

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXXVII.

FEBRUARY, 1889.

No. 4.

GÉRÔME.



JUNE, 1887, and high noon, with scarce a hand's breadth of shade to be detected on the broad Boulevard de Clichy, as my horse reaches the top of the hill and stops wearily before No. 65. I spring from the fiacre and pull the brass bell. A responsive click, the heavy door opens in obedience to some unseen force, and I enter the cool flagged

court with its background of green ivy and its alluring glimpses of that most charming of interiors — the home of Gérôme.

A word with the concierge. The family, I learn, has already gone down to the villa at Bougival, but the master still comes every day to town, and is even now working in the atelier.

Passing in to the left, I close the glass doors and pause a moment to greet the well-remembered bronze horse and cavalier that guard this silent antechamber, and to pass my hand over the red shining scales of the cobra that yawningly coils itself into the newel-post at the foot of a marble staircase. The sunlight filters softly through a stained-glass window. Slowly I mount several steps till, perceiving the "Salve" over the balustrade, I hasten up three flights, hardly noticing the walls of polished marble with their decoration of quaint Japanese bronzes, plaques, and masks, over which I delightedly lingered in days gone by. Breathless, I arrive at the top landing.

The soft cooing of a dove close to the half-

open window seems only to accentuate the profound stillness in the large atelier, the door of which stands ajar. Following hard upon the whir of the electric bell comes a cheery "Come in," in a voice not to be mistaken, and I cross the threshold of the sanctum.

The master stands before an easel, and looks inquiringly towards the door. Palette and brushes are hastily laid aside, and he advances with both hands extended.

The great painter has not changed. There is the same oval face crowned with a profusion of fine, snowy hair brushed well back and up from the forehead. Heavy black eyebrows overshadow deep-set brown eyes. The aquiline nose, with the nostrils slightly curved and dilated, gives him a valiant air. A sweeping mustache, now just touched with gray, almost entirely conceals the melancholy droop of the thin yet ruddy lips, the delicacy of which is relieved by the firmness of the chin. The erect military carriage of the figure might lead one to think him an officer. There is something in Gérôme's carriage doubtless inherent in the Southern temperament; for although since the time of Louis Quatorze the province which claims the master has been part and parcel of France, it was originally settled by the Spaniards and remained for many years under their dominion. The mother of Gérôme was a thoroughly Spanish type, and so is the son.

A most indefatigable worker, still he always has time for his friends. Walking up and down his noble atelier, where he has assembled the richest and rarest accessories of his profession, he discourses of his art with eloquence and ardor. I sit and listen, at once charmed and pained, since it is well-nigh as impossible to

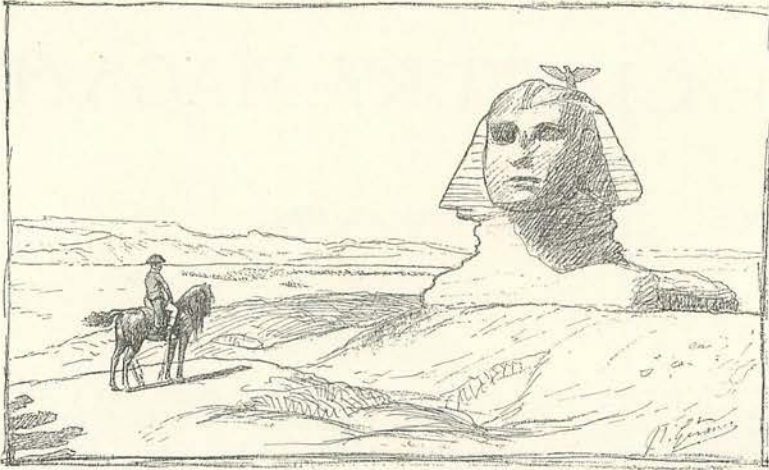
remember this impromptu lecture, this marvel of criticism, comparison, and instruction, as it is to reproduce the energetic, sparkling, vivid manner of delivery.

The homes of many wealthy connoisseurs, as well as the galleries of our best dealers in

ceding year, and a much desired opportunity comes to me.

"Do you know where your pictures go when they are sold?" I ask.

"Sometimes; but rarely beyond the first purchaser, if they change hands."



"L'ŒDIPÉ." (FROM AN ORIGINAL SKETCH BY GÉRÔME.)

works of art, bear witness to the industry and versatility of the master during the years 1886 and 1887. In the garden of the Exposition des Beaux-Arts, at the Palais de l'Industrie, stands a masterpiece in the whitest of Carrara marble—the center always of a throng of admirers. It is his wonderful Omphale—pure, pensive, passionate; the perfection of form and expression.

What hours of manual labor do these achievements represent, aside from the mental tax and strain! And yet on the various easels in this spacious atelier are still no less than seven exquisite pictures, in various stages of progress. Even now the master is busy packing up all his artist paraphernalia to send to his summer home at Bougival, on the banks of the Seine, where, in his open-air studio, he works from earliest dawn till the last faint ray of light has gone. The talk one morning turns to the Salon of 1887 and of the pre-

"But don't you care to know?" I persist.

"When they are finished, they are finished," he replies, with a shrug of his shoulders, "and there is an end of them as far as I am concerned. But why do you ask?"

"Because there is one I have not yet seen and which I cannot trace, but which I am determined to find, if I have to make a special pilgrimage."

"Ah! and that is—"

"'L'Œdipe,'—Bonaparte before the Sphinx,—which you exhibited at the Salon in 1886. I was not here and I have only seen a wretched woodcut of it; but the idea, the composition, has made so deep an impression on me that it haunts me."

"Tiens! c'est curieux!"

"What is strange?"

"Everything in life," is the sage reply. "But I find it especially strange that I should happen to know where this very picture is at this moment."

"Tell me—where? Is it here in Paris? Is it far away? Where shall I find it? Tell me quickly!"

"It is here in Paris—around the corner. It belongs to one of my friends, and you shall see it as soon as you like."

I begin to draw on my gloves.

"I will go at once, and you—you will write a line to say, 'Please admit bearer to see the Sphinx.'"

"A card is not necessary. You have simply to ask and you can see it. You may say I sent you."



STATUE OF "POLLICE VERSO."

"Oh, truly! I think I see myself demanding to enter private apartments and saying, 'Gérôme sent me.' It is likely that I would be admitted! What objection can you have?—it will take but a second."

Finally he rises; but instead of going to the writing-table he crosses the room to a corner where hang his coat and hat. He is going to accompany me himself! I seize my parasol, and in obedience to a gesture hasten to-



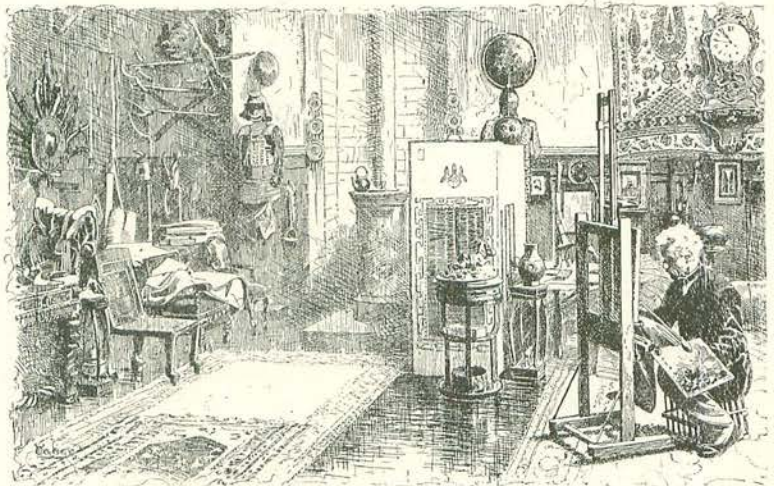
the horizon by smoky vapors, through which mountains are faintly outlined. Over the sandy plains masses of troops march and countermarch, so far away that clash of saber and blare of trumpet do not disturb the profound silence that envelops, as with a mantle, the majestic figure which dominates the scene. The Sphinx rears its massive head, and regards with a calmness born of absolute knowledge the vain struggles of a pigmy world.

The lesser Sphinx on horseback, himself an incarnation of will and force, mutely de-

wards him. But to my astonishment, instead of passing into the hall, he turns a brass knob, till then unnoticed by me, and a door in the wall swings back, revealing a dim passage.

In a moment I hear the harsh grating of a bolt, the shutters are thrown back, and a flood of light falls upon—the picture.

No, rather it is the desert itself, scintillating with heat, the cloudless blue of the sky softened towards



THREE VIEWS IN GÉRÔME'S ATELIER.

mands of the oracle the secret of his future. In vain! The steady gaze passes over even *his* head — on — on — doubtless beholding the snowy steppes of Russia, reddened with blood and the light of conflagration; the wounded eagle trailing his broken wings over the field of Waterloo; a lonely rock, at the base of which the sea makes incessant moan. But there is no warning, no sign.

"*Eh bien!*" The master sits quietly in a chair, enjoying to the utmost the success of his little plot.

"It is for my children," he says. "I would never sell it; I love it too well.

"We are old friends," he adds, rising and passing his hand affectionately over the mass of yellow stone—it is impossible while looking at it to think of paint and canvas. And then he falls to describing his life in the desert in the twilight and in the early dawn,

packet and a letter, from which I make the following extract:

I send the notes which I promised you, but fear you will not find them interesting. My life has been above all a life of work—of incessant labor, consequently monotonous—for the public. I have had but little to do with the affairs of my time, except in regard to all that pertains to the fine arts. It is rather a collection of dates, jotted down years ago, than biographical information that I send you. Has it any value?

Jules Claretie, member of the Institute of France and present Director of the Comédie Française, says, alluding to these very notes, "That which interests us above all in the life of illustrious men is their origin, their début, the first blossoming of their talent. When an artist has covered himself with glory, one writes his biography with the mere titles of his works."



CONSPIRACY. (FROM AN ORIGINAL SKETCH BY GÉRÔME.)

under the blazing sun, and in the midnight stillness.

After this the little door always stands open to me, and often I slip in alone to study this masterpiece, which with its tender tones renders the Orient so much more faithfully than do the flaming canvases of other painters of Eastern subjects.

RETURNING from a flying visit to the Matterhorn,—the Sphinx's counterpart in nature,—I stop in Paris long enough to gather some needed documents and bid the master farewell. I bear away as a precious souvenir a bronze medallion head of Gérôme—a chef-d'œuvre of Chaplin—and the promise of a manuscript, written by himself, which will tell me something of his early life and struggles.

True to his pledge, Gérôme sent me a small

I have therefore translated as literally as possible a part of these delightful recollections of Gérôme's youth, and some criticisms he made immediately on the appearance of several of his pictures, now fortunately forming part of the collections of American connoisseurs.

NOTES BY GÉRÔME.

To prevent seven cities from disputing in the future the honor of having given me birth, I certify that I first saw the light of day, 11th of May, 1824, at Vesoul, a little old Spanish city. No miracle took place on the day of my birth, which is quite surprising! The lightning did not even flash in a clear sky!

I was born of parents without fortune, living by their labors: my father was a goldsmith. He gave me the regular academic education—much Latin and not a little Greek, but no modern lan-



MEDALLION OF GÉRÔME BY CHAPLIN. (DRAWN FROM THE BRONZE BY WYATT EATON.)

guages, which I have always regretted; for the little Italian which I acquired later has been of great service to me in many travels.

At the age of sixteen I was bachelor of letters. I had some success in the drawing class, and my father, who went every year to Paris on business, brought me as a reward a box of oil colors and a picture by Decamps, which I copied fairly well, to the great satisfaction at least of the persons who surrounded me, who, let us confess, were entirely ignorant of artistic matters.

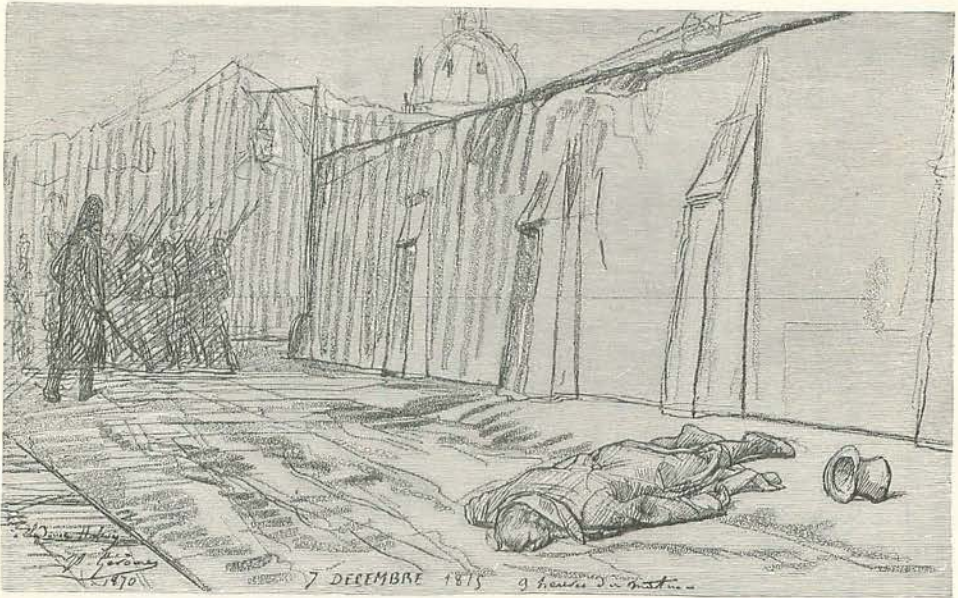
By a happy fortune, a childhood friend of M. Paul Delaroche had just settled in my native city. He induced my father to send me to Paris, where I arrived with a letter of introduction to my future teacher (Delaroche). Like a sensible and prudent man, my father allowed me to begin my studies in painting, thinking that if his expectations were not realized I was still young enough to embrace another profession. I therefore entered the atelier, where I remained for three years.

Rather mediocre studies, shattered health, nervous system greatly irritated; but in spite of all, I made efforts and worked my best. My student companions, whom I scarcely ever left, were Damerly, —, and Gobert; later on, Hamon also. The first promised well, gained the Prix de Rome while very young, and sent back two extremely remarkable nude figures; but he was attacked by a mortal

illness that swept him away in his prime. The second, with an admirable intellectual and physical organization, a Raphaelesque temperament, and a truly extraordinary facility of invention and execution, drowned himself, so to speak, in a bath of alcohol. He is now but a shadow of his former self. The two others have fulfilled the promise of their youth.

It was in the third year of my studies that, on returning from a vacation, I learned of the closing of the atelier, and at the same time the news that M. Delaroche had placed us (— and myself) in the atelier of M. Drolling—two blows at a time! I went immediately to find my dear master and told him that, satisfied with his instruction, I should not seek elsewhere; that I lived well at Paris on my little annuity and consequently could exist at Rome, whither I desired to follow him.

The truth is that Gérôme had less than a dollar a day to defray all his expenses—rent, food, fire, clothes, use of atelier, colors, canvas, models, etc. He has often recurred to those days of privation: "The happiest of my life. I was rich. There were others that had nothing, absolutely nothing. And I have seen days when if we could scrape together forty sous to dine five of us, we thought ourselves fortunate."



SKETCH OF DEATH OF MARSHAL NEY, OWNED BY LUDOVIC HALÉVY.

I have heard others say that Gérôme's purse was always at the disposal of those who had "nothing," and it is very probable that the "shattered health" of which he speaks was due in a great measure to privations, self-imposed, that he might be able to assist his unfortunate comrades. He continues:

At the age of eighteen, therefore, I was in Italy. I did not deceive myself in regard to my "*études d'atelier*," which were in truth very weak. I knew nothing, and therefore had everything to learn. It was already something to be well posted as regarded myself: "*γνώθι σεαυτόν*" [know thyself]—a good thing. I did not lose courage. My weak health improved under the influence of the good climate and the open-air life, and I set to work with ardor; I made studies in architecture, landscape, figures, and animals—in a word, I felt that I was waking up by contact with Nature.

This year was one of the happiest and best employed of my life, for at this time I was assuredly making real progress. I watched myself closely in my work, and one day having made a study rather easily, I scraped it entirely from the canvas, although it was well done, so much did I fear to slip on the smooth plane of facility. Then already I was and have remained very severe towards myself. I am my most merciless critic, because I do not delude myself in regard to my work. As to the self-styled critics, their approbation and their raillery have always found me indifferent, for I have always had the most profound contempt for these ignorant vermin, who prey upon the bodies of artists. One day Nestor Roqueplan, who was the equal of his *confrères*, said to me that it was evident I did not "show sufficient consideration for the critics." I replied to him, "I have talent or I have it not. If the first is true, you critics may find fault with and demolish my pictures as much as you please:

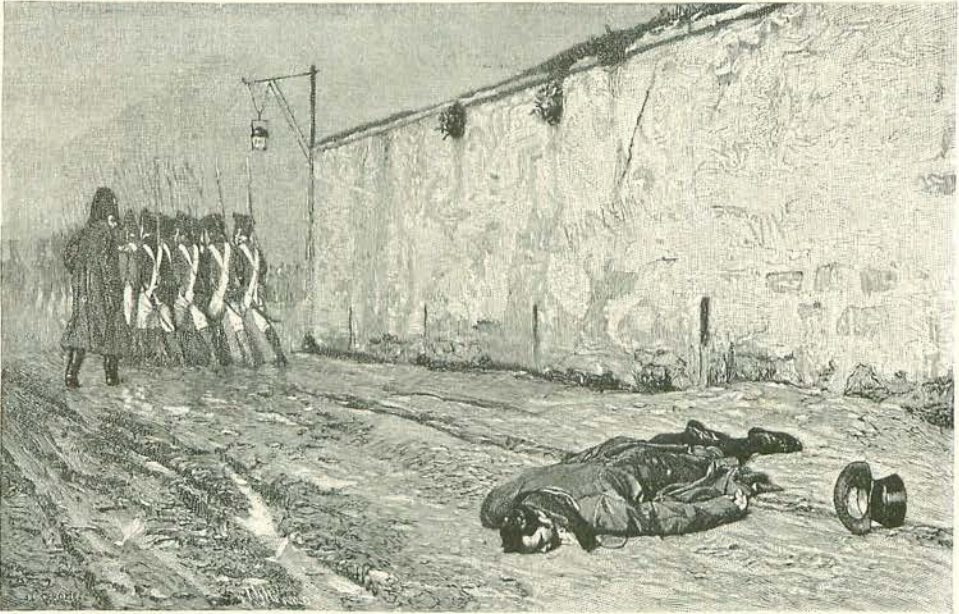
they will defend themselves, and the public will be the judge. If the second, unmerited praises will not render my works better, and no one will be entrapped by these lying snares. Moreover," I added, "whatever may be my lot in the present or in the future, I have firmly resolved never to pay the claque." This conversation created a coldness between us.

On my return from Italy, I entered the atelier of M. Gleyre, who had succeeded M. Delaroche. Three months of study—nude figures. I had worked for nearly a year at the first draught of a picture which occupied my master at that time. I refer to the "Napoleon crossing the Alps" (Delaroche).

Then, as my father desired it, I attempted to compete for the Prix de Rome. The sketch was well received, the painted figure rejected. Decidedly I needed to learn to draw and model the nude. It was with this intention of study that I painted my first picture, "The Cock-fight."

I dreaded the Salon and feared repulse, and it was owing solely to the advice of the master that this canvas was sent there. Although badly placed, it had a very great success; unquestionably an exaggerated success, which astonished no one so much as the author.

At this epoch—I speak from a general point of view—there was a complete absence of simplicity. Effect (*le chic*) was in great favor when accompanied by skill, which was not infrequent. And my picture had the slight merit of being painted by an honest young fellow, who, knowing nothing, had found nothing better to do than to lay hold on Nature, and follow her, step by step, without strength perhaps, without grandeur, and certainly with timidity, but with sincerity. Praise was unanimous, which was not always the case in the future. My success had encouraged without puffing me up. They gave me a third-class medal. I was in the saddle.



DEATH OF MARSHAL NEY.

I attempted a more complex composition, in which I had less success. I mean my second picture, "Anacreon dancing with Bacchus and Cupid," which was exhibited the following year, 1848. A dry, cut-up picture, the style and invention of which, however, was not bad. If I had had the experience which I have since acquired, this work could have been a good thing: it remains mediocre (in the museum at Toulouse). I had at the same time sent a "Virgin and Child,"—imitation of Raphael,—insipid and of poor execution. Complete fiasco with these two pictures. It was deserved.

In the year 1883 Gérôme executed a group in marble of the same subject, "Anacreon dancing with Bacchus and Cupid," of which we give an illustration. It was a masterpiece, and was purchased by Mr. Jacobsen, a wealthy brewer in Copenhagen,—who is a well-known lover and patron of the fine arts,—and placed in the museum which he has generously presented to his native city. It is to be regretted that some of our American connoisseurs, who own so many of Gérôme's finest pictures, have never thought to acquire any of his works in sculpture.

I quote again from the notes :

After this I exhibited almost every year, but I had lost ground, and several works placed before the public left it cold and indifferent. . . . In 1854 I started for Moscow with my friend Got. On the way we changed our minds, turned back, and took the route to Constantinople by way of the Danube—a journey of tourists, not workers. This same year I received an order for a large picture—"The Age of Augustus—Birth of Christ." This canvas, which cost me two years of work and enor-

mous efforts,—it measured ten meters in length by seven in height,—only obtained a *succès d'estime*, which was perhaps unjust. However, I must admit at once that the picture had one glaring defect—it lacked invention and originality, recalling by the disposition of the figures, and unhappily by this point only, "The Apotheosis of Homer," by Ingres, of which it is, so to speak, a paraphrase. This grave fault once acknowledged, it is just to admit that there are in this vast composition figures well conceived—*motifs* of groups happily combined (such as Brutus and Cassius, Cleopatra and Antony), arrangements of costumes and draperies in good style; in short, a quantity of fancies crowned in some instances with success, with which perhaps the public should have accredited me, which it has not done.

It would seem that Gérôme, detecting as usual with his severely critical eye his own weak points, has underestimated the impression made by this remarkable picture, of which Théophile Gautier has said: "It will be forever remembered as one of the beauties of the Exposition." It is the greatest ornament of the museum at Amiens.

At the same time appeared a small picture representing "The Band of a Russian Regiment." I had, it seemed, found *la note sensible*—for it was much more remarked than my large work, on which I had a greater right to count. This year I received the decoration of the Legion of Honor.

Departure for Egypt! My short stay in Constantinople had whetted my appetite, and the Orient was the most frequent of my dreams. Probably some Bohemian slipped in among my ancestors, for I have always had a nomadic disposition and a well-developed bump of locomotion. I started with

friends, being one of five — all of us with little money and abundant spirits. However, living at that time was very cheap in Egypt. The country had not yet been invaded by the Europeans, and one could live there at a very moderate expense. We rented a sail-boat and staid for four months on the Nile, hunting, painting, fishing, from Damietta to Philæ. . . .

We returned to Cairo, where we passed four months more in a house in Old Cairo, which Suleiman Pasha rented to us. In our quality of Frenchmen he showed us the most cordial hospitality. Happy time of youth, thoughtlessness, and hope, with the future before us. The sky was blue.

Many pictures, more or less successful, more or less to the taste of the public, were executed as a result of this sojourn by the bank of the Father of Waters. Among others, "Le Hache-paille" [straw-cutters], which depicts quite well, I think, the agricultural and pastoral side of Egypt, and "The Prisoner," which had a universal success, being admired by both connoisseurs and idiots.

At this epoch appeared another picture on which I had not founded any great expectations — "The Duel after the Masked Ball," a composition a little after the English taste and the subject of which captured the public: execution fairly good, several portions well treated.

The original "Duel after the Masked Ball" is in the collection of the Duc d'Aumale. Gérôme, desiring to have it engraved, painted it again, making some important alterations, which, he says himself, "singularly improved the picture." This second one is in the famous Walters collection at Baltimore.

Later, I exhibited "The Gladiators" before Cæsar [Morituri], which, with another canvas of the same nature, "Pollice Verso," I consider to be my two best works. At the same time I sent out from my atelier "The Death of Cæsar." It is a small canvas, which could have been executed on a larger scale without losing its force, which I cannot say of many of my works.

The "Death of Cæsar" belongs to the Astor collection. A study, life size, of the figure of Cæsar is in the Corcoran gallery, Washington. After describing another journey to Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, in 1867, he continues:

On my return from this trip I exhibited two very different pictures, the "Death of Marshal Ney" and "Golgotha." . . . Apropos of the first one, I was very near having a serious affair with the Prince de la Moskowa, son of the Marshal. The Superintendent of the Beaux-Arts begged me several times not to exhibit this picture; but I steadfastly refused to yield, for the sake of the principle involved, declaring to him that painters had as good a claim to write history with their brushes as authors with their pens, which is incontestable. Besides, this picture was only a statement of a well-known fact, without comment of any kind. The Administration might put its veto upon it. It did not do so, but chose a middle course — the picture was hung in a corner. It was none the

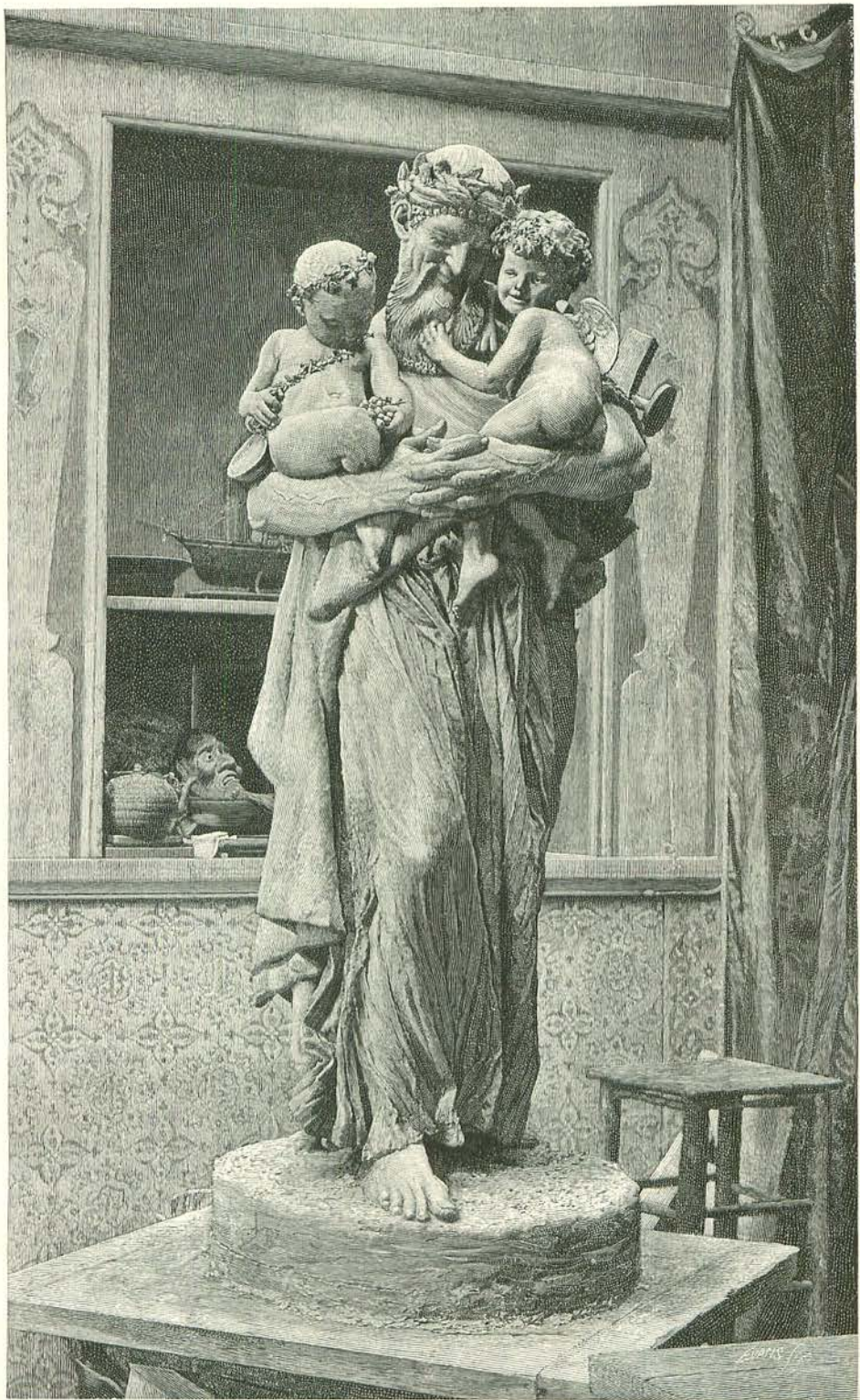
less looked at, and started the tongues of the various political factions to wagging. The Legitimists said, "What a toady of the Imperial Government!" etc. The Bonapartists, "What harm have *we* done him? Is n't he contented yet, when he has just been made Officer of the Legion of Honor?" etc. What do you think of these two ways of speaking? If I had wished to displease the Legitimists I should have served the purpose of the Bonapartists, and vice versa.

M. Ludovic Halévy, the fortunate owner of the first sketch of this world-renowned picture which stirred Paris to the center, has kindly allowed it to be photographed for this article.

FROM this time on we chronicle a series of triumphs for Gérôme at home and abroad. Receiving in 1847, at the age of 23, his first medal, he obtained successively the following honors: Medal, 1848; Medal, Universal Exposition, 1855; Chevalier Legion of Honor, 1855; Member Institute of France, 1865; Grand Medal of Honor, Universal Exhibition, 1867; Officer Legion of Honor, 1867; Grand Medal of Honor, 1874; Commander Legion of Honor, 1878; Medal of Sculpture, Universal Exhibition, 1878; Grand Medal of Honor, Universal Exhibition, 1878. He has also been for many years Professor at the École and Member of the Superior Council of the Beaux-Arts, Honorary President of the Association of Artist-Painters, Architects, Engravers, and Designers, Member of the Commission for the Decoration of the New Opera House, etc., in Paris.

Other nations have not been slow to recognize his extraordinary talent. He is Honorary Member of the Royal Academies of Fine Arts in Rome, Naples, Turin, Madrid, London, Glasgow, Brussels, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Rio de Janeiro. He has also been decorated as Officer of the Royal Order of the Aigle Rouge, by the Emperor William of Germany; Chevalier of the Order of Leopold, by the King of Belgium; Chevalier of the Lion d'Or and Officer of the Couronne de Chêne, by William III. of the Netherlands; Chevalier of S. S. Maurizio e Lazzaro, by Victor Emmanuel; and Officer of "The Rose," by Dom Pedro. He was Member of the Commission on Fine Arts at the Universal Exhibitions at London, 1872, Vienna, 1873, and Rome in 1885; and the most eminent societies devoted to the study of geography, archæology, and belles-lettres claim him as one of their most valued members. Claretie writes:

It was after the Salon of 1874 that Gérôme obtained the Grand Medal. It was indeed the hour of his supreme sway. Gérôme was fifty years old. He seemed to have arrived at the zenith of his renown.



"ANACREON DANCING WITH BACCHUS AND CUPID."



DETAIL FROM PAINTING OF "LA PYRRHIQUE."

But not yet! Since then he has reserved for those who loved best his rare talent new surprises; and it was thus that, aside from his pictures, the world assembled at the Universal Exposition of 1878 saluted him as "Sculptor!" Yes! this same hand which used the brush with such delicacy had molded the clay *par grande masse*, . . . and this admirable group, this combat of "The Gladiators," with its powerful and virile composition, commanded universal admiration.

And again:

His statue of "Anacreon" and his statuettes of "Phryne" and "L'Almée" are equal to his most attractive pictures. . . . Everything that bears his stamp, be it bronze or canvas, sketch or marble, is true, strong, distinguished, like himself. In one word, Gérôme is a thoroughbred!

ALL along through the autumn and winter (1887-1888) come letters telling of unremitting toil, and betraying in and between the lines the unflagging energy of this man of indomitable will, under the most trying circumstances of mental and physical suffering. I venture to translate several passages from these letters, in the hope of stimulating the ambition of struggling students and encouraging them to accomplish truly serious and conscientious work. In the letter from which I have already quoted (September, 1887) he says:



DETAIL FROM PAINTING OF "ALBANIAN SENTINELS."

I have just returned from a short journey to the shores of the Mediterranean, where I made some studies of the sea which I need for a picture I am painting. And here I am again, installed in Paris, preparing work for the winter—for it is work alone which satisfies the mind and consoles the heart. . . . One cannot in the course of a day entirely re-create one's self. Still one must not feebly succumb, but resist to the utmost; not yield without a struggle, but always seek to regain full self-possession. The spirit should always dominate the flesh.

In October he writes:

I have just sent you a collection of photographs of some of my pictures. I hope you will like them. In any event, I shall esteem myself happy if you will receive them favorably, and occasionally glance at them. . . . I have begun again to work with frenzy; to forget my grief and melancholy. Since I had the pleasure of seeing you I have finished several pictures which have gone to your country, and I have begun several others which will probably follow the same route. I also have a mind to model another figure, in order not to lose time during the months of November and December, when the light is too poor to paint, but sufficient to model in clay.

One of the pictures sent in October to the United States was "The Rose," a veiled lady tossing a rose from her balcony to a cavalier below. Another, "The Terrace of the Seraglio," a scene in the old palace at Constantinople, belongs to Mr. Elbridge T.

Gerry of New York. It is probably the most exquisite picture of this style that Gérôme has produced.

In November he writes:

We are having days so gloomy that one might imagine one's self in England, and it is almost impossible to work. Nevertheless I keep at it desperately, and expect to fight on to my last breath.

In writing of a young artist in whom I had felt a deep interest he says (May, 1887):

I had advised young — not to go to Spain, but to remain here in order to study seriously. I regret that he did not listen to me, so much the more since I learn by your letter of his unfortunate journey. It is money, and above all time, lost. I am much pleased to know that he is busy, and trust his work is serious, with an eye to his future. When he decides to return to Paris, you may rest assured that



DETAIL FROM PAINTING OF "THE CAMP GUARD."

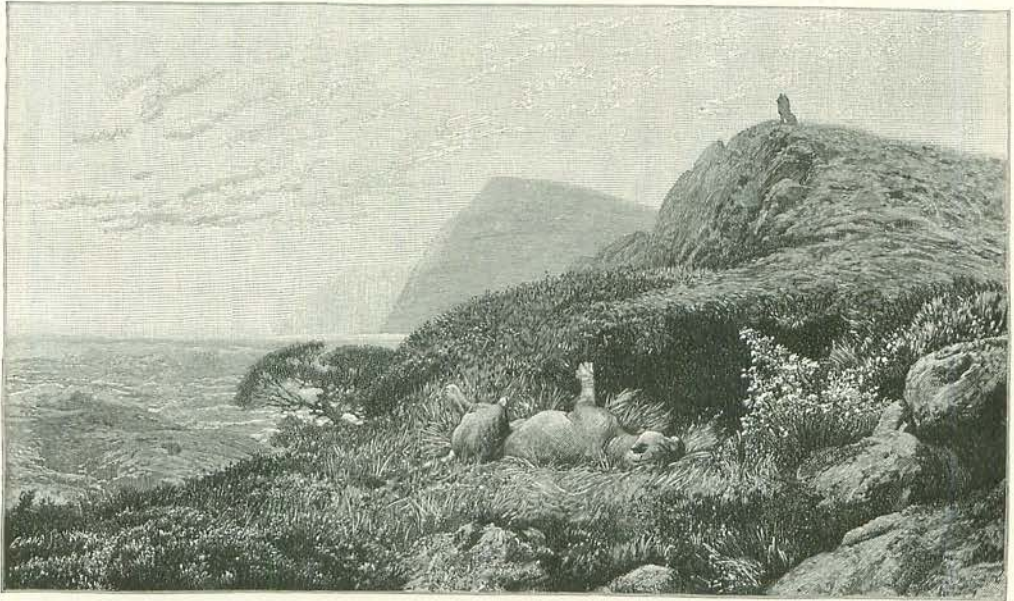
I will interest myself to the utmost to serve him, and to be useful to him in every possible way. I regret that he did not long since carry out his intention of returning to France. It is here that one finds all that one needs in order to pursue truly austere studies, which reëcho through the entire career of an artist,—for good principles inculcated in a young mind are never effaced.

Again, in December, 1887, he writes:

You ask me about my method of teaching. It is very simple, but this simplicity is the result of long experience. The question is to lead young people

[Does the swan, who wings his flight towards the eternal vaults, question whether the shadow of his wings still floats o'er the sward below?]

The method of instruction should, above all, tend to protect the young mind from the influx of these paltry sentiments, which, having generated here, have crossed the Atlantic and are in a fair way to infect America. I claim the honor of having waged war against these tendencies and shall continue to combat them, but what can one do against the current? A young painter who begins his career has need of great strength of soul not to be swept away by it, and even those who resist



“SPRINGTIME.”

into a straightforward, true path; to provide them with a compass which will keep them from going astray; to habituate them to love nature [the true], and to regard it with an eye at once intelligent, delicate, and firm, being mindful also of the plastic side. Some know how to copy a thing and will reproduce it almost exactly; others put into it poetry, charm, power, and make of it a work of art. The first are workmen, the second are artists. An abyss separates the mason from the architect.

To-day, in this epoch of moral and intellectual disorder, there seems to be a sovereign contempt for those who seek to elevate themselves, to move the spectator, to have some imagination; for those who are not content to remain fettered to the earth, dabbling in the mud of realism. It is to-day the fashion to which all the world sacrifices, because it is only granted to a few to have a well-balanced mind, and because it is easier to paint three fried eggs than it is to execute the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

But all this will pass like a shadowy phantom, and it need not make us uneasy. As Lamartine says:

“Le cygne qui s'envole aux voûtes éternelles,
Amis, s'informe-t-il si l'ombre de ses ailes
Flotte encore sur un vil gazon?”

cannot entirely ascend against these rapids, but suffer in a certain measure from their influence. Yet I am far from being a *retardataire*, an exclusive, and I have always loved all experiment, all effort, in whatever direction; these indicate in a country a force of expansion. I love movement, for movement is life! Only, these revolutions should be made by people of talent, who have understanding and knowledge; and I must say that many painters of the modern school, the impressionists, the *plein-air-istes*, the independents, etc., are more or less *fumistes*, some of them humbugs and some ignorant as carps. To-day, when a work is insipid and badly executed,—badly drawn, badly painted, and stupid beyond expression,—it stands a good chance of being a success, since it is on a level with those who admire it. To-day, when one walks through the halls of the Exposition at Paris, one is struck first by the great number of works produced—works which often have not cost their authors any great pains in any respect, as to either subject or execution. The commonplace is in honor, and poetry has fled to the skies. Will she ever descend again?

Later he says:

As to my own way of working, I have no manner, no method. I have studied nature much, and in



"THE CARPET MERCHANT." (BY PERMISSION OF KNOEDLER & CO., NEW YORK.)

many countries, and have consequently learned a good many things which I try to put into practice, always seeking to remain natural and true, forcing myself faithfully to depict the character of the epoch which I represent on the canvas, endeavoring to say much in a few words. It is a difficult task, and I have been sometimes happy enough to succeed; but, in spite of great efforts, not always. . . . I am at work early every morning and only leave my studio when day has fled; and this since my youth. You see I have been hammering on the anvil a long time. It is one of the examples I try to set my pupils, that of being an ardent and indefatigable worker every day and under all circumstances.

Having made definite plans for serious work, the early spring of 1888 finds me once again in London, where a letter of welcome awaits me. It says:

You Americans are intrepid travelers. I admire the courage of your mother, who, at the age of sixty-nine, has crossed the ocean with you. As for me, I have not left my easel since I saw you, save for that one little trip to the Mediterranean, where I went to make some studies of the sea for the picture which I have at the Exposition. I am well, only a little tired by the steady work of the winter, and I really need a little rest, but I have no time for it.



KC 476. J. L. Gérôme.

DETAIL FROM PAINTING OF
"LA PYRRHIQUE."

This picture, which hangs on the wall of the Salon, under the title of "The Dream," represents a poet reclining on the sands by the sea. His Muse, gently touching his head, permits him to see gods and goddesses, Nereids and Tritons disporting themselves in the waves,

while a flaming sun is sinking to rest near the horizon. This charming canvas goes to form part of the collection of one of the finest amateurs of art on the continent, the Grand Duke Vladimir of Russia. Gérôme exhibits still another picture at the Salon—a lion eagerly lapping water from a pool which he has found near an oasis after a weary march in the desert. It is entitled "La Soif" ("Thirst"), and is a chef-d'œuvre. He also exhibited last summer at the Royal Academies in London, Copenhagen, and Moscow.

In spite of the foregoing list, which would have exhausted the resources of any ordinary worker, every easel in his atelier holds an unfinished picture, and others lean against the walls in delightful confusion. To study these and watch their gradual completion is an absorbing and enjoyable occupation.

In a temperance of diet which borders on abstemiousness lies part of the secret of the astonishing vigor of this youthful veteran, who has just passed his sixty-fourth birthday. He rides on horseback almost daily, and during the winter hunts twice a week, in any kind of weather.

"*Beau cavalier, chasseur adroit,*" says Claretie of him.

ONE day I recounted an absurd criticism which I had heard the day before, apropos of one of his pictures. He laughed heartily.

"The greater part of these critics are idiots. Hold! I will give you a specimen of their caliber. I had one here in the person of my servant—not Thomas, another one. He came in one morning just as I was finishing the picture called 'Les Deux Majestés.' You have it, I believe, in New York. 'What is that?' said Monsieur Critic, viewing it with the air of a connoisseur. 'That—you see what it is,' I replied; 'a lion in the desert, looking at the setting sun.' 'Yes, monsieur—yes, I see. But—but, what does that *prove*?'

"'It proves that you are an idiot!' I answered.

"And in truth," said the master, laughing

again, "he was as fit to write up the Salon as most of those who arrogate to themselves the right to form the public artistic opinions and tastes of to-day. An artist does not deliver lectures on surgery, nor does a lawyer dictate to a ship-builder regarding the vessels he constructs. But most of these art critics, whose ignorance is often deplorable,—quite encyclopædic in fact,—who have not learned the *a b c* of our profession, consider themselves fully competent to criticise it! Idiots!"

The palette and brushes are again taken up, and he seats himself on a light Egyptian tabouret, made out of the pith of the palm-tree and covered with a leather cushion, his maul-stick being a long Indian arrow, denuded of its feathers. He is painting the sky of a wonderful picture, a lion prowling on the shores of the Red Sea, "Quærens quem devoret."

"The sky is difficult," he says. "It is too dark."

Under the skillful hand fleecy clouds pile up and melt away towards the horizon, while through the haze one perceives alluring paths leading up from height to height on the mountain. At its base, masses of rock in warm tones of brown and drifts of yellow sand reach to the water's edge. The lion, with lowered head and eye intent, powerful, subtle, alert, steps softly yet firmly, his shadow sharply projected on the stony beach, where waves of a deep yet tender green break in delicate foam.

Every now and then the master rises, steps back, and sharply views his work. He is never satisfied. "I must work on the mountain." A few touches, and then, "Ah! that is better; that gives it more body."

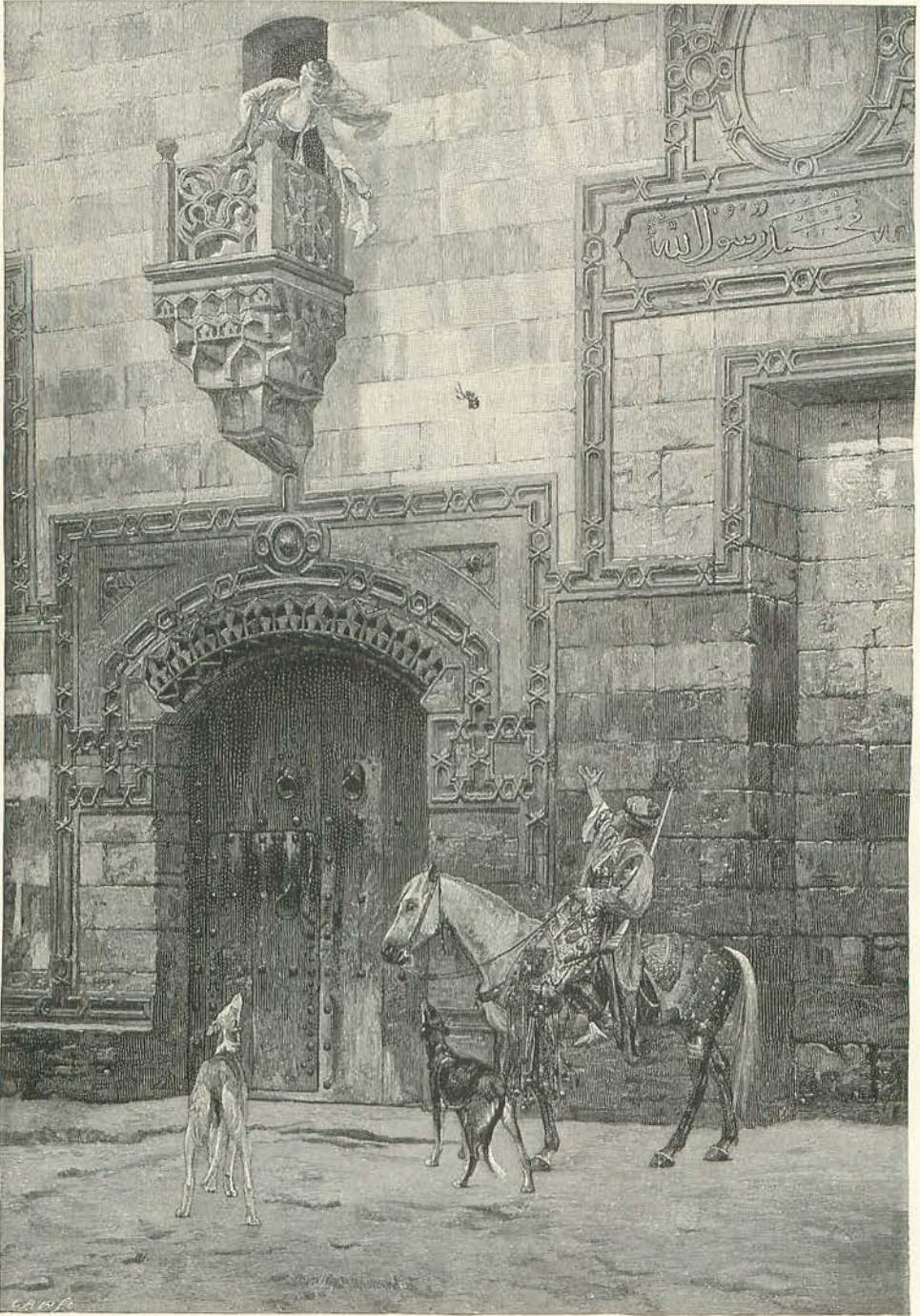
He has just returned from a flying business trip to some mines in Spain, where he made excursions among the mountains on horseback and on foot, writing from Grenada. Despite the fact that it was not a professional journey, he has brought back some charming studies in landscape.

"It is good to steep one's self in nature," he says. "Like Antæus, one gains strength in touching the earth."

From time to time he works, whistling softly, on another canvas, "Spring-time" in Arabia. In the foreground a lioness rolls on a flowery bank, while her mate looks down from a neighboring height on a dreary waste of rocky plain, the rising sun just



DETAIL FROM PAINTING OF
"THE FLAG-MAKERS."



"THE ROSE." (BY PERMISSION OF THE OWNER, M. H. ARNOT, ESQ.)

flecking with rose the cloudlets that seem to fly before the wind.

I am at this moment reading from "Le Fellah" of Edmund About — a charming volume dedicated to Gérôme in the following

lines, which pay just tribute to that fidelity to nature which is one of the most striking qualities in the master's work :

MY DEAR FRIEND: Do you remember our last meeting in Egypt? It was under your tent, at the ex-

treme end of the desert of Suez, in sight of the caravan which was carrying the carpet to Mecca. You were starting for Sinai; I was preparing to return to Alexandria, with a portfolio crammed with notes, as was yours with sketches. I knew Egypt well enough to describe it from top to bottom, as I have done the Greece of King Otho and the Rome of Pius IX. But the hospitality of Ismail Pasha had swathed me in bands which paralyzed my movements not a little. I had no longer a right to publish *ex-professo* a contemporaneous Egypt. Your example, my dear Gérôme, has at once fascinated and reassured me. No law forbids an author to work *en peintre*; that is to say, to assemble in a work of imagination a multitude of details taken from nature and scrupulously true, though selected. Your masterpieces, small and great, do not affect to tell everything; but they do not present a type, a tree, the fold of a garment, which you have not seen. I have followed the *same method*, in the measure of my ability, which, unhappily, is far from equaling yours, and it is only in virtue of this fact that "Le Fellah" is worthy to be dedicated to you.

"If Mr. — and Mr. — could only see those pictures!" I said to Gérôme. "Why do you not exhibit them in America?"

"If your Government would cease to place pork on an equality with pictures, and to put works of art in the same category with sardines in oil and smoked ham, *then*, perhaps. But pay your thirty per cent. tax, with the probability of having my pictures returned to me! No, I thank you!"

It is not the first time I have had to blush for the monumental obtuseness and ingratitude of our law-makers, who thus repay the unparalleled generosity of this great nation, which has thrown open its schools, its galleries, and its competitive exhibitions to American art students free of expense, and on terms of absolute equality with its own native-born pupils.

I could not repress a sigh of regret that my countrymen will perhaps never see these two masterpieces, and tentatively suggested their being engraved in THE CENTURY MAGAZINE. I said that, although unfinished, the pictures would photograph well; and the master, with his accustomed generosity, said, "If you wish, I will have them done for you."

Once I found him leaning back in an arm-chair, having just lighted his pipe.

"I am tired," he said with a deep sigh.

"You, tired! You confess it?"

"Yes; tired by *years*! It is tiresome to grow old! But," he added, with a smile, "it is the only means yet discovered whereby one succeeds in living long."

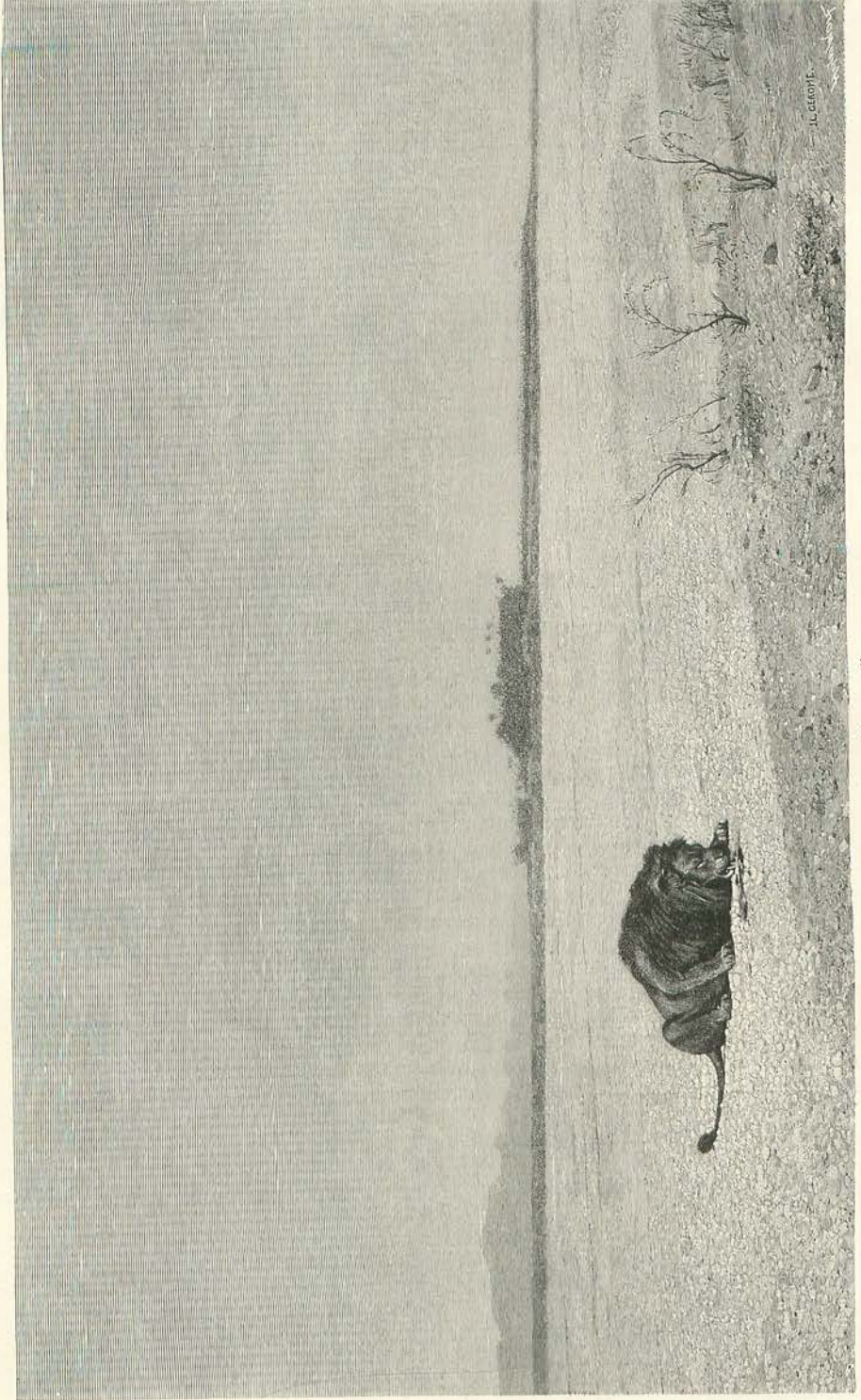
My question — something in regard to the monoliths of Petra — transported him back to the time of his early travels, and fatigue of body and mind was forgotten as he described the marvelous countries he knows so well. Suddenly he began to laugh heartily.

"I remember once we were camping in the forum there at Petra, where the Arabs are brigands — veritable brigands. They stole everything they could see by day, and at night they would creep up so close to us, in hopes of finding something else that they could carry off, that we could feel the tents shaking as they moved about. It is an astonishing fact that these miserable wretches are without any moral sentiment save that of modesty, which is developed to an extraordinary degree. So that when their nocturnal attentions became insupportable we could always drive them off by sending one of our little band to confront them clad only in his boots. One night Lenoir, poor Lenoir!" — a beloved friend and pupil of Gérôme, who died afterwards at Cairo — "was so exasperated at having his sleep disturbed that, in language more energetic than elegant, he called out to one of the intruders, whose voice he recognized, bidding him begone. We were all convulsed to hear this Arab, whom we called Agamemnon, repeat, like a parrot, the last three words, with a perfect accent, although he was entirely ignorant of their meaning. This tempted Lenoir to try an experiment. He sat up in bed and shouted, 'I.' 'I,' echoed the Arab, 'Am,' continued Lenoir. 'Am,' said Agamemnon. 'A scoundrel.' 'A scoundrel.' 'A thief.' 'A thief.' These self-accusing words reëchoed in the forum with marvelous distinctness, to the intense delight of our whole encampment."

While relating this droll anecdote Gérôme rose up, and with inimitable gesture and tone mimicked in turn Lenoir and his Arab in a manner worthy of the *Comédie Française*. Then followed other stories, gay and grave, of artist friends who have passed away: of Fortuny, who painted for two months in this very studio, on his "Spanish Marriage"; of Barye, whose chefs-d'œuvre lie on every table and cabinet in the ateliers, and who owed his election to the Institute largely to the warm affection and personal efforts of Gérôme.

"For years they allowed him almost to die of hunger!" said the master, flushing with generous indignation. "It was only after he was gone that his genius was fully recognized, and now they will pay any price for pieces cast by his own hand."

Then he spoke of Baudry, also one of his intimates, whose talent he greatly admired and whose loss he deeply mourns; and of Fromentin, one of his near neighbors and good friends, of whom he said: "A remarkable man, a writer of the first order; but as a painter he unfortunately lacked the advantage of serious study in his youth. No one realized this more keenly than he himself. One morning I came into his atelier and found him making a simple,



"THIRST."

rudimentary study. 'Why are you doing that?' I asked. 'To learn,' he replied frankly. And in that spirit he worked till the day of his death. He was only fifty-five years old—a very remarkable man."

The pipe has long since gone out, and now the master springs up and seizes his brushes as if he had not painted a stroke to-day. "Let us go on." He evidently believes with our own Franklin that "Time is the stuff of which life is made," and the various canvases which await the final touches are fully accounted for. Among them I notice a "Head of Diana," "Negroes carrying Home a Dead Lion from the Chase," "Hunting Scene in the Forest of Meudon" (portraits of Gérôme and friends), "Baby Cupid lifting the Veil of a Vestal Virgin" (an exquisite draped figure asleep in a chair), "Bathsheba bathing on the Roof of her House" (Jerusalem in the distance). This last is one of his finest studies in the nude that I have ever seen. I recall Théophile Gautier's assertion that no one can treat these antique subjects like Gérôme, "with his art, so chaste, so sober, so pure." On another easel is a "Den of Wild Beasts," into which Love has just entered. It is impossible to give more than an idea of this great picture. Gérôme has selected the following familiar couplet as a title:

"Qui que tu sois, voici ton maître!
Il l'est, le fut, ou le doit être!"

[Whoever thou art, behold thy master! He is, he was, or should be!]

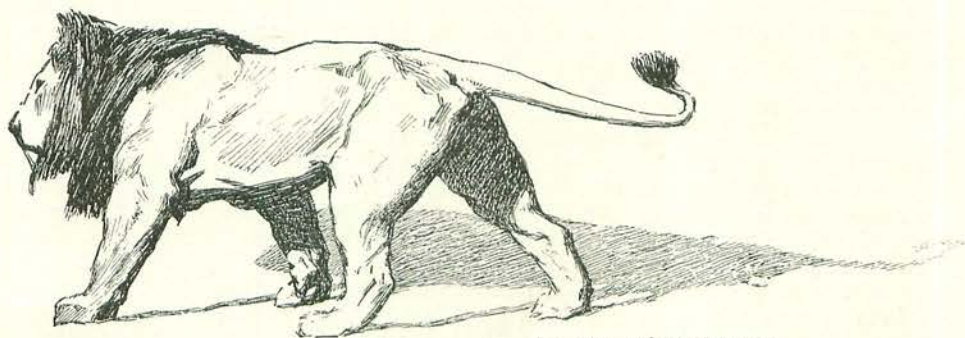
These two canvases are fortunately to be seen in the accompanying picture of one corner of Gérôme's studio. He considers them as yet only sketches. There is also another that I have watched from the first stroke of the preliminary sketch—a lion leaping in the air, in full pursuit of a fleeing herd of antelope.

I look at them all again and then at the master. Although four busy years have passed over his head, he has not changed since Claretie wrote of him:

Such at sixty is Gérôme; what he was at thirty-six—as young, as active, as vigorous; as impressionable, vivid, and sympathetic. A charming conversationalist, gay, pensive also under his delightful humor, respectful of his art, frank and loyal, adored by his pupils, a professor who teaches to the young the rare and neglected virtues—simplicity, study, labor. In a word, a noble example of a master painter of the nineteenth century—the soul of an artist with the constitution of a soldier; a heart of gold in a body of iron!

Fanny Field Hering.

[The illustrations of this article, except as specified in the titles, are from photographs by special authorization of Boussod, Valadon & Co., successors to Goupil & Co., of Paris.]



Kenneth Cox - after J. L. Gérôme.

DETAIL FROM PAINTING OF "SOLITUDE."



J. L. GEROME.

NAPOLEON BEFORE THE SPHINX. ("L'ŒDIPÉ.")

H. WOLFF.