, stand in the midst of the field as documents of labour. A manure-heap, a massive church-tower, or a group of trees lightly breaks the line of the horizon. He employs these objects—the implements powerfully composed in the foreground, and the towers diminished by distance and blending with the sky—to endow his perspective with an enormous power of illusion. And while other masters who strove for similar effects—Rembrandt equally with the Impressionists—bestowed more attention on the sky than on the land, with Millet the land always remained the chief consideration. He needed a firm base whereon his figures might stand and move. So he moulds and kneads the soil itself. By means of furrowed fields, broad indentations, and low hills, everything is distributed into settled combinations of form. In this manner he creates a double impression—that of boundlessness and infinity, and, simultaneously, of the ponderousness of earth, pulsating with all the forces of the universe. We seem to survey the globe itself; we think we hear the Spirit of Earth stalking invisible across the plains. But, at the same time, we feel that the most insignificant strip of ploughed land which here lies before us has been fertilised by the sweat of generations of toiling humanity.



Photo Durand-Kuel

GOOSE GIRL
(Drawing)

Paris

The beasts of the field, too, take their appointed place as component parts in this rhythm of the landscape. They assume not only the colour, but likewise the forms of the soil upon which their lives are passed. Among the animal-painters of all time, Millet is pre-eminent in his rendering of flocks and herds. Whether he is portraying sheep, as they wander over the country-side in search of food, or timidly huddle together at evening in the fold, we feel that all these animals are merely parts of one whole, possessing but a single instinct, a single soul. Marvellous, too, is the manner in which the woolly backs are made to accompany the undulations of the ploughed fields. The beast is the product of the soil on which it moves—an animal phase of the landscape itself.

[And from that same soil, to which the beasts also belong, there rises next the figure of man. He, too, was once a clod of earth ; but God, the first Sculptor, fashioned him after His own image. Hence he stands erect, wrestles with the earth, and compels it to serve him. By the strength of his hands and his intellect, he conquers Nature, triumphs over matter. Such is the remarkable symbolism of the works of Jean François Millet.] The peasants whom he painted were not those that dwelt at Barbizon in 1860. These are sons of an age that knew not the sounds of bells ; children, not of Time, but breathing the atmosphere of Eternity ; mighty symbols of Man, who, himself fashioned of clay, yet reigns supreme over the earth, from whence he sprang.]

The same negation of time broods over Millet's interiors. No one could ever class him among the painters of home life. These peasant women standing at the wash-tub, or ladling out soup to their children, have nothing about them that suggests domestic intimacy. They inspire a feeling of depression, because here, too, we recognise the note of Woman's great song of destiny—Woman, who only exists to bear children, and to toil for their subsistence. But in this very consideration there lies, "not merely true human nature, but also the loftiest poetry." There is a certain sacredness about these mothers, who "bear the burden of life, who suffer patiently under the law of mankind, without complaining, and without inquiring its meaning." It is astonishing, too, how Millet, merely by simplicity of form, contrives to invest even his interiors with a quality that is patriarchal, sacred, primæval in its grandeur. All appears wrapped in old memories, as though hallowed by the patina of the centuries.

Even Millet's perception of colour admits of justification from this point of view. A connoisseur of painting will never stand before his works with the astonishment and admiration that the pictures of really great painters, such as Franz Hals or Velasquez, excite. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that Millet's paintings, even as we see them, are endued with a harshness that is wonderfully full of character. What they might gain in cleverness, they would lose in elemental power.

Millet occasionally attempted to strike certain notes of bright colouring. He did so in the *Angelus*, and also in many of his studies of little shepherdesses. And it is at once obvious that a joyous and bright colour-scheme is unfitted to the gravity, the earthiness of his subjects. Such pictures, contrasted with those others which only exhibit a dull, heavy brownish-grey, are flabby and insipid. The soil is Millet's theme, and hence all his landscapes must needs exhibit a certain quality of earthiness; hence, also, the garments of his peasants are made to suggest clay, or weatherbeaten stone. For it was only by such means that it was practicable to convey the impression desired by Millet. Man appeared all the more powerful and dignified when his bodily presence, his assimilation with the soil, and grandeur of action proclaimed his triumph over Nature.

Much has been written concerning this impression of loftiness produced by Millet's pictures. Many critics have sneered at the want of harmony between the prosaic nature of the subjects, and the solemnity of their treatment. It has been objected that the men who are carrying the newly-born calf, hold it with a priestly solemnity worthy of the bull Apis or the Holy Sacrament. It was also satirically suggested that the peasant woman ladles out soup to her children with as much dignity as though she were administering the Host: that the youngsters have to stretch their necks like young pelicans, solely in order that the mother,

leaning well forward, may have the opportunity for a sacramental gesture ! that it is a profanation of the heroic style, to employ its language of form for the expression of commonplace ideas. Other critics, again, discovered that it was solely this solemn language of form that endowed such insignificant themes with interest ; that Millet had extracted greatness from mere ciphers, and had exalted the trivial into the sublime ; that he had conferred on peasants—poverty-stricken, half-witted peasants—somewhat of that majestic grandeur hitherto peculiar to the figures of the Greek divinities. And it is, in truth, strange to notice how many artists were striving, at the commencement of the nineteenth century, to impart to their work some reflection of antique beauty. David copied ancient statues, and thought he was approaching very near to the spirit of the antique, when he gave his Horatii and his Sabine women the action of Greek statues. Leopold Robert transferred these principles to the delineation of rustic life. His Italian peasants, both male and female, dance and play precisely after the manner of the ancient Satyrs, Nymphs, and Muses. It is always possible to designate the particular statue in the Vatican Museum that has served as his model. But it is precisely this resemblance that makes the pictures so untrue to nature. David and Robert believed that their soulless and incongruous copies entitled them to take rank with the ancients, and were under the delusion that they had embraced the very spirit

of the antique, when in truth they were grasping merely its dry bones.

Millet's path diverged widely from that of these academic painters. It was his high destiny to approach more closely to the antique than any other modern master, for the reason that instead of copying the ancients, he only learned from them, in the spirit of the masters of the Renaissance, to look at Nature from their standpoint. Outwardly, there can be no greater contrast than that between the Hellenic divinities, dwelling nude and serene on cloud-capped Olympus, and the rugged race, clothed in squalid raiment and spending itself in the bondage of labour, that peoples the canvas of Millet. But this very disparity serves but to throw the essential identity of style into greater relief. A picture by David or Robert, placed in juxtaposition to an antique statue, would suggest the work of a manneristic imitator; while a painting of Millet's, under similar conditions, would at once proclaim its affinity with the product of a Greek chisel. Gautier called the three *Gleaners* the "Parcæ of Poverty." The *Woman Tending a Cow* stands there in her *sabots* like an antique Cybele. The *Faggot-bearers*, with their faggots on their heads, resemble Canephoroi. And again in other works, such as the *Homme à la Houe*, there breathes a suggestion of the Sistine Chapel, of the *terribile* of Michelangelo. Reference has also been made to the Biblical spirit animating Millet's pictures. It is related that when a merry company of artists once paid

a visit, in Millet's absence, to his studio, where the picture of a *Mother Rocking her Child* stood upon the easel, the impression produced on them by this work was so great, that all were dumb, until Diaz said softly, "Eh bien! messieurs, ça, c'est biblique." And, doubtless, to those whose minds are prepared for the impression, Millet's pictures will recall the Bible quite as vividly as it will the ancient divinities. When he paints a mother, the comparison with a Madonna naturally at once suggests itself. Or if a shepherdess, she might be S. Geneviève, the patron Saint of Paris. Or we see a peasant family returning from the field at eventide, the mother and child riding upon a donkey, and our thoughts immediately turned to the Flight into Egypt. When he paints harvesters resting, the title might well be "Ruth and Boaz."

Millet himself has emphasised this connection of his art, both with the Bible and the antique. His youth had been passed in an atmosphere of uncompromising piety. The first book that he handled was that sixteenth-century illustrated Bible which had been handed down in his family for so many generations. In later years his friends at Barbizon still occasionally found him immersed in this huge folio. He characterised the Psalms of David as gigantic monuments. His ambition was, he said, to paint in like manner that the Prophets would have spoken. He was as intimate with classical authors as with the Bible; for, although he was a peasant's son, and himself lived the life of

a peasant, his uncle, the curé of Gréville, had imparted to him a knowledge of Virgil's bucolic poems. In later years he preferred Theocritus and Homer to all modern poets, and he drew the inspiration for several of his pictures from passages in the works of ancient writers. In painting the *Greffeur* he remembered that line of Virgil: "Inserere, Daphne, pios, carpent tua poma nepotes" (Daphnis, plant pear-trees; posterity shall pluck thy fruit), and he desired his *Parc aux Moutons* to reproduce the sensations with which he read Virgil's beautiful verse: "Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ" (And from high mountain-tops the lengthening shadows fall). Even in his personal appearance, and in the simplicity of his life, there was a suggestion of the antique, or the Biblical. Théophile Gautier called him a "Jupiter in *sabots*." To the American painter, William Morris Hunt, who visited him in Barbizon, he appeared "as though he might have stepped bodily out of the Bible." Millet's father had had nine children, and he himself had nine. The scene must have been patriarchal, archaic, when at eventide he "sat at the long table, which lacked a cloth, in the midst of his family—all holding out their plates towards the steaming soup-tureen."

Thus is Millet's connection established both with the antique and the Bible. At the same time it were wise, so it seems to me, not to accentuate it too much. For the greatness of an artist lies, not in the ties that connect him with past ages, but in the

new things that he, the son of a new era, has to say. And hence I am of opinion that those who imagine they are honouring Millet by tracing his inspiration to the Bible, are labouring under a misconception. It is, in my estimation, peculiarly odd that the *Angelus*, of all pictures, should have acquired the greatest reputation among the master's works. For, quite apart from the fact that this particular painting must be reckoned, on purely technical grounds, one of Millet's weakest productions, its theme is characterised by a sentimentality which is foreign to his work. Its two figures are in the act of prayer. In none of Millet's other pictures are they thus occupied: they are at work. And it is in that very fact that his greatness lies—that he was the first to paint a race that knows neither Heaven nor Hell, only earth and labour. Millet proclaimed an entirely new conception of the universe. To the Gospel of Suffering preached by Christ, he opposed the new Gospel of Labour; though he, too, was not fully conscious of the significance of his own action. He himself emphasised the connection of his works with the Bible. For the *Angelus* he chose a theme that is out of place in the new conception of the universe. He confined himself, in general, to an extremely limited field. For although on a few occasions in the year of the Revolution, 1848, he did paint the plaster and the workers of the town, his later life afforded him only the opportunity of depicting the soil and its tillers. Others were to follow in his footsteps. It



Photo Durand-Ruel

PORTEUSE D'EAU

was necessary that his art should be brought out from the solitude of Barbizon into the highways of Life—into the machine-rooms, the mines, and the factories. The working man had to be painted in all his types, and the succeeding generation accomplished the task in a huge volume of work containing thousands of chapters. And it is in these studies of labour that the art of our time has found its loftiest expression. They are truer, nobler, and more genuine than anything the anaemic religious art of the day can produce.

Millet was the pioneer of this new departure. Labour, as such, to him was sacrosanct. Sowing and reaping, grafting, and mowing, were in his eyes acts of a sacred, a hallowed character. It was thus that he attained to his style of solemn, sustained earnestness, by the same natural process by which the ancients arrived at theirs when they set up monuments to their gods. The old masters erected upon earth a mighty cross, and stretched upon it the figure of the Saviour, breathing forth His soul under a sky black as though with the darkness of night. Millet's work is equally religious in its effect, although his figures wear neither crown of thorns nor halo. He created the first religious pictures of our own time—and consecrated them to Labour.

A portion at least of his fame came to him during his lifetime. He did not go forth to seek the world, but the world came to him. The United States, indeed—and this was, perhaps, not due to chance alone

—was the first country to recognise Millet's importance. France next, about the beginning of the sixties, remarked the appearance of a new and powerful influence in the world of art. Millet commenced to sell, and his future was abundantly assured. His studio at Barbizon, festooned with ivy, climbing roses, and wild vines, was shown to strangers as an object of interest. The World's Exhibition, too, of 1867, at which he was represented by nine pictures, brought him all the honours of the outside world. Every one knew his name, and budding painters revered him as a divinity. Dealers and collectors offered thousands for the pictures of which he would once gladly have disposed for a few francs. True, he did not live to witness the career of the *Angelus*, which crossed the Atlantic in 1889 at the price of 550,000 francs, and was bought back by Chauchard for 750,000; but he lived to see his *Femme à la Lampe*, for which he had received 150 francs, sold at the Richard auction in 1873 for 39,000. "Allons, ils commencent à comprendre que c'est de la peinture sérieuse," he would say, half laughing and half vexed.

At the end of 1870, when "the uniforms of the Prussian Uhlans sullied the peaceful landscape of Barbizon with such unpleasant blots," he once more sought his Norman home. This visit resulted in a few pictures which display Millet in a new light. For Gruchy lies hard by the sea, and the mighty shock with which the waves hurled themselves against the granite cliffs formed one of the first striking impres-

sions of his youth. After having hitherto painted exclusively subjects connected with the Soil, he now turned his attention to the Sea. He painted men wading through the tide with a heavy anchor upon their shoulders ; a cow stretching forth a ghostlike head behind the cliffs of Gruchy, beyond which an expanse of sea is visible—majestic in its calm ; the village church, too, in which he had been baptized and confirmed, and in the churchyard of which his forefathers slept.

Returning to Barbizon, he was invited in 1874 by M. de Chennevières, Minister of Fine Arts, to take part in the decoration of the Panthéon. He commenced the undertaking, and the world would have been the richer by the happiest of combinations had it been privileged to view his work there in conjunction with that of Puvis de Chavannes, who in his sustained mastery of line and his impressive breadth of space has so much in common with Millet—but his bodily powers proved unequal to the task.

His last work, painted in June 1874, is called *Les Meules*: summer is past, and the harvest is gathered in ; the earth rests from its labours. And to the painter himself, too, came rest. In spite of his peasant origin and robust appearance, Millet was by no means a giant in strength. Sickness of every description had tried him from his youth up. Towards the end of 1874 he was prostrated by a fever, and at six o'clock in the morning of January 20, 1875, in his sixty-first year, he closed his eyes for

ever. On Saturday, January 23, at eleven o'clock in the morning, they bore him forth to the churchyard of Chailly, where he lies, hard by the old church he had so often painted. Théodore Rousseau had preceded him three years before, and the rose-bushes he then planted upon his friend's grave now cast their shade upon his own as well.

At that distance from Paris, the funeral ceremony was conducted with rustic simplicity. In addition to his family, only a few friends and a sprinkling of painters and critics were present. The morning was cold and gloomy, with rain and fog. Even the peasants who flocked thither from the neighbouring villages could not half fill the church, where the funeral took place.

In Paris, however, the melancholy news created all the greater sensation. When, on the morning after his decease, some forty of his drawings were exhibited at a dealer's gallery, the enthusiasm was universal. He was named by the critics in the same breath with the greatest artists of history—with Giotto and Michelangelo. The sale by auction of the pictures, drawings, and pastels he had left behind, held in May at the Hôtel Drouot, brought the family the sum of 321,000 francs. In the cottage, which his widow still continued to inhabit for sixteen years, visitors assembled from every quarter of the globe. The City Fathers of Cherbourg, proud of the fact that it was partly owing to their former subsidy of 600 francs, granted by the advice of Langlois, that Normandy had produced a great



Photo, Durami-Kiel

CHURCH OF CHAILLY
(*Pastel*)

artist, erected a monument to him in the market-place of their city.

But finer by far is the memorial that stands at the entrance to the Forest of Fontainebleau. Here, let into a gigantic rock, is a relief by the hand of Chapus, showing Millet's powerful head beside that of his friend Rousseau. Primaeval blocks lie scattered round about, and the whole forms the fittest possible monument to an artist who was rooted like a rock in this soil, and whose place in the history of art is established with equal firmness for ever.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

BALTIMORE, U.S.A.

MR. J. W. WALTERS.

- "La Récolte de Pommes de Terre" (1858).
- "La Bergère en Parc" (1863).

BLACKHEATH, ENGLAND.

MR. A. J. YOUNG.

- "Une Bergère tricoteuse."
- "Le Bain."
- "Réverie—Solitude."

BOSTON, U.S.A.

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS,

- "Une Bergère assise" (1869).
- Homestead at Gréville (1854).
- Portrait of himself.

MRS. MARTIN BRIMMER.

- "Les Moissonneurs" (1853).
- "Lavandeuses."

MR. P. BROOKS.

- "La grande Tondeuse de Moutons" (1853).

MR. Q. A. SHAW.

- "Le Semeur" (1851).

- "Les Planteurs de Pommes de Terre" (1863).
- Village of Gréville.

BOURG-EN-BRESSE,
FRANCE.

MUSÉE.

- "Femme faisant paître sa Vache" (1859).

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM.

M. VAN DEN EYNDE.

- "L'Homme à la Houe."

M. EDOUARD OTLETT.

- "Oedipe détaché de l'Arbre."

CHERBOURG, FRANCE.

MUSÉE.

- Portrait of M. Javain (1841).
- Moïse (1845).

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK.

GLYPTOTHEK CARLSBERG.

- "La Mort et le Bûcheron" (1859).

GLASGOW, SCOTLAND.

MR. JAMES DONALD.

"Le Départ pour le Travail."

LILLE, FRANCE.

MUSÉE.

"La Becquée" (1861).

LONDON.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM.

"Une Bergère."
"Les Scieurs de Bois."
"Femme remplissant ses
Seaux."
"Paysage—Bord de la Mer."

MR. W. H. BURNETT.

"La Maternité" (1862).

THE LATE MR. J. STAATS
FORBES.

"L'Amour Vainqueur" (1840).
"Lavandières."

H. M. THE KING.

Château de Bricquebec.

MARSEILLES, FRANCE.

MUSÉE.

"Une Mère."

MONTPELLIER, FRANCE.

MUSÉE.

"L'Offrande à Pan" (1845).

NEW YORK, U.S.A.

MR. W. ROCKEFELLER.

"Le Greffeur" (1855).
"La grande Bergère" (1859).
"La Porteuse d'Eau."

MR. J. C. RUNCKLE.

"Les Lavandières."

MRS. P. STEVENS.

"Cardeuse de Laine."

MR. J. F. SUTTON.

"Une Fileuse."

MRS. W. H. VANDERBILT.

"Le grand Semeur" (1850).
"Femme qui porte ses Seaux"
(1856).
"Bergère tricoteuse" (1859).
"Leçon de Tricot" (1869).

PARIS.

LOUVRE.

"Les Baigneuses" (1846).
"L'Eglise de Gréville" (1854).
"Les Glaneuses" (1857).
"Le Printemps" (1867).

M. BELLINO.

"M. Berger—Clair de Lune"
(1853).

M. CHAUCHARD.

"Le Vanneur" (1848).
"L'Angelus" (1857).
"Parc à Moutons."
"Une Fileuse d'Auvergne."

M. COQUELIN L'AINÉ.

"La Femme au Rouet."

M. DOLLFUS.

"Le Soir."

M. DESFOSSÉS.

"L'Hiver" (1867).

M. HECHT.

"Les Tueurs de Cochons"
(1867).

M. ROUART.

"La Fin de la Journée."

PHILADELPHIA, U.S.A.

MRS. F. G. FELL.

"Femme qui donne à manger
aux Poules" (1853).

Mr. H. C. GIBSON.

"Le Berger ramenant son
Troupeau" (1855).

WASHINGTON, U.S.A.

MR. A. LBITNER.

"La Leçon de Tricot" (1869).

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

- THE TIMES.**—“*Another series of little art monographs which is as attractive in format as any.*”
- THE STANDARD.**—“*This nicely printed little volume contains reproductions of some of the more famous Bartolozzi prints, together with a list of most of the important ones.*”
- MORNING POST.**—“*The Langham Series: The first volume, ‘Bartolozzi and his Pupils in England,’ by Mr. Selwyn Brinton, is an excellent summary of a subject most popular at the present time. It should prove a great boon to the collector.*”
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