

TROYON (CONSTANT)

1810-1865

French

A man of rustic manner, bluff and bold, who might have been one of the gamekeepers or herdsmen whom he painted—such was Constant Troyon. Troyon was born at Sévres in 1810, and worked in the porcelain manufactory, as his father had done before him. Récœur, the flower painter there, taught him to draw, and at twenty years Troyon was a student of landscape painting from nature, with some advice and encouragement from Roqueplan, whom he met on one of his sketching tours, and who became interested in him. It was as a landscape painter that Troyon made his *début* in the Salon of 1833, and in this walk he displayed a sentiment for light and colour of the first order; but in 1847 he astonished the Salon, after a trip to Holland, where he had studied the old Dutch masters closely, with a cattle piece so splendid in spirit and so powerful in colour and vivid realism that his fame was established at a single stroke. In 1849 he was decorated with the Legion of Honor, and the augmentation in the prices and the popularity of his works made him rapidly rich. The great school of French cattle painting whose foundation Brascassat had laid Troyon built up. He gave to the brutes he painted life and soul. His oxen have the grand movement of nature, his cows ruminate the cud and watch you with their soft eyes, his sheep bleat an appeal out of the canvas, and the dog which guards the flock or travels at the heel of the poacher or the gamekeeper only needs to bark to be alive. Poetry saturates his art—the humble rustic poetry which becomes majestic through its very simplicity. Troyon's colour, his appreciation of light and the ripeness and harmony of tone which characterise his pictures, were sustained to the last. Like Corot, he remained unmarried, content with his art, and helpful of the younger talents whom his genius attracted to him, and upon whom he made an impression which one sees reflected still in French art. Sixty masterpieces from his brush graced the Salon between 1833 and 1865, in which latter year his splendid career passed into a splendid memory.

39. *La Mare (The Pool)*

Owner, James Ross