Lucien Simon

THE ART OF M. LUCIEN SIMON. BY GABRIEL MOUREY.

AMONG our modern French artists there are, to my thinking, few who display more conspicuously than M. Lucien Simon certain of those qualities which may be regarded as the most precious a modern painter can possess: clearness, striking independence of vision, spontaneity and truly prodigious freedom of execution—in a word, the gifts of plastic perception and expression in all their fulness. Not one of his canvases but reveals an absolute unity between the eye of the artist and the hand of the executant, the closest cohesion between the feeling of the man and the technique of the painter.

M. Lucien Simon is a masterly realiser. Precise and sober, energetic and sane, he knows exactly what he desires, and whither he is going; one imagines him armed with a firm will, ever conscious and conscientious, ever master of himself. He is one of the strong: strong in his portraits, as in his *scènes de mœurs*, strong in his types and his characters, in everything passionately devoted to truth, simple and direct. He is endowed with the courage that enables him to look Nature in the face, and to confront life as it is, immediate contact with reality having no terrors for him. He knows nothing of the languors from which so many artists suffer nowadays; he is proof against the seductions of those complexities which work such ravage among his fellows, and he has preserved himself from all contagion of the sort by patiently studying his own faculties, while keeping strictly aloof from external influences. The glamour of easy success has failed to lure him from the path his heart and brain had chosen; and for this he must be admired and congratulated.

It follows that his work is marked by complete unity and a clear and logical spirit. In composing his pictures his first thought has been to simplify and to balance; exceptional spectacles do not concern him at all. His main object has always been to produce a strong and deep impression of nature and of life, with exactness and precision. As for the artist—his joys and sorrows, his mode of life, his moral self—you will look in vain for any trace of such things in these canvases. He keeps himself absolutely apart—one might almost say absent—from them; the more deeply to move us he hides his emotions. Unlike so many others who, by design or by accident, or because they cannot do otherwise, make a parade of their sensibility, he studiously conceals his inner self. For this reason his art appears to me as impersonal as that of Gustave Flaubert.

His portraits, his studies of *bourgeois* life, his Bohemian scenes, are all absolutely authentic

"VIEILLE" FROM A WATER-COLOUR BY LUCIEN SIMON

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