

## CLAUDE MONET.



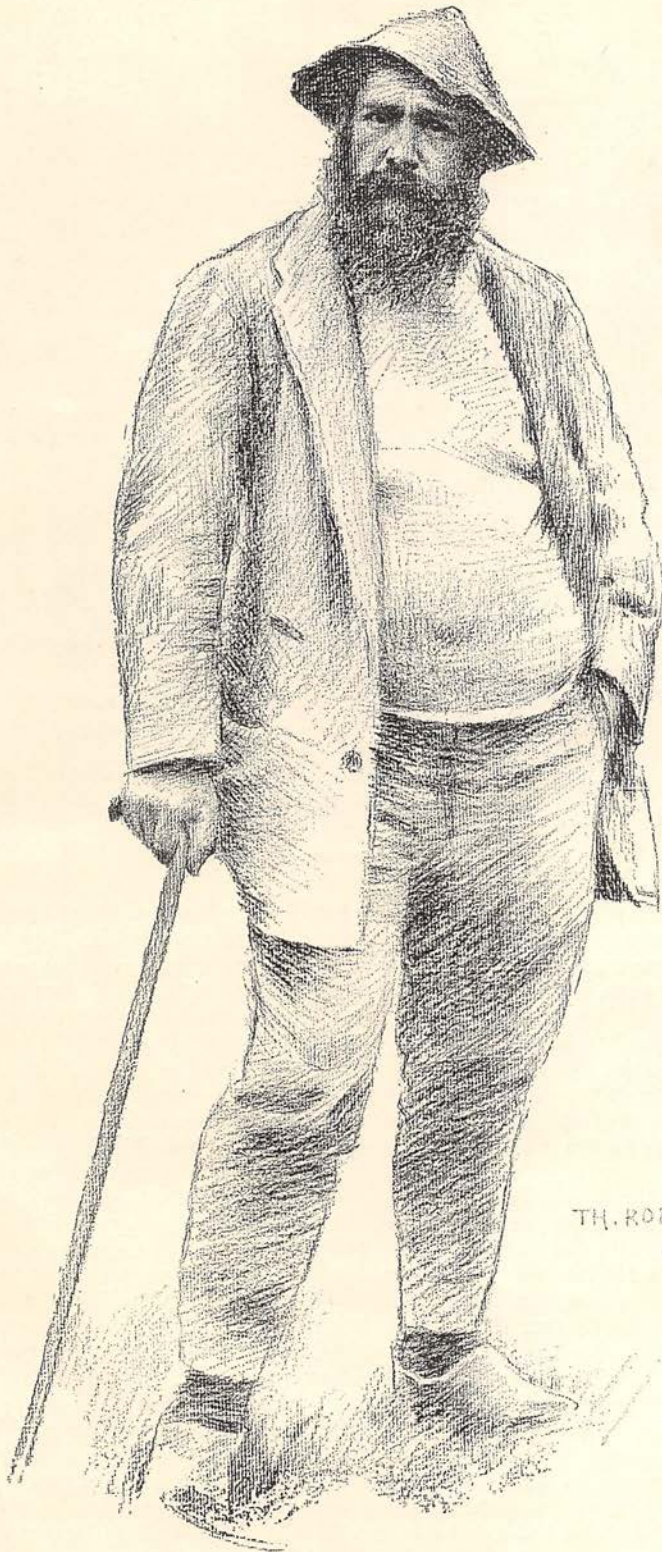
WHEN the group of painters known as impressionists exhibited together for the first time twelve or fifteen years ago, they were greeted with much derision. In fact they were hardly taken seriously, being regarded either as mountebanks or as *poseurs* who served the purpose of furnishing the quick-witted but not infallible Parisians with something to laugh at once a year. But they have seen their influence increase steadily in a remarkable manner, first, as is always the case, with the painters, and latterly with the public. It is a very superficial observer who sees in the impressionists only a body of bad or inefficient painters who would attract attention at any cost except that of study. The sum total of talent represented by M.M. Manet, Degas, Monet, Pizarro, Caillebotte, Sisley, Renoir, Mlle. Berthe Morisot, and the American Miss Cassatt, not to mention others, is very considerable. Of course there have appeared the men of small talent with their little invention, who have tacked themselves on to the movement, notably the genius who imagined the fly-speck or dot *facture*, while streaks and stripes have been considered a part of the new school's baggage. All this does not take away from the fact that the influence of the movement has been a healthy and much-needed one. It is to be thanked first, of course, for its independence and revolt from routine, the *chic* and *habileté* of the schools; next for its voice in behalf of pure, bright color and light, things of which painters as well as the public are more or less afraid. That refined color must necessarily be dull color; that one should not paint up too near white; that one should "husband his resources"; and that if any qualities must be sacrificed, let those be color and air—all these theories have been stoutly and efficiently combated by the impressionists.

Of them all M. Claude Monet is the most aggressive, forceful painter, the one whose work is influencing its epoch the most. If he has not, as M. Guy de Maupassant says with enthusiasm,

"discovered the art of painting," he has certainly painted moving waters, skies, air, and sunlight with a vividness and truth before unknown. Though occasionally painting indoors, he is, in my opinion, most original as an open-air painter, and he has scored his greatest success in that line. No one has given us quite such realism. Individual, and with the courage of his opinions from the first, his work, while remaining substantially the same in intention, has become larger and freer. In the beginning there was a visible influence of Corot, and certain mannerisms which have disappeared with increasing years. Superbly careless of *facture*, or at least with no preoccupation in that direction, he has arrived at that greatest of all *factures*, large, solid, and intangible, which best suggests the mystery of nature. And all painters working in the true impressionist spirit, absorbed by their subject, must feel that neat workmanship is not merely not worth the while, but is out of the question. "No man can serve two masters," and this noble indifference to *facture* comes sooner or later to all great painters of air, sea, and sky.

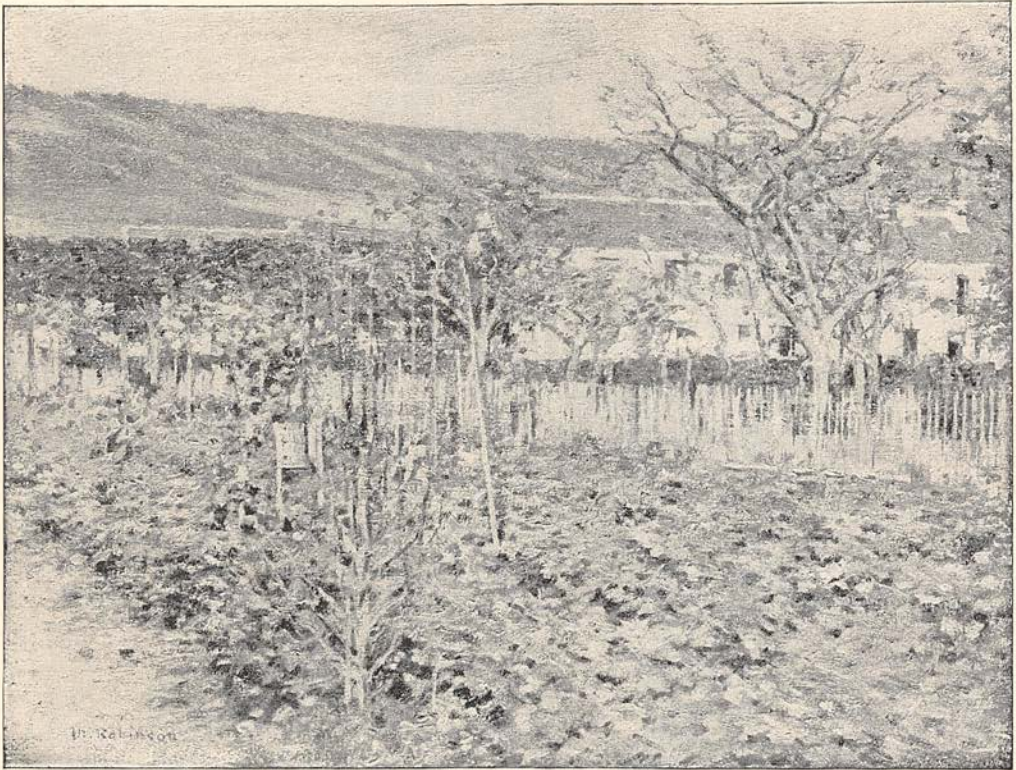
Most painters have been struck by the charm of a sketch done from nature at a sitting, a charm coming from the oneness of effect, the instantaneousness seldom seen in the completed landscape, as understood by the studio landscape-painter. M. Claude Monet was the first to imagine the possibility of obtaining this truth and charm on a fair-sized canvas with qualities and drawing unattainable in the small sketch. He found it attainable by working with method at the same time of day and not too long, never for more than an hour. Frequently he will be carrying on at the same time fifteen or twenty canvases. It is untrue that he is a painter of clever, large *pochades*. The canvas that does not go beyond the *pochade* state never leaves his studio, and the completed pictures are painted over many times.

Though these details may be of some interest, it is, of course, the spiritual side of the painter's work that is really worth dwelling on. M. Claude Monet's art is vital, robust, healthy. Like Corot's, but in more exuberant fashion, it shows the joy of living. It does not lack thought, and many of his pictures are painted with difficulty; but there is never that mysterious something



TH. ROBINSON  
1890

CLAUDE MONET.



DRAWN BY THEODORE ROBINSON.

THE HOME OF MONET AT GIVERNY, EURE.

which often gets into a picture and communicates itself to the spectator, a sense of fatigue, or abatement of interest in the motive. There is always a delightful sense of movement, vibration, and life. One of his favorite sayings is "La Nature ne s'arrête pas." Clouds are moving across the sky, leaves are twinkling, the grass is growing. Even the stillest summer day has no feeling of fixedness or of stagnation; moving seas, rivers, and skies have a great charm for him.

The exhibition at the Rue de Sive last summer was a surprise to many from the variety, rare in a collection of pictures by one painter. Those who knew M. Claude Monet only as a painter of sunlight saw him in a new vein in the somber, rocky hillsides of La Creuse. There were Paris streets and gardens, gay in movement and color, railway-stations, Holland tulip-fields, and Normandy winter landscapes. One, of grain-stacks in the early morning, with a thin covering of snow, was a most extraordinary piece of realism. Then the sea, for which he has a lover's passion, seen from the Normandy chalk cliffs dazzling in sunlight, blue and green shadows chasing one another across its surface, or the stormy waters and black rocks of Belle Isle. And his "Essais de Figures en Plein Air" —

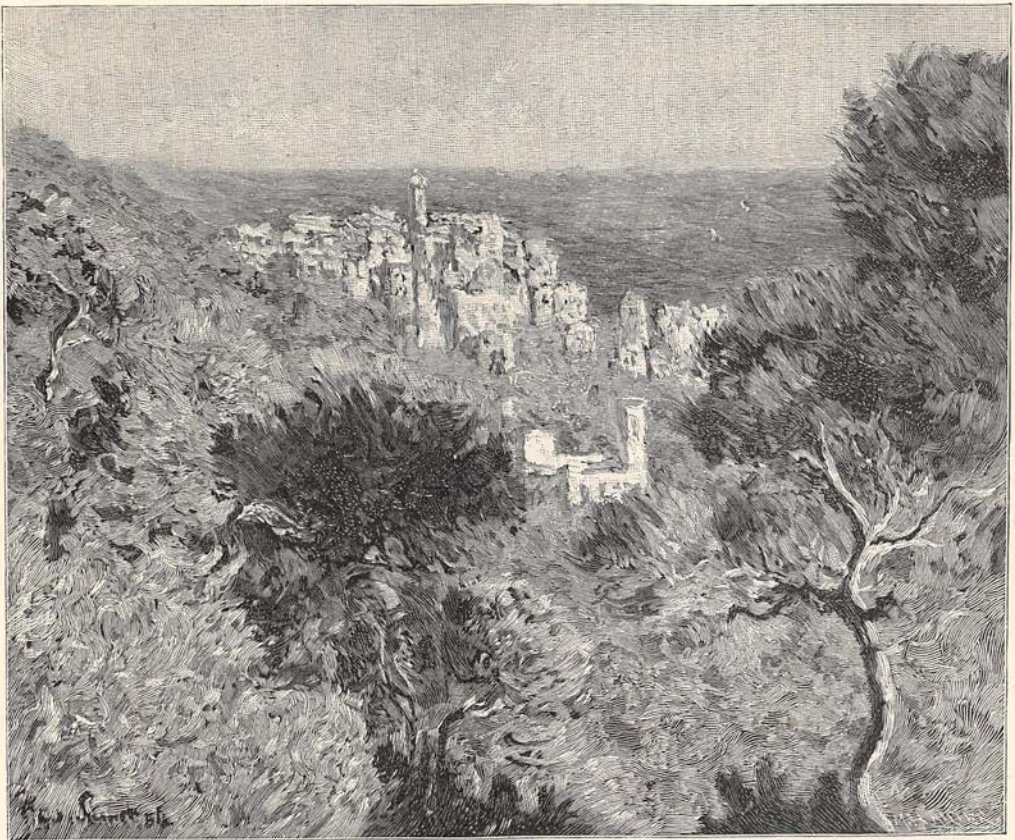
what charm of color and life! how they belong to the landscape in which they breathe and move! To my mind no one has yet painted out of doors quite so truly. He is a realist, believing that nature and our own day give us abundant and beautiful material for pictures: that, rightly seen and rendered, there is as much charm in a nineteenth-century girl in her tennis- or yachting-suit, and in a landscape of sunlit meadows or river-bank, as in the Lefebvre nymph with her appropriate but rather dreary setting of "classical landscape"; that there is an abundance of poetry outside of swamps, twilights, or weeping damosels. M. Claude Monet's work proves this fact, if there be need to prove it: that there is no antagonism between broad daylight and modernity, and sentiment and charm; that an intense lover and follower of nature is not necessarily an indiscriminating note-taker, a photographer of more or less interesting facts. Beauty of line, of light and shade, of arrangement, above all, of color, it is but a truism to say that nowhere except in nature can their secrets be discovered.

M. Claude Monet's art leaves few indifferent. There is a whole gamut of appreciation, from the classicists who abhor him,—as Ingres is said to have spat at the sight of a Dela-

croix,—to M. de Maupassant, whose judgment I have already given. He is often aggressive, sometimes wilfully so, and you feel that he takes a delight in making the "heathen"—*i. e.*, Philistine—"rage." There is always need of such work and such painters. His work is quite as often sane and reasonable, and should interest all who love nature. His painting, direct, honest, and simple, gives one something of the same impression, the same charm, that one gets directly from the great mother—Nature—herself.

One cause of the popular prejudice against impressionism is the supposed wilful exaggeration of color. No doubt restrained, negative

and colors than we; that they had, in fact, a simpler and more naïve vision; that the modern eye is being educated to distinguish a complexity of shades and varieties of color before unknown. And for a comparison, take the sense of taste, which is susceptible of cultivation to such an extraordinary degree that the expert can distinguish not only different varieties and ages of wine, but mixtures as well; yet this sense in the generality of mankind, in comparison, hardly exists. In like manner a painter gifted with a fine visual perception of things spends years in developing and educating that sense; then comes the man who never in his life looked at nature but in a casual and patro-



FROM THE PAINTING BY CLAUDE MONET, IN POSSESSION OF JAMES F. SUTTON.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

BORDIGHERA.

color pleases better the average mind, and only a colorist and searcher can use pure, vivid color with good effect, as Monet certainly does. That there is more color in nature than the average observer is aware of, I believe any one not color-blind can prove for himself by taking the time and trouble to look for it. It is a plausible theory that our forefathers saw fewer tones

nizing way, and who swears he "never saw such color as that." Which is right, or nearest right?

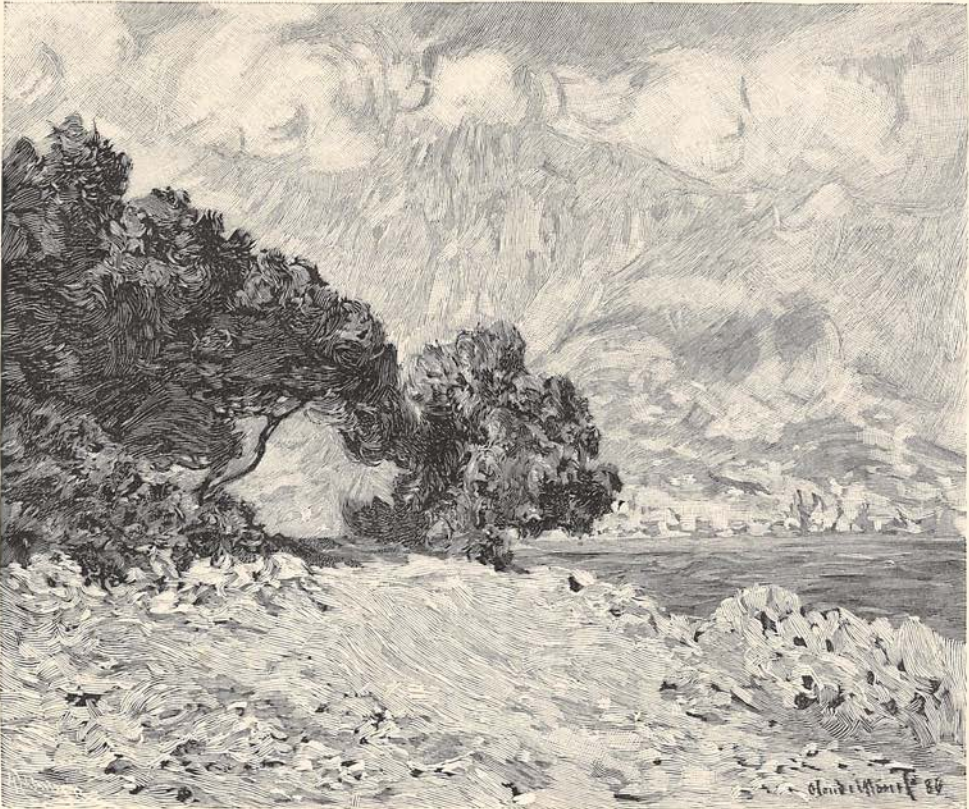
Another cause has been its supposed tendency toward iconoclasm and eccentricity. But in reality, while bringing forward new discoveries of vibration and color, in many ways the impressionists were returning to first principles. Manet's "Boy with a Sword" and

the much discussed "Olympia" may claim kinship with Velasquez for truth of values, and for largeness and simplicity of modeling, while the best Monets rank with Daubigny's or, to go farther back, with Constable's art in their self-restraint and breadth, combined with fidelity to nature.

While the movement is much in sympathy with the naturalistic movement in literature, yet I should rather insist on its resemblance to that brought on by Constable. In independence of thought and intense love of nature, in the treatment received from public and critics, and in their immediate influence on the younger painters of their day, there is a remarkable similarity between Constable and M. Monet. In Leslie's "Life" Constable preaches

Perhaps the sacrifices I make for lightness and brightness are too great, but these things are the essence of landscape."

In 1824 some of his landscapes exhibited in Paris made a sensation. The French artists "are struck by their vivacity and freshness, things unknown to their own pictures—they have made a stir and set the students in landscape to thinking. . . . The critics are angry with the public for admiring these pictures. They acknowledge the effect to be rich and powerful, and that the whole has the look of nature and the color true and harmonious; but shall we admire works so unusual for their excellencies alone—what then is to become of the great Poussin?—and they caution the younger artists to beware of the seduction of these English works."



FROM THE PAINTING BY CLAUDE MONET, IN POSSESSION OF JAMES F. SUTTON.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

ON CAPE MARTIN, NEAR MENTONE.

against *chic*, then called *bravura*, "an attempt to do something beyond the truth. Fashion always had and always will have its day, but truth in all things only will last and can only have just claims on posterity." "The world is full enough of what has been already done." "My execution annoys the scholastic ones.

But a few years later the younger artists began to profit by Constable's ideas, and the noble school of 1830 appeared, carrying the art of landscape-painting another step in advance.

It is not perhaps too soon to prophesy that in the same manner the influence of M. Claude Monet on the landscape art of the future will



FROM THE PAINTING BY CLAUDE MONET, IN POSSESSION OF F. H. FULLER.

THE ORCHARD.

be strongly felt. Imitation can go but a little way, and is always without value, although its appearance is no argument against the art imitated—witness M. Trouillebert. But as the young Frenchmen of 1830 profited by the example of Constable, his discovery of breadth

and values as we understand them to-day, so will the coming landscape-men use the impressionist discoveries of vibration and the possibilities of pure color, and, while careful to “hold fast that which is good,” will go on to new and delightful achievement.

*Theodore Robinson.*

## TWO POEMS.

### AN IMPULSE.

THE silent little glen I often seek,  
 Moist, dark: a tiny rivulet runs through  
 The lush, wet grass, so small a silvery thread  
 That one might take it for a line of dew.  
 The trees have shut it in a sylvan room  
 Full of chill earthy scents. Diana might  
 Choose such a spot to don her huntress garb,  
 Or stretch her cold, chaste body there at night.  
 And yet to-day, thou thing of Eastern suns,  
 The very contrast of the place to thee  
 Made me look up, and through the undergrowth,  
 With the wild dream that thou hadst come to me!

### MELODY.

WHEN the land was white with moonlight,  
 And the air was sweet with May,  
 I was so glad that Love would last  
 Forever and a day.

Now the land is white with winter,  
 And dead Love laid away,  
 I am so glad Life cannot last  
 Forever and a day.

*Anne Reeve Aldrich.*