

JEAN-CHARLES CAZIN.

BY WILLIAM A. COFFIN.

WITH THREE PICTURES BY JEAN-CHARLES CAZIN.

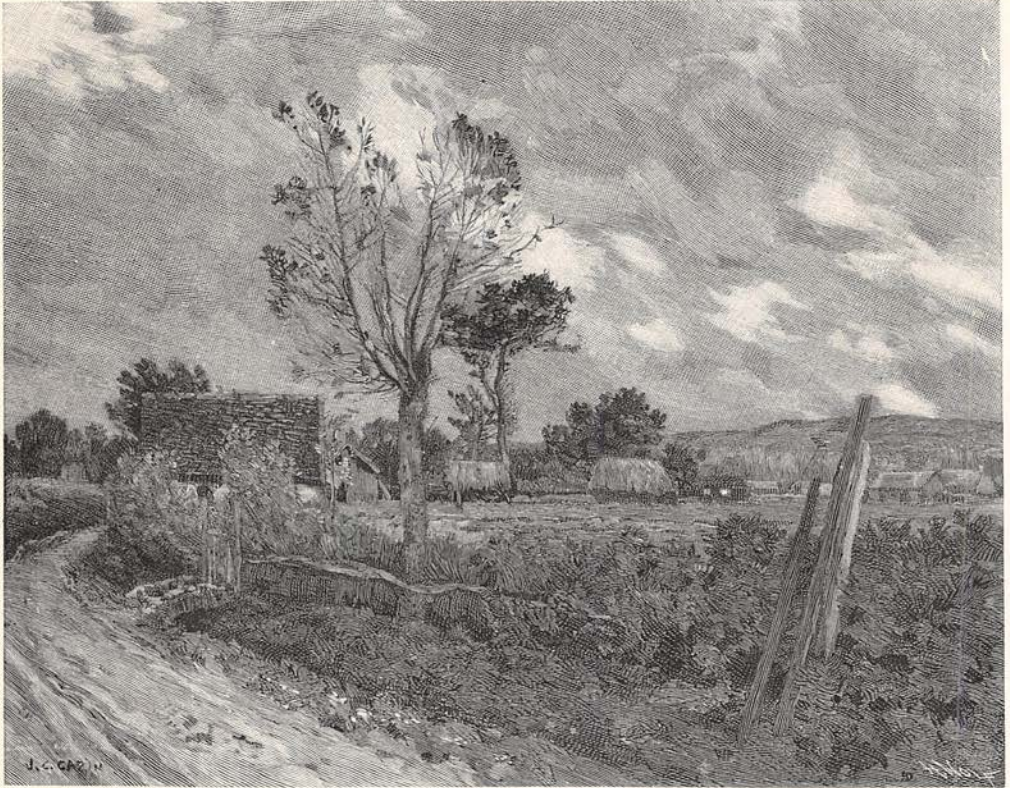
ONE day in November, 1893, when I was with M. Cazin in the galleries where his exhibition was held in New York, he told me a little anecdote. His father was a physician, and throughout his lifetime had found interest and pleasure in making notes about botany, investigating the curative properties of plants, and recording the results of his observations. At last he made up these notes into a book. M. Cazin himself, one day in Paris, some time after his father's death, went into a chemist's, and asked if he could safely take a certain remedy for some ill that was troubling him at the time. «I'll tell you in a moment,» said the pharmacist, and consulted a book. «Yes; you can take it, certainly,» he said; «it's in (Cazin.)» «And so I found,» said M. Cazin to me, «that my father, taking his notes, had made a standard work

(*un ouvrage classique*). I have, in my painting, pursued about the same method. Understand me,» he went on; «I did not start out to paint saying to myself, (I will be an independent); but when, after a certain number of years, I looked back at what I had accomplished, I found myself one.»

Here, indeed, is the key to the intentions and purpose of his art. Nature may be looked at by everybody. M. Cazin loves it, studies it, is impressed by this or that effect, makes his notes, thinks it over, gets his impression clearly pictured in his mind, and then paints it. «Take one of my pictures of night,» he explained; «it is *one* night—some night that I have seen something»; by which he means that he depends on a definite impression to make a picture. If it be a night subject, it will not be a summary of a number of im-

pressions of different nights, but the reproduction of a particular effect seen and noted and kept apart from other effects similar, perhaps, in a general way, but different from this one in the distinctive phase of nature that he felt himself impelled to interpret. «If it were not that I feared it might be thought pretentious,» added M. Cazin, «I should have

leon from 1805 to 1813, and was a surgeon in the dragoons. Jean-Charles Cazin was born at Samer, May 25, 1841. When he was only five years old, in 1846, the three generations covered a century. His studies in his youth were directed toward the profession of medicine; for it was intended that he should be, like his forebears, a physician. But while pur-



ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

THE ROAD TO THE VILLAGE.

OWNED BY FREDERIC BONNER.

placed at the head of my catalogue this sentence from Michel de Montaigne: «Entirely unfettered both in nature and in art, I have gone forward in my path and at the gait that I willed» («Extrêmement libre et par nature et par art, j'ai marché aussi avant et le pas qu'il m'a plu»).» It is easy to see in his pictures that M. Cazin has not been deterred from trying to paint anything that appealed to him by the thought of conventions in art, or by any laws that others may have laid down. Yet he is a most logical and consistent painter. He is a poet as well.

The Cazins belong in Samer, in the department of Pas-de-Calais. Jean Cazin, grandfather of the artist, was born there in 1746. His father, François-Joseph Cazin, born at Samer in 1789, made the campaigns of Napo-

leone, and was a surgeon in the dragoons. Jean-Charles Cazin was born at Samer, May 25, 1841. When he was only five years old, in 1846, the three generations covered a century. His studies in his youth were directed toward the profession of medicine; for it was intended that he should be, like his forebears, a physician. But while pur-

suing his medical studies in Paris, at about the age of nineteen, he determined to take up the pursuit of art, and entered the school of Lecoq de Boisbaudran. He studied also with Barye, and made drawings of the animals at the Jardin des Plantes. A young woman who was a pupil in a school directed by Mme. Rosa Bonheur was working under Barye at the same time, but separately, and M. Cazin had not the pleasure of knowing her. He met her afterward, however, and she became his wife. I may refer here briefly to Mme. Cazin's position as an artist. Her work both in painting and in sculpture is very well known in Europe, and is of most sympathetic quality and positive merit. She is specially clever in her work in pastel, and her pictures, something like those of her husband in gen-

eral intent and compass, bear a distinctive character that is entirely personal. At Berck-sur-Mer there is a monument to M. Cazin's brother, and the pedestal, as well as the sculptured group, is the work of Mme. Cazin. The monument is signed by her both as sculptor and architect. Mme. Cazin received an honorable mention for her work at the Salon of 1885, and a medal of the first class at the Universal Exposition of 1889. Their son, J. M. Michel Cazin, is an artist who sometimes paints pictures, but is best known as an etcher. Eighteen of his etchings, including reproductions and original subjects, were exhibited in New York in one of the galleries where his father's exhibition was held, and were notable for straightforward, technical methods and considerable cleverness of design. He was awarded an honorable mention by the jury at the Universal Exposition of 1889.

M. Cazin's first picture was a study of his father's library at Samer. It is now in the Museum of Boulogne, and he says it compares well with his later work. The fact that it does bears testimony to the sincerity of his painting from the very beginning. He exhibited pictures in the Salons of 1864 and 1865, and for the following five or six years devoted himself to teaching at Paris and Tours. From 1871 to 1875 he spent most of his time in England, Holland, and Italy, and during this period was engaged in making artistic faience both in England and in France. M. Cazin, wherever he found himself, and whatever might be his occupation, during these years, was making his "notes," and trying various experiments in methods and processes of painting. He expresses himself with facility in a number of mediums—oil-painting, pastel, water-color, combinations of pastel and wax, and modeling in clay, and painting for the kiln. In all of his work the decorative sentiment is pronounced, and appears as a factor of the first importance in the ensemble, considered either from the point of view of line or from that of color.

It was about 1879–80 that the high quality of M. Cazin's work was generally taken note of by the public. He had exhibited in the Salons of 1877, 1878, and 1879; and for his two pictures in the Salon of 1880—"Ishmael," placed soon afterward in the Luxembourg Gallery, and "Tobit," now in the Museum of Lille—he received a first-class medal. The decoration of the Legion of Honor was conferred on him in 1882, and he was made an officer of the order in 1889. He was a member of the jury for fine arts at the Universal

Exposition of 1889, and one of the founders of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, which holds the "new Salon" at the Champ de Mars. It was owing to his suggestion that the society includes in its annual exhibitions objects of art not classed as painting or sculpture, and which include the productions of isolated workers in metal and ceramics. Few of his pictures found their way to the United States until 1884 or 1885; but of late years few other French artists have obtained greater recognition from American amateurs, and in the exhibition of one hundred and twelve of his works at the galleries of the American Art Association in New York in 1893, sixty-eight were lent by American owners in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and other cities.

II.

Now that Corot, Daubigny, and Rousseau are gone, there are two painters (three, if you include Claude Monet) whose names one is apt to mention first in speaking of landscape-painting in France—Harpignies and Cazin. Harpignies is a much older man than Cazin, and his renown dates back to Daubigny's time. He is a master of form, and has long been a force in the development of landscape-painting, and much of what is best in it now is traceable to his influence, especially in regard to drawing and composition.

Cazin, on the other hand, is a colorist. He is not a colorist in the sense that Delacroix is, for his color-schemes are modified by the attenuating quality of atmospheric effects. He is more sensitive and refined than Delacroix, and more nearly resembles Millet, though his gamut is simpler and much more diversified in detail. His color-schemes are invariably quiet and reserved; and though contrasts and the counterplay exist, they are so subdued as not to attract attention to themselves. They are effective in the best sense of the word, because they make themselves felt only in the ensemble. Speaking generally, I do not think M. Cazin's pictures of daytime effects are so distinguished in color as those which depict evening or night. Tenderness in painting is a dangerous attribute, which in the hands of a man who lacks a certain sturdiness of temperament becomes mere sweetening. M. Cazin is not without this sturdiness, and it pervades his best work. The lack of it is most noticeable in effects of sunlight, where blue skies, green grass, and yellow grain-fields, under his hand, lose something of their frank brightness.



EXHIBITED AT THE CHAMP DE MARS, 1855.

ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

CANAL IN ARTOIS.

OWNED BY L. CHRIST DELMONICO.

Daubigny treated such effects uncompromisingly. Monet delights in their vividness, and even exaggerates. M. Cazin softens them in the attempt to escape the glare, and sometimes his interpretations are a trifle too tidy.

A gray day is more in accord with his temperament, and how well he can paint a gray sky is shown in the «Wheat Harvest» (No. 87 in the New York catalogue). How well he knows how to envelop a landscape in atmosphere on such a day, how admirably he can place a figure in it so that it shall neither usurp the importance of the landscape as a landscape, nor appear merely as an accessory, may be seen in the «Madeleine au Désert,» a beautiful picture, with its wide valley and hills covered with dark patches of forest green.

Some of the very best of M. Cazin's works are pictures in which he introduces figures. Certainly no two pictures by him are more deservedly celebrated than the «Ishmael» and the «Judith—the Departure.» Neither has been seen in the United States. Both may be properly called figure compositions, and yet in both the landscape is much more than a background or setting for the figures. Landscape and figures are treated as component parts of a harmonious whole, in which every note of color has its proper place and its proper strength.

In the «Ishmael» we see Hagar and her son in a barren waste of sand-hills, with patches of herbage growing here and there, and in the distance the line of a forest. There are rosy half-burnt-out clouds in the sky, such as often appear at the close of a hot, dry day, and Hagar sits, tired and disconsolate, on the ground. She has left Ishmael beside a clump of bushes, not wishing to see him die; but the angel appears, and she sees a spring bubble at his feet, and understands that succor has come. This picture presents a fine color-harmony, in which the bluish gown of Hagar, the white robe of the angel, the pale tones of the sandy desert and the evening sky, are admirably held together. It cannot be said that the figures are given prominence at the expense of the landscape; and yet the landscape, while impressing us as beautifully simple and true, does not detract from the interest felt in the personages in the dramatic scene.

The French government ordered from M. Cazin, several years ago, a series of pictures to be reproduced in tapestry at the Gobelins' studios. They are to represent the story of Judith, and the first composition, depicting

her departure from the town of Bethulia to go to the camp of Holofernes, was exhibited at the Salon of 1884. The artist, in treating this subject in religious history, discarded all archæological traditions, and placed his figure of Judith in the act of leaving one of the gates in the wall of a medieval town. The other figures, her servant and the people looking on, are costumed with little regard for historical accuracy. The subject is treated, first of all, from the purely picturesque side of art, and what might seem incongruities in another man's work here seem so natural that the question of archæological exactness is not even thought of. In painting the departure of Judith, the artist seems to have imagined a scene from impressions received somewhere, then to have waited till the complete impression was clear in his mind, and to have painted this vision. It is evidently the result of mental processes the reverse of those that move such scholars as M. Gérôme or M. Cormon. M. Cazin is perfectly well informed, but his picture cannot be a reconstruction. «Nobody could be more at a loss what to do than I before a bare canvas,» he said to me, one day, meaning that he cannot sit down and construct a picture from a starting-point merely. He must have a clear, definite impression of something he has either really seen, or that, derived from impressions received through his eyes, he seems to see complete in his fancy.

For his landscapes M. Cazin chooses the simplest of motives, and delights in rendering passing effects. Quiet evening skies over hill and plain, a cottage on the moors at twilight, the blue vault of heaven and the stars at night, moonlight falling on white walls and casting mysterious shadows on the village road, the moon rising through misty clouds over the sea, form the subjects that he uses over and over again, but in each one there is something that makes it different from every other. His effects of night seem to be painted in too high a key, sometimes, to be entirely truthful. I do not forget, in saying this, that the painting of such effects is a matter that depends on relative values. One painter may render a given effect in a cold key, and another in a warm one; and both may be true to nature if every part of the picture harmonizes with every other part. One or two pictures of night by M. Cazin that I have seen, however, did not impress me at first glance as being night effects, but seemed rather those of the twilight hour, and one even looked like a

dull, gray day. But these are rare exceptions. I note them simply because M. Cazin's work shows that he has been more successful in painting night effects than any other painter. Eugène Lavielle, whose range was a narrower one than M. Cazin's, is about the only painter I can think of who has approached him in expressing truthful and

sidewalk of a paved roadway at the water's edge—is more complex, is equally delightful to the eye; and here again the painter's art, by sympathetic observation, presents to us a poem of the night that enchants by its verisimilitude.

In a small canvas, «Starlight Night» (No. 99 in the New York catalogue), we have an



ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

APPROACHING STORM. (CANAL ST.-OMER.)

OWNED BY A. M. DYERS.

poetical impressions of night. At the exhibition in New York in 1893 there was a picture called «Home by the Sea,» in which the foreground is occupied by grass-grown bluffs and a tall, squarely built house overlooking the ocean. The sky is veiled halfway to the top of the canvas by curtain-like clouds of gray, and above them rides the moon. There are lights in the house, and the feeling of space and vastness out of doors is contrasted with the thought of comfortable nooks within. This picture, of extreme sobriety in its color-scheme, does not attract at first glance, but it is soon seen to contain a great store of beauty. «Moonlight in Holland,» in which the motive—tall houses fronting a harbor, and a row of trees along the

attempt to paint a scene without the light of sun or moon. There is no doubt that a night scene in the country, with no light but that of the stars, cannot be represented in color. Anything like a reproduction of the relative values of the sky and the ground and trees results in no more than a piece of dark-colored canvas. But some artificial light may be introduced, so that something in the picture may be seen by it; and M. Cazin, in this instance, places a window with lamplight within at one side of his canvas, allows the light from it to fall in a checkered square on the pavement of a courtyard and to bring out by its indirect illumination a white wall at the other side. Thus a foreground is obtained that can be perfectly well seen. It

then becomes comparatively easy to get the just value of the sky, which does not appear now as the lightest part of the picture, as it is in the open country, and to put the stars in it so that they will keep their places. M. Cazin has done all this so well in this little canvas that the result is a picture of most subtle charm. It was exhibited at the first Salon at the Champ de Mars, and was greatly admired by Meissonier, who said he should like to have it for himself.

I might point out in a dozen other pictures by M. Cazin the different elements that contribute to their beauty and truth. In all of them, suffice it to say, truth is the predominant factor. Whatever the effect, whether fleeting, like the glow that colors the sky at evening, or constant for a time, like the silvery sheen of the moonlight on the sea, M. Cazin notes it as it appears to him, and tries to paint it so that all other things in the composition he imagines for his canvas may seem in harmony with it. As to detail, it may be said that his *facture* is singularly suave, while it does not fall into mere softness. At times his brush-work is more vigorous than at others; but his hand is always held in bounds, and never slips into passages that might be reproached with lack of sureness

on one side, or too vehement brusqueness on the other.

When the municipal council, whose duty it was to give the commissions to the artists chosen to decorate the halls and chambers of the new Hôtel-de-Ville of Paris, decided on the places to be apportioned to each artist, some one said to Cazin that he would do well to confer with one of his brother-artists, who had the space next to his to decorate, for he believed this artist intended to use a color-scheme of red. The well-meaning adviser feared lest one of Cazin's delicate color-harmonies might suffer by contrast with its fiery neighbor. But Cazin told him—as I have heard the story—that he had no objection to red or any other «note» in his vicinity, and he thought the best way was for each one to do what he liked. If you look in at the Hôtel-de-Ville now, you will see his «Le Dimanche des Parisiens,» a party of people enjoying a game of blindman's-buff at a picnic, more than holding its own by its very simplicity and unobtrusiveness. Herein may be found the charm of his art. It is personal, refined, and sure to appeal to all those who perceive that, in painting, simple beauty is more potent to move than audacious display of skill or flights of imagination that depart in the smallest degree from truth.

THE WANDERER.

BY WILLIAM CRANSTON LAWTON.

AT drowsy dawn I left the Gate—so very long ago,
Whether that home be memory or dream I hardly know.

The cloud-hung visions of the morn were far more real then
Than now are thronging city streets and cries of eager men.

The hours ere yet the sun was high were like eternities,
But now how swift the shadows run, how near the darkness is!

Ah, well! 'T is aye the happiest day comes swift to even-song;
With merrier comrades never yet did pilgrim pass along.

The paths that widest seem to part still winding turn and meet;
Perchance they do but homeward lead again our wandering feet.

Familiar faces vanish, but the voices vibrate still,
And nothing now seems far away, at the ending of the hill.

To one warm hand alone I cling, as fast the night grows late,
And crave that we may come at last together to the Gate.