

ROSA BONHEUR.



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(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY AMBROSETTI.)

MARIE ROSA BONHEUR was born in Bordeaux in 1822. She was the eldest of four children. Her father, Raymond Bonheur, was a portrait and landscape painter, and the only instructor in art of his children, of whom Rosa has the widest reputation. Auguste, the eldest son, who died recently,

Painted some remarkable animal pictures, finely drawn and composed with mellow backgrounds, that are more pleasing than the backgrounds in his elder sister's paintings. In 1867 he received the cross of the Légion d'Honneur. Isidore Jules Bonheur, the sculptor of animals, is widely known by the reproductions of his

statuettes in bronze from the foundry of Monsieur Peyrol, who married the second daughter, Juliette Bonheur. Isidore Bonheur obtained medals at the Paris exhibitions of 1865 and 1869. Madame Juliette Peyrol, who signs herself, like all the other members of the family, *élève de son père*, has the family talent, and is also a painter of animals.

Madame Peyrol's studio is over her husband's bronze exhibiting-rooms. In this studio is a portrait of her sister painted by the brother, Auguste, which represents her as a tall, rather plain girl, with short hair, in a simple green costume, with a cape of the same over her shoulders. This picture was painted when Rosa lived with her father at 30 Faubourg du Roule (since changed to 157 Faubourg Saint-Honoré), before she had adopted male attire. This was not until she began her picture of the "Horse Fair" in 1861, when she found it necessary to work unmolested among the rough characters that collected about the horse market.

Germain Bonheur, the youngest child by a second wife, is a landscape painter, and two sons of Madame Peyrol are continuing the reputation of this artistic family into the third generation.

Raymond Bonheur, the father of Rosa, was at one time one of the most enthusiastic members of the Saint-Simonian group, and *Enfantin* considered him as a personal friend. He was at the same time a thorough republican, and personally acquainted with the leaders of that party.

A few young artists and writers who had formed a society to publish their own writings, under the title of "*Ruche Populaire*," counted Raymond among their number. In those days he is described as "of medium height, robust, his beard long, and what remained of his hair, a kind of monkish crown, was of a sandy color, which, with his kind blue eyes and sympathetic voice, made him particularly attractive." He used to declare that still for a long period the only means to manifest and propagate the new ideal would be science and art; that, no matter how great they were, such masters as Ingres, Paul Delaroche, and even Horace Vernet, were men of the past; that the new French school would be landscape, with such men as Decamps, Français, Cabat, Rousseau, Troyon, and Corot for masters and leaders. He worshiped light, which he considered not as a fluid without soul or intelligence, but a real being, that spreads over nature life and color.

I was once examining a picture which now hangs in the daughter's studio, a landscape that reminds one of Ruysdael or Salvator Rosa, when Mademoiselle Rosa said, "That

was painted by my father. He had grand ideas, and had he not been obliged to give lessons for our support, he would have been more known, and to-day acknowledged with other masters." Raymond Bonheur lost his wife in 1840, and two years afterward married a widow with two sons, Hippolyte and Alphonse Peyrol. Both families were poor, and formed a numerous clan, but with them union was strength. The second Mme. Bonheur was beloved by all, and was called by all the children "*La Mamiche*," the pleasant equivalent for mother in her native Auvergne dialect. She was really a mother to them, and a stranger would never have supposed that only two of the children were her own. In 1848 a child was born to this union who was called Germain. So the family, including the parents, counted nine, a heavy burden for a poor Parisian professor. But *La Mamiche*, by her indefatigable activity and intelligent management, was able not only to multiply "bread and fishes," but everything that was necessary to life and decency. Raymond also was industrious, giving lessons, painting portraits and landscapes, and making illustrations for books.

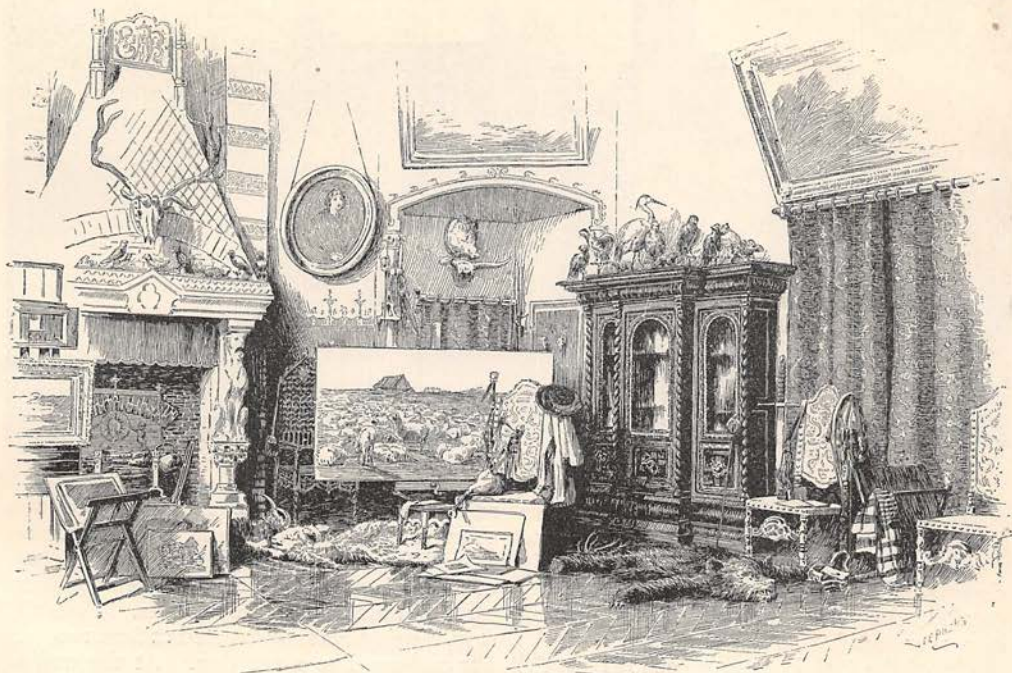
But the eldest daughter, Rosa, also lent a helping hand to assist the family. The year of her mother's death had been doubly eventful to her, as she at the same time became an orphan and began her artistic career. It was in 1840 that she exhibited her first painting, "*Two Rabbits*," which now hangs in Madame Peyrol-Bonheur's studio. Soon the picture merchants began to find their way to her studio, and to Rosa's talent and industry must the ultimate success of the family be attributed. This first exhibition picture was painted in an attic studio in the Rue Rumfort, which, with the street itself, has long since disappeared, making room for the new Boulevard Maiesherbes.

The love of animals is general in the family, and with Rosa it is peculiarly strong. She does not talk of animals as a jockey or as a fancy-stock grower; it is always of their intelligence or their human resemblances, the brightness of their eyes, their glossy coats, and their picturesque qualities. Her place is the asylum for all stray dogs; if one is found in the neighborhood, it is instantly carried to the château, and is sure of admittance. When she paints in the open air, the dogs lie about her in a circle, and the stag in the park rubs his nose against her like a pet hound.

When Rosa was but seven years old, and living with her parents in the Rue Saint-Anoine, she used to steal away to a pork-butcher's shop near by to admire the sign, which had a great charm for her; it was a wild boar's

head in wood, coarsely carved and still more rudely painted. When she was missed from home they immediately sent to the pork-shop, where she was sure to be discovered wrapt in admiration. Curiosity led her some years ago

dining-room in the Rue Rumfort, during the evenings of those early years, and gave advice to his children and pupils. Often one of the number read aloud while the others worked. On one of these evenings they were listening



THE STUDIO OF ROSA BONHEUR.

to revisit this youthful shrine. She found it still extant, but the illusions of childhood had gone; there was nothing left to the educated eye but rude carving and glaring paint.

She began, as I have said, by painting rabbits, and gradually ascended in the scale until at last she painted the horse, which Leonardo da Vinci considered the noblest model that an artist can copy, after man. As to this last progress of Rosa's talent, Auguste Desmoulins told me that when he was about leaving Paris for Algeria, after the *coup d'état* in 1851, he went to bid adieu to Rosa, and found in her studio many sketches in a larger, broader manner than her painting of years before. He expressed his delight, and without answering she moved her easel, and showed a study of horses, painted by Géricault, which had been the sensation of Paris at the annual exhibition some years before. The study had been lent her, and she was copying it for the purpose of better understanding the large manner of this master. Two years afterward her friend in exile rejoiced when the press extolled the merits of the "Horse Fair."

Raymond sat in his arm-chair in the little

to George Sand's rural novel, "La Mare au Diable," in which she describes a plowing scene, with a plowman young and robust, the ground rich, eight vigorous oxen, and a bright autumn sunlight lighting up the landscape. Says the author, "It would be a noble subject for a painter." "Yes," exclaimed Rosa, interrupting, "George Sand is right; she must be fond of animals to describe them in so masterly a manner." Mademoiselle Rosa in 1849 painted the subject, her most important canvas after the "Horse Fair," and called it "Le Labourage Nivernais."

Situated on the border of the Fontainebleau forest is the château of By, now the home of Rosa Bonheur; the château dates from the time of Louis XV., and the garden is still laid out in the style of Le Nôtre. Since it has been in the present proprietor's possession, a quaint, picturesque brick building, containing the carriage-house and coachman's lodge on the first floor and the studio on the second, has been added; the roof of the main building has been raised, and the chapel turned into an orangery; beside the main carriage entrance, which is closed by iron gates and wooden blinds, is a postern gate



CHÂTEAU OF BY — THE HOME OF ROSA BONHEUR.

with a small grated opening, like those found in convents. The blinds to the gate and the slide to the grating are generally closed, and the only communication with the outside world is by the bell-wire terminating in a ring beside the gate. Ring, and the jingle of the bell is at once echoed by the barking of numerous dogs, the hounds and bassets in chorus, the grand Saint Bernard in slow measure, like the bass drum in an orchestra. After the first excitement among the dogs has begun to abate, a remarkably small house-pet that has been somewhere in the interior arrives upon the scene, and with his sharp shrill voice again starts and leads the canine chorus. By this time the eagle in his cage has awakened, and the parrot, whose cage is built into the corner of the studio looking upon the street, adds to the racket.

To enter the grounds of Mademoiselle Bonheur one must have some well-defined claim upon her friendship or acquaintance, for she does not like the stare of the lion-hunter. She courts reputation and fame, but only through her productions. Her adoption of masculine attire was not to make herself more marked among the crowd, but to enable her to prosecute her studies unobserved; and she has never permitted a picture or photograph to be made of her in such attire.

Behind the house is a large park divided from the forest by a high wall; a lawn and flower-beds are laid out near the buildings, and on the lawn, in pleasant weather, graze a magnificent bull and cow, which are kept

as models. In a wire inclosure are two chamois from the Pyrenees, and further removed from the house, in the wooded part of the park, are inclosures for sheep and deer, each of which knows its mistress. Even the stag, bearing his six-branched antlers, receives her caresses like a pet dog. At the end of one of the linden avenues is a splendid bronze, by Isidore Bonheur, of a Gaul attacking a lion; a plaque upon it tells the visitor that it was presented to Mademoiselle Rosa by "her friend and admirer, M. Gambart," who has been intimately connected with the painter's success in England, where at present she is perhaps better known than in her own country.

The studio is very large, with a huge chimney at one end, the supports of which are life-size dogs, modeled by Isidore Bonheur. Portraits of the father and mother in oval frames hang at each side, and a pair of gigantic horns ornaments the center. The room is decorated with stuffed heads of animals of various kinds — boars, bears, wolves, and oxen; and birds perch in every convenient place.

Her principal paintings, many of which are famous, number about forty. Between the production of these she told me she had painted small pictures, of which she has lost all trace, they having been sold to picture dealers, who have again resold them to foreign amateurs. Of late failing health has interfered with Mlle. Bonheur's artistic activity.

By is a small village only a few miles from the town of Fontainebleau, and situated on a

narrow strip of land between the forest and the Seine. It is dependent upon the town of Thomery, celebrated for its vineyards, and there are found the parish church and even the post-office; for the post-office at By consists only of a box set into the side of a house, difficult for a stranger to find in the summer season, as it is overhung by grape-vines. The rural postman passes upon his

Tradition says that when the château was built the property extended down to the river's edge, but that was long ago. The lands when the château came into the hands of Mademoiselle Rosa were very small. Since then she has added to them, until again their extent is of handsome proportions. The only place of entertainment in By is a small tavern with a bush over the entrance, the emblem



THE CHÂTEAU COURT-YARD.—A RING AT THE GATE.

rounds twice a day, at the same time taking up and delivering the letters. Grape-vines grow everywhere on the outer wall of most of the houses; each side of the roads about the village are high walls, and the hill-side fields that slope to the river are checkered with these high walls for the training and protection of the vines. A walk through the village in winter is very dreary and in summer monotonous, as these walls imprison the view, and the vineyards here are more practical than poetical, like their cultivators. Before the time of railroads the vintage was conveyed to Paris by boats upon the river, and then the banks of the Seine must have presented quite a lively appearance; but now not a boat of any size is to be found, and the road that winds between the melancholy walls down to the water's edge is seldom marked by wagon-wheels; the washer-women monopolize the river-bank.

throughout France that announces to the unlettered where wine is to be obtained. This bush at Monsieur Chéron's is a small fir-tree, that is replaced each year during the annual, local *fête* by the youths of the village,—not entirely disinterested in their gift, as they expect after the ceremony that the tavern-keeper will generously "water the bush." Chéron's house is the exchange of the place, for he not only keeps a café, but groceries and dry-goods; here the gossips congregate. Traveling peddlers and artists sometimes stop here to dine, for Madame Chéron is celebrated for making an omelet that one does not require to have a ravenous appetite to enjoy.

The first time I saw Mademoiselle Rosa was several years ago. With a friend of her childhood I had rung at the gate and been admitted by a black-haired maid, who barred the passage while we explained our errand. We were expected. As we followed her across the



THE STUDIO, FROM THE ROAD.

court-yard a young doe sprang out of our path, the dogs regarded us curiously, and the caged eagle awoke from his afternoon nap to gaze lazily at us. Between the eagle's cage and the orange-trees we entered a kind of work-room, where we found a party shearing a sheep which was laid out on a table; one of the women had a white covering over her head and shoulders, giving her the air of a *religieuse*, and I thought for a moment that she must be the one we had come to see; but I was immediately undeceived as another of the group under a large straw hat greeted my friend and apologized for not being prepared for our reception. Our entrance had interrupted the operation, and the animal, taking advantage of the situation, attempted to rise. Happening to be nearest to its hind legs, I held them down while Mademoiselle Rosa put her hand upon its head, and we were introduced by our friend. She wore a blue blouse embroidered on the shoulders in white,—a country teamster's blouse; a white collar with a single pearl button, without a cravat, encircled her neck; below the blouse were pantaloons, not picturesquely arranged with gaiters or loose inside her boots, but ending like any of the

modern masculine affairs straight over the shoes, which were heavy and strong, but looked exceedingly small. "Now you have seen me," she said, "I need not change; but had I expected you so early, you would have found me *en dame*."

The same afternoon we walked through the vineyards together, and by the river-bank, where the Seine is quiet and beautiful as it skirts the forest and vanishes in the distance near the historic town of Meaux. The peasants all knew Mademoiselle, and doffed their caps as she approached; for all she had a pleasant word about their families and their crops. She always addressed the peasants familiarly, and they her with respect. The peasants look upon her with deference, as they are apt to do upon the inmates of "*le château*," for each small village has its *château*. Besides this, there is a mysterious supremacy in this woman, who has made herself world-renowned by the development of a talent born in her; and their greatest boast is that they have given her some small animal caught in the forest, that one of their children has posed in a picture painted by her, and of late years that they have seen her. For she seldom appears in the village, except to drive



CROSSING A LOCH IN THE HIGHLANDS. (FROM A PAINTING BY ROSA BONHEUR.)

through, only leaving her own grounds to go to the city or walk in the forest, which is reached by a gate at the end of the park. Madame Chéron, who had kept the grocery shop for many years within a few hundred yards of the château, and who regulates her day by the clock in its turret, declares she has never seen Mademoiselle Rosa but twice. The first time was in 1870, the day the Prussians arrived at Champagne, the village on the other side of the Seine. It was all excitement before her shop; her husband and several others had already got out their guns, and were hesitating what to do. There was no leader, when Mademoiselle Rosa appeared among them in her usual hunting costume,—for she is fond of the chase, and a good shot,—and, with her gun swung across her shoulders. “How many are there?” she asked, and, learning there were only a few advance guards, she said, “Oh! if there are only three or four, we can take care of them.” She insisted upon going to the river-side, and walking up and down until night came on. But happily the bridge had been destroyed, and the Prussians did not attempt to cross.

The next day they came *en masse*, and resistance was useless. The enemy respected the painter's property, and even allowed her servants to go unmolested when they knew whom they were serving. It is doubtful whether the advance guard were aware that the little man among the squad that they were watching through their glasses from the opposite banks was the celebrated Rosa Bonheur.

That day, the day of my first visit, after we had returned from our walk, Mlle. Rosa retired to dress for dinner, and I hoped to see her “*en dame*,” but was disappointed. She had changed her blouse for a light, double-breasted linen coat, which she wore buttoned to the throat.

It was years afterward that I saw her in female attire. I was sketching in a corner of the park, when I heard a voice calling the gardener, and, looking in the direction from which it came, saw a woman wearing a large straw hat. It was surely Mlle. Rosa, but I hesitated for a moment before saluting her, for she now appeared much taller than when I had met her before. The dress was cut very plain, and over it she wore a jacket of the same material; her collar was held together by a double button, and the only ornament she wore was the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor in her button-hole. Since then she has received the decoration of the Leopold Cross of Honor from the King of Belgium, said to be the first ever conferred upon a woman; also a decoration from the King of Spain. But it is this red ribbon, her first decoration, that she evidently prefers. It was given by the hand of the ex-Empress. The Emperor, it is said, had been advised to confer the cross of the Legion of Honor upon Rosa Bonheur, but, willing as he certainly was, he hesitated, fearing the popular judgment, which might condemn the giving of this honor to a woman. The Emperor, leaving Paris for a short summer excursion in 1865, left the Empress as Regent. From the imperial residence at Fontainebleau it was only a short drive to By. The

countersign at the gate was forced, and un-announced the Empress entered the studio, where Mlle. Rosa was at work. She rose to receive the visitor, who threw her arms about her neck and kissed her. It was only a short interview. The imperial vision had departed,

the rumble of the carriage and the crack of the outriders' whips were lost in the distance. Then, and not till then, did the artist discover that as the Empress had given the kiss she had pinned upon her blouse the cross of the Legion of Honor.

Henry Bacon.



THE POST-OFFICE AT BY.

GROWING OLD.

I AM not old, O Friend! though treacherous time,
Which promised ever fairer days to come,
Has robbed the cheek of bloom, the eye of fire,
And feathered silver frost amid the brown
Of locks you laid your hand in blessing on
When I was but a child. I am not old,
Though all the flowers of spring-time withered be,—
Though summer has swept on to harvest days,—
E'en though bright autumn's gold has changed to brown;
Not old, nor can be, Love, while thou art near.

For thou, dear heart, to all my years hast been
A chalice into which life's best has flowed;
And thou in love hast hoarded my life's best;
Not as 'twere ashes for a funeral urn,
Gathered from embers of a soul's dead fires;
But by some subtle spiritual charm,
All thine and thine alone, the bloom of spring,
Fragrance of summer, and the autumn's glow
Of flaming gold and ruby, stay with thee,
And thou canst bring them back at will to me;
The same, yet not the same, more fragrant, fair,
And tender, for long hiding in thy heart.

If thou but treasure still my long-lost youth,
Counting my late fruits sweet,—finding fresh green
'Neath faded leaves of autumn,—I am young,
Nor can lose youth except through loss of thee.

Mary Lowe Dickinson.

