

Перевести.

The School of Fontainebleau. How it was formed Style and manner of Primaticcio. His difference from Rosso. Their common elongation of the figures Extent of this characteristic Geoffrey Dumoutier. Other French painters Jean Cousin His authentic works True beginnings of the school Comparison of Primaticcio and Niccolo Oil-paintings by these two The former's poetic style The Fontainebleau School in the provinces Bouteloup The Artemisia series Antoine Caron Pierre Quesnel Their mediocrity Painting difficult to establish in France.

Школа Фонтенбло. Как он сформировался стиль и манера Primaticcio. Его отличие от Россо. Их общее удлинение степени показатели этого признака Джеффри Dumoutier. Другие французские художники Жан кузен его подлинными произведениями истинных истоков школы сравнение Primaticcio и Никколо картины маслом на этих двух первых поэтического стиля Фонтенбло школы в провинциях Bouteloup на польни серия Антуана Карона Пьер Кеснел свою серость картины трудно установить во Франции.

THE simple story we have told so far has shown the importance of Primaticcio to the French Renaissance. The fact is generally recognised, but the reasons given are not always sufficiently cogent for the clear understanding of it.

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The most striking of all is the extreme duration of his residence and his influence. He survived Rosso thirty years and preceded Niccolo del P Abbate by twenty. In all the forty years during which, as I have said, the first studio of Fontainebleau was at work, he was in charge of it for all but two, the first and the last. All the rest of its long career was maintained and filled by his presence.

Самым ярким из всех-это экстремальный период его проживания и его влияние. Он пережил Россо на тридцать лет и предшествовал Никколо дель Аббате П на двадцать. Все сорок лет, в течение которых, как я уже сказал, первой студии Фонтенбло был на работе, он был ответственным за все, кроме двух, первый и последний. Все остальные его долгую карьеру поддерживается и наполняется его присутствием. (Это про Приматиччо)

His influence, which was shared at first and even slightly surpassed by a rival of greater weight, had not ten years to wait before it reached the throne from which it was never to fall, and which the cleverest of the newly engaged artists was only to enlarge and strengthen still further. We have observed the deep mark left by Rosso on ornament, by motives borrowed from his stuccos which Primaticcio himself imitated. With that exception, it must be acknowledged that all the direction exercised on art by the studio of Fontainebleau had its principal and almost unique source in Primaticcio. I am speaking here of the figure, and exclusively of what concerns my subject. If the question is asked, why the great work left by Rosso did not equally form a school, the point is reached at which we can no longer escape a comparison between their respective manners.

Great and able as are the paintings which cover the gallery of Francois L, they have scarcely a single merit that is not to be found in Primaticcio, with the addition of something more of attractiveness, of balance, of pleasantness, with which it is not surprising that imitators were much taken. Poetry, learning, a fine intellectual equipment, and noble and fertile invention are found equally in both these artists : there is an ease and a grace and a more delicate feeling for nature in the second, which distinguish him from the first.

Three influences went to form Primaticcio: Giulio Romano, Michael Angelo, and Correggio. From the first he took his poetic form, the calm majesty of his faces, and a real and very vivid feeling for the antique ; from the third his undulating and flexible line, the roundness and fulness of his drawing, his happy contrasts, his pleasant nonchalance, his loose and floating drapery, all his tenderness and all his grace ; finally, from Michael Angelo he took his good sense, the grandeur of his outlines, the delicacy of his transitions, the vivid display of anatomical science, the unexpected in action, his grandeur and his vigour.

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Such a combination composes a style very different from that of Rosso and decidedly superior to it, which could only pass unrecognised by a hurried observer, or one who knew nothing of the drawings of the two masters.

It is the opinion of such observers, 'however, that has commonly been accepted ; and nothing is so common as to hear these two artists spoken of as if they formed part of one and the same school. They are bracketed together for the same praise and the same blame ; the lucubrations on Fontainebleau combine their names and the history of their influence ; the catalogues suggest them both as possible painters of the same works. When it comes to defining their styles, it appears that one can scarcely be distinguished from the other, and that their most individual characteristics are nothing more than varieties of the same style.

The features of this style are dinned into the ears of all who seek for information on these subjects. It has but one characteristic, and that has become so much a matter of popular knowledge that not a man but thinks himself entitled to bring out the name of one or the other at will, and even to assign works to them off-hand. Ask any amateur the decisive mark of these painters, and scarcely one will hesitate to say that it consists in a singular elongation of the figures, which is at the same time the characteristic of the school of Fontainebleau. Such is the easy authority assumed ; an authority which has resulted, from one end of Europe to the other, in the attribution to this school and the sixteenth century in France of any number of works, either in drawing or in painting, that are obviously dubious. Now I do not deny that this elongation is found in Rosso and in Primaticcio ; nor that it is, as a matter of fact, a characteristic sufficiently unlike nature to tempt us to retain it as a distinguishing feature. But that would only be possible on one condition : the total oblivion of the number of other painters who equally adopted it, a number so large that a school constituted on this basis would run the risk of including all the countries and all the indefinite periods imaginable. The most striking example I know of this, is a passage in Waagen's » Treasures of Art,» * concerning the illuminations of Godofredus Batavus in the manuscript of the Gallic War. «The over-slender proportions,' 1 he says, » the free, often graceful, but sometimes extravagant attitudes, show that they already belong to what is called the Epoch of the Renaissance in France, which attained its highest perfection in the so-called School of Fontainebleau.» These illuminations date from 1519. I have shown what the French School was like at that time, and these productions are the work of a Hollander. How, before a school is formed, can a foreigner possibly be chosen to represent a characteristic of style which was the special note of that school ?

The truth is that the elongation we are speaking of, which is found at such a distance from Rosso and Prima?ticcio in what is here called the French School, is met with in a hundred other places too. To begin with, is it not present in Botticelli and Mantegna, and any number of primitive painters ? It acquires later, I admit, another character, which derives from the influence of Michael Angelo ; and I believe that, as a fact, that great artist was the source from which sprang the proportions of the figure maintained by the Fontainebleau artists ; but that is a common character, which it would be quite erroneous to discover only in the artists who worked in France, like Cellini again, and Niccolo, and, I will add, Luca Penni. For we do not find that all these painters differed in that respect from those who stayed in Italy. Bronzino, for instance, or Parmigiano had this elongation quite as strongly. If anything more was wanted, surely the Libyan Sibyl in the Sixtine,* or the group of Victory in the Bargello, and some other figures by Michael Angelo, were quite enough to spread the taste and the imitation, with?out assigning the mysterious inception of this feature to the mutual approximation of the painters in the pay of the court of France.

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There is another point to notice, and that is, that there is no school worthy of the name which can take its title from Fontainebleau, at least during the whole of the reign of Francois I. and the first half of the career of Primaticcio. In fact, it is impossible to combine Rosso with Primaticcio in any common definition of style, since both had been completely formed by different schools before their residence in France, and could do no more than approximate their different styles to each other. The word school, which is used to join these two men, can signify no more, therefore, than a studio, in which their works were mingled. Rosso belonged to the Florentine school, Primaticcio to that of Parma ; Luca Penni, whose works were widely different from those of the other two, was almost exclusively Roman. Then what part can be played by Fontainebleau and the unity imposed by the name, in defining the manner of these painters ?

It is true that the conjunction of their teachings ultimately gave birth to a school ; but time was needed for this result, and the passage of several years at least. From looking at these models side by side, the eyes of the French painters, like those of the less able Italians, came to be accustomed to mingling their styles; and it may be said with truth that out of that combination, towards the end of the reign of Henri II., there grew the type of figures and compositions which was to remain in favour throughout the whole century. Only thus is it correct to speak of a School of Fontainebleau. The characteristics of this school I shall come to very shortly.

If, therefore, we go back first of all to the reign of Francois I., and seek for the first effects of the lessons of Fontainebleau, we must expect no more than individual and distinct instances. A Frenchman, GeoiFroy Dumoutier,* comes to hand as a good example.

I have mentioned before his son Etienne, a distinguished portrait-painter. Geoifroy comes under the heading of the stylists formed by the influence of Italy. He was a native of Rouen,t and we find his name in the «Comptesdes Batiments du Roi^J about the period of 1588 to 1540. The latest date of some etchings assigned to him by very ancient evidence is 1547.* We know nothing more of him, but these etchings, twenty-two in number, make us acquainted with the style he practised. To these we must add a design for painted glass preserved in the Louvre, from which the latest catalogues have incorrectly removed his name.t It represents in several episodes the life and ascension into heaven of Mary Magdalen. I am inclined also to attribute to him the drawing for two celebrated pieces of pottery made at Rouen in 1542, now at Chantilly.J In the absence of the pictures which we have the right to suppose he painted, this is sufficient indication of his scope. The most unmis?takable feature is a decided imitation of Rosso, carried out with but moderate though skilfully managed ability. Hence he fits exactly into the epoch that produced Leonard Thiry ; and there is every reason to suppose that the other Frenchmen then at work, like Claude Badouin and Charles Dorigny, who were employed in the execution of the master's designs in the gallery of Francois I., were subject to the same influence.

It is true that we cannot be certain that they painted pictures on their own account, for we know scarcely anything of them but their names. But it may be added that Badouin was employed on the Fontainebleau tapestries, and possibly painted some part of the glass in the chapel at Vincennes,* which was begun under Francois I.

I have mentioned in their places others of these Frenchmen who worked under Primaticcio after Rosso's death: Carmoy, Musnier, and Rochetel. Of Charles Carmoy we know that he was a native of Orleans.t Musnier and Rochetel are given by name as painters of the wardrobes in the King^s Closet, the former for Temperance and its fellow-figure, the latter for Zaleucus and Justice.J

For want of a better time, I will choose the middle of the century for the mention of an enigmatical artist, who has been talked of far and wide, but of whom very little indeed is known for certain; I mean the famous Jean Cousin.

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Every detail about this painter, his life, his works, even the branches of art he practised, have yet to be verified. He is referred to on all hands as a glass-painter, and unsupported tradition certainly affirms that he was. There is no proof that he did the famous windows of the chapel at Vincennes, and the opinion that assigns them to him is no older than the eighteenth century. It is acknowledged now that he did not make the statue of Admiral Chabot, and that his part in his tomb could not have extended beyond the accessories and the ornaments and fortifications which accompany it. Further, in his case, there is always a possibility of confusion among writers on the subject, no less than in the » Comptes,» between this artist and some other, from the commonness of his name, which was shared by several artisans of the time. It is true that he came unquestionably from Sens; but there is no reason to suppose that that town had fewer people of the name than any other. He had no official title to distinguish him, and his whole biography suffers from this uncertainty. For instance, must we admit that the accounts of works executed in Sens Cathedral in 1530 * have anything to do with him ? He is credited with a grown-up son in 1542 f and an elder brother, a jeweller, who, like himself, was also named Jean. After 1542 we find him a citizen of Paris, where he appears to have lived, with the exception of a few visits to Sens, till his death, which took place between 1583 and 1595.+

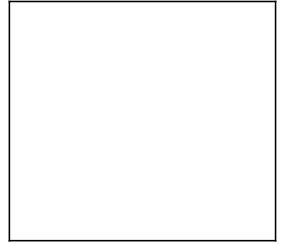
A point to be remembered is that this famous painter, who appears in nearly all the manuals as a great ancestor of French painting, is never mentioned in any contemporary document as commissioned for any work, nor granted any distinguished post. That means that all the current ideas on this subject are in need of reformation. No doubt, what made his fortune with posterity was the surname of the «French Michael Angelo»; and that name was given him by those who had only studied his «Last Judgment» in Pieter de Jode's engraving. The following is a list of his authentic works, which are very few in number and of trifling importance.

The «Last Judgment» in the Louvre,* engraved under his name in 1615, may pass as sufficiently guaranteed by this old ascription. The » Book of Perspective,» published in 1560, also bears his name, like the » Book of Lace,» with additions by Domenico da Sera, which appeared in 1584. A print of the «Brazen Serpent,» engraved by Etienne Delaune, is lettered Cusinus Senon. invert. Another anonymous print of the «Conversion of St. Paul» has I.C.S. in., which, considering the style of the composition, is equally convincing. A third, engraved by Leonard Gautier in 1581, which represents the «Forge of Vulcan,» has these words : Johannes. Cusinus Senon. inv. I pass over several instances of less obvious signatures, in which there is nothing at all to indicate that Cousin was more than the engraver. That is the whole of the authenticated output of this artist ; enough to give a sufficient idea of his style, and at the same time to enable us to credit him with other works which may some day be classed together. Meanwhile, the duty of criticism is to see that all the rest is forgotten, and to prevent the return of fabrications which make the supposed biography of this artist tend to falsify all the present history. His manner reveals but indifferent knowledge, taste of little refinement in spite of considerable care, and an imitation of Primaticcio, which compels us to include Jean Cousin in the number of those in whom the School of Fontainebleau became at last a real thing.

Primaticcio is not the only artist I find imitated in this work : a few notes of Rosso still survive, and some signs of Roman influence which may have been drawn from Luca Penni, or from the drawings by Giulio Romano brought by Primaticcio from Mantua,* or from the same artist's tapestries which filled the storehouse of the royal furniture. But all this was set in motion and carried forward by the purely Parman style, imposed by the constant study of Primaticcio's works and his living influence. This style, in fact, united all the others, and this unification marked the establishment of what at length we may rightly call a school.

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If I were asked for a precise date, I should give the year 1552, when Niccolo came to settle in France. Niccolo so soon caught the manner of Primaticcio, for which his education at Parma had admirably prepared him, that his enamels in the Sainte Chapelle, which date from 1553, show him already in perfect enjoyment of it. Most of the drawings that are classed under his name are of the same style, which is easy to recognise, and though distinct from the master's, are none the less evidently an emanation from that admirable model.



This is the natural place for a comparison between the two, in which their common features will be the first consideration. These common features consist in rich and emphatic drawing, in prettily contrasted attitudes, in all the correction that delicate taste could administer to the impulses to which the members of an aristocracy are always subject. Like all imitators of Michael Angelo, Primaticcio is decidedly mannered ; but his mannerism is of a peculiar kind. It is composed of contrary elements artistically united, which, though they miss being perfectly natural, attain none the less some sort of balance. The same may be said of Niccolo. This balance and good taste are what attaches them to the Roman school, though they cannot make them part of it; as M. Reiset has justly remarked. «Their principles,» says this excellent writer, » were precisely the opposite of those of the clumsy imitators of the great Michael Angelo. The examples they gave to the French artists were those of an elegant and lofty taste, and could have borne nothing but good fruit, if they had been faithfully followed.» What distinguishes one from the other is the excess of manner, or rather of practice, in Niccolo's works, which no amount of study could correct. In Primaticcio, it did not hold so complete a sway, nor absorb his whole talent; on the contrary, it was incessantly refreshed by the imitation of nature. Scarcely ever with him did design degenerate into a formula, or miss the reward that came of impressions born of looking at things as they are ; and although his eye gave to natural objects too much refinement and selection, at least it was always open. We have a proof of that in the large number of studies after nature which have survived among his compositions, especially in the early part of his career. Among Niccolo's, on the other hand, we find nothing of the kind. Nearly all his drawings are mere exercises: the stroke of his pen is more abstract and his attitudes less natural. His ideas are as ordinary as his hand is easy and intelligent. But decadent fashions born of the time, and of those collective impulses to which the members of an aristocracy are always subject. Like all imitators of Michael Angelo, Primaticcio is decidedly mannered ; but his mannerism is of a peculiar kind. It is composed of contrary elements artistically united, which, though they miss being perfectly natural, attain none the less some sort of balance. The same may be said of Niccolo. This balance and good taste are what attaches them to the Roman school, though they cannot make them part of it; as M. Reiset has justly remarked. «Their principles,» says this excellent writer, » were precisely the opposite of those of the clumsy imitators of the great Michael Angelo. The examples they gave to the French artists were those of an elegant and lofty taste, and could have borne nothing but good fruit, if they had been faithfully followed.» What distinguishes one from the other is the excess of manner, or rather of practice, in Niccolo's works, which no amount of study could correct. In Primaticcio, it did not hold so complete a sway, nor absorb his whole talent; on the contrary, it was incessantly refreshed by the imitation of nature. Scarcely ever with him did design degenerate into a formula, or miss the reward that came of impressions born of looking at things as they are ; and although his eye gave to natural objects too much refinement and selection, at least it was always open. We have a proof of that in the large number of studies after nature which have survived among his compositions, especially in the early part of his career. Among Niccolo's, on the other hand, we find nothing of the kind. Nearly all his drawings are mere exercises: the stroke of his pen is more abstract and his attitudes less natural. His ideas are as ordinary as his hand is easy and intelligent. But such as he is, he is among the artists who can do much for the glory of a school, because the manner in which their talents were formed has fitted them to multiply unlimited examples of a single style, to circulate, as it were, the coin of the masters. What in Primaticcio is rare invention, profound thought, racial or natural characteristics, with Niccolo takes on a popular and banal air, though still giving evidence of the promise of extraordinary fertility. Nothing is so valuable as this kind of talent when it follows in the footsteps of a veritable master. At the head of a school such men are incapable of imposing on art anything but a rapid decadence ; if they fall into the rank of assistants, they are wonderfully helpful. Invaluable workers in the field of industrial art, they give without measure what they conceive without pain, and contribute to the spreading of good taste, which they could neither invent nor maintain.

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It must be added that Niccolo brought to Fontainebleau an art of which Primaticcio no doubt knew nothing, the art of landscape-painting. His » Rape of Proserpine,« at Stafford House,* is admirable in this respect. Till the present moment this was the only picture painted in his Fontainebleau manner that was known to be his. I have ventured to add a » Contenance of Scipio » at the Louvre,t and I am now prepared to add the picture of » Achilles with the daughters of Lycorned es,« in Lord Pembroke's collection at Wilton House, which has quite erroneously been ascribed to Salviati.

For a long time I despaired of finding anything of the same kind of Primaticcio^ ; I mean any oil-painting, the preservation of which, being more certain than that of a fresco, might provide the opportunity of judging his talent from something else than his drawings. The examination of two pictures in the most famous collections in England has enabled me at last to add what I sought. One is a » Helen Swooning, 1' at Wilton House ; the other a «Ulysses relating his adventures to Penelope,« at Castle Howard.* I regard them both as absolutely authentic, and can only regret that the first has been damaged. The second is copied from the principal part of one of the compositions in the Ulysses Gallery, and the only difference is in certain accessories which have been altered to suit the needs of the case. It settles what might well be suspected, that Primaticcio sometimes took studio — pictures from his frescoes, and so made double profit. These two pictures enable us to form an idea of the softness of his execution, his bold and pleasant touch, and at the same time of his colour, which is darker than we should be led to suppose by certain old copies of the frescoes, as it lacks the discoloration which was possibly Niccolo's work and is repeated in his oil-paintings.

The actual subjects of the pictures with which these two masters conquered the admiration of the French must not be omitted, for Primaticcio is one of those artists in whom the poetic meaning of a composition is of some importance. In that he resembled his master, Giulio Romano, and a yet greater painter who was to arise to the glory of the French school, Poussin. Mythology and fable provided him not only with hackneyed motives for the grouping of his characters, but with inspiration and counsel. In his historical paintings he was imbued with the spirit of the ancients whose stories they told, and with the most delicate aspects which the Muse had given them.

Реальных сюжетах картин, с которыми эти два мастера завоевали восхищение французов не должен быть опущен, для Primaticcio является одним из тех художников, у которых поэтический смысл композиции имеет определенное значение. В этом он походил на своего хозяина, Джулио Романо, и еще большей художник, который должен был возникнуть на славу французской школы, Пуссена. Мифы и басни обеспечивало ему не только избитые мотивы для группировки своих героев, но с вдохновением и адвоката. В своих исторических полотнах он был пропитан духом древних, чьи рассказы они сказали, а с наиболее сложных аспектов, с которым Муза дали их.

In this respect nothing can be more striking than the long series of the story of Ulysses, in which the painter has followed the » Odyssey » so closely, and supplied, as it were, the most faithful and complete commentary on the poet that has ever been seen in painting. It is true that there is a great difference between the studied art of Primaticcio and the simplicity of Homer; but it must not be forgotten that the painter's mannerism does not touch the composition of his subjects, and that, though mannered in his drawing, he is not mannered either in his arrangement or his choice of accessories, the sobriety of which brings him into perfect accord with his author. In Primaticcio as in Homer we are surprised and charmed to find all but barbarous manners represented in so elaborated a style. The direct, the familiar, the un?civilised elements in Homer's characters are rendered more exactly than we can express. We see jaws that eat, fists that strike, mouths that cry, represented with that frankness of gesture and accent which give such striking beauty to the works of the ancients. On the side of mythology we find the same agreement. He introduces the gods as boldly and as freely as the Greek. They appear in the midst of mundane events, mingled with the men they govern and the elements they let loose, and with the appropriate action which the Ionian Muse assigned them. On the ceiling of this Ulysses Gallery the illusions were still greater. A vast number of different subjects, collected from all points of an?tiquity, composed a whole of which the like was never seen. Passing from allegory to legend and from fiction to history, Primaticcio seems to have exhausted the whole field of poetic invention in a series of paintings which had no bond of union but his imagination. Or rather, it was a work after the fashion of the » Metamorphoses,» in which episodes, by turns amusing, grave and terrible, formed a single whole by means of the wonderful unity of their style and the ingenious and constant resuscitation of interest.

These were the characteristics which put the School of Fontainebleau so closely in accord with the times, and made the masters of this branch of art stand out as historical personages, proclaiming the taste for classical antiquity which the court of the Valois possessed as no other did. In that court the love of ancient literature made its influence felt outside the narrow circle of a few scholars. The learned men who lived at court had inspired the knights and ladies with the taste. Rosso, Primaticcio and Niccolo were their painters, the painters of the humanists, just as Poussin was said to be the painter of the gens c?esprit. What pleasure in seeing, in the newly-built palace, the succession of their brilliant paintings, giving visible beauty in an instant to the stories which poetry alone had recounted till then ! * Who can express the delicate delight bred by this evocation, in minds illuminated by the sun of the Renaissance in all the beauty of its rising? They might fancy old Olympus alive once more. It would have been well if this paganism had known its own limits ; if, in the innumerable subjects on every side, no excessive licence had debased this admirable artistic aim.

Established finally on these models, the School of Fontainebleau held sway, not only in the royal residences and in Paris, but also, naturally enough, in the provincial houses of the great. I have mentioned its production in this period at Ancy-le-Franc. But it is not only in the Chamber of the Arts that we must note its effects. All the paintings by different hands, with which this castle is filled, bear the mark of the same style. Unhappily, some of them have been so entirely repainted that it is impossible to express any opinion about their original creators. A few pieces preserved in the Hall of Diana and the Emperors' Closet, on the first floor, are, next to the Chamber of the Arts and a long way after it, the best of all. At Tanlay, in the same neighbourhood, a vaulted roof at the top of a tower is decorated with figures of divine beings in the same style. At the Con?stable de Montmorency's house at Ecoeuen there are numerous chimney-pieces painted with cartouches, cameos and mythological figures,* several of them excellently done, which bear the vivid imprint of the examples spread abroad by Primaticcio and Niccolo At Oiron in Poitou, in the house of the Boisy family, we find, in the ^Eneid Gallery, obviously painted under the influence of the pictures of the story of Ulysses, a long series of large compositions, enclosed in imitations of frames in relief, which repeat the ideas of Rosso's stuccos. At Troyes there are several pictures which bear witness to the extent of a similar influence : one of them, the » Treachery of Judas,» is in the Church of St. Pantaleon.

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It is remarkable that in all these works the ornament required to frame them is invariably in imitation of relief. The owners were afraid of the great expense of the stuccos, even when they appear to have paid a large price for paintings of some merit. The object was not always attained, and a clumsy bungle is most frequently the result with these provincial paintings. Most of them must have been executed on the spot by local artists, with the aid of prints, or occasionally by the lowest rank of assistants in the decorations of Fontainebleau, on their return into their own country. Sometimes they confined themselves to copying engravings. Thus the Gallery of Jason and Medea at Ancy-le-Franc is taken from plates by Leonard Thiry.* From all these signs it may be understood that, whether from want of funds or want of readiness to incur an expense which was still only newly in fashion, France was far from responding, so far as the development of painting was concerned, to the brilliant example set by the crown. And so it is to the crown that we must return and confine ourselves in the main, if this history is to be pursued to any advantage.

It has not been possible yet to date the works I have mentioned with the necessary precision. On the other hand, we know the moment at which Bouteloup's paintings appeared, though it is true that nothing survives of them but references to them. The date was 1556, and the work consisted in scene-painting. I have already mentioned this artist among the portrait-painters of the period; but there is nothing surprising in his being bespoken for large compositions, since he had taken some part in the decoration of Fontainebleau. Catherine de Medici engaged him for a tragedy played at Blois.*

A very interesting work of this epoch has happily been preserved, and aptly presents in a convenient form, foreshortened, so to speak, a summary of the second and third rate talents which France produced in historical painting ; in some respects an invaluable document on the School of Fontainebleau. I refer to the famous series of the story of Artemisia, dedicated to Queen Catherine de Medici, which may be seen in the Cabinet of Prints in Paris.t The story of this series is a curious one. It is composed solely of pen-drawings, touched with Chinese white, and accompanied by indications of frames in parts only. The drawings number thirty-nine, of which two appear to have been added later. It is true that the Louvre has two others, doubtless taken from the same series, which would bring the total up to the same figure. The idea of the collection was due to a courtier, for whom Artemisia was but a pseudonym for Catherine de Medici ; and the intention of the man who bore the expense, as the preface modestly explains, was that some day they might be woven in tapestry. This, in fact, was done, and there are in existence several pieces of a set of hangings of Artemisia executed after this series ; all, it is true, very inferior to the composition of the series itself, with which we are concerned here.J

It is dated 1562, and was ordered, says the preface, «of the first men of Italy, as of France. 11 But there is no drawing in the whole of the series that can be attributed either to Primaticcio or to Niccolo, who were both then living. To begin with, then, nothing more should be seen in this account of its production than the habitual exaggeration of such dedications to princes. One point at least it decides, that several artists were employed on the series, which is borne out by the evident difference of styles, and that some were French, some Italian. I will add that one and all were of indifferent ability ; the result being that this work is an accurate representation of the School of Fontainebleau, in its middle and ordinary regions, where Italians and French were mingled.

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At least one of the latter can possibly be named, Antoine Caron, whose name appears in an old inscription on one of the two drawings in the Louvre, and whom old inventories give as the sole creator of the cartoons for the Artemisia tapestry.* M. Reiset reckons thirty-one out of the thirty-nine drawings as his. I cannot assent to so large a number, and believe this artist's part to have been about equal to those of the rest, who remain unknown, though occasionally of superior merit. Antoine Caron came from Beauvais. Like so many others, he had worked on the decorations at Fontainebleau, where his name appears among the second-rate men before 1550. Later we find him employed on work which distinguished him further the restoration of the paintings in the King's Closet, which was ordered by Primaticcio, the designer of these paintings, in person, as Director of the King's Buildings.* The Artemisia series marks a period in his life at which he must have attained to some reputation, but to no excellence, which, indeed, was never to be his. Nevertheless, he must count for something in the history of French painting in the sixteenth century, as being one of the few artists of that country and that age concerning whom we are not reduced to the vaguest of conjecture. He was a contemporary of Jean Cousin, and the acknowledged works of both give precise indications of the level of the national artists in that branch, following those of Geoffroy Dumoutier, which do the same service for the preceding epoch.

In truth, that level was a very low one, and we have no authority for believing that there were any others who could raise it. In 1557 Pierre Quesnel, whose works are unknown, gave the Augustins of Paris a design for a painted window, which represented the Ascension. He came, strangely enough, from Scotland, whither Maria de Lorraine, the wife of James V., had taken him, and, according to the Abbe de Marolles, presented him to her husband. Sprung, like Geoffroy Dumoutier, from a family of portrait-painters, he practised, as Dumoutier did, historical painting, and no doubt with as little success. No other French artists of the period can be found; so that, from what has just been said, we may judge of the effect produced on the French workmen by the teaching of Fontainebleau in that epoch of 1571, when the death of the great Italian masters left them to their own devices.

Some suspicion of elegance, some rudiments of composition, and an effort to equal the too lofty models, by which, nevertheless, their restricted and feeble talent was exalted : that is the whole round of these works. The result was a number of drawings, which no doubt looked pleasant enough in windows and hangings, but nothing whatever on the side of painting, which must have greatly excelled the anonymous works in the provinces, the chief of which I have noted.

In that respect the Artemisia series remains a monument of the feebleness of the whole school. Everything is wrong at once, but especially the figure, which displays so much ignorance that there is no room left for even a superficial dexterity. That was the case with nearly all the French artists of the time ; Ducerceau himself, whose paintings reveal such perfect mastery of ornament, comes off with no more honour when he attacks figures of a certain size. One only deserves exception in this respect, Etienne Delaune, who was an engraver also, and who, though not belonging to this period and working after the time now before us, heralded, in the correct drawing of his figures, several excellent artists whom we shall meet quite at the end of this history, as ornaments to the reign of Henri IV.

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Meanwhile, the soil remained all but barren ; a condition that will very likely be attributed to the resistance made by the genius of France to the teachings of Italy. This resistance is by no means mere imagination, and I am quite willing that the idea of it should be retained ; but solely on the condition that it is not made a cause of reproach against Italy. It cannot be said that any other kind of painting had flourished in French hands before that date. It is true that Francois Clouet was just then showing high abilities in another branch of the art ; but there are other circumstances to be reckoned with in his case, among which the fact that he was the son of a foreigner must not go for nothing. A certain facility in this kind of painting, too, may be added, since several artists of rather more merit than the pupils of Fontainebleau, Frenchmen and the sons of Frenchmen, were revealed in that branch of the art. But composition, allegory, style, offered too many different parts and too many difficulties to be overcome so quickly by a school that was still only in its infancy.

A palpable proof of the justice of these observations may be taken from the history of French sculpture, which, unlike painting, was in an extremely flourishing condition at this period, though completely imbued with the Italian influence. The difference sprang from the prosperity which had not ceased to attend the art since a time before the Renaissance in this country. The Italianisation of sculpture, far from stifling it, was the determining cause of its brilliant progress, which may be sufficiently recalled here by the names of Colombe, Goujon, and Pilon. The two last are the direct outcome of the influence of Fontainebleau, and Pilon is even something of a Primaticcio in sculpture. For Primaticcio's influence stretched out on all sides ; and those branches of art in which France was better prepared show how she could respond to teaching such as his.