

## OBITUARY.

### HONORE DAUMIER.

On the 11th of February there died in a little cottage at Valmondois, near Paris, Honoré Daumier, one of the most original and gifted artists that France has produced during the past three-quarters of a century. He was principally known as a caricaturist, having published nearly 5,000 designs, lithographic or engraved on wood, in the various illustrated journals of Paris between the years 1832 and 1877. This enormous mass of works, however, corresponded rather to the term caricature as applied three centuries ago than to the meaning now usually given it; that is, they were studies of character. This is shown incidentally but clearly by the fact that the artist made his own designs, but never the legend which accompanied them, and the resources of the wittiest writers for *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari* were frequently taxed to the utmost, and sometimes in vain, to devise phrases which should fairly express M. Daumier's ideas. The variety of his designs was as remarkable as their extent. He was an earnest though not bitter Republican, and he pursued with an unwearied pencil the politicians of the Orléanist monarchy, as well as those of the Empire. But, though his political sketches throw a great deal of light on the politics of his time, especially on those of the reign of Louis Philippe, they embrace but a small portion of the field covered by the artist. He took great delight in portraying the *bourgeois* spirit of the French in all its manifestations. The Bar and the medical profession figure largely in his designs, and no one can appreciate the fertility and vigor of his genius who has not traced the infinite variety he introduced into the portraiture of those classes, while presenting the constant characteristics of the types with such fidelity that they were always recognizable. He was also very happy in his satire of the speculative sharpers who came to such prominence in the period of commercial prosperity under the Orléanists, and his series of some 400 plates, under the title of "Robert-Macaire," affords many instructive glimpses of these peculiar characters. "Les Femmes Socialistes," "Les Divorceuses," "Les Bas-bleus" were directed to the follies of women; "Les Papas," "Les Beaux Jours de la Vie," "Les Bons Bourgeois," at the men, considered from the varying points of view of society and the family. "Le Voyage en Chine" was aimed at many a current pretense. We recall one especially, satirizing the Academy, in which a group of learned Chinese sit about a table, each one in a different attitude of somnolence, and another in which four Celestials are quarreling over a game of whist. The costume and the coiffure, as well as the principal features, are plainly Chinese, but the peculiarities of the faces, which can yet be seen on the streets of Paris, are not less clearly brought out.

Daumier, the son of a glazier, and so a member by birth of the *bourgeoisie*, was born in Marseilles in 1810. He served an apprenticeship at lithographing, and began his artistic work in *La Caricature*, under Philipon in 1832. Though he will be most known as a satirist, he was a water-colorist of extraordinary power. He treated his subjects rapidly and broadly, bringing out the subtle expression with a touch or a line, and showing an inexhaustible fertility in composition. So eminent an authority as M. Viollet le Duc said of him that he was, in 1878, the one living painter who possessed a touch of the genius of Michael Angelo, and some of the works exhibited in May last at Paris, in the curious collection of the Rue le Pelletier, explained this extreme praise. A peculiarity of Daumier's was that he modeled in clay the men, or the types of men, whom he intended to caricature, and in the collection referred to there were figures of Thiers, Guizot, Louis Napoleon, and others, that were worth volumes of memoirs.

Daumier lived very modestly, and shrank from the society of all but a few intimate friends, among whom were counted as the most valued and constant, Jules Dupré, Corot, and D'Aubigny. He had a small pension of \$480 a year from the Government, but had refused the decoration of the Legion of Honor. Since 1877 he had been nearly blind, and died finally of a sudden paralysis.

**The New York Times**

Published: March 3, 1879

Copyright © The New York Times