

A FAMOUS PICTURE

Rosa Bonheur's Stirring Masterpiece, "The Horse Fair."

A PRIZE THAT FRANCE LOST.

The Artist's Native Land Permitted the Great Canvas to Find a Home in This Country—The Story of the Painting and Its Replica.

One of the chief glories of the Metropolitan museum in New York is Rosa Bonheur's stirring masterpiece, "The Horse Fair," a picture which for its irresistible movement and living portraiture of man's most useful friend holds a unique position in the annals of art and the affections of lovers of paintings.

Now, however, are acquainted with the intimate history of that notable canvas, and fewer still are aware that there are no less than five horse fair pictures in existence. The one in New York is the original and, it will be remembered, was first the property of A. T. Stewart and then purchased for the Metropolitan by Cornelius Vanderbilt for 250,000 francs.

It was painted in Paris, the models used being the horses of the Paris Omnibus company and a few animals studied at the horse market of the French capital. It was first exhibited at the salon of 1853, but went back to the artist unused.

A part of the further history of the famous painting is recorded by Ernest Chantrel in his manuscript memoirs, which have been freely drawn upon for the "Reminiscences of Rosa Bonheur."

"After the closing of the 1853 Paris salon 'The Horse Fair' was entrusted to the Society of Artists of Ghent for exhibition in that town, where it had a great success, but whence it also came back unsold. In the spring of 1854 I expressed to Mlle. Bonheur the desire to buy it from her. At that time it was in Bordeaux, her native town.

"Her preference was that the municipality should purchase it for the city museum, and a price of 12,000 francs had been mentioned at which the town authorities might acquire it. But she said to me that if the canvas came back to her again she would let me have it. However, she could not let it go to England for less than 40,000 francs.

"I unhesitatingly accepted the bargain, and it was agreed that the picture should be mine unless sold to Bordeaux. As the picture was back in her studio again in the following year, I told Mlle. Bonheur that I wished to take it at once in order to have it in my 1855 exhibition and that I should like to have it engraved by Thomas Landseer, the celebrated engraver and brother to the painter.

"She was delighted at the idea of the picture being engraved and said to me: 'I have asked you 40,000 francs for my picture, although in France I cannot get 12,000, and I am pleased at your consenting to my terms. On the other hand, I don't mean to take undue advantage of your liberality. How can we arrange matters? Let us see. Well, the picture is very large, and it will be difficult to find a place for it in an engraver's studio. Besides, you want to exhibit it. Wouldn't it be better for me to paint you a smaller copy?'"

"That suggestion she carried out and explains how the second canvas came into existence. That smaller copy was the one from which Landseer's well known steel engraving was made and is the picture which is in the British National gallery.

"When she heard that it had become the property of the British nation Mlle. Bonheur decided to make a third copy, thinking the second was not good enough for the London collection, hence "The Horse Fair" No. 3. But the National gallery authorities were not able to accept the substitute, as the painting which it was designed to replace had been given to them as trustees.

Besides these three, Mlle. Bonheur executed a water color replica and a drawing based on a large photograph. Of all these, however, the picture in the Metropolitan is by far the finest work, which is only as it should be in view of the fact that the artist always found her best public in America.

"This was recalled to her detriment when the rossette of the Legion of Honour was requested in her behalf. 'She has ceased exhibiting at the salon,' objected the president, 'and sells in America everything she paints.' The complete answer to that was that the French government had had the opportunity to buy "The Horse Fair," but had neglected it.—Argonaut.

An Accurate Description.
"Did you ever run into a telegraph pole?" inquired the elderly passenger.
"Yes, ma'am," said the chauffeur, slowing up the taxicab to avoid a collision with a street car. "I've bumped into telegraph poles, I reckon, two or three times."
"Brings you to a pretty sudden stop doesn't it?"
"No, ma'am; the machine stops, all right, but I always keep on going."—Chicago Tribune.

Curious.
"I had a curious experience yesterday," said Farmer Corntossel.
"What was it?"
"A stranger came along and told me a funny story and didn't try to sell me anything."—Washington Star.

Obedience is not truly performed by the body of him whose heart is dissatisfied.—Saadi.

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Nothing can give a nation dignity but its thought.—Woodrow Wilson.

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On Boston Common.
Comparatively few people know that there was once a "spinning school" in Boston Common. Winsor's "Memorial History of Boston" records that upon the arrival in Boston of some Irish spinners and weavers a spinning prize took possession of the town, and the women, young and old, high and low, rich and poor, flocked into the spinning school, which for want of better quarters, was set up in the Common, in the open air. Here the whirl of their wheels was heard years later to night. Thirty-five years later the Society for Encouraging Industry and Employing the Poor again used the Common as a spinning school, about 300 young women appearing here.

INAUGURATION

President Wilson Washington, D. C.

MARCH 4, 1913.

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