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J. M. W. Turner's 'Woman Sewing' (1842) is a reproduction of the original painting. The original painting is in the collection of the National Gallery, London. The painting is a reproduction of the original painting by J. M. W. Turner. The painting is a reproduction of the original painting by J. M. W. Turner. The painting is a reproduction of the original painting by J. M. W. Turner.

**the  
tranquillity  
of  
endless  
Summer  
is  
enchantment  
for  
H. E.  
BATES**

**T**HE picture I have chosen from my collection, *Woman Sewing*, is by Henri-Gabriel Ibels and was painted in May 1893, at the very time when he and Lautrec were making the rounds of the *cafés concerts*.

I have chosen the picture not only because it is in itself as vibrant and fresh and enchanting as the day it was painted, but because I find the very date of its execution a matter of absorbing interest and astonishment.

When Henri Vicomte de Toulouse-Lautrec, the grotesque buffooning dwarf who had been born into one of France's oldest and most aristocratic families, went to live in Montmartre in the early eighteen-nineties, one of the first friends he was to make among his fellow painters was the young artist, Henri-Gabriel Ibels. The two men had much in common. Both were enthusiastic frequenters of *cafés concerts*; both were accomplished lithographers; both had a sharp eye and a strong sense of humour. But whereas Lautrec was well enough off, Ibels was generally hard up and always under the necessity of thinking up fresh dodges to make a little money.

The two men eventually produced eleven lithographs each, three of Lautrec's and one of Ibels' being tinted. The resulting book, *Le Café Concert* is now extremely rare in its complete state, Lautrec's lithographs having been removed from most copies, the lesser known Ibels being nothing like such a rich commercial proposition. A complete copy, in perfect condition, will cost you about £550.

How did Ibels, at the very time when he and Lautrec were soaking themselves in the noisy and alcoholic debauchings of Parisian night life—the life that on Lautrec's own confession was finally to make him commit moral suicide—manage to turn himself inside out, as it were, and create this calmest, most lyrical and most reposeful of pictures? What caused him to turn from the wild frills and bounces of *café* troupers and paint this fresh and enchanting young lady in her mutton-leg sleeves tranquilly sewing at a piece of vivid scarlet cloth by a still waterside?

I find no answer; but this picture, for all its repose, has for me a great inner vibration. It is like a segment cut from a Summer day. Its vivid calligraphic lines strongly recall Lautrec himself; the background of trees beyond the water has an echo of Bonnard. Less illustrious than his friend the debauched dwarf genius, Ibels may well have been, but this entrancing little sketch in oils has, in my view, no need to fear the rivalry of more distinguished company.

**And that reminds us to remind you . . .  
our Painting Competition is still open, there's  
an entry form on page 128**