

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY PAINTERS OF FRANCE

It would have been impossible before the exhibition of French primitives held in Paris in 1904 to trace the history of the early days of painting in France; that exhibition came as a natural sequence to the exhibition of Flemish primitives held in Bruges a couple of years previously. Many of the pictures appeared in both collections, and long discussions took place among the critics as to their exact place of origin. In regard to some of them a good deal of heat was infused into the controversy, and there was an indulgence in a spirit of chauvinism which tended to obscure the real points at issue. Many difficult problems arose, of which a large percentage will probably never be solved. But every one must acknowledge that the exhibition served to show how neglected France had been by the historians of art, and to make it evident that the early French painters left a rich inheritance to those that came after them.