

14 STORIES OF THE FRENCH ARTISTS

who, while seeking to abstract the best from the influences he saw working around him, possessed originality, and had the capacity to think for himself.

It is to this time that we must look for religious fervour in the pictorial art; religion was still the great moving factor in life, the doctrines of the Church were unchallenged, and in them artists sought inspiration. As time went on the French school was content to proceed upon more materialistic lines. Not that there is any absence of religious motives, but the lofty conception has departed, and an increasing joy in material things is observable. A parallel movement was apparent in every country of Europe. We still find men who, like Memline and Gerard David, could derive their sole source of inspiration from religion in spite of the wonderful naturalism of John van Eyck. The French have never produced fervent religious painters like those of most of the neighbouring nations, but they have certainly given to the world naturalistic painters of whom any nation might be proud.