

DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

I.



HAD been studying in Paris about six months when, in M. Bonnat's school, where I was making my first attempts at drawing from the model, I heard some of the senior pupils, who had advanced to the dignity of painting studies from life, talk about a picture in the Salon of 1878 by Dagnan-Bouveret. They spoke so highly of it, and said it was so good, that the next time I went to the Salon I made a point of seeing it. It was the "Manon Lescaut," a canvas of moderate size, and, as it seemed to me in my ignorance, rather empty and uninteresting. I have never had better proof of the fact that appreciation of good art depends upon cultivation of the sense of seeing, than my first impression of that picture. It is a charming work (I have seen it since); the two figures are beautifully drawn, and the delicate color-scheme of pale grays and yellowish tints is most artistically conceived, and delightfully carried out in the painting. The next year at the Salon a much less sympathetic subject by Dagnan, "A Wedding-Party at the Photographer's," evoked my admiration for its marvelous technical skill; and in 1880, when I saw "The Accident," I became, like every other young painter in Paris, an enthusiastic advocate of the ability of the brilliant artist whose name became, by the exhibition of that picture, as well known as that of Bastien-Lepage. These two young men have always stood side by side in my mental retrospect of the achievement of French painters up to the time that Bastien's career was ended by his untimely death in 1884. Since then I have followed, as closely as my residence in New York would permit, the development of Dagnan's art; and in 1889, at the Paris Exposition, where I saw nine or ten of his best works, I placed him in the first rank of modern painters, and could find in all the galleries of that wonderful exhibition no picture by a living painter on which to found so much hope for the future of the French school as on "The Blessing." It seemed to me, in looking at it, that if it does not prove to be one of the works of our day most held in esteem a generation hence, it will be only because all canons of taste will have been reversed, and all appreciation of the true and beautiful have ceased. In the "Horses at the Watering-Trough," and "The Consecrated Bread" at the Luxembourg Gallery, in the "Breton Women at the Pardon," in "Vacci-

nation," "The Pardon," and other works, I have seen much to convince me that Dagnan-Bouveret is one of the ablest painters of our time, and that his temperament, most refined and sympathetic in its artistic quality, is supported by a skilfulness of technic, and an individuality of expression, that give to his works a personal character such as few others possess. His pictures satisfy the most rigorous technical requirements, and impress by their truth to nature and by their healthful sentiment.

Unfortunately I have not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with M. Dagnan-Bouveret. Those of my friends who have speak of him as a man of gentle temper, and devoted to his art. From one of them who has told me of his intercourse with him in Paris, where they had studios in the same building, I have heard interesting details of his life and character. He is a man of small stature, with dark hair and beard, intense eyes that investigate and pierce the mystery of the subject that occupies his attention, of a strong, determined will and the most resolute perseverance, but, withal, of such sweet disposition that all who know him are instinctively drawn to him. His will, though it stops at no barrier, never offends those brought in contact with him. "When he used to come into my studio sometimes," says this friend, "he would seem for the moment absorbed in my work, and would examine it closely, and talk about it to me with the same earnestness that he might if it were his own. He is a man of the most sympathetic nature and the kindest heart, and in his work, whether he is occupied with some detail of still life or with the expression of an important figure, he brings to bear on the task in hand the same intense study, and the same strong purpose to get out of it all that it means. With his hard study of nature in his school work, and his unflinching perseverance in bringing out in his pictures what he feels in the subject before him, are combined a sympathetic, artistic perception and a poet's thoughts. All this makes him the artist he is."

It appears that to Dagnan no quality is greater than sincerity; and this is apparent enough in his work for us to know it without being told. He has the greatest admiration for Holbein, in whose work he recognizes the presence of the same intentions that are so clearly shown in his own. He cares nothing for fashionable life, but lives solely for his art. In his studio and garden at Neuilly he works incessantly. Sometimes he goes to the country



PAINTED BY DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

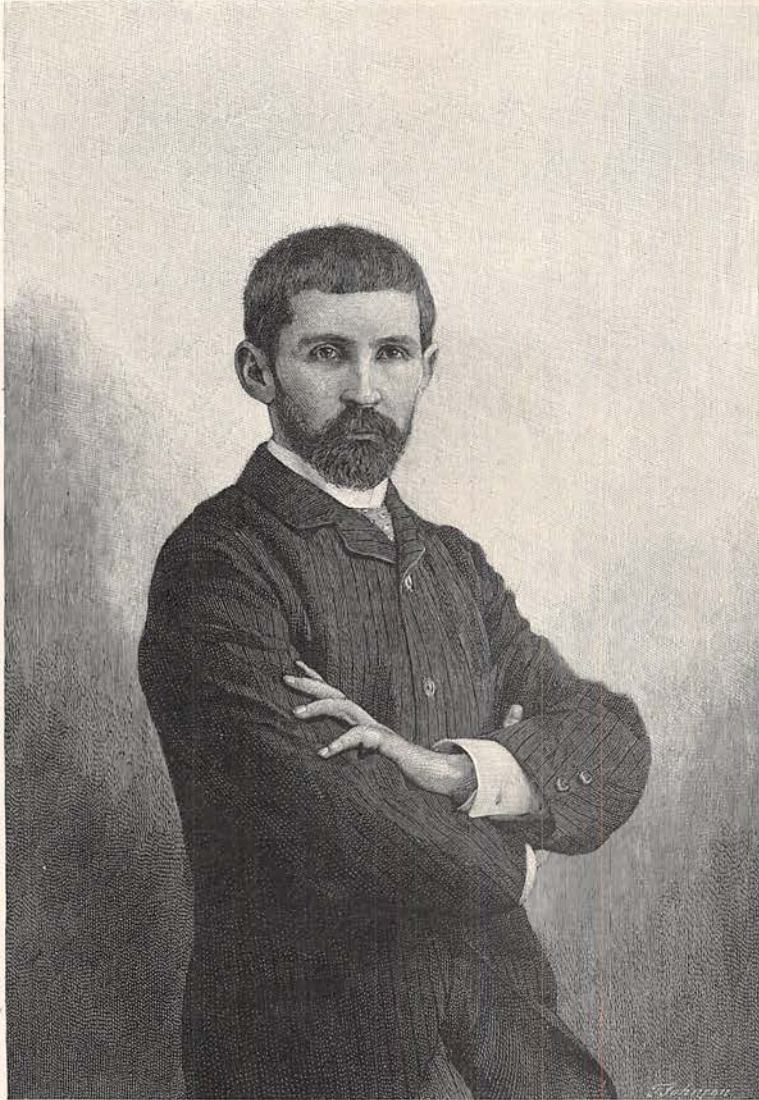
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRAUN & CO.

BY PERMISSION OF MR. GEORGE F. BAKER.

“THE PARDON.”

with his wife and son, and there too he works with equal ardor. A little story about the "Horses at the Watering-Trough" well illustrates the thoroughness of his methods. Dag-

primitive sorts of casts of the horses' backs by laying over them cloths soaked in plaster of Paris, and when these were hard and dry, they were set up, and the harness was placed on them



ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON.

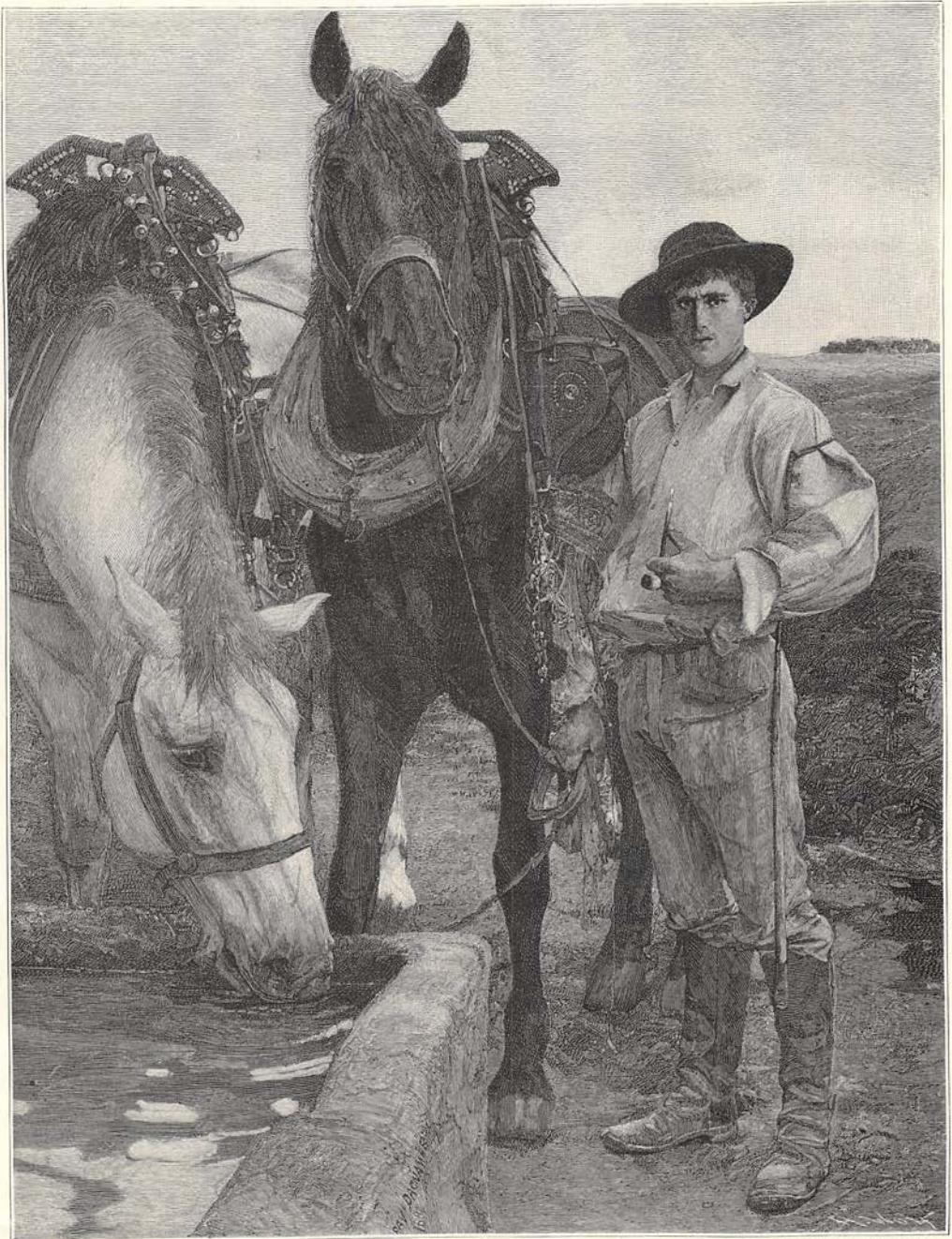
F. A. J. DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

nan was passing the summer at his father-in-law's place, and there saw the subject of this picture. His father-in-law entered with great interest into the project of making a picture of the farm-horses, and arranged various devices to make the task of painting the picture from nature as convenient as possible. The summer wore on, and the picture progressed, but the way Dagnan paints a large canvas (or a little one, for that matter) takes time. So, at his father-in-law's suggestion, they took

just as it would be if the horses themselves were standing before the trough. And here every day Dagnan came to paint his straps and buckles, and before he had finished them to his satisfaction the snow fell on his palette as he worked.

It is not to make note of mere painstaking labor that I think it worth while to speak of this incident: what it shows is that Dagnan believes that no detail in a picture may be neglected; that everything, however small, has its



PAINTED BY DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF, FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRAUN & CO.

“HORSES AT THE WATERING-TROUGH.”



PAINTED BY DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

"THE CONSCRIPTS."

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRAUN & CO.

own character; and that that distinctive character can be rendered only by the most thorough study; and that the conditions must be such as to enable the painter to make that study conscientiously and well. Like all great artists, he knows that there is as much character in a hand as in a head; that among all the men in the world no two noses are exactly alike, and no general type will serve to represent them. He carries out the same principle in the minor parts of his pictures, and even when the interest of the work requires that these minor parts should be broadly indicated only, we may be sure that the indication is based on the individual char-

acter possessed by the objects, and that truth to facts is the foundation of all that we see.

Dagnan takes little part in the discussions of the groups in the art-world of Paris and the divisions of coteries. He followed his friends from the old Salon to the Champs de Mars when the split came about in 1890, but he lives apart from the strife of the schools. More like an artist of the early Renaissance than a Parisian of to-day, he lives for his art, and finds his pleasure in his work and in the companionship of a few intimate friends. One of these is Gustave Courtois, the well-known painter, who was a fellow-student at the Beaux-Arts, and another



PAINTED BY DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

"IN THE FOREST."

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRAUN & CO.

of them was Bastien. We can easily understand that the great artist who painted those wonderful portraits of his grandfather and of his mother, "The Haymakers," and "Jeanne Darc," would admire the work of his confrère Dagnan, and that their similarity of artistic aim would draw them together even without personal sympathy. But a strong attachment existed between them, and they were most intimate friends.

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II.

PASCAL ADOLPHE JEAN DAGNAN-BOUVERET was born in Paris January 7, 1852. His father, going to Brazil to engage in commerce, took his family with him, and there Dagnan's mother died when he was only six years old. His father then sent him and his brother back to France, and he went to live with his grand-

father, M. Bouveret, at Melun. He was brought up by him, and, following a not uncommon practice in France, Dagnan added to his name that of his mother's family. M. Bouveret, who was an old officer of the army of Napoleon I., had acquired a modest but comfortable competence, and sent Dagnan to the College of Melun, where he obtained his education during the ten years from 1858 to 1868. About the time he finished his studies, his father, who had remained in Brazil, offered him a chance to go into business with him; but Dagnan refused this offer, expressing his firm purpose to become a painter. His father thereupon cut off all financial aid. Assisted by his grandfather, however, he entered the *École des Beaux-Arts* under the instruction of M. Gérôme in 1869. "Depuis, à part quelques voyages en Brésil (1874), en Italie (1882), en Hollande et Belgique, en Allemagne et en Algérie (1888)," the painter writes me, "mon existence est d'une platitude extrême, toute consacrée à mon travail." He worked in the *Beaux-Arts* until 1876, when he won the second Grand Prix de Rome, a high academic honor, but, fortunately perhaps, not carrying with it, like the first prize, a residence in Rome, at the government's expense, at the French Academy. Had he gone there, his individuality might have been restrained, and we might not have witnessed the development of the real Dagnan so soon. But I fancy that no adverse circumstances, and no uncongenial surroundings, could long have kept him from following his bent.

The first picture exhibited by Dagnan was "Atlanta," at the Salon of 1875, and though it attracted some attention, it revealed no originality on the part of the artist. "Orpheus," which followed in 1876, may also be passed over without comment, the first indication of individual feeling appearing in the "Manon Lescaut" in 1878. "The Wedding-Party at the Photographer's" (1879) brought the artist into prominence, and "The Accident" (1880) achieved for him a settled reputation as a skilful, thoughtful, and individual painter. "The Blessing" (1882) placed him definitively in the first rank. His first "recompense" was a third-class medal at the Salon of 1878 for "Manon Lescaut." At the Salon of 1880 for "The Accident" he was awarded a medal of the first class. He was made chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1885, received the Medal of Honor in painting at the Salon of 1889 for his picture, "Breton Women at the Pardon," and at the Universal Exposition the same year was awarded one of the grand prizes for the collective exhibition of his works. In 1892 he was made officer of the Legion of Honor. He has received gold medals at international exhibitions at Munich, Vienna, and Ghent, and is a member of the fine arts academies of Munich, Stock-

holm, and Berlin. Though a *sociétaire* of the Society of French Artists, under whose direction the "Old Salon" is held at the Palais de l'Industrie in the Champs Elysées, he is more intimately connected with the National Society of Fine Arts, which holds the "new Salon" in the galleries erected at the Champ de Mars for the exhibition of 1889, and in 1893 he exhibited there two pictures—"In the Forest" and "In the Fields."¹

III.

It is one thing to learn the grammar of the art of painting, and another and very different thing to make good use of the knowledge afterward. Any young student with sufficient natural ability to learn may with patience, intelligence, and hard work become proficient in the *métier*; but to express what one feels depends on qualities of brain and temperament. Indeed, as study to acquire the art of painting is study to educate the eye, what a man will paint after his eye is trained to a just sense of form, proportion, and color, will be decided by what his imagination prompts him to portray or interpret. Many a clever man, after acquiring the knowledge of how to look at nature, has continued all his life to paint what are veritably no more than school studies. Others who have acquired the knowledge even not so well have been able, by their superior faculty for perceiving what is most interesting in nature, and by their deeper insight into the character of things, to paint pictures that, if technically not so good, have greater human interest. But the man who is endowed with an excellent sense of form and color, who faithfully devotes himself to the hard work necessary to develop them,

¹ The principal works of P. A. J. Dagnan-Bouveret are: 1875, "Atlanta" (Melun Museum); 1876, "Orpheus"; 1878, "Manon Lescaut" (a replica belongs to the Hon. Levi P. Morton, New York); 1879, "The Wedding-Party at the Photographer's" (Lyons Museum); 1880, "The Accident" (owned by Mr. W. T. Walters, Baltimore, Maryland); 1882, "La Bénédiction," or "The Blessing" (owned by M. Tretiakoff, Moscow); 1883, "Vaccination" (owned by Mr. Turner, London, England); 1884, "Hamlet and the Grave-Diggers"; 1885, "Horses at the Watering-Trough" (Luxembourg Gallery, Paris); "Madonna" (Pinakothek, Munich); "Madonna" (owned by Mr. T. S. Clarke, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; engraved in *THE CENTURY* for December, 1892); 1886, "The Consecrated Bread" (Luxembourg Gallery, Paris); 1887, "The Pardon" (owned by Mr. George F. Baker, New York); 1888, "La Bernoise" (owned by Mr. John G. Johnson, Philadelphia); "Young Breton Peasant" (owned by Mr. Potter Palmer, Chicago, Illinois); 1889, "Breton Women at the Pardon" (owned by M. Engel-Gros, Basel, Switzerland); "Madonna" (engraved in *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE*, January, 1890); 1891, "The Conscripts" (Chamber of Deputies, Paris); 1893, "In the Forest"; and "In the Fields" (owned by M. Constant Coquelin, Paris); twenty to thirty portraits (including a beautiful one of Mrs. George F. Baker of New York), and some small single figures.—EDITOR.



PAINTED BY DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRAUN & CO.

“THE CONSECRATED BREAD.”

and who is at the same time gifted with qualities of head and heart, is the one who will become the great artist. Such a man is Dagnan. He could never paint the pictures he has painted if he had not studied as he did in the school with an intense determination to render on his canvas or drawing-paper the exact and literal appearance of things as he saw them in the model before him. He could not robe that truth in such attractive form in his pictures if he had not the technical force fully to express facts in nature as he finds them, and he could not express the truth that the combination of these facts reveals without the most thorough study of every one of them in the aspect in which they presented themselves to him. Further than this, with the most perfect technical equipment he could attain, he penetrates the superficial aspects of nature, and, like a man who comes to feel instinctively the thoughts in the mind of another person with whom he is in intimate relation, he arrives at a sympathetic knowledge of what is inside. It may be no more than the sleeve of a jacket, but its wrinkles and folds have for him a distinctive character. He does not dissect like the surgeon; he analyzes, reasons, and forms conclusions with the gentle intelligence of a friend. Peasant at his toil, or Breton woman at her devotions, when Dagnan has painted them for us, we feel that he has felt their thoughts.

His style is far less synthetic than that of Millet, and it is somewhat less naïve than that of Bastien. This delicious quality of naïveté, that so often escapes a painter of great technical skill, is present in Dagnan's best work. Very little of it is to be found in "The Wedding-Party at the Photographer's," where there is an evident confidence shown in the way the picture is painted, to meet difficulties and to vanquish them. In "The Accident" this confidence is less apparent, and the picture is by so much better than "The Wedding-Party"; in "The Blessing" it has almost vanished. There is just enough of it left to hold the interest of the spectator to the technical excellence of the work, and not too much to cause him to think of the means of expression. This timidity before nature (I call it timidity for lack of a better word, meaning by it an artist's fear that he cannot, well as he may paint, paint well enough to do justice to nature) is apparent in most of Bastien's work. In the portrait of his mother, for instance, it shows in every touch of the brush seeking to render the subtlety of expression in the face, in the beautiful drawing of the mouth, in the almost indecisive way in which the line and form are felt. It is a quality that distinguishes the best art of the kind to which the work of Bastien and Dagnan belongs, and it is not one that needs to be sought for in looking

at a picture. If it is present at all, it communicates its charm unknowingly. Such a charm is in the work of Holbein, in that of some of the Dutch masters, as Terburg or Van der Meer of Delft, and it pervades that wonderful masterpiece by Rembrandt in the Louvre, "The Supper at Emmaus." The chief points of technical excellence in Dagnan's work are first, his drawing, which, while without nervous quality, is delicately felt, irreproachably correct, and faithful to detail; second, sympathetic and refined color-schemes of more depth and of more variety than are usually found in the work of men who are essentially draftsmen, and give such careful attention to form as he does; third, frank, simple, and unobtrusive brush-work; and, fourth, good composition. In composition his originality is remarkable; for while his groups are unconventional, and the point of view taken by the painter in most of his pictures seems to be a novel one, and in the hands of an artist with a less well-developed sense of symmetry would incline sometimes to eccentricity, his art of arranging his figures on the canvas to give an impression of naturalness is so great that the effect is always agreeable, and impresses by its unity of ensemble. His technical faults, judging his work by an ideal standard, are a tendency at times to "breadiness" of facture, and, in his out-of-door pictures, a slight lack of atmosphere or envelop. His methods in composition are well shown in the "Breton Women at the Pardon," and in "In the Forest," and the quality of his exquisite drawing is especially well exemplified in the heads of the women in the church in "The Consecrated Bread," in "La Bernoise," and in some of his small single figures, which are comparable only to the works of the Dutch masters.

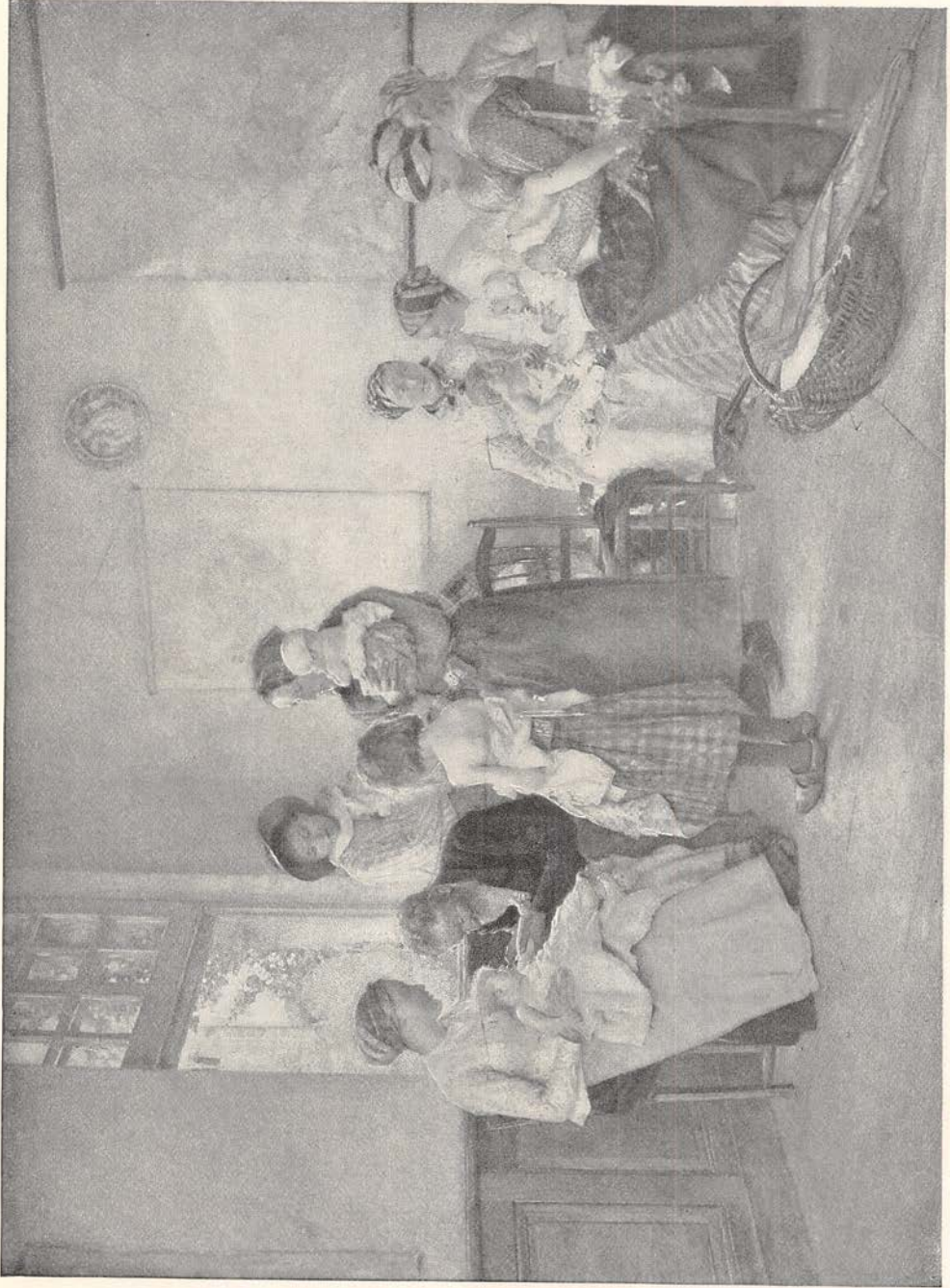
The scene of "The Blessing" is taken from the life of the French peasantry, and shows a young couple who are about to leave the father's house for the church, receiving the parents' blessing before their marriage. The young man is kneeling on the floor at the left of the picture, in profile to the spectator, and the bride, with the veil falling over her shoulders, is at his right hand and a little in advance. The father and mother, who are standing a little farther to the left, are dressed in clothes kept for such great occasions, and at the back of the room behind the long white-draped table, where the feast will soon be spread, are the friends who are to assist at the ceremony — young girls in white, with here and there a colored ribbon, and sturdy-looking men, sunburnt and brown in contrast with their white linen; and about all, the warm glow of the sunlight, veiled by the white muslin curtains at the windows, colors the plastered walls, and the wooden rafters of the ceiling, with tints of amber, opal, and blue. Dagnan



PAINTED BY DIGMAN-BOUVERET.

“THE BLESSING.”

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRUNN & CO.



PAINTED BY DAGNAN-BOUVERET.

‘ VACCINATION. ’

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRAUN & CO.

was never more happy in his choice of a subject than in this, and has never more admirably rendered, nor with such delicate appreciation, the subtle values of light and air. In the figures of the young people, the old man, the good mother, and the guests, in every line of the faces and turn of the bodies, there is something expressed that adds its part to the beauty of the picture as a whole. Without a particle of affectation, or over-insistence on the sentimental side of the scene, without a vestige of appeal to the literary sense, he gives us a picture full of poetry, and sound, fresh, and charming from the artistic point of view. In the "Vaccination," a scene in one of the large rooms in the municipal building of a provincial town, where mothers, with their children in their arms, and a doctor, the personification of the traditions of the *médecin de province*, are grouped, there is equal knowledge, the same sure, frank, well-felt modeling as in "The Blessing," and agreeable, quiet color. But to describe, even in the most summary way, the pictures by Dagnan that deserve as much praise as these is more than space will permit. "The Pardon," one of his pictures owned in this country, is one of the finest of his renderings of Breton character, and the "Breton Women at the Pardon" must be passed with a mere mention that it is one of the finest of his works, and the one perhaps that has given him the most renown. So, too, "In the Forest," the picture which was exhibited last year in Paris, and of which those who have seen it can speak only with the highest praise for the rugged but gentle sentiment expressed in the scene, where a party of woodcutters, resting after the noonday meal, are listening to one of their number who plays the violin, must be thus briefly referred to. Even in a reproduction in black and white it shows how eloquently, and with what simple pathos, the painter has told an idyl of the woods. Dagnan, whether it be in one of his most important compositions, in a simple, single figure of a peasant, such as the one owned by Mr. Potter Palmer of Chicago, which represents a young man holding a taper, or in such a portrait of a lady as the one he painted in 1889, and which belongs to Mr. George F. Baker of New York, is always the same sincere painter. His talent and his skill are indisputably great. In this present day, when insincerity and superficiality parade themselves in the exhibitions, and too often receive from the world consideration they do not deserve; when "fads" and experiments are leading many a good man in art into devious paths; when the rush for notoriety and quick success almost excludes from view those who are content to strive in an honest way to achieve that which they know is true and good; when Fame cuts capers, and casts her laurels all too carelessly, it is more than gratifying to find such a man as Dagnan steadily pursuing his ideal, regardless of clamor and strife, and remaining faithful to the principles that have made all the good art in the world. There are other men in the French school as solid as he, fortunately, and every one of them is an influence for good. When the dust behind the *fin-de-siècle* chariot shall have cleared away, we shall find the work of such men as Dagnan standing like sign-posts on the road to point the way to truth.

William A. Coffin.

MINORCHORD.

I.

THE flowers have their bold bees to woo them;
 The brooks have their fresh rains to feed them;
 The nights have their stars to o'erstrew them;
 The dawns have their pure dews to bead them:
 Yet my steps go darkling,
 With but the dim sparkling
 Of memory's lamp, love, to lead them!

II.

The sea hath its waves to make sheen with;
 The winds have their music to sigh with;
 The groves have their boughs to be green with;
 The birds have their fleet wings to fly with:
 But I, in my lonely
 Allegiance, have only
 This deep-wounded heart, love, to die with!

Edgar Fawcett.



ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. BRAUN & CO.

"LA BERNOISE." PAINTED BY DAGNAN-BOUVERET.