

COMMEMORATIVE TRIBUTES TO  
LA FARGE, ABBEY, AND  
MILLET

By THOMAS HASTINGS

READ AT  
PUBLIC SESSION FOLLOWING ANNUAL MEETING OF  
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	<p>King Edward VII to paint for Buckingham Palace the official picture of the coronation. From that time the greater part of his life was devoted to painting, his last and most recent work being three important decorative panels for the State House at Harrisburg, in his native State. Unfortunately, he did not live to see this work completed.</p> <p>In this country many honors and university degrees were conferred upon him, and he was the recipient of many foreign decorations, and in 1898 he was made a Royal Academician. His last year was the sixtieth of his life, and judging from the progressive excellence of his work and the vitality and enthusiasm of the man, there was every promise of even greater and finer results if he had lived longer to reap more fully the benefits of experience and his constant and untiring habits of work.</p>
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<p>An unparalleled event in the history of navigation was the foundering of the great steamship <i>Titanic</i>. Francis Davis Millet was one of her passengers. In mid-ocean, under a starlit sky, which had dissolved the darkness of the night, he must have seen the last of this world. Amid the confusion and débris of the sinking ship, he could see only an unbroken horizon over the waters of the Atlantic, a circle on the earth's surface, emblem of eternal life. Thinking more of the safety of others than of himself, our friend was taken from us in the fullness of his power. I know of no other American artist who has served such high and varied purposes with such unselfish devotion to the interests of American art, and with such an untiring capacity for work, unhesitatingly sacrificing his time for the good of others. Indeed, he was so public-spirited that I have often</p>	
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	<p>thought he gave himself so freely that his unselfishness seriously interfered with his own private interests in life.</p> <p>Though gentle and unassuming, he was a leader of men, an educator of men. He would have succeeded in whatever he might have undertaken. He had a singular gift for making friends. To know him was to love him. He had a remarkable fund of interesting information on the widest variety of subjects.</p> <p>We were members together of the National Fine Arts Commission in Washington, where I learned to know what a delightful privilege it was to work with him. Intellectually he was somewhat inclined to wander, being often drawn into other channels than art.</p> <p>He was born at Mattapoisett, Massachusetts, in November, 1846. He was the youngest man of sixty-six I have</p>
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<p>ever known. During the Civil War he was a drummer in the 50th Massachusetts Regiment. In 1869 he was graduated from Harvard, later associating himself with Boston journalism, and devoting what spare time he could find to the study of art. It was not long before he went to Europe and entered as a student in the Royal Academy of Antwerp, where he made great progress and showed much promise. He then traveled widely, returning to Boston to assist La Farge in his work in Trinity Church.</p> <p>For his brilliant services as correspondent for the New York and London papers in the Russo-Turkish War, and for bravery on the battle-field, he was decorated by the czar. Later he was sent as a war correspondent to the Philippines. He was chairman of the Advisory Committee of the National Museum, a member of the Municipal Art Commission of New York, a trus-</p>	
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	<p>tee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, secretary of the American Federation of Arts, and member of the National Fine Arts Commission. He had recently been appointed the executive officer of the United American Academy and the American School of Classical Studies at Rome, and was returning on the <i>Titanic</i> after visiting Rome in the interest of this institution. It seemed a fitting place for him, with his unusual ability for organization.</p> <p>In 1879 he married Elizabeth Greeley Merrill. While their home was in Broadway, Worcestershire, England, his life in recent years was spent mostly between Washington, New York, and Rome. With all this time given to traveling and public affairs, it seems almost incredible that he could have produced so much in painting, which was the actual means of his livelihood. He had traveled extensively all over</p>
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<p>the world, and spoke nearly all of the principal languages of Europe.</p> <p>In 1891 he made a canoe trip the full length of the Danube for Harper Brothers, who published his book entitled <i>The Danube from the Black Forest to the Black Sea</i>. About the same time appeared his collection of short stories and his translation of Tolstoi's <i>Sebastopol</i>.</p> <p>In recent years he devoted a great deal of time to decorations. The historical paintings in the capitol at St. Paul, the decorations in the custom-house at Baltimore, and a historical decoration in the court-house at Newark, New Jersey, are among his most important later works.</p> <p>Few men enjoyed life as he did, and few men gave more enjoyment to others. He will be missed, and no one man can be found to fill his place—alas, so many places!</p> <p>Millet was a strong, intelligent man</p>	
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	<p>of character, with a sweetness and simplicity almost childlike. His nature was joyous, which attracted men to him, and always assured him their collaboration in whatever work he undertook.</p> <p>John La Farge died November 14, 1910;  Edwin Austin Abbey died August 1, 1911;  Francis Davis Millet died April 15, 1912.</p> <div data-bbox="321 712 634 898"> <p><b>FREE  PUBLIC LIBRARY,  MATTAPOISETT</b></p> </div>
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