

**A FETE IN THE MIDDLE-AGES - Adrien Moreau (1843-1906)**



This medieval scene was exhibited at the 1876 Salon and was probably one of Moreau's most popular paintings, mentioned by *Le Figaro* in the artist's obituary on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1906. Contemporary reviews ranged from mere lip service to overboard enthusiasm. Thus Jules Antoine Castagnary in *Salons* thought that it was 'a costume designer piece, even if the figures are pretty and the colours pleasant'. The magazine *Le Monde Artiste* found the painting 'awash with sunshine'. *Le Monde Illustré* was so enraptured that they had a sonnet especially written by poet Adrien Demazié.

It's Spring time Fair !  
Village folks, in artless merriment,  
Are dancing alfresco, in the shade,  
As they did in the good old days.

Young fellows in their Sunday best,  
Their arms around the girls' ample hips  
Are laughing to their hearts' content  
Amid a flutter of petticoats.

Such rejoicing ! Such mirth !  
On the grassy spot happy couples  
Swirl to the tune of bagpipes.

Into these innocent and tender hearts  
The golden sun god of Flanders  
Pours down love from heaven.

The painting belonged to Princess Mathilde, Emperor Napoleon III's cousin. Its present location is not known, engraved copies only being available: that much for the sunshine effect.

Laurence drastically reduced the number of figures: only four dancing couples, two musicians instead of three, and two onlookers, the burly man with a tankard and the boy holding a bough.

At least four copies have survived, two of them in my collection. The first one is printed on burgundy coloured satin, the second one on paper, with a dated stamp 'Royat 1891'. It is most likely a print by Mourguiart and is studied in the Chapter "Focus On ..."



\*\*\*