

*Reminiscences of Corot***S**OME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF COROT. BY ALBERT DUBUISSON.

I BECAME acquainted with Corot during the last years of the reign of Napoleon III; the painter was then already well advanced in years, and I was barely a young man. His death occurred while I was still a student, and consequently I did not profit as much as I should have desired from his presence and his good counsel. But the impression that I, in common with all who knew him, was left with was a profound one, and it is always with the keenest pleasure and an interest which has increased as I have grown older that I recall the most minute details of our meetings. Since those days I have often chanced to speak of Corot to other artists, to collectors, to critics and picture dealers, and sometimes, though nowadays, alas! not so often as in past years, my interlocutor will stop me to exclaim, "Ah! you knew père Corot? so did I!" Immediately our faces light up, our eyes brighten, and at once a communion, a bond of sympathy, establishes itself between us. Without referring to it in words we feel that we have shared together the most rare privilege of having lived in the times of one of those great artists of exceptional character and remarkable personality, whom no one will see again; and feeling ourselves thus favoured by this good fortune we cannot but be conscious, when face to face with those who speak of Corot but who never saw him, of that "If you had known him . . .!" in which is expressed so much more of regret than may be appreciated or divined from the written word.

My father, a great lover of pictures, who had already met Corot several times at the houses of friends, invited him to spend some days at a country place surrounded by delightful grounds which he owned at Brunoy in the neighbourhood of Paris. This was in the spring of 1868. I was then at school in the capital, but on holidays I used to take the earliest train home so as to be with my people as quickly as possible. I remember one morning as I entered the park catching

sight of Corot down one of the paths, standing in his white blouse and talking to my father, ramming the tobacco into his pipe as he chatted away. I cannot say whether, as his contemporaries have asserted, he had in his youth a somewhat commonplace appearance, but I can hardly believe that they could have looked at him properly. His countenance when he was starting to paint must have lit up and taken on quite another character. At the time of which I write he possessed a superb head which could not fail to inspire respect and admiration. It is true that it offered no very



FROM A SKETCH MADE BY COROT ON THE BACK OF A DISH WHEN VISITING M. DUBUISSON'S UNCLE

characteristic features, nor evinced any pronounced traits, but his eyes were astounding in their vivacity and intelligence; under his fine head of white hair, framing them like the mane of an old lion, they looked out at you with such an expression of kindness and dignity that you felt no doubt of being in the presence of a personage of distinction, and no one ever felt inclined to adopt the least familiarity towards him. His mouth was large and very mobile, the chin square and energetic. Always clean shaven, his complexion had that fresh colour of a full-blooded man who passes much of his life in the open air; holding himself upright, with movements easy and brisk, without any weakness or infirmity, his health as yet practically unimpaired and his energy seemingly inexhaustible, he represented, as it was said of Alexandre Dumas, one of the forces of nature, and astonished all who approached him.

I went forward to meet him, timid and nervous, for since my childhood I had heard talk of him amongst artists, and I knew their almost fanatical