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FITZROY CARRINGTON, Editor

CHARLES JACQUE
(1813-1894)

BY

ROBERT J. WICKENDEN

Author of "Jean-François Millet," "Le Père Corot," "The Men of 1830,"
"Charles-François Daubigny," etc., etc.



PUBLISHED FOR
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Charles Jacque

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CHARLES JACQUE



PAYSAGE; HIVER. (GUFFREY No. 50)

CHARLES JACQUE

(1813–1894)

BY ROBERT J. WICKENDEN

CHARLES JACQUE might be called “the Admirable Crichton” of the Barbizon school, for, in addition to his mastery of etching and painting, he had been a notary’s clerk, a map-engraver, a soldier, an illustrator of comic papers and serious books, a chicken-fancier and author of one of the best manuals on the subject; while later at Croisic in Brittany he manufactured excellent specimens of carved Gothic furniture. To crown all, after succeeding more or less in these and other enterprises, he ended his life in comfortable bourgeois fashion, as *proprietaire* of the fine apartment building on the Boulevard Clichy, where he had his last studio.

Yet whatever his active brain and hand found to do, he was above all an artist,—and one of the most

remarkable in the French school of the nineteenth century. The very breadth and variety of his talents may have obscured to a certain degree the luster of his special achievements. But this may be safely left for time to rectify, and out of the immense quantity of work he accomplished, enough will be selected to give him the supreme place he deserves as an etcher and painter of rustic and pastoral subjects.

Jacque was a true *enfant de Paris*, having been born there on the 23d of May, 1813, not far from the Hôtel des Invalides. His school life was not marked by any special brilliance, nor did he stay long at college. His earliest manifestation of talent was shown in copies made from some lithographed landscapes by Coigniet, but this did not prevent his father from placing him in a notary's office. The family lived at this time in the Passage St. Antoine, and there he made the acquaintance of a young decorator of porcelain, Louis Cabat, who was afterward celebrated as a landscape painter, and became Director of the French School in the Villa Médicis at Rome. Cabat initiated his young friend into the greater world of art, and Jacque, who had in the meantime left the notary's office, to work for an engraver of maps, soon tried his 'prentice hand on an etching of a woman's head after Rembrandt, of which an example still exists in the splendid collection of Jacque's etchings presented by the late Samuel P. Avery to the New York Public Library. But whether from pure love of adventure or martial tastes, after the revolution of 1830 Jacque entered the Fifty-second Regiment of Infantry of the Line, where he remained five years, assisting at the siege of Antwerp and subsequent oper-



PAYSAGE; PERSONNAGES. (GUIFFREY No. 117)

Size of the original etching, $3\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ inches



PAYSAGE; TROUPEAU DE COCHONS. (GUIFFREY No. 62)

Size of the original etching, $4\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ inches



PAYSAGE; SAULES. (GUIFFREY No. 113)
Size of the original etching, $2\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ inches



PAYSAGE ET ANIMAUX. (GUIFFREY No. 82)
Size of the original etching, $2\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{8}$ inches

ations. It was here he met the Duke of Orléans, who was struck by his native wit, and Jacque's regimental duties were somewhat lightened through his ability in drawing, of which his superior officers often availed themselves.

His character sketches were in great demand, and after leaving the regiment he composed an odyssey of the soldier's life, entitled "Militariana, and the History of de la Ramée, ex-fusilier of the French army, from his entry into the service and before, till his death and after, related and drawn by Charles Jacque, ex-corporal of the Fifty-second of the Line." This ample title suggests the witty nature of the caricature which was published by Aubert in the Musée Philipon and is now very difficult to find. While a soldier he already had begun his career as an illustrator, working for Henriot, and afterward for Best, in the *Magasin Pittoresque*.

Freed from military service in 1836, he was called to England, where he worked on a "Picturesque Greece" and for an edition of Shakspeare. Like Holbein he composed a "Dance of Death," but returned to Paris before it was published, after about two years' stay in London.

Then followed a period of illustrating such works as *Paul et Virginie*, *Les Contes de Perrault*, *Les Chansons de Béranger*, and other publications. He contributed also to a "Picturesque Brittany," published by Coquebert and it is probable that this work increased his interest in French provincial and rustic life as fit subjects for his pencil.

These earlier years spent in the army, and afterward at London and Paris, constantly employed in

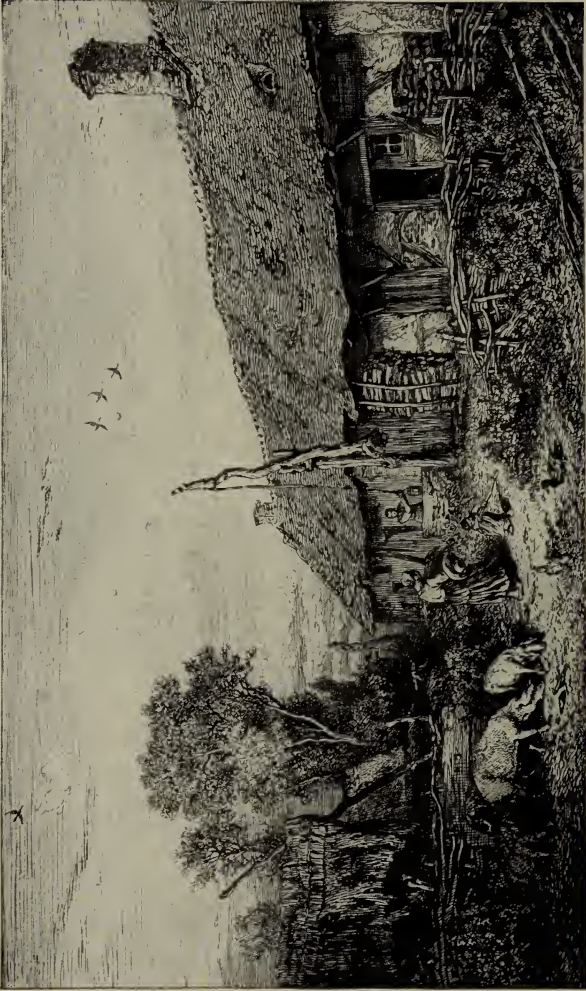
sketching and illustrating, developed in Jacque a wide knowledge of the world, besides giving him a facility in sketching and the use of line so essential to etching. It is an interesting comparison to note that Whistler began life as soldier-in-the-making at West Point, and also engraved maps for the coast survey at Washington, while the earlier sketches of both men were of military subjects. The romantic movement of 1830 in France brought with it a renewed admiration for Rembrandt and the Dutch painters who were masters of etching. Jacque turned to these for guidance and study as much by temperamental sympathy as from an inborn dislike for the formal and academic in art. His first essays with the needle after Rembrandt were followed by further copies and analysis of the works of Van Ostade, Hobbema, and Du Jardin as well as of the great Spanish naturalistic painter and etcher Ribera. He trained himself in the use of the point and mordants on copper, so that when his taste for rustic subjects fully declared itself, he was perhaps the most accomplished *eau-fortiste* in France.

His earlier plates were usually of small dimensions such as could be carried in the pocket, and among them are some so small that a strong magnifier is needed to appreciate their delicate detail. On the other hand, he now and then did a large plate, such as "Les Chanteurs," where the stroke is strong and bold.

A few plates were done at Montmartre, but in most of them he seems to have sought far-away corners in Burgundy and the provinces, where the architecture and the people were beyond the effect of Parisian and city influences.



TROUPEAU DE PORCS. (GUILFREY No. 85)
Size of the original etching, $5\frac{1}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ inches



PAYSAGE; MAISON DE PAYSANS. (GUILFREY No. 80)

Size of the original etching, 4 X 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches

Well equipped technically, he depicted the life of the countryside in all its antique charm, and during the early "forties" produced a number of masterly plates that betray in every line the deep interest Jacque felt in such picturesque subjects as he discovered on the farms, or about the cottages and courtyards, with their timbered walls and rustic inhabitants. His etchings of this period seem to take us back to an age when railways and automobiles were unthought of and to a land where such things as newspapers and books were left to *messieurs les curés, les notaires et les chatelains*.

I still remember the intense delight experienced when, as a student in the Quartier Latin, I first happened across some of these early proofs done at Cricey and thereabouts in 1843 and 1844. In their quality as etchings they seemed to recall the best examples of the seventeenth-century masters, while their subjects, by some subtle charm of composition and treatment, seemed to evoke the rural life of Old France in its most intimate and romantic aspects.

Concentrating his attention on the development of etching, Jacque undoubtedly rediscovered many forgotten processes, and became so adept in their use that he in a sense revived the art, and brought it again to the attention of painters as a means for working directly from nature or for translating their ideas into *estampes*. For this purpose nothing else can compare with etching, unless we except lithography, which has virtues of its own, but is less keenly precise in its results, as far as line is concerned, than those obtained by the needle-point on metal. I remember a morning spent with Whistler at his house on the rue

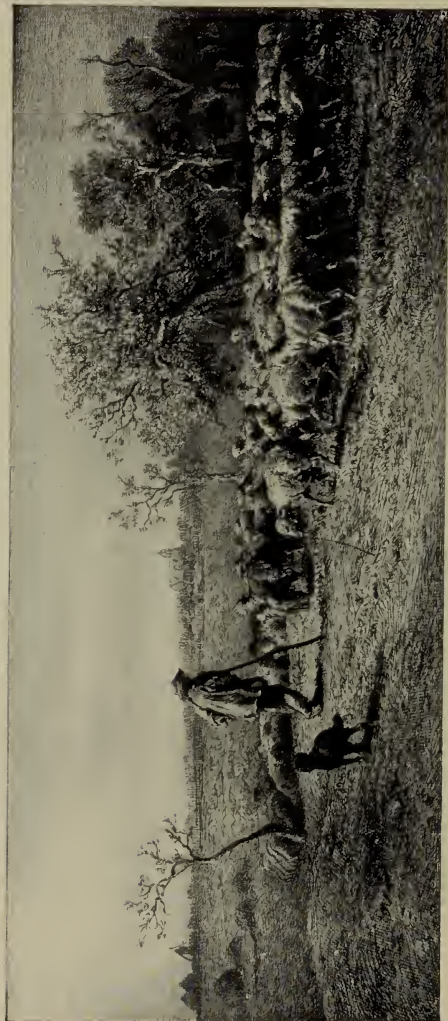
du Bac at Paris, when he opened his portfolios and entered into a discussion on the relative merits of etching and lithography, both of which he so well understood. "With the *crayon gras*," said Whistler, "a soft quality of touch and tone is possible which is the special charm of lithography; the relations of the crayon and the stone can produce a certain velvety effect in passing from the tenderest lights to the deepest blacks which is the peculiar advantage of the art, but when I work with a needle-point on copper, I feel that I am able to produce something akin to a fine lace of the utmost delicacy of detail!" It is impossible here to punctuate Whistler's words with the expressive movements of his head and hands, or to take up as he did examples from his portfolios to prove his statements, but it is certain that each art has its own possibilities and limits. We can see, too, that many of Jacque's most beautiful plates could not have been produced with any other tool than the etching-point, either used "dry" or subsequently "bitten in."

Lithography, invented by Senefelder in 1795, became "all the rage" with artists early in the nineteenth century. Jacque also did a number of lithographs, but felt that etching was more in accord with his temperament and the subjects he wished to treat, so without further regard for the prevailing fashion he set to work to perfect and revive the more ancient art.

He must therefore be considered as a pioneer of the renaissance of etching in the nineteenth century, and if others in France and elsewhere down to our own time have practised the art so effectively, it is largely due to Jacque's masterly initiative.



PAYSAGE; ORAGE. (GUIFFREY No. 248 B)
Size of the original, $6\frac{3}{8} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$ inches



L'ARRIVÉE AU CHAMP. (GUIFFREY No. 183)

Size of the original etching, $3\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ inches

Up to 1848 he had completed some three hundred etchings and dry-points, and as he advanced, figures and animals became more and more the important motives of his compositions. His skill in depicting that useful and picturesque animal the pig was so great that he was called "le Raphael des cochons," and certainly no artist before or since has created such masterpieces from these ever-hungry quadrupeds. Among many good plates Charles Blanc, Guiffrey, and Beraldi have considered the *Paysage: troupeau de porcs* as Jacque's chef-d'œuvre. It is of modest size, but the landscape with its leafless trees is full of air, and the sense of life and movement, as well as the effective composition of the active "rooters" accompanied by their herdsman, is from many points of view unexcelled.

Jacque soon began to make sheep and poultry an important part of his compositions. In "*Petits, Petits!*" some children are feeding chickens and *Pastorale* is an exquisite etching; of which the composition in sunlight and shadow, as well as the delicate drawing of the figures and sheep, are replete with life and poetic suggestion; it is technically perfect, and a number of exquisitely finished plates belong to this series. The very plenitude of Jacque's *œuvre*,—'t is said to comprise some five hundred examples,—has possibly lessened the appreciation of those collectors who make rarity rather than quality their objective, yet it is doubtful whether an absolutely complete collection of Jacque's etchings in the best states could now be made, for of some plates only one or two proofs were taken, and the few impressions of others would be exceedingly difficult to find.

As time advances, their true merit will be better understood. Few of the nineteenth-century etchers are more worthy of a place among the classical masters of the art; but to judge Jacque rightly we must see the proofs printed by himself or under his direction, as a certain number of the earlier plates were printed from by publishers beyond the artist's control.

As I have heard some people attribute Jacque's devotion to rustic art to the influence of Millet, it may be well to call attention to the fact that many of his earlier plates, possibly some hundreds, were executed years before he met the great Norman painter. At the time Jacque was occupied with them Millet was doing his mythological nudes, and other subjects à la Boucher and Watteau, of which the production was dictated by sheer necessity. The two masters met in 1848 introduced by Campredon, about which Jacque wrote a letter in 1891, acknowledging his appreciation of Millet's great powers. It was fitting that they should meet, and it is not too much to say that Jacque's etchings and studies of country life, added to his advice, may have strengthened Millet's determination, at this period, to devote himself wholly to rustic subjects.

Jacque's point of view tended toward the incidental and anecdotic, while Millet's art was always more subjective in character. The massive and statuesque composition of Millet's pictures affected many artists who saw them, Rousseau included, and no doubt Jacque was influenced in this regard. But taken all in all, it is probable that the acquaintance of the two masters was mutually beneficial. It was through Jacque too that Millet found Barbizon, and by their



UNE FERME. (GUIFFREY No. 189)

Size of the original etching, $5\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{7}{8}$ inches



BERGERIE. (GUIFFREY No. 204)

Size of the original etching, $4\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ inches



VACHES A L'ABREUVOIR. (GUIFFREY, SUPPLEMENT, No. 61)

Size of the original print, $9\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ inches

permanent settlement in this hamlet on the borders of the Fontainebleau Forest, it gained the distinction of naming a whole school of artists. Rousseau was already settled there, but Corot lived mostly at Ville d'Avray, Dupré at l'Isle Adam, and Daubigny at Auvers; yet these artists with Diaz, Daumier, and Barye, Troyon and others made it often a common meeting-place or at least have been included in the so-called "Barbizon School," of which Millet was the acknowledged chief.

Yet Jacque and Millet stumbled upon the place almost by accident. The revolutionary period of 1849, and the cholera invasion from which Jacque had suffered, decided them in their plan to leave Paris, and as Millet had a few hundreds of francs in hand received from the Minister of Fine Arts for his picture *The Haymakers* he joined forces with Jacque, and off they started for Fontainebleau with their families. Jacque said he had heard of a place somewhere near there of which the name ended in "-zon," though he could not remember the rest. After wandering in the forest for some time they came across a woodcutter, who replied to their inquiries that *Barbi-* "zon" might be the name. Jacque's enthusiasm was unbounded and he broke out with "That 's the place; I told you, Millet, we should find the promised land!" They went to Barbizon with their families and soon settled in peasants' houses,—Millet, for the rest of his life,—and both men here found the material and surroundings their tastes and art required.

Jacque's activity was irrepressible, and soon after the settlement at Barbizon he developed the enterprise of chicken-farming, recording his experiences in a

book "Le Poulailleur," which is still considered a standard work on the subject, and which he embellished with drawings from his own hand that were engraved on wood by Adrien Lavieille.

"A number of people," said Jacque, "occupy themselves with agricultural questions as well as in acclimatizing useful plants and animals, and make experiments, in keeping with their resources and knowledge. But a veritable fashion from which no one can escape is the raising of chickens. It is so amusing, and the pleasure so direct, the egg that the child goes to find in the hen-house is so fresh, and the hen that has laid it so tame, and comes so prettily to the doorstep to take the bread-crumbs that the mistress of the house offers from her hand: the cock is so handsome, so majestic, so careful of his hens, and by the side of the enormous Brahma the silvered Bantam is so deliciously coquettish, his forms are ravishing and his air so comic when he defends his microscopic partner; his plumage so rich and distinguished,—that the care given to the installation of these charming birds makes time pass so rapidly that we forget the troubles of existence." After reading this we can understand a critic of the time who wrote of Jacque's work and tastes: "Troyon has been the most *powerful* animal painter of our time, but Jacque will remain the most *spirituel*. Pigs, sheep, dogs, horses,—everything succeeds with him. And chickens! how well he knows them! how he talks about them! He is at the same time their Buffon and their Homer!"

Jacque loved to mystify and surprise the peasants, especially when their intense love of money was brought into play. A certain piece of land near the



DANS LE BOIS. (GUIFFREY, SUPPLEMENT, No. 239)

Size of the original etching, $7\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ inches



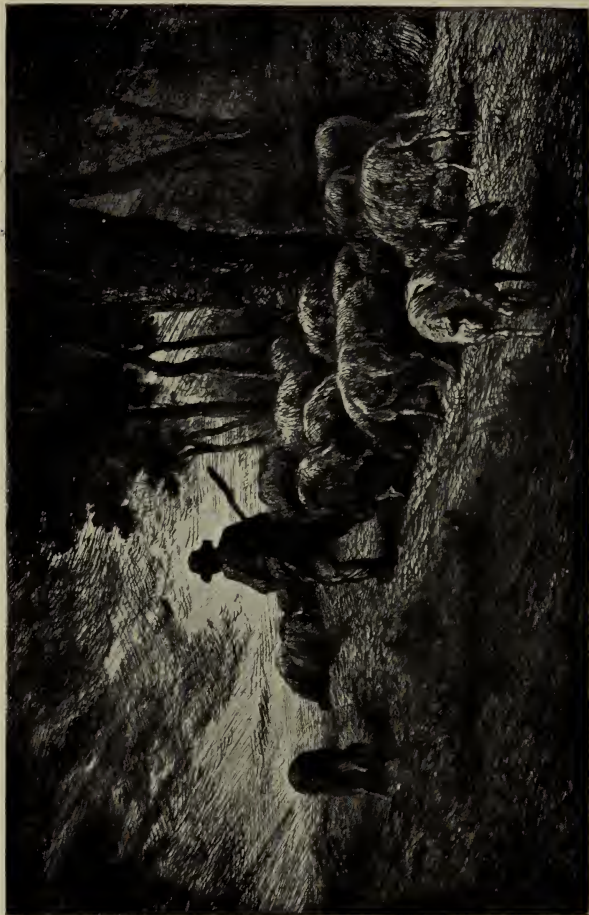
LA VACHÈRE. (GUIFFREY, SUPPLEMENT, NO. 66)

Size of the original dry-point, $8\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{8}$ inches

Forest, called "Le Platio," was up for sale, and the notary had called together all the village worthies and unworthies for the auction at the town hall. "Messieurs," said he, "the upset price of this fine piece of land is eight hundred francs; have I an offer?" After much hesitation and lowering of figures, an hour's work had only brought the price up franc by franc to a hundred and sixty-three francs, where it stuck fast. Then Jacque came in, and hearing the last bid shouted out, "Fifteen hundred francs!" The effect was terrible; the peasants fell back stupefied and it almost required a doctor to restore some of them to their normal condition. Jacque knew the value of the land and enjoyed giving them a lesson in promptness. Some of his pranks and enterprises almost startled Millet, whose sober peasant nature somewhat resented such rapid changes and novelties.

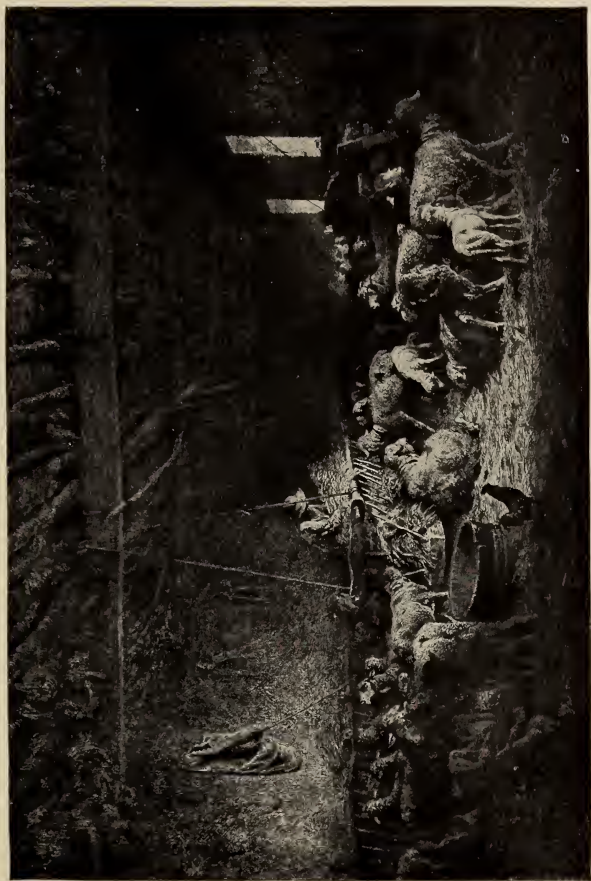
One of Jacque's peculiarities was an intense fear of catching cold. "Charivari" published a sketch in 1866 commenting on the artist's habit of going about muffled up both in summer and winter, adding, "Some well-informed persons assure us that the artist is a blond, and that his very regular features are perfectly disposed for the pleasure of the eye; but these are merely rumors impossible to verify, as this Touareg of art has never shown himself with his face uncovered." It was this sensitiveness to cold that caused Jacque to spend many winters at Pau, though he always enjoyed travel and change of scene.

Occupied with his drawings and etchings he did not take up painting till about 1845, but treating similar subjects he soon found appreciation among collectors. Although he had exhibited etchings at the salon of



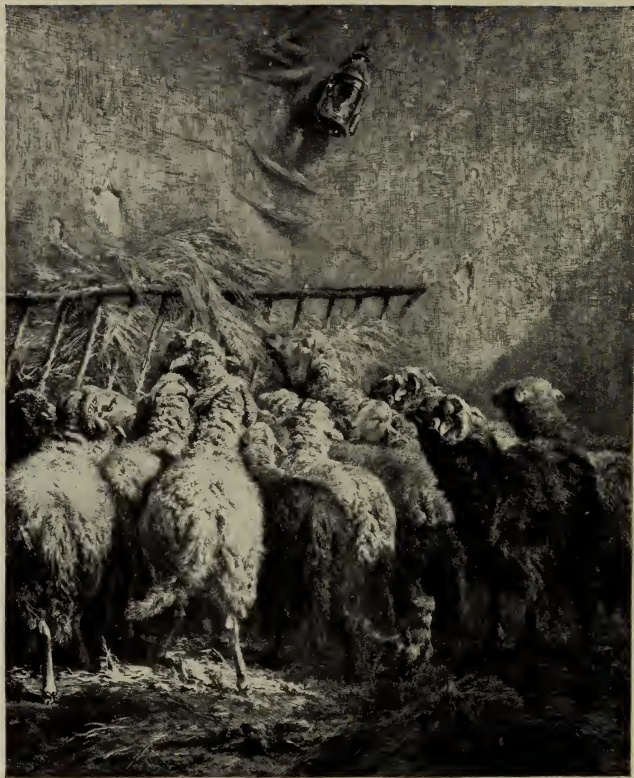
TROUPEAU DE PORCS

Size of the original etching, $6 \times 9\frac{3}{8}$ inches



LA BERGERIE

Size of the original etching, $11\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{5}{8}$ inches



LA BERGERIE BÉARNAISE. (GUIFFREY, SUPPLEMENT, No. 246)

Size of the original etching, $17\frac{7}{8} \times 14\frac{5}{8}$ inches

1851, he did not show any paintings there till 1861, when one of his subjects was the large sheep picture so long admired at the Luxembourg Museum, thus making his *début* with a masterpiece. He also exhibited at the salons of 1863 and 1864, while to the Universal Exhibition of 1867 he sent three frames of prints.

For these seven exhibits he received successively seven third-class medals, so that his friend Jules Claretie, commenting on the fact later on, remarked: "In this he is unique, as the only painter or engraver who has *seven* third-class medals! But he can make light of official recompenses. He is superior to the highest fact noticeable in these days, when medals and crosses rain on mediocrities."

He however received the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor, owing to the initiative of Monsieur de Nieuwerkerke, just after the Universal Exhibition of 1867. His name did not appear in the official list of recompenses and his decoration came forty-eight hours later than their distribution; upon which Jacque remarked: "My subversive ideas kept me from the altar. They made me commune apart!" But in 1889, after twenty-two years' absence, he again exhibited at the salon as well as at the Universal Exposition of the same year, where he was awarded the Grand Prize for original etching and a gold medal for his paintings. This was tardy justice, but it greatly pleased the veteran artist, then in his seventy-seventh year, and in a letter to a friend he wrote: "I withheld my works from the exhibitions for some twenty years, and my success now surpasses my hopes. I have been admirably placed, and I have obtained the grand

prize for original etching as well as a gold medal for my painting. It might be added, that I owe this to the spirit of justice in my fellow-artists of the different juries, whom I never solicited in any way either by word or letter." The superb etching which gained for Jacque the Medal of Honor was "*La Bergerie Béarnaise*."

In 1891 a collective exhibit of his works was made at the Durand-Ruel galleries in Paris, which met with great success, and three years later, after more than sixty years' steady toil at his beloved art, he died, in May, 1894, the last of the great Barbizon men to disappear. His later paintings and etchings were principally of sheep and shepherds in which *genre* his success was so universally confirmed. Several of his largest and most important plates, such as *L'Orage*, *La Pastorale*, *Le Châtaignier* and *L'Abreuvoir*, belong to this later period, and in the treatment of these he sustained the high opinion expressed by that master of art criticism Charles Blanc many years before in regard to his earlier work.

"That which distinguishes him is the penetrating poetry of his landscapes, the intimate charm of his farms, of his tavern scenes, of his portrayals of peasant life. By these he represents and sums up in his little etchings all our modern school of landscapists and familiar painters, from Decamps to Jean-François Millet and Adolphe Leleux, from Jules Dupré and Rousseau to Daubigny."

Jacque lived some thirty-three years after these lines were written, and saw his Barbizon friends pass away one after the other. He saw new men and new ideas replace the old romantics who in their turn be-

came the classics of the French School. But the new fashions of *plein-air* and impressionism had little effect on the veteran whose practice was based upon principles that underlie the world's best art, in all places, and at all times.



PAYSAGE. (GUIFFREY NO. 28)



