

JOHN FREDERICK HERRING JNR

(Doncaster 1815 - 1907)

A Corner of the Farm

signed 'J. F. Herring' (lower centre)
oil on canvas
35.5 x 50.8 cm (14 x 20 in)

Provenance: with Richard Green, London;
anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 5th June 1998, lot 52.

IN THIS IDYLIC SCENE, VARIOUS FARMYARD ANIMALS graze on a warm, English summer day. The circle of horses dominates the picture and about their feet, pigs and chickens forage in the grass for food. To their right, ducks bask in the heat by the edge of a pond and beyond a rickety old fence, a herd of cows trail into the distance. The rustic thatched stables, lush grass, rolling hills and harmonious gathering of animals create an ideal image.

Through successful attention to proportion, perspective and light, John Frederick Herring Jnr achieves a high degree of realism in *A Corner of the Farm*. His rendering of light is superb: careful attention has been given to the shadows cast by the sun, as the foliage is lightly dappled and the grass shimmers. We see it most impressively in the defined contours of the horses as their polished coats reflect the light. His obedience to detail is paramount: evident in the individual attention given to the wooden planks of the barns, the feathers of the chickens, and in the grass which is represented through an abundance of minute brushstrokes.

An illusion of depth is realised through the strong diagonal of the buildings and fence that cuts through the centre of the painting. As these objects recede, the viewer's eye is led to an expansive landscape which opens up in the centre-right of the composition and diminishes into the distance. Again, a faithful rendering of light, with the bold colours of the foreground fading as the landscape recedes, enhances the sense of distance.

Herring, Jnr was the son of the well-known artist John F. Herring Snr (1795-1865) who at the time was considered one of England's finest sporting and equestrian artists, patronised by the English aristocracy. Herring Jnr was thus brought up in a strong artistic environment and gained useful contacts with significant patrons. From an early age he took up his father's passion for painting, and along with two of his brothers, Charles and Benjamin, painted in the manner of their father, often collaborating on the same work. With Herring Jnr's increasing popularity, his father began to sign his own works with the tag 'SR' included on the end of his signature, perhaps feeling somewhat threatened by the progress of his son.

Like his father, sporting and animal pictures define Herring Jnr's work. Characteristically, he portrayed farm animals along the banks of a stream or in a farmyard, depicting them in a faithful, if not idealized, manner (fig. 1). *Horses in a Farmyard*, echoes the present work in its inclusion of horses, pigs, chickens and ducks grazing within a verdant landscape.

As his artistic ability progressed, Herring Jnr's style evolved from his father's, incorporating looser brushwork and wider landscape views. *A Corner of the Farm* is a particularly fine example and represents the height of his artistic achievement, which brought him popular recognition in his day.



John Frederick Herring Jnr, *Horses in a Farmyard*,
Private Collection (Figure 1)

