

## SNACKERS ANTIQUES & FINE ART



Victor Marais- Milton, Une histoire étonnant

Victor Marais-Milton (Puteaux, Paris 1872–1944, Sèvres)

Une histoire étonnant

Oil on panel

Signed lower right: V. Marais

In a chic interior, a cardinal sits at a table reading a magazine. His jaw drops in astonishment, or does he utter a cry of disapproval? Or does he find the magazine soporific and yawn? We won't know exactly, but it's abundantly clear that this is a caricature of a clergyman reading a magazine. Color printing was time-consuming around 1900 and therefore reserved for magazines, not newspapers.

The painting was created by Victor Marais Milton.

He was an artist from the transitional period between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who

was very successful in the caricatural genre in Paris. During this period, genre painting made a comeback. In genre paintings that satirized the established order, Marais Milton, like some of his contemporaries, combined the demand for genre painting with caricatural satire. With a keen eye for detail and realism, Marais subtly depicts the comic adventures of his subjects, particularly those of cardinals. Victor Marais-Milton was born on July 21, 1872, in Puteaux, just west of Paris on the Seine River. He began his career living in Paris but later moved to Sèvres, where he remained until his death. He studied in Jonchère's studio but is also associated with Ernest Meissonnier, a master of genre painting and an inspiration to many artists, while teaching in his own studio at the École des Beaux-Arts. Victor Marais-Milton steered clear of the avant-garde and focused primarily on his anecdotal genre paintings of clergymen, which were in high demand not only among Parisian clients but also in the United States.

The appreciation for this theme in the nineteenth century reflected the renewed interest in Dutch genre painting of the seventeenth century. The growing anticlericalism of the nineteenth century was a valuable source of inspiration for Marais-Milton and his colleagues. In printmaking, it was Daumier who primarily produced political genre pieces for illustrated magazines. This popular theme was thus widely accepted and understood by every viewer. Collectors and spectators alike delighted in the sight of noble figureheads of the church, reduced to banal, even undignified proportions. The comedy was appealing, and the anticlerical message resonated with the prevailing political mood among the buying public. After Marais Milton moved to Sèvres, he had a studio with a large window at his disposal. The effect of this window is often visible in his paintings. His subjects are clearly illuminated. Sometimes, the window itself appears in his paintings. For his ecclesiastical subjects, he dressed his models appropriately. The interior reflected his own home. Several of the pieces of furniture regularly seen in his paintings were in his house in Sèvres.

H. 24 cm. W.19,5 cm