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JEAN-LEON GEROME.

BY EUGENE BENSON.

Gérôme is the most successful, and perhaps the most learned, of living French painters. Not yet an old man, he has reached the culmination of his powers, and has leapfrogged the honors that Fortune yields to artistic talent. He has *interested* the mind of a people of social writers and historians more than any painter that has ever lived; and, among the artists of any generation, it would be difficult to find a more scrupulous and exact draughtsman, a more elaborate and scientific picture maker. His is an example of a scientific mind supplemented with the dramatic sense, and he has the executive talent of a thoroughly-trained eye and hand. He lacks the sense of color, and the generous touch of a great painter; he lacks the tenderness of a poet; he is, however, an artist of consummate skill and uncommon gifts; he is remarkable for historical researches and constructive genius in the domain of history; he falls to command the tribute of tears, which only the masters of our hearts can summon at will. Gérôme is master of the human intellect, but not of the human heart—Mind, the peasant-painter, reigns over the last.

The narrative of the historian, the story of the traveler, the fifth act of a French romantic play, are not more interesting, more enchanting, than the pictures which Gérôme has painted during the last twenty years. To-day, criticism is very well instructed concerning the merits and defects of his work. If we were writing for the French public, it would be difficult to say anything that has not been said about Gérôme; but his genius is far from being an exhausted theme on this side of the Atlantic. The first indisputable fact concerning Gérôme is that he is a scrupulous artist in prose; he seems as much a work of art as his dramatic artist in his conceptions. A thorough examination of his works would lead us to the statement of the divergence of modern from ancient art, and exhibit the most striking characteristics of the modern mind. Edmond About says his great renown commenced with the "adorable pen-and-ink drawings, called, like a cemetery of corks," which was painted in 1847 or '46. It has been said of Gérôme that he recommenced to work for glory every morning, and counts as nothing the works he has already made—hence his indefatigable and varied studies; hence he has never contented himself with pictures of one epoch and people, like Meissonier, but has gone from Greek boys to hardcoarse of the desert, from Louis XI. to Rembrandt, from the Roman Circus to *Le Tapeyre*, from the Bois de Boulogne to the Danube. But the most direct way to inform one of the nature and extent of Gérôme's work is an artist, is to enumerate the titles of his famous pictures—and almost every picture he has painted is celebrated.

One of his earliest pictures represented a Madonna that out-Raphaeled Raphael in self-conscious maidenliness and repose." Since 1847, he has constantly exhibited pictures of the highest pictures:—"Anacreon and Love drunk;" "A Greek Interior;" "Souvenir of Italy;" "Pestum;" "Italy;" "Study of a Dog;" "A Keeper of the Herd;" "The Age of Augustus and the Birth of Christ;" "Cock of the Masked Ball;" "Memnon and Sesostris;" "The Comedians;" "The Two Augurs;" and the chance of the vase recently purchased by the London Exhibition, ordered by the minister of state for the manufactory of Sèvres." Better known is his "Death of Cæsar;" his "Roman Amphitheatre in the Time of Vitellius;" his "Dancing-girl, Pallanza;" his "Turkish Butcher." Equally celebrated is his "Phryne before the Tribunal;" his "Greek Cock-fighting Alcibiades at the House of Aspasia;" his portrait of "Rachel as the Goddess of Tragedy;" his "Cleopatra before Cæsar."

But enumerating the titles of Gérôme's paintings does little toward furnishing the mind with an adequate conception of the extraordinary complexity and instructiveness of his varied works. We are not now speaking of the artistic enjoyment to be derived from the actual pictures—they are power in the pleasure which is given by color and ideal beauty than the mere fact of any pictures can be an speaking of the social and historical instruction which they give to the mind; we are saying that no one learns over contained more of the truth of past or distant life, that no painters ever more scrupulously has relative of history or travel. Assuredly, Gérôme is an ordinary man. Far from being a poet, he lacks the tenderness of a poet; he is, however, an artist of consummate skill and uncommon gifts; he is remarkable for historical researches and constructive genius in the domain of history; he fails to command the tribute of tears, which only the masters of our hearts can summon at will. Gérôme is master of the human intellect, but not of the human heart—Mind, the peasant-painter, reigns over the last.

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