

8 STORIES OF THE FRENCH ARTISTS

Rheims, Amiens, Beauvais, and Bourges show us the highest pinnacle to which it is possible to carry the laws of symmetry and proportion. When, with time, the demand for great churches had passed away we find them manifesting the same qualities in domestic architecture; the country houses of the Loire valley and innumerable others scattered over France are instances in point. Then during the next great epoch, the reign of Louis XIV, the mania for spacious rooms, and rooms elaborately decorated, afforded them an opportunity for demonstrating that the national characteristics had not been lost. It was but a step from this point to the boudoir, and thus continuity was maintained until after the Revolution, when art was directed into other channels: and it is curious that the French, ever fertile in invention, have evolved no enduring style since that of the empire.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century one style developed itself so naturally from its predecessor that there seemed to be no limit to the possibilities of the future. The break, however, came, and since the early days of the last century painting has almost entirely engrossed the attention of France, and that with results on which it has every reason to pride itself.