

# MEMORIAL NOTICE

OF

## FRANK DAVIS MILLET

PRESENTED AT THE MEETING OF THE

CLASS OF 1869

HELD ON COMMENCEMENT DAY JUNE 20, 1912  
AT CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Frank Davis Millet, born in Mattapoisett, Mass., November 3, 1846, our classmate, friend and comrade, soldier, artist, author, war correspondent, hero, and best all-around man, died at sea in the wreck of the Titanic, April 15, 1912.

No one can bring within the necessary limits of this notice even the tersest index of the record of Frank Millet's life, gifts, deeds, works and spirit.

We of the Class of '69 are "all in the sixties, all born before 1850, and the successive black-bordered notes from our dear Secretary make us wonder who will write when it comes our turn. Sometimes I wondered if Frank Millet or George Ball would write mine, but I wrote of Ball and now I write of Millet.

My heart is in it, but I cannot write in calm self-control. I must not let my distress drown this message. The best I can do is to try to help turn the tide of mourning to the joy and the pride of all who knew him in what he was and in the almost incredible story of all that he did.

We were thrown together intimately in college, and it was one of my greatest pleasures to be with him and work with him. He took me to his home in Bridgewater and we worked and played together. In burlesques on Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet, in which he played Juliet, we were fellow actors. We sailed together in Yacht Club races. At class reunions, Associated Harvard Club meetings, and other occasions growing out of our Harvard life, we were boon companions. We were looking forward to, and often talked about meeting with, the Associated Clubs in New York this month; and he sailed for home on the Titanic and was one of those lost in the fearful disaster of the wreck of that great ship.

When I read the news, by wireless, that there were not boats enough for all, and that men stood back for women and children to be saved, I knew, to a certainty, and said then, that there was no hope that Frank Millet and Archie Butt, the President's Aide, who was traveling with Millet, would be saved. I knew too well

that he would be one of the last to seek safety in such a crisis, for he was born and lived his grand life absolutely innocent of fear, and died nobly distinguished in a host of heroic men in that night of icy horror, of which a noble woman, Mrs. Justice Harlan, wrote to me :

"That horrible Sea Disaster! How it lifted human nature almost to Divine heights, with wonderful human and self sacrifice. It was sublime. Angels in Heaven must have thought so. How it puts to shame our love of luxury and speed and all that makes us the almost insanely self indulgent, restless people that we are!"

Frank never posed but unceasingly pictured others. His presence and his bearing in everyday peaceful ways were never calculated to suggest that he was in any way notable. He was modest and unassuming to a fault, and, in every place and time, seemingly just a lovely, useful, helpful, handy, generous, glad-hearted friend. Yet, from his tender childhood, when he was a drummer boy in a Massachusetts regiment in the Union Army and Acting Assistant Contract Surgeon, on through every year of his life, and even unto death itself, he was the bravest and loveliest spirit that I ever knew in man. He was laughing and dauntless in danger, hardship, difficulties and uncertainties; quick witted, clear-headed, resourceful, intensely efficient, ever ready at the word, with exceptional experience in every phase and walk and every source and growth of human action and research. He was a man of the world, in the best sense, at home with everything best in human life, in art, letters, life and love; welcome in palace and cottage, and in all homes; valued associate and close home friend of our Presidents, and of great leaders of men, generals of finance, commerce and manufactures.

He came from the army to college. He and Hartwell, Travis, Royal Merrill and another friend, while we were in college, made a canoe trip up the Penobscot, across Moosehead Lake and by portage to the headwaters of the River St. John, in the wilds of Maine, and went alone down that river and its rapids, all strange to them, to St. John, with many exciting adventures.

He was an expert sailor and had a part in great yacht races, many of which he reported for the press. He worked as a reporter for the Boston Advertiser; local editor of the Courier and later of the Saturday Evening Gazette, studying lithography all the time, and he entered the Royal Academy in Antwerp in 1871, receiving the prize of excellence in antique work the first year and in painting the next. He had been in Antwerp but six weeks when the annual "concour's" came on, and went in to try his luck, and won nine out of eleven prizes offered and received a Silver Medal of the Royal Academy of Antwerp; was crowned in public by the

King, in May, 1872; and at the next "concours," 1873, received seven of the nine prizes and the Academy Gold Medal, securing prizes in the departments in which he missed in 1872.

In 1873 he was Secretary to Massachusetts Commissioner, Hon. Charles Francis Adams, at the Vienna Exposition, member of the Fine Arts Jury, and correspondent of the Tribune and Herald, and at its close traveled in European Turkey, Hungary, Greece and Italy. Spent the winter and following summer in Rome and Capri, and in the autumn settled in Venice for a year, also traveling extensively meanwhile.

In 1876 he represented the Advertiser at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition; then assisted in decorating Trinity Church in Boston, and painted a portrait of Mark Twain.

Then off to the war between Russia and Turkey in 1877, first as correspondent of the Herald and London Daily News, and later taking the place of Archibald Forbes for the London Daily News, and Special Artist for the London Graphic, with the Russian Army.

He was in the Battle of Oltenitza and with Gen. Zimmerman in the Battle of Mejidie. At Karahassankioj he was with a single Russian regiment which was surrounded and attacked by the whole Rasgrad Army, eleven times their number, and after twelve hours resistance, during which the regiment was well nigh annihilated, it withdrew. Millet received for this the order of St. Stanislaus with crossed swords. During September and October they were in various little battles, too numerous to name, when he joined the Plevna Army and was with Gen. Skobelev at the Battle of Green Mountain. Then he joined Gen. Gurko and was with this army at the taking of Praves Pass and Shandarnik Peak, and after the fall of Plevna crossed with Gen. Gurko to the Battle of Taskasin, the taking of Sofia, the Battle of Maritza and Stanimaka, and the occupation of Phillipopolis, and rode with Gen. Gurko to Adrianople, where he was decorated with the Order of St. Anne.

A friend who was sketching by his side when shells were whizzing and bursting around them, says: "Millet's pencil never stopped and he was quoting 'Alice in Wonderland.'"

"An adventurous spirit throughout his life he was, despite his proved courage, a man of nerves and fortitude. His humorous tricky side, an unfailling delight to his intimates, thus found vent in the trying battle crises."

"In all that concerned the things of everyday life he was calm and level headed; in the practice of his art a serious student, one whose enthusiasm never deserted him. The inimitable raconteur was also a man of boundless energy, far seeing and practical in adjustment of harassing details, and patient and kindly."

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He received from the Czar the Roumanian Iron Cross and on battlefields the Russian Military Crosses of St. Stanislaus and St. Anne, and later the Russian and Roumanian war medals. I credit the Harvard Graduates Magazine of September 1909 at page 31, to which I refer for a condensed story which would furnish glory for a score of great men.

In 1878 he was Fine Arts Juror at the Paris International Exposition, and had a picture in the Paris Salon, and another in the Royal Academy.

In 1879 he married Elizabeth Greeley Merrill, sister of Royal Merrill, of our class, and in 1884 bought a lovely home in Broadway, England.

In 1885 he traveled through the Western states and territories and Mexico, with the Hon. Chas. Francis Adams, Chairman of the Union Pacific Railroad.

In 1881 he made a canoe trip, nearly 1,800 miles, down the Danube for Harpers and published "The Danube from the Black Forest to the Black Sea," a translation of Tolstoi's "Sebastapol," and a collection of stories.

He was Director of Decorations at the Chicago World's Fair, Fine Arts Juror and Director of Functions and Ceremonies.

In 1894 he was War Correspondent, in the Phillipines, of the London Times, Harpers Weekly, and the New York Sun; and later wrote a book, "The Expedition to the Phillipines," and in the fall traveled through Japan, China, Java, Straights Settlements Burmah and India.

In 1900 he had charge of the U. S. Government Pavilion at the Paris Exposition and was Fine Arts Juror and received the Cross of the Legion of Honor, his paintings being excluded from a prize by his office of juror.

In 1905 he made a trip through Yellowstone Park, Alaska, and British Columbia.

In 1908 he went via the Siberian Railway to Japan, as Commissioner to Tokyo, had many unusual privileges from the Japanese Government, was presented to the Emperor and Empress, and was given the "First Class Order of the Sacred Treasure," an extraordinary distinction in Japan.

Then he made a tour of Shanghai and Peking by the Yangtse River and was in Peking, when the Emperor and Empress died and the succession was established, and went from Peking to Mukden, Dalny, Port Arthur, Korea, and back to Tokyo.

He was elected a member of countless institutes, academies of design, societies of artists, illustrators, Fine Arts Federation, Honorary Member of the American Institute of Architects, Arts Club, and "Kinsmen" of London, Cosmos Club of Washington;

in New York, of the Players, Century, University, Explorers, Arctic, "Ends of the Earth," and many others.

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He is represented by highly valued pictures in the National Gallery of British Art, the National Gallery of New Zealand, the Metropolitan Museum of New York, the Union Square Club, Detroit Museum, and Duquesne Club of Pittsburgh. He was Acting Chairman of the U. S. Niagara Falls Commission, Vice President of the Municipal Art Commission of the City of New York, Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Smithsonian Institution on the National Gallery, Secretary of the American Federation of Arts; and Secretary, and practically Manager, of the American Academy in Rome; and all of these came to him, none was ever sought by him, and in all of these institutions he was a most valued and splendid worker, and always gave more in work than he gained in the honor of being chosen in them.

He made great historical pictures for the splendid new capital of Minnesota, the court house at Newark, New Jersey, the magnificent Mural Decorations at the new custom house in Baltimore, in the Cleveland Trust Company, and the Cleveland Federal Building.

He executed medals of the United States for soldiers of the Civil War, Indian Wars, Chinese Expedition, Spanish War, Philippine Insurrection, and the Merit Medal for enlisted men of the U. S. Army; superintended the Panama Canal medal, and made seals for the Society of International Law, Washington-Lee University, and the American Educational Association.

The story of his life and works is truly bewildering in its extent, variety, travels, achievements, associations, honors and distinctions,—a career which would enrich even a score of lives. No man of our generation has had so useful a part in so many things, or such an experience, knowledge and acquaintance with so many people, and great and distinguished men and women.

And all this he achieved for himself by his own merit, without fortune or favor, solely by his own character, spirit, sense and service. He won more great honors and distinctions, all earned and deserved by good works, than any, and, I believe, than all of his comrades who sorrow for his death. He won them all, first and wholly because he was Frank Millet, the most genial, kindly, friendly, helpful, useful, and most untiring and dauntless worker and thinker, and the most modest, sensible and unassuming of men, and one of the most useful and gifted artists, and helpers of men, work and art, that ever lived.

He leaves two children, Kate, wife of Frank W. Adlard, and a son, John Parsons Millet.

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Twenty-three of our class were at the funeral services at Mt. Auburn Chapel, May 2, 1912. The Class sent a wreath of red roses and the President of the United States sent a large wreath of white roses. His body was cremated and his ashes were entombed at East Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

His father, Dr. Asa Millet, was a member of the Council of Governor John A. Andrew, the great War-Governor of Massachusetts. His mother was Hulda Byram.

Frank supported himself, and helped put his younger brothers through college, and through all his student days at Antwerp, and in all his travels, by his reporting, writings, sketches and pictures.

He was a close friend of Gen. Skobelev, Gen. Gurko and other distinguished Russian officers. He was the first man into Plevna after the Russians stormed it.

The resolution of the National Society of Mural Painters "Mourns, with tens of thousands of others, the death of Frank Millet, their talented, genial, helpful and beloved fellow member. Decorative Art demands exactly that selfsacrifice, that unselfish co-operative spirit which were always such ingrained characteristics of his own altruistic nature, and for the last ten years he has given the very best of his efforts to the development of a new and better equipped generation of decorative artists, architects, sculptors, and painters, through the establishment of the American Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. Other societies will dwell upon the countless lovable characteristics of Frank Millet, and we echo their words in our hearts; but for us today it is specially our duty and privilege to emphasize the loss which in his death is suffered by the art that he loved best, — mural painting."

The Board of Trustees of the American Academy in Rome will establish a Chair with an endowment of \$100,000.00, now being raised, in his honor.

All of the stories of the loss of the Titanic dwell especially on the brave self sacrifice of Frank Millet, Major Butt and John Jacob Astor, working hard, helping women and children into the boats which left the sinking ship. A lady, who saw him at the last, said he was calm and smiled as he waved his hand to ladies in a boat leaving the ship, apparently not thinking of the ship but of those around him.

In the New York Evening Post, William A. Coffin wrote:

"His friends were legion and wherever he was known he was as much esteemed as he was loved. His place really cannot be filled for he was capable of filling a number of responsible positions at the same time, and filling them all better

than anybody else could do. Notable, useful and honored as he was, Millet was much more than a useful citizen. He had a rare capacity that is given to but few, that he could fill almost any responsible place, requiring knowledge and experience. His record of achievements in various fields is a fine one, almost unique, and as for the man himself, the name of Frank Millet, wherever it is spoken, in these days of sorrow for his loss, evokes such tributes of admiration and affection as are bestowed on the memory of very few men, at any time, in any country."

"Few men enjoyed life so richly as Millet; few made so much of it or gave so much of it to others; few have faced its trials with such even courage or brought so much good cheer and uplift to other men and women; and there is no moment of his life in which he better deserves to be remembered than that final, awful moment when he was last seen standing on the deck of the sinking ship, bravely waving farewell to those whom he helped to save."  
— *Boston Herald.*

"Millet came of the best New England stock, Pilgrim and Old Colony, and State of Maine. He was scholarly, uncommonly talented, capable of doing extraordinarily well almost anything he chose to put his hand to; industrious democratic, on an equal footing with the humble, and standing, without self assumption, on a parity with the best in the land. He was of remarkable executive capacity might have made a success of almost any business he had method without routine. So it was that in his open and aboveboard way he had gained the confidence of many men standing high in the world, and was enabled to do many things of the sort best worth the doing he knew not what idleness was enjoyed life at the best, and made the best of it, taking keen zest in pleasure as well as in work. Such a man was of course much-sought socially he loved the companionship of the world's best, and the world's best sought his company. A nature like that is infused with the essence of perpetual youth Frank Millet was one who could never grow really old in bodily movement and play of feature he was ever active, replete with energy, responsive to human fun and keen with mental stimulation. Youth ever sought his company and accepted him as one with themselves. Howells urged him to give up painting and make literature his vocation."

"Dear Frank: Over there in the Great Beyond, in the after life, whatever it may be, we feel that somehow, in some way, you are with us, and that your work here will go on yourself part of it, and that our loving thoughts of you will draw you consciously

to us; to the hearts that hold you in affection ever one with us in soul and spirit through all the transmutations of life everlasting."

— *Sylvester Baxter in the Boston Herald.*

Archie Howe writes: "Of course I know how deeply, and more than others, you felt Frank's death, but I was and am still much cast down by such a loss as his taking off. However, a great life was lived and you and I shared in it."

Dear Frank was the brother and friend of every member of the class of '69 and of every Harvard man, one of Harvard's heroes, proven in the hour of danger and horror, gentle, kind, sweet and brave, facing sure and dread death with a smile, and helping the helpless to be saved at the cost of a life and love which could ill be spared. He had shown deathless courage in war on bloody battlefields, and just as great in peace and actual work for the good of the world and all humanity. No one has achieved more or done more than he. His life and work cannot die. The love we hold for him clutches our heart strings with immortal grip and our pride in his great and useful life conquers our woe and our grief. He worked with us, fought with us, and died, our own forever and ever. His name is graven deep on the roll of the great immortals. He was the intimate friend of Presidents, statesmen, great men and women, and of the immortals. He was a genius of art and of work. He loved as few could love, and was loved as it is given to few to be loved.

He was of unfailing good cheer, with the smile which never came off, and which was the token of a spirit which was blessed in the life and memory of all who saw him, and a benediction to all who knew him, — man, artist, gentleman and scholar, friend, classmate and brother — our own for all time.

To his wife and children, to his sister, brothers and friends, we send this greeting of our love and heartfelt admiration, and our prayer that his translation shall be blessed in the world to come as it was in this life and this world.

The story of his life is to us evidence strong as Holy Writ that he was immortal, and we believe with steadfast faith that he is not lost to us, but saved. "God be with us till we meet again."

AUGUSTUS EVERETT WILLSON

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

June 11, 1912