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Julia Pardoe

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The Court and Reign of Francis the First, King of France

This two-volume work by the historian Julia Pardoe (1804–62) was published in 1849. (Her bestselling account of life in Turkey and her biography of Marie de Medici are both also reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection.) Pardoe began writing poetry and novels, but later turned to non-fiction, especially travel narratives and historical biography. In this work, she attempts to remove the accretions of myth which have clung to Francis I and to his court. Noting the tendency of French historians to glorify the monarchs of the distant past, she observes: ‘it is only by reference to the more confidential records and correspondence of the period’ that the modern historian can arrive at ‘a just estimate of the character and motives of the sovereign’. Volume 2 considers the tumultuous consequences of the Protestant reformation and the rivalry between France and the Habsburgs, and ends with Francis’ death in 1547.

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