

12 STORIES OF THE FRENCH ARTISTS

and showed signs of promise a disastrous invasion or some other political misfortune overtook the district, and all the good that had been accomplished was swept away.

And this unsettled state of the country was another reason for the absence of any characteristically French school. Never more than beginnings were possible; and these beginnings had always to be made by foreign artists, whence it follows that the principles and methods differed, depending on the circumstance of the instructor being Flemish or Italian, as the case might be.

It is curious that during this period of broken activity the miniaturists continued working with scarcely any interruption in national development. The collections of illuminated manuscripts in the national library and elsewhere show a degree of excellence unsurpassed in Europe. There is but little evidence of the nationality of these men, and it is but fair to presume that a not inconsiderable number of them were French; but works are common in which Flemish influence predominates.

During the early years of the fifteenth century Burgundy began to play an important part in the artistic development of France. The Flemings, who had migrated there, encouraged by an