

# THE DAWN

OF THE

FRENCH RENAISSANCE





Medal of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany. By Nicolas Leclerc and Jean de Saint Priest (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)



# THE DAWN OF THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE

BY

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TO FRANCE



## **PREFACE**

SYMPATHETIC critic of my Literature of the French Renaissance pointed out that it lacked an introduction, and he suggested that with a view to remedying that defect I should revise and add to the Introductory Essay that I published thirty-five years ago. I recognised the justice of his criticism, but I was conscious that the Essay in question was too imperfect to serve the purpose. I therefore proposed to begin afresh and to write two or three chapters which might more worthily take its place. But in the course of thinking out the matter this modest undertaking assumed larger proportions. It seemed to me that to trace the beginnings of the French Renaissance, and to lay a sure and firm foundation for the study of it as an organic movement affecting the whole life and thought of the nation, a wide and thorough survey of the ground must be made. There must be an investigation of the first manifestations of the Renaissance spirit, not only in humanism and literature, but in architecture, sculpture, painting, and every form of art. Former histories of the Renaissance have suffered from a concentration of the vision on certain fields of activity to the exclusion of others equally important. The humanist has been inclined to identify the Renaissance with Humanism, the historian of art to lay undue stress on the particular art in which he was interested. Into the delicate and much debated question as to the relations between France and Italy a further hindrance to right judgment has been introduced by a natural but disturbing bias of patriotism. Good



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Frenchmen have rejected without due examination any suggestion of the debt of France to Italy, and this attitude has provoked counter-attacks which go too far in the opposite direction.

It appeared to me then that a stranger, untouched either by patriotic impulses or by the desire to rise superior to them, might possibly hold the scales more evenly and survey the field with a mind that was at any rate free from pre-There was this difficulty that I was not an expert in any branch of art, and that in dealing with architecture and sculpture and painting I was likely, indeed sure, to But on the whole I thought that the attempt was worth making. I thought that if I abstained from pronouncing aesthetic judgments and confined myself to the more modest task of collecting data to speak for themselves, I might present a body of facts, not indeed complete, but sufficient to enable those who have more special knowledge than myself to form their own conclusions. mistakes I have made, there should at least be no difficulty in detecting them, for I have been careful to give the sources of my facts, and to state with candour my conclusions.

The writing of the book was nearly finished in May 1914, when I made a final visit to France in its interests. Little did my companion and I think as we rested on the grass at Chantilly, after inspecting the treasures of the château, that in three months from that day, within five miles of where we sat, the peaceful town of Senlis would be given up to murder, rapine, and destruction at the hands of an invading army broken loose from civilization and humanity. The Great War has swept other interests into the background, and the best energies of active men and women have been concentrated on the paramount task of repelling the common danger. Thus, though under normal conditions



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this book might have appeared in the autumn of 1915, and though the printing, except for the introductory matter, was finished before the end of that year, it was thought advisable to wait for its publication till the close of the War. Two more years however have passed, and it has not yet pleased God, "who by his divine Word rules and moderates all," to crown the efforts of the Allies with final victory. My book therefore must appear under the shadow of war, and I can only hope that there may be a few persons who have leisure and inclination to direct their thoughts for a while from sterner issues to the arts of peace.

Fortunately all the buildings and works of art that fall within the immediate scope of this inquiry are intact. It is otherwise with some of the buildings to which a cursory reference is made. Everyone knows how the cathedral of Reims, so intimately associated with the historic greatness of France, has been defaced. It is worse with Soissons, which has been damaged almost beyond repair. Of secular buildings the Hôtel de Ville of Arras, a singularly beautiful example of Flamboyant architecture, has with the exception of one solitary corner been entirely destroyed. What will be the ultimate fate of its sister of Saint-Quentin it is impossible to say. Worst of all, because no shadow of a military excuse can be alleged in its justification, is the case of Coucy. It was in pure revenge that the finest existing example of a mediaeval château in France was deliberately blown into the air1.

From these injuries to the sacred relics of her past, as from the devastation of her soil and from the sacrifice of so many of her heroic sons, who have died that she may live,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> An instructive account of the damage done to French buildings will be found in M. André Michel's "Ce qu' 'ils' ont détruit," in the Gazette des Beaux Arts for June 1916.



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France, with her unconquerable spirit and her inexhaustible powers of recuperation, will rise triumphant. But her regeneration will not be merely material. Unless one has misread the signs of the times, we are nearing the dawn of a greater Renaissance than that which is the subject of these pages-greater, because, while the old Renaissance was chiefly intellectual in character, and its chief work was the emancipation of human intelligence from the chains of worn-out tradition and authority, the new Renaissance will be largely of the spirit. It will not be a sudden re-birth, it will not bring with it the millennium, there will be delays and hesitations and backslidings, but it will surely come, and it will bear the fruits of love and righteousness and peace.

A. T.

CAMBRIDGE, Christmas, 1917.



# AUTHOR'S NOTE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Full reference will be found at the beginning of chapters III-XV to the sources of information for these chapters, but I should like to make here special acknowledgement to the Histoire de l'Art now in process of publication under the direction of M. André Michel. Without its guidance, and without that of Mr W. H. Ward's Architecture of the Renaissance in France and of M. Paul Vitry's Michel Colombe et la sculpture française de son temps I should have been greatly at a loss in dealing with the Third Part of my book. To my friend Mr Ward, indeed, who combines with the professional knowledge of an architect the habits and method of a trained scholar, I owe a double debt, for he has kindly read, wholly in proof and partly also in manuscript, the two chapters on Architecture (XI and XII) and the chapter on the French Occupation of Milan (IV). I must hasten to add that he is no way responsible for the statements and opinions that occur in them. My deep gratitude is also due to my friend the Rev. H. F. Stewart, D.D., Fellow and Dean of St John's College, who—not for the first time—has read the whole of my proofs, and given me the benefit of his vigilant criticism. My grateful thanks are also due to the Provost of King's College, Dr M. R. James, who has always been ready to place at my disposal the stores of his multifarious learning. I am also indebted to Mr F. J. H. Jenkinson, University Librarian; to Mr C. E. Sayle, and to Mr H. G. Aldis of the University Library; to Mr S. C. Cockerell, Director of



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Finally let me add a word of sincere gratitude to the Syndics of the University Press for undertaking the publication of my book, and to the Secretary of the Syndicate, the reader and other members of the staff, for unfailing courtesy and patience.

A. T.



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#### CORRIGENDA

- p. 47, l. 23. For Cada Mosto read Ca da Mosto.
- p. 64, 1. 5. For brightening read blighting.
- p. 74, n. 2. For 327 ff. read 527 ff.
- p. 87, l. 20. For Varro read Valla.
- p. 122, l. 23 and p. 128, l. 21. For Le Maire read Lemaire.
- p. 126, l. 28. For Manuel Chrysoloras read Constantine Lascaris.
- p. 145, l. 8. For Ambierlé read Ambierle.
- p. 153, last line but two. For Forjat read Forjot.
- p. 155, n. 1. For George read Georges.
- p. 166, l. 11. For Giulio read Giuliano.
- p. 168, l. 29. For Génèvre read Genèvre.
- p. 168, last line but one. For Tarn read Tarare.
- p. 190, l. 16. For by Verard read for Verard.
- p. 392, l. 5. For Blois read Romorantin.
- p. 397, l. 5. For nine miles north of Caen read seven and a half miles south-west of Caen.
- p. 421, l. 11. Del. the old Hôtel de Ville, and in.
- p. 421, l. 17. For a narrow building of read a third set of rooms consisting of

#### ADDENDA

- p. 155, n. 3. Add a reference to M. de Montmorand, Une femme poète au xvie siècle; Anne de Graville, 1917.
- p. 364, n. 4. The author, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, died in France on November 29, 1917, of wounds received near Cambrai two days previously.
- p. 375. Add a reference to T. A. Cook, Twenty-five great houses of France (reprinted from Country Life), with an introduction by W. H. Ward (1916). It contains chapters on the house of Jacques Cœur and the châteaux of Langeais, Montreuil-Bellay, Amboise, Blois, and Maintenon, besides those of Josselin and D'O cited in my notes.
- p. 381. For the château Du Moulin see Country Life for August 25, 1917 (by W. H. Ward).
- p. 419. For the Hôtel Lallemand see Country Life for April 28, 1917 (by W. H. Ward).