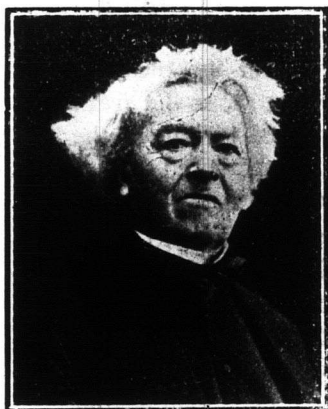


## Corot.

BY MISS A. MACLEAN, New York.

Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (ko-ro) was born in Paris, July 26th, 1796. Taking the train at Paris, a short run brings one to Sevres and Ville d'Avray. Sevres is on the river, but Ville d'Avray is further back on the ridge. Passing up through the Ville (veel) and descending the other side of the ridge by steps, one comes to a beautiful little lake. Just at the foot of the steps is a fountain, and on the large marble slab is inscribed "Veri diligentia" (search after truth). A large medallion head of Corot is cut in the slab, and beneath it his name. Opposite the fountain is the old home, where he lived with his sister after their parent's death. Nothing has been changed



since his death. It is a picture of ease and comfort—quaint, flower-decked, vine-clad, tree-shaded. Turning from this, one faces the lake. There are the trees Corot painted, and which one can never fail to recognize—willows, silver-leaved beeches, here and there silver-poplar, and, on the further shore, tall Lombardy poplars with ragged ruffles of leaves about their dead stems. These

were as familiar to Corot as the walls of his studio. Loveliness everywhere. Millet was in full sympathy with his surroundings; Corot with his. Millet's pictures may be called the rugged strophes of toil, Corot's the summer idyls; each are part of life and nature.

Today in the Bas Bréau, in the forest of Fontainebleau, at the very gates of Barbizon, the grand trees speak as they spoke to Rousseau; in the open glades the play of light and shadow lures and witches as it did Diaz; still the gorges of Franchard offer the backgrounds for scenes of animal life they gave Barye; the cattle of Troyon still feed in the meadows; Corot alone is absent in spirit, for the idyllic tone and sun-steeped haze of his best canvases are not of Barbizon.

Corot's parents were well to do people. He respected his father, but had a real reverence for his mother, whom he thought the most beautiful of women. Late in life he discovered peasant relatives among the vineyards of Burgundy. He was proud of these and said, "They are good workers, and they used to call out to each other in the fields 'Hi Corot!', and I used to think they were calling me."

Dumesnil said of Corot's appearance, "of good height, strong, of a robust constitution, with a healthful, frank, jovial expression; liveliness and tenderness in his eyes; a tone of *bonhomie* blended with penetration; great mobility of face." His parents sent him to the Lycée of Rouen in 1806, and there he remained seven years, receiving his entire education. His father intended to make a business man of him, but Nature got in her work ahead of père Corot. When placed in a draper's store he availed himself of every opportunity to hide away and sketch. The draper told his father that he would never make a business man and that he ought to let him be an artist.

The home at Ville d'Avray was purchased by Corot's father as a summer home, and there young Corot would lean from the open window and drink in the misty loveliness of lake and sky and tree long after all the others in the house were asleep. In the stillness, the dreamy, visible dampness, the light, transparent vapors impressed him in a way that influenced all his after career. When he came to paint, it all came back to him. At Ville d'Avray his artistic sense was quickened and his dislike for commercial life deepened. He begged his father to let him give up business, and be an artist. His father, a shrewd business man, finally consented, but told him that while plenty awaited him if he remained in business, he would allow him only an annuity of 1500 francs if he became an artist. "See if you can live on that," he said, "you shall have no capital at your disposal while I live." Corot gladly accepted the annuity and began to paint. Millet's relatives thought his talent a divine gift—Corot's family did not believe he had any gift, and thought painting an idling with life. Millet's life was a long struggle; Corot had enough to live on; he never married; he gave his life to art, interpreting Nature as she appeared to him, diffusing constant sunshine about him, with a song always in his heart and on his lips. Beauty and gladness were revealed to him, but not the heights and depths; these are revealed only to those who have struggled and suffered. For a long time recognition did not come to him, but when it did come he said, "I am the happiest man in the world." Corot studied two winters with Victor Bertin, a pure classicist, then went to Rome in 1825. At the Academy there his social qualities made a much greater impression than his artistic abilities. He was more apt in Nature's studio. As an artist he united harmoniously academic traditions with impressions received directly from Nature. man.