

HELPS FOR STUDENTS OF HISTORY. No. 13

# THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE

BY  
ARTHUR TILLEY, M.A.

LONDON:  
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING  
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE  
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1919

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RENAISSANCE

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## THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to detect the first manifestations of any intellectual movement. There were premonitions of the French Renaissance as far back as the days of Philip VI. (1328-1349), the first prince of the Valois line, but these early blossoms were blighted before they had time to bear fruit, by the era of foreign conquest, civil war, and anarchy which began early in the fifteenth century, and it is customary and convenient to take the expedition of Charles VIII. to Italy in 1494 as marking the real beginning of the French Renaissance. We may even go further and, for the purpose of historical study, divide the whole movement into four sub-periods, terminating respectively at the death of Louis XII. (1515), the death of Francis I. (1547), the Massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572), and the peace of Vervins (1598). It will be an additional help if we also make a cross-division into Learning, Literature,



and Art. As for Science, though the Renaissance with its encouragement of free inquiry awakened the scientific spirit, this spirit hardly found expression in Science itself before the beginning of the last sub-period.

## I.

1494-1515.

The growth of the Modern State is intimately connected with the Renaissance, and when fully developed, as it was in France under Francis I., it tended greatly to the furtherance of Learning, Literature, and Art. Its two leading characteristics are territorial unity and absolute monarchy, but neither characteristic became universal in Western Europe during the Renaissance. The second was absent from Switzerland and Poland, the first from Germany and Italy. In Italy, however, where autocracy was firmly established in the separate states, the idea of unity, which is the underlying principle of Machiavelli's *Prince*, came near to realisation in the hands of Cæsar Borgia. In France both unity and autocracy were the work of Louis XI. Under his astute and far-seeing rule the loosely-knit aggregate of French provinces, inspired with the new spirit of patriotism which was the legacy of Jeanne d'Arc, was welded into a great homogeneous kingdom, and the whole nation, weary of war and anarchy, readily wel-

came an absolute government which gave them peace and order. The unsuccessful war waged by the Dukes of Brittany and other feudal lords after the death of Louis XI. only served to strengthen the royal power, and the marriage of the heiress of Brittany with Charles VIII. was a further step towards the complete unity of the kingdom.

The government of Charles VIII. and Louis XII. was patriarchal rather than despotic, but the essential absolutism of both monarchs is shown by the fact that their Italian expeditions were undertaken against the real interests of the nation, and at the prompting of favourite ministers.

The pretext of Charles VIII. for the invasion of Italy was his claim to Naples as the representative of René of Anjou. At Naples he remained for nearly three months, but in no other city did he spend more than eleven days, and his whole stay in Italy amounted to barely fourteen months. The impressions, therefore, that he and his nobles received of the Italian Renaissance were of a hasty and general character. Judging from the commissions which they gave on their return, they were chiefly impressed by the spacious palaces with their stately fronts, the beautiful sepulchral monuments, and the increasing fashion of portraiture. Much of the spoil which Charles had collected in "his kingdom of Naples" was lost at Fornovo,

but a considerable amount reached France, and, what was much more important, a small colony of Italian artists and workmen was established at Amboise. It included Fra Giocondo, the distinguished architect and humanist; Domenico of Cortona, surnamed Il Boccadoro, who, later achieved considerable distinction as an architect; and Guido Mazzoni of Modena, whose realistic style of portraiture had greatly impressed the King. A year later the renowned Hellenist, Janus Lascaris, also entered his service.

The expedition of Louis XII. which was based on his claim to the Duchy of Milan, as the grandson of Valentina Visconti, was very different in character to that of his predecessor. Instead of fourteen months he remained in Italy for twelve years and a half, and the prolonged influence of a single city, Milan, second only to Florence as a centre of art and culture, was substituted for the hurried impressions of the former expedition.

#### *A. Learning.*

That revival of learning which was perhaps the most striking manifestation of the Renaissance, and which we call Humanism, began in France about the year 1460, but for the next third of a century its progress was slow. The leader of the movement throughout the greater part of its first stage was Robert Gaguin, General of the

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Order of the Trinitarians or Mathurins, a man of considerable influence owing to his high character, his capacity for affairs, and his reputation as a diplomatist. Though not himself a great scholar, he did much for the study of Latin, and especially for Latin composition, or, as it was then called, rhetoric. After his death in 1501 his work was taken up by a native of Ghent who had settled at Paris as a printer, Josse Badius Ascensius. A better scholar than Gaguin, he rendered great service to humanistic education as an editor of Latin classics, as a reformer of textbooks, and above all as a printer of humanistic literature.

Better known than either of these two is Jacques Lefèvre (Faber Stapulensis), of Étampes in Picardy, who devoted himself to the task of reforming the study of Aristotle. Proceeding in a cautious and conservative spirit, he carried out his task by means of new Latin translations, made by Italian humanists, and improved textbooks. After 1507 he began to turn his attention more and more to theological studies and to make Greek Christian literature similarly accessible. He also worked at Biblical criticism, and in a commentary which accompanied his Latin version of St. Paul's Epistles (1512) he anticipated two of the cardinal doctrines of Luther's theology. Later he became the leader of the Evangelical party in France, but he never left the Catholic Church. A searcher



after truth, he "preached Christ," as he had lectured on Aristotle, "from the sources." But to forms and ceremonies and all the outward pomp of ritual he was indifferent, for he was at heart a mystic.

But there was still a serious gap in French humanism. Gaguin knew no Greek; Lefèvre d'Étaples had merely a working knowledge of it. The first real impulse to Greek studies in France came in 1508, when the Italian scholar, Girolamo Aleandro (Aleander), arrived in Paris, and began to teach in private, and then to lecture. By 1511 he had become famous, and at his opening lecture on Ausonius his audience was estimated at two thousand. But as soon as he demanded a fee the crowds vanished. They had come less from a desire for real study than drawn by the spell of the Italian Renaissance. However, when he departed from France towards the close of 1514, he left behind him pupils trained to carry on his work, and a Frenchman who in solid learning and critical judgment was the equal of any Italian. This was Guillaume Budé (Budæus), now a man of forty-six; but as the work which raised him to the first rank of European humanists was not published till 1515, mention of him may be deferred till we come to the next period. His friend and rival the Dutchman Erasmus, the greatest figure of the Northern Renaissance, had not resided

at Paris for any length of time since 1506, but both his *Moriae Encomium*, which was published there in 1511 and the new and greatly enlarged edition of his *Adagia*, printed at Venice in 1508, had a direct and immediate influence upon French humanism.

### B. Literature.

There is little to be said under this head. It was the age of the *grands rhétoriciens*, a detestable school, upon which the spirit of the Renaissance had never breathed. There was, however, one exception, Jean Lemaire de Belges (1472 or 3 - c. 1515), who was for eight years in the service of Margaret of Austria, Governor of the Netherlands. In the course of two visits to Italy, he made himself acquainted with her language and literature, and delighted in the masterpieces of her painters. Marot and Ronsard profited by his verse, and even the great Rabelais did not disdain to study his prose.

### C. Art.

The influence of the Renaissance upon French art is most visible in architecture. Some years before the Expedition to Italy the new spirit of freedom and expansion had shewn itself in the gradual transformation of the château from fortress to country-house. For the invention of gun-

powder had made fortresses useless for defence, except against casual raids, and the crushing of feudalism and the pacification of the kingdom had made them unnecessary. Thus it had become possible to satisfy the natural desire for greater comfort and convenience, for more light and air. Then had come the revelation of the stately and attractive palaces of Florence and Rome, of Naples and Siena, and finally of Milan. The French nobles returned to France with a desire to emulate the symmetrical planning, the airy loggias, and the tasteful decoration of these fine examples of domestic architecture.

But it was no easy task to get their wishes executed. If Gothic architecture had ceased to be progressive, it was still magnificent and still powerful in the possession of a long-established tradition and highly competent workmen. Thus in the few buildings erected before 1508 which show the influence of the Renaissance the new element is comparatively small. The best example is the wing added by Louis XII. to his ancestral château of Blois (completed in 1508). During the last seven years of his reign the progress was more rapid. Unfortunately the château of Gaillon which his powerful minister, Cardinal Georges d'Amboise, the chief promoter of Renaissance art in France, rebuilt as the country residence of the Archbishops of Rouen, was destroyed at the

Revolution and exists only in fragments. From these, however, and from old drawings we know that its south-eastern wing was Renaissance in character, the greater part of the decorative details being executed by Italians and the design being probably by Fra Giocondo. Italian, too, with hardly a doubt, is the Renaissance portion of the Hotel d'Alluye at Blois, the town-house of the Cardinal d'Amboise's successor, Florimond Robertet, which was completed before 1515.

The influence of the Renaissance upon the sculpture and painting of the period is more difficult to estimate because more intangible. In sculpture we find that the Renaissance element is practically confined to decorative details. Certainly in the admirable work of the chief French sculptor of the period, Michel Colombe, who was nearer fifty than sixty, and possibly older, when Charles VIII. returned from Italy, there is no trace of Italian influence, and little, if any, of the Renaissance spirit. His masterpiece, the great tomb of the last Duke of Brittany, François II., at Nantes, is the mature flower of an art which is at once mediæval and purely national.

The chief painter of the period is an anonymous master known as the Maître de Moulins, so-called from his principal work, which hangs in the sacristy of the Collégiate Church of Moulins, and which must have been painted about 1501 or 1502. Alike

in the unity of its composition and in its imaginative idealism it reveals the inspiration of Italian models. On the other hand, the fine picture in the Glasgow Gallery of St. Maurice with a donor, which art-critics ascribe to the same painter, is pre-Renaissance.



## II.

1515-1547.

Francis I., who succeeded his cousin, Louis XII. on January 1, 1515, was born on September 12, 1494, when Charles VIII. was at Asti in Piedmont, making the momentous decision to march on Naples. He thus may be said to have been born and bred under the Renaissance, and he had many characteristics of the Renaissance spirit, curiosity, versatility, restlessness, a real love of art, and sympathetic interest in learning and letters. Unlike his two immediate predecessors, he had a kingly presence, but his character was no stronger than theirs. He was unstable, inconstant, and easily led. In two things only he showed persistence—the development of monarchical power and the patronage of art.

*A. Learning.*

Francis I. did much to encourage the new learning. He established a fine library at Fontainebleau, formed a collection of Greek manuscripts, and after many delays, due to the opposition of the obscurantist party in the University,

founded Royal Professorships—at first five in number—for Hebrew, Greek, and Mathematics (1530). To this he was urged by Guillaume Budé (1468–1540), the leading humanist of the reign, which he had inaugurated by his *De Asse* and had recently glorified by his *Commentaries on the Greek Tongue*. He was a man of wide interests, and profound and multifarious learning. For it was characteristic of the humanists of this period that they did not confine themselves to some one special department, but ranged over the whole field of ancient learning. For instance, Jacques Toussain, a pupil of Budé and one of the first Royal Professors of Greek, was nicknamed “the living library.”

Like their Italian predecessors the French humanists realised that the spread of humanism could only be effected through education. Accordingly new Universities and Colleges were founded in the interests of the new learning. Trinity College at Lyons, the College of Guienne at Bordeaux, where Montaigne was educated, and the University of Nismes, all adopted the new methods of study, and all proved highly successful. An essential help to this reformed education was the printing of classical texts, in which Lyons vied with Paris, and by translations from Greek and Latin authors. Of those who took part in the latter work the best known is the printer and scholar

Étienne Dolet, who was burnt on a doubtful charge of heresy in 1540. His enthusiasm for learning and the services that he rendered to scholarship by his *Commentaries on the Latin Tongue* make him not undeserving of the title which his biographer, R. C. Christie, has conferred on him, that of the *Martyr of the Renaissance*.

### B. Literature.

It is a sign of the close alliance that existed at this time between learning and literature, that at a dinner given at Paris in honour of Dolet in 1537 Marot and Rabelais, the chief poet and the chief prose-writer of the period, took their places beside Budé and Toussain and Danès. It was only five years earlier (1532), when the reign of Francis I. was more than half over, that Marot had published the first collected edition of his poems, and Rabelais the first instalment, *Pantagruel*, of his great romance. In both writers we find the same blending of mediæval and Renaissance elements. Marot clung to the *ballades* and *rondeaux* of old French verse, but by their side he introduced epigrams on the model of Martial, elegies after Ovid, eclogues after Virgil, and epistles, his most successful work, which were largely inspired by Horace. Another influence, which helped to form him, was that of the Court, in which from the time of Anne of Brittany, the wife first of Charles VIII. and then

of Louis XII., women had played a refining and civilising part. To these influences Marot added the natural gifts of self-restraint and concentration, of tact and *esprit*. He was, moreover, a conscientious artist, and he was capable of deeper feeling than he is sometimes credited with. He raised no standard of revolt, he issued no manifestos, but he quietly undermined the pretentious shams of the *rhétoriqueur* school, and recalled French poetry to the paths of sincerity and good sense.

Like Marot, Rabelais made no violent break with mediævalism. Like Marot, he appreciated the older writers who savoured most richly of the native soil, such as Villon and Coquillart, and the author of the immortal farce of *Patelin*. He began his romance as a giant-story, and it is not till he came to his Third Book, published in 1546, that he definitively abandoned this popular form. The grossness of some of his chapters, chiefly to be found in his earliest book, *Pantagruel*, and the cruelty which sometimes disfigures his humour, is largely due to his adherence to mediæval literary tradition. But the best part of Rabelais is pure Renaissance. In the first place he was an enthusiastic humanist, of the encyclopædic type. He had not indeed the profound knowledge of a Budé, or a Toussain, but he was an omnivorous reader of Greek and Latin literature, and he

shared to the full the reverence of his contemporaries for the knowledge and wisdom of the ancients. Further, he realised, as the Italian humanists had done, the importance of educational reform. The chapters in *Gargantua*, in which he contrasts the old education (chap. xiv.) with the new (chaps. xxiii. and xxiv.) are among the best known in the whole book. Taken literally, Rabelais's scheme is the education of a giant in intellect, as well as in stature, but in its broad outlines it is modelled on the practical experience of Vittorino da Feltre and his successors in Italy, and on the system which was being carried out in Paris at this very time by the famous German humanist, Jean Sturm.

• Another side of the Renaissance is represented by the Abbey of Thelema, the account of which occupies the last seven chapters of *Gargantua*. Like Gargantua's education, it is an ideal picture, but it is inspired by Castiglione's *Courtier*, that charming record of humanistic society as it flourished at the Court of Urbino. It expresses, too, Rabelais's abhorrence of that monasticism from which he had himself escaped. The one rule by which the society is governed, "Do what thou wilt" (*Fay ce que voudras*), is the expression not of an ignoble Epicureanism, but of an enlightened individualism regarded as the true basis of common action.





*Gargantua*, which was published in 1534, is the most Protestant in tone of Rabelais's five books. Like most of his fellow-humanists he was keenly alive to the abuses of the Church, and to the crying need for reform. He welcomed, too, the new religious teachers as purgers of the primitive text of the gospel from the interpretations of the canonists. But the iconoclastic and other violent tendencies of the Protestants, which came to a head in the very year of the publication of *Gargantua*, and the publication of Calvin's *Institution* (1536), with its insistence on the natural corruption of man and its virtual negation of the Renaissance principles of free inquiry and individualism, wholly alienated his sympathies from Protestantism as a creed.

Rabelais's eager curiosity was far from being confined to humanistic learning and to French and Italian vernacular literature. He was keenly interested in architecture and music, but it was in the domain of science that his acquirements were the most remarkable. He was a skilful physician, and he had a considerable knowledge of anatomy, physiology, zoology, and botany. He had not, indeed, the thorough scientific spirit of Leonardo da Vinci, who recognised no authority save that of experiment, for much of Rabelais's scientific knowledge was based on the authority, which he seldom questioned, of the ancients. But in an age when

the dissection of the human body was still a rare event in France, and professors of anatomy seldom, if ever, handled the knife, it was a notable thing that Rabelais should have given demonstrations on the human body, even though he may have left the actual work of dissection to a barber-surgeon. Lastly, we may note, as a final instance of the working in him of the Renaissance spirit, that he took a lively interest in geographical discovery.

In Margaret of Navarre, the sister of Francis I. and the wife of the King of Navarre, there was less of the mediæval element than in Marot or Rabelais. A Latin and Italian scholar, she had assimilated what was best in the Italian Renaissance, and she imparted it to her countrymen as a refining and purifying leaven. To poets and scholars she was a firm friend, and they found her Court a home of refuge in hours of stress. Loving serious conversation and the commerce of honourable men and women, she was worthy to have sojourned in the Abbey of Thelema or to have formed one of that select company whose sayings are recorded in the *Cortegiano*. Her own book, the *Heptameron*, modelled on Boccaccio's *Decameron*, is remarkable, not for its tales, which are not particularly well told—if they are sometimes coarse and sometimes indelicate they are never licentious—but for the discussions which follow

the tales, and which throw an interesting light on the thought and society of the day, and especially on the relations between men and women. There is a strong bias in favour of the new religious doctrines, but Margaret never became a Protestant. Like Lefèvre d'Étaples she was a true mystic. Her religion was an adoring love for her God and Saviour, and it is this which at times gives dignity and passion to her too facile poetry.

### C. Art.

Francis I. was an indefatigable patron of art, never counting the cost, and showing on the whole a discerning taste, though he has been blamed for giving too great encouragement to Italian artists at the expense of native talent. Neither Leonardo da Vinci, who died near Amboise in 1519, nor Benvenuto Cellini left traces of their influence, but the Florentine Rosso, who came to France in 1531, and the Bolognese Primaticcio, who followed a year later, founded the famous "School of Fontainebleau." Both were accomplished decorators, working in stucco as well as paint, facile in execution and distinguished in design, but both, in their different ways, had the mannerisms of decadent art. Rosso died in 1540, but Primaticcio lived till 1570, and his influence was great. Throughout the length and breadth of France the châteaux of the nobles were decorated, in

imitation of Fontainebleau, with mythological scenes and other stories of classical antiquity.

In architecture the native builders held their own, and the result was a composite style of Gothic and Renaissance, French and Italian. The finest building of the reign, the Hôtel de Ville at Paris (destroyed by the Commune), and possibly also the new wing at Blois with its great spiral staircase and Chambord with its round towers and steep roofs, were designed by Il Boccadoro, but that artist had lived long enough in France to respect French traditions. All these buildings are French in their general planning, and Italian only in their rich decoration. The vanished château of Madrid in the Bois de Boulogne was the joint work of a French and an Italian architect, but Fontainebleau with its classical peristyle, which became the favourite residence of Francis I., and Saint-Germain with its balustrated galleries were due entirely to French master-masons.

The artistic tastes of the royal patron were shared by his nobles, his ecclesiastics, and his *bourgeois* financiers. It was for one of the latter, Gilles Berthelot, that was built the most perfect example of the domestic architecture of the reign, Azay-le-Rideau.

In sculpture in spite of the inroad of Italianism the school of Michel Colombe still carried on his traditions, and it is to that school that critics are

disposed to assign the noble kneeling figures of Louis XII. and Anne of Brittany on their tomb in Saint-Denis, which served as a model for all the sculptors of the sixteenth century. The tomb itself, especially the decorative ornament, was in part the work of the Florentine Giusti. So with the tomb of the two Cardinals of Amboise in Rouen Cathedral, which has another admirable kneeling figure, that of the elder Cardinal. The principal sculptor, Pierre des Aubeaux, was a Frenchman, but he had several Italians among his fellow-workers, and the influence of Italian models is clearly visible.

Historical painting in this period was chiefly represented by Rosso and Primaticcio, but in portrait painting Jean Clouet, probably of Flemish origin, achieved at the Court a celebrity which was continued by his greater son François. The studies in coloured chalk, which they made for their portraits, are masterpieces of their kind, and had an enormous vogue, but very few of their portraits in oils have been identified with any certainty.



## III.

1547-1572.

This period represents the full flower of the French Renaissance. In humanistic studies France easily surpassed all her rivals; in literature and art she showed astonishing productivity and a high degree of achievement. Though the policy of Henry II., whose character, if more stable, was no stronger than his father's, was alternately swayed by the Constable de Montmorency and the Guises, the absolutism of the crown remained in his hands undiminished. But the fact that his two immediate successors Francis II. and Charles IX. were feeble boys, coupled with the unpopularity of those who governed in their name—the Guises in the first case and Catherine de' Medici in the second—tended greatly to weaken the absolutist idea.

A. *Learning.*

The encyclopædic humanist of the age of Francis I. was now succeeded by the specialist, and in two departments of knowledge, classical

scholarship and jurisprudence, France speedily took the lead. In Greek scholarship the chief names were Turnèbe, Dorat, and Henri Estienne, in Latin scholarship Lambin and Muret, in jurisprudence Cujas and Doneau. Turnèbe and Dorat were both notable editors of Aeschylus; Turnèbe also edited Sophocles and (for the first time) Philo. The output of Henri Estienne, whose home was at Geneva but who was always on the wing, was enormous. He issued from his press eighteen ~~first~~ editions of Greek authors, nearly all of his own editing, and his work was as careful and scrupulous as it was rapid. Lambin was a brilliant editor of Plautus, Lucretius, Cicero and Horace, and Muret was the foremost Latin stylist in Europe.<sup>9</sup> Cujas, "the pearl of jurists," edited the *Corpus Iuris* in the true spirit of humanism, while Doneau aimed at a philosophic conception of the Roman law as a whole. Of greater importance than any of these in the history of thought is Pierre de la Ramée, better known as Ramus, a brilliant lecturer and a many-sided and original thinker, but chiefly famous as leader of the revolt against Aristotelian logic.

### B. Literature.

The humanistic impulse made itself strongly felt in literature, and the work of the Pleiad was begun in Dorat's lecture-room, where Ronsard

and Baïf and Joachim Du Bellay learnt to appreciate the perfection of classical form. The leader of the new movement was Ronsard; its herald was Du Bellay, and he proclaimed their doctrines in his *Déffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoise*. In urging Frenchmen to take for their models the Greek and Latin poets, or the modern Italians, he was urging them to do what Marot had done already; but far more clearly than Marot, he recognised the virtue of a poetic style based upon heightened and imaginative language, and together with Ronsard and his other friends he put this creed into practice. Ronsard is not only a great artist in verse, worthy to be named with La Fontaine and Victor Hugo, but he is a true poet. If he is wanting in passion and high poetic vision, he has warmth of feeling and true creative imagination. Though he essayed epic and eclogues and other forms of impersonal verse, he was essentially an elegiac poet. He is at best not only in his regular elegies, but in those of his odes and sonnets which express tender and reflective emotion, and he has to the full that feeling for nature which characterises so many elegiac poets.

Du Bellay's poetical endowment was slighter than his friend's, but in his *Regrets*, an intimate journal in the form of sonnets of his Roman life, he struck a really original note. Without any attempt to vie with Petrarch or other masters of

style, he records simply and naturally his personal experiences and feelings. The earlier sonnets are elegiac in tone, but in the later ones he passes to satire, for which he had a marked capacity. His later poem, *Le poète courtisan*, is one of the first regular or classical satires in the French language. Another slender volume, which immediately followed *Les Regrets*, reveals him as endowed to a higher degree even than Ronsard with that delicacy of perception and that sense of form which are the heritage of the French genius. *D'un vanneur de blé* is as perfect in its way as Ronsard's impeccable sonnet, *Quand vous serez bien vieille*.

Ronsard attracted many disciples, whom he dubbed the Brigade; but there was an inner and more select circle, which from its numbering at one time seven members, though the number was never strictly defined by Ronsard, was called the Pleiad, after the Alexandrian Pleiad of the third century B.C. It was composed of Ronsard, Du Bellay, Baïf, Pontus de Tyard, Jodelle, Belleau, and another, who is traditionally said to be Dorat, but who was more probably Peletier.

Outside this inner circle, the most interesting poets are the Lyonnese Louise Labé, whose best sonnets are instinct with sincerity and passion, and Olivier de Magny, who died young, a year before his friend Du Bellay. In his joy in life, tempered by the thought of its transitoriness, and

in his pagan sympathies, he is a true type of the Renaissance spirit. But we must guard against exaggerating the paganism of the Renaissance, and we must not be deceived by the pagan mythology and symbolism which was the fashion in French poetry, as in French art, throughout this period. The tomb of Guillaume Du Bellay, in the cathedral of Le Mans, which was completed in 1557, the year after the publication of Ronsard's second book of *Hymns*—so-called after the Homeric *Hymns*—is, at least in its present somewhat mutilated condition, without a single Christian symbol. But this does not imply a purely pagan conception of death. Ronsard's *Hymn to Death*, in spite of its classical allusions and pagan mythology, is thoroughly Christian in tone.

Humanism also had its effect on French prose. In the last year of the reign of Henri II., Amyot published a complete translation of the *Lives* of Plutarch, which took its place in French literature as an original work. Plutarch's examples of lofty patriotism became an encouragement to many generations of Frenchmen, and Amyot's style, orderly and artistic, yet full of savour, not only inspired Montaigne, but served as a model to later writers.

*C. Art.*

The humanist ideal found expression in art as well as in literature. In architecture the compromise between Gothic and Renaissance, and the sharing of the work between Frenchman and Italian, came to an end. The French architects—architects in the modern sense of the term—learned the principles of classical construction from books of engravings and architectural treatises by Frenchmen and Italians. The one most in repute was by a Frenchman, Du Cerceau. Moreover, two of the three chief architects of the period, De l'Orme and Bullant, had visited Italy. Of Diane de Poitiers's chateau at Anet, which De l'Orme regarded as his masterpiece, only a fragment remains, and the Tuileries which he and Bullant began to build for Catherine de' Medici has suffered the same fate as the Hotel de Ville. Bullant, however, can be judged by the work which he did at Écouen and Chantilly for his first patron, the Constable de Montmorency.

Lescot, the third great architect of the reign, had not the advantage of Italian travel, but he was a man of good birth and high culture, and if he lacked the learning of De l'Orme and the imagination of Bullant, he had a stronger feeling than either for harmony and artistic perfection. His share of the Louvre, the southernmost part



of the western wing, in which he had the collaboration of the sculptor Jean Goujon, is the richest and most wholly satisfactory monument of the reign of Henry II.

Of all these artists Goujon is the most thoroughly imbued with the classical spirit. He is wanting in virility and creative energy, but he is grace personified, witness the Cariatides of the Louvre, the Diana from Anet, and above all the *Fontaine des Innocents*. Germain Pilon, a considerably younger man than any of the above, has two sides to his genius. He is sometimes a classicist of a more or less conventional type, in which mood he produced his overrated Three Graces, but he is also a realist of originality, the precursor of a truly national art. Such he appears in the sepulchral figures—both kneeling and recumbent—of Henry II. and Catherine, and with even more convincing effect in the superb kneeling figure of the Chancellor Birague. Another sculptor of this period, the object of recent investigation, is Pierre Bontemps, who collaborated with De l'Orme in the tomb of Francis I., and to whom has been attributed with some probability the famous statue of Admiral de Chabot.

In painting, Primaticcio still continued his work at Fontainebleau, where he was joined, in 1551, by his principal collaborator, Niccolò dell'Abbate. He found great favour with the Guises, and after

the death of Henry II. was appointed superintendent of the royal buildings, which gave him a general supervising power over French art. François Clouet also continued his successful career; of the few portraits in oils that can be ascribed to him with certainty the best is that of Elizabeth of Austria, the wife of Charles IX. He had a rival in Corneille de Lyon, a native of the Hague, who settled at Lyons, began to paint portraits for the Court in 1536 and had a great vogue for many years. But his chalk drawings show that he has had few equals as an interpreter of human physiognomy.

The enumeration of the masterpieces of the principal arts gives a very inadequate idea of the artistic activity of the age, and of the amazing fertility and high excellence that was shown in every branch of art. Glass-painting was especially flourishing. The amount of sixteenth-century glass still preserved in France is enormous. Among the most famous windows are those of Champigny-sur-Veude in Touraine; of Conches, Le Grand Andély, and the churches of Saint-Patrice and Saint-Vincent at Rouen in Normandy; and of Vincennes (completed in 1558 and attributed without sufficient evidence to Jean Cousin), Écouen, and Montmorency (1523-1535, the last a veritable portrait-gallery of the period) in the neighbourhood at Paris. Richest of all is the province of Cham-

pagne, which can show admirable examples at Châlons-sur-Marne, Sens, Saint-Florentin, and in several churches at Troyes. Among the artists whose names have come down to us are Jean Lescuyer, who worked at Bourges, Robert Pinagrier, and Engrand Le Prince and his two sons from Beauvais. On the whole the best Renaissance glass belongs to the first half of the sixteenth century. Soon after 1550, it begins to decline, and after 1572 it shows decided marks of decadence, as in the windows of Montfort-l'Amaury.

The medallist's art during this period was well represented by Delaulne and Pilon; engraving on copper by Delaulne, Boyvin, and Duvet; wood-engraving, chiefly in the form of illustrated books, by Geoffroy Tory and *Le petit Bernard*; ceramics by Palissy and the faïence of Saint-Porchaire; enamelling by the Pénicauds, Léonard Limousin, and Jean Reymond. Tapestry had an enormous vogue. In the earlier part of the century Flemish work was largely imported, but Francis I. established an *atelier* at Fontainebleau, and Henry II. one in the hôpital of the Trinity at Paris, where probably Catherine de' Medici had executed the *Tapisserie d'Artemise* in the Italian style. The taste of the period is also shown in its furniture; in cabinets, dressers, coffer, wardrobes, tables, bedsteads. The designs for these were largely inspired by the architect Du Cerceau in the severer

style, and Hugues Sambin of Dijon in the more exuberant.

In all these arts the influence of the Italian Renaissance is very apparent. In glass-painting this takes the form, partly of the substitution of Renaissance for Gothic forms in the architectural back-grounds, partly in the increased striving after pictorial effect. In the enamels mythological subjects become more and more frequent, and even religious scenes, such as the Life of Jesus by Léonard Limousin (1557), assume a pagan character. Palissy, also, close student of nature though he was, borrowed classical subjects from the painters and engravers, and his larger medallions of Galba and Vespasian in the Louvre are inspired by antique gems. The influence of the school of Fontainebleau with its note of elegant distinction is especially visible in the work of Delaulne and Reymond, and in the faïence of Saint-Porchaire; it is only Palissy and Duvet, the latter especially in his series of the Apocalypse, who show striking originality and vigorous creative genius.

In the sixteenth century music flourished in France under the various forms of dance-music, the setting of songs and lyrics, and Catholic and Protestant church-music. But during the first half of the century the leading musicians were either Flemings or at least belonged to the

Netherlands school. Clément Jannequin, who died an old man in 1559 or soon after, with a great reputation as a writer of songs and descriptive secular music, was, according to tradition, a Frenchman, but he is connected with the Netherlands school through Josquin des Prez. It is Claude Goudimel, born in the Spanish town of Pesançon but settled in Paris by 1549, who has the best claim to be regarded as representative of French Renaissance music. He set to music the Odes of Horace and four Odes of Ronsard, but he is known mainly as a writer of motets and masses, and above all as the composer of the music for the Protestant Psalter of Marot and Beza. Whether he himself was a Protestant is uncertain, but he was among the victims who were massacred at Lyons in the days following St. Bartholomew.

## IV.

1572-1598.

Before the Massacre of St. Bartholomew the wars of religion had no marked effect upon the intellectual activities of France. But after St. Bartholomew learning and art received a sudden check, while literature was turned into new channels. Ramus, hunted down by a rival professor, was one of the victims; Lambin<sup>1</sup> died of shock<sup>2</sup>; Doneau, Hotman, and the younger Scaliger fled to Geneva, Delaulne to Strassburg; Jean Goujon had already died in exile; François Clouet died in the same year; Ronsard retired from the Court, having practically done his work, two years later. In 1575 Cujas was driven from Bourges by religious disturbances. By 1578 the three great architects, Bullant, De l'Orme, and Lescot, were all dead.

Primaticcio died in 1570, but even before his death he had gone out of favour. This was largely due to a general reaction against the predominating Italian influence. Henri Estienne had sounded the attack in 1565 in the first of three treatises



directed against the Italianate fashions of the Court. After the Massacre it was remembered that at the fateful conference which decided on its execution the only person present of pure French blood was Tavannes, and that the majority were Italians.

But antagonistic to this patriotic anti-Italian movement there were forces at work, which were dangerous to national unity, and to the unifying power, already much weakened, of the Crown. The Protestants instead of being cowed, as Catherine had anticipated, by the Massacre, were hardened in their resistance. They felt that they could no longer trust the Government, and on the first anniversary of St. Bartholomew they addressed a petition to the King, in which they assumed the tone of a quasi-independent power. At the same time, the *Politiques*, or moderate Catholics, who were for the State first and for religion afterwards, began to ally themselves with the Protestants. On the other side, the ardent Catholics formed leagues and associations, which looked rather to Guise than to the King as their head, and ultimately to Spain. The most important of these was the League of Paris, constituted in 1585; with the avowed aim of establishing Catholicism as the one and only religion in France, and of excluding from the succession the heretic, Henry of Navarre, who by the death of Alençon, the King's only

surviving brother, had become the rightful heir to the throne.

Ever since the Massacre the question whether it was lawful to resist an unjust magistrate or rebel against a tyrannical King had been discussed in pamphlets. The Protestants said Yes, and the Catholics No, but they now changed weapons, and while the Protestants maintained the divine right of Kings, the Catholics appeared as the champions of revolution. All this, combined with the intense unpopularity of Henry III., who by his unnatural debaucheries and grovelling superstition had brought the royal dignity into contempt, tended greatly to undermine the power of the Crown. Moreover, the dynastic aims of Guise, and the ambition of Henry's favourites to restore the provinces of which they were governors to their former condition of quasi-independent states, threatened to disintegrate the kingdom, and to plunge it once more into the disunion and anarchy of the feudal period.

#### *A. Learning.*

There is one great name in this period, the greatest in the history of French classical scholarship, that of Joseph Scaliger. He returned from Geneva to France in 1574, and lived there till 1593. A master of Greek and Latin, he had a critical sense, a sureness of method, and a construc-

tive power that have never been surpassed. His great work was the creation of a scientific system of ancient chronology, but when his masterpiece, the *Thesaurus temporum*, was published, he was living out of France, a professor in the new Protestant University of Leyden. After his departure the most learned scholar in France was Pierre Pithou, and it was significant of the fact that the study of Greek had not taken deep root in France, that his scholarship was mainly Latin, and that the original editions that we owe to his enterprise were all of Latin authors.

If classical scholarship suffered grievously from the Massacre, it gave a certain indirect impetus to historical research. Protestants were moved not only to write political pamphlets, but seriously to investigate the origin and limits of the royal power. Thus Hotman in the *Franco - Gallia* initiated the critical study of French history, and his republican theories provoked Bodin, a distinguished and active member of the *Politique* party, to write his *Six Livres de la Republique*, which laid the foundations of modern political science. In the same historical spirit Pasquier wrote his *Recherches de la France*, which contains much valuable information on the history of French institutions and French poetry. In all these works we see a double source of inspiration, the critical spirit which was inherent in the Renais-

sance, and a spirit of patriotism, which was leading thoughtful men away from Italy and classical antiquity to the early history of their own country. It was still humanism, but it was humanism turned into a national channel, and nourished on national traditions.

### B. *Literature.*

After Ronsard's retirement the poetical stream divided into two channels—the one represented by the Catholic courtier and ecclesiastic, Desportes, and the other by the Protestant country gentleman and soldier, Du Bartas. Desportes inherited a share of Ronsard's art without his imagination; Du Bartas had all Ronsard's imagination and more, but he had no art, and not even taste. The same inability to control his inspiration by self-criticism and a sense of artistic form is shown by a greater Huguenot soldier, Agrippa d'Aubigné. *Les Tragiques*, his chief poetical work, is an epic in intention, but its merit lies chiefly in its satirical parts. Like Du Bartas's rival epic, *Les Semaines*, it is a poem of fine passages and still finer single lines.

The poet of this second generation of the Pleiad who inherited the largest share of Ronsard's genius was the dramatist Garnier. But the poetical language of his tragedies, of which the best is *Les Juives*, does not atone for their lack of action, a defect common to all Renaissance tragedy.

It was due to two causes—the influence of Seneca and the want of stage experience. The Renaissance comedy had its chief representative in Larivey, who contented himself with translating or adapting Italian originals. As with Garnier, his chief merit is in his language, which is colloquial, expressive, and amusing, the prose of true comedy. But his best play, *Les Esprits*, is inferior to *Les Contents* of Odet de Turnèbe (a son of the great Hellenist), which has not only the merit of easy and natural language, and of two characters who are alive, but is even to some extent a serious study of manners.

The intensity of life which is so marked a feature of the Renaissance is admirably reflected in the *Commentaries* of the ruthless Catholic leader Monluc, in which he records with racy and picturesque charm his experiences as a soldier, and in the *Vies de grands Capitaines*, *Dames illustres*, and *Dames galantes* of the Abbé de Brantôme, which, though biographical in form, are full of personal reminiscences. The whole courtly society of the later French Renaissance is mirrored in his volumes. Vice and virtue have no meaning for him; he cares only for intensity of life. He applauds from his stall, but he never criticises.

A third Gascon, Montaigne, found life equally interesting, but he was a critic as well as a spectator, and it was impossible for any one seriously to

contemplate the condition of France during the twenty years from 1572 to Montaigne's death in 1592, the period covered by his *Essays*, without forming a very sober estimate of human nature. "Man is a wonderfully vain, diverse, and wavering subject," he wrote in the essay which he placed at the head of his book. This is far removed from Pico della Mirandola's treatise *On the Dignity of Man* and even from Rabelais's *Abbey of Thelema*. So too his attitude towards that classical literature which had so impressed the humanists with the sense of man's dignity was very different from theirs. Though he had been educated on strictly humanistic lines, though his favourite authors were Seneca and Plutarch, though his essays are stuffed with passages "pillaged" from ancient literature, and though no story told by an ancient historian is too absurd for his credulity, yet for all this he has not the superstitious reverence for antiquity that we find in the earlier humanists, or even in some of his contemporaries. The ancients were not the only great writers, and their opinions, like those of everyone else, had to be brought to the bar of criticism. "Greek and Latin," he wrote in one of his two famous essays on education, "are fine accomplishments, but we pay too high a price for them." And a comparison of his educational views with those of Rabelais's gives us a measure of the change that



had taken place during the interval of forty years which separates them. Rabelais's ideal is a highly-trained all-accomplished prince of the Italian Renaissance; Montaigne's is a shrewd and open-minded man of the world, the *honnête homme* or well-bred gentleman of the seventeenth century.

But if in his attitude towards humanism Montaigne is a herald of the age of Reason, he is in two respects a true representative of the Renaissance. Firstly he is so thorough an individualist, that he can say of his book that he himself is the subject of it. Secondly that book is written in a style which in its disorderly genius is the exact antithesis of the balanced prose of the classical age, and in its rich imagination is a true offspring of the Renaissance.

With Montaigne the literature of the French Renaissance may be said to close. The *Satire Ménippée*, which dates from two years later, is an admirable piece of work, but it has no Renaissance characteristics. It initiates the work of reconstruction which awaited Henry IV. and which he carried out with astonishing success. There is more of the Renaissance in Regnier, the first great French satirist, whose earliest satires were not published till 1608. He stands between two ages. If in his close and sincere observation of life and in his firm and manly versification he is a forerunner of Molière, he is also the last poet of the Pleiad.

C. *Art.*

During this period of civil warfare and economic disaster all the arts languished. The building of the Louvre and the Tuileries came to a standstill, and in no department of art was there any activity. It was not till the return of Henry IV. to Paris that, thanks to his wise encouragement, the arts again revived.

D. *Science.*

If during the years which followed St. Bartholomew, art, poetry, and philology languished, on the other hand the scientific spirit began to show itself not merely in a quickening of the critical faculty, but in a deliberate application of the methods of observation and experiment. The new movement was chiefly illustrated by two men who died in the same year, 1590, and who both left writings which have won for them an honourable name in literature as well as in science—Ambroise Paré, the surgeon, and Bernard Palissy, the potter. Paré's *Method of Treating Gun-shot Wounds* (1545), the first scientific treatise ever written in French, revolutionised practical surgery; Palissy's *Discours admirables* (1580), the substance of lectures which he had delivered at Paris, stamp him as a pioneer in physics, chemistry, mineralogy, and geology. On the formation of rocks and

fossils, on crystallisation, and on the origin of springs and action of running water, he made real contributions to knowledge. "His only book," he says, "was the sky and the earth," but he mentions with honour two contemporary naturalists, Pierre Belon, who wrote a remarkable book of travels in the East (1553) and important works on Fishes, Birds and Coniferous Trees, and Pierre Rondélet, the author of another treatise on Fishes.

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