

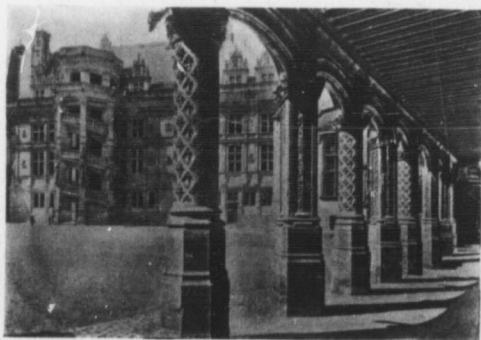
Louis XII., replacing an earlier one destroyed at the Revolution, into the quadrangle formed by these four separate edifices, the object that first strikes the eye, is the famous open staircase of Francis I. Octagonal in shape, florid in its decoration, and shelf-like in its whole effect, it is without an equal in France, and is even unexcelled by any of the Renaissance motives of Italy.

At the southern corner of the chateau but separate from it is a small round tower, called the Tour de Foix. Here Catherine de Medici installed Cosmo Ruggieri, her astrologer, alchemist and poisoner, whom she brought with her from Italy and who accompanied her everywhere. Between this tower and her private apartments there was said to be a subterranean passage.

Time would fail us to tell of the wealth of action, the splendor, gayety and sadness its walls have held, and the scenes that have taken place under its roof. But the prime horror, the one in which the guide specially delights must not be passed over without mention. It was in this chateau that the weak and effeminate Henry III. at last was roused to action by constant repetition of the reproach that he would never really be king until the Duc de Guise had been made away with. De Guise, lured into a trap by a message commanding him to go to the King's closet, was set upon and murdered by the guards of the Forty-fifth, while below in her own apartments lay the

queen-mother, dying, listening with dread to the rush of footsteps overhead, for now at last she was weary of bloodshed, and had tried to dissuade her son from this deed.

The town of Ambois is old, for we are told that St. Martin, patron saint of Tours, threw down a pagan temple and established Christianity. It was here that Clouis and Alaric held their celebrated meeting in 496 on the tiny island in the middle of the Loire. Not long after, according to our ancient historians, a fortified chateau was built



CHATEAU DE BLOIS.

here on the site of the present one. From 1434 on, when on some pretext it was taken from the Counts of Anjou and added to the possessions of the Crown, it was for centuries a favorite royal residence. Here Charles VIII. was born, and here, while superintending the introduction of some Renaissance details, passing under a low overhanging beam, he struck his head so violently that he died almost immediately afterwards. Here Louis XII. lived for some time, and here Louise de Savoie educated her two children, the