THE GLORIFICATION OF CHARLES VIII

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Some mysteries are never solved; others are clarified in the course of time. Collecting stray pieces of evidence for almost thirty years has made possible the reassembling of what is believed to be the longest medieval wool, silk, and metal thread tapestry in existence, and it now hangs again as a single unit in the Burgos Tapestry Hall at The Cloisters. Further study, relating facts long known but not sufficiently assimilated, has enabled us to place it at the beginning of a series of fabulous late medieval tapestries, sometimes referred to as those “rich with gold,” which can be connected with certain monarchs and other personages who dominated the political and economic history of western Europe about the time Columbus discovered America.

Queen Isabella, who was ready to pawn her jewels to defray the expenses of the historic voyage if the funds in the Spanish treasury should be found inadequate, owned many of the two thousand tapestries still remaining in the royal palaces and cathedrals of Spain. Such tapestries were used for public display, to hang from balconies and façades or decorate palace and cathedral walls on the occasion of royal weddings, coronations, and the signing of treaties before and after battles; they often served as gifts for friendly neighbors. The history of many of them has been recorded, and like the possessions of the Hapsburgs in Madrid and Vienna, they were handed down from father to son; but the fate of innumerable tapestries was less fortunate. Some disappeared when they became worn out with use; others were cut up and dispersed if too large or outmoded; some were destroyed in war and revolution; some burned for the recovery of the precious metals used in their fabrication.

The large tapestry now shown at The Cloisters, which had been cut into three pieces some time before the second half of the nineteenth century, was acquired by the Museum in parts. The right-hand section was given by the late George Blumenthal in 1941. Recently we have been able to obtain the other two sections, acquired with funds provided by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and to unite them with it. A small piece missing from the central panel has been filled in with plain new tapestry material and an old border and is now concealed by a newly acquired fifteenth-century Florentine credenza.

The right section, which hung for many years in the great dining room of George Blumenthal’s house at Park Avenue and Seventieth Street in New York and came to the Museum with his other munificent gifts, was long known as the “Charlemagne” tapestry. This piece and the central section have been traced to the Château de Bazoches du Morvan (Nièvre), where they were sold about fifty years ago by the Marquis Henri de Vibraye. The present Marquis, his grandson, has been unable to discover any provenance going back to an earlier generation.

The central section came from Bazoches through the Engel-Gros collection, Château de Ripaille, on the Lake of Geneva, and an auction at the Georges Petit Gallery in 1921 to the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, for which it had been acquired by the late Henry Walters. With the splendid co-operation of Edward S. King, Director of the Walters Art Gallery, and his associates and with the happy concurrence of the Trustees of both our institutions and the Mayor, City Council, and Board of Estimate of the City of Baltimore, it was possible to effect a most unusual inter-museum exchange. The Metropolitan Museum bought a fine Brussels tapestry known as The Prodigal Son and gave it to the Walters Gallery in exchange for the central section of our tapestry.

The recently purchased left section of the tapestry, long unrecognized on the New York art market as belonging with the other two pieces,
FRONTISPIECE: The Glorification of Charles VIII, tapestry designed by Jan van Roome and probably ordered by Maximilian in honor of Charles VIII, his son-in-law. Flemish (Brussels), about 1490. Height 11 feet 1 inch; length 30 feet 2½ inches. In this reproduction a drawing has been inserted for the missing lower part of the central scene. Left and central sections, purchased for The Cloisters with funds provided by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1953; right section, gift of George Blumenthal, 1941
Charles VIII as Solomon, from a Flemish tapestry, the Coronation of the Virgin, 1485-1488. Sens cathedral

was formerly in the possession of Baron Arthur Schickler, who about 1872 had placed it in his castle at Martinvast, five miles from Cherbourg. The major part of the Heroes tapestries at The Cloisters also came from Martinvast.

Although several tapestry authorities had discussed and illustrated one or more of the three sections of the reassembled tapestry, they had never suggested that the pieces might originally have belonged together. In studying them and relating them to other tapestries, they also failed to mention the new portions of the borders. Footnotes in extenso about their conclusions would add little to the present status of the elements of the tapestry or to an understanding of its history and what is represented.

Before the tapestry could be adequately studied it was essential to join the three pieces. The pasting together of photographs reduced to scale was our starting point once it was almost certain that the panels had originally formed a single tapestry. After the three pieces had all been acquired and the modern borders removed, they fitted perfectly, thread by thread, and were woven together. The complete tapestry and the story about it were submitted to the scrutiny of a number of scholars, including the foreign delegates to the Museum's International Congress when they came to The Cloisters in January. There was no disagreement with our findings.

The tapestry was originally woven in three sections—but not those into which it was subsequently cut. The indications of joining occur at the sides of the third and sixth columns. At
these intersections the vertical count of the ribs (warp threads) is approximately 1838 and 1842 and 1833 and 1897 respectively, but the actual measurements are the same. This would suggest that, owing to the desire to complete the tapestry as quickly as possible, at least three looms were used simultaneously. The number of warp threads had to be increased or decreased as the work progressed so that the component parts would have the same height. Unlike those produced by modern machine methods medieval warp threads varied in thickness and in tightness of weave. In this tapestry the weavers had more than fifty thousand square inches of warp to cover, with approximately seventeen ribs to the inch. At an estimate of a very few inches per day
per weaver, it would have taken a long time to produce it in one piece.

In an inventory of the tapestries of Charles V, prepared in Brussels in 1536, we read of a large old tapestry, with gold, “du jeune temps du roy Charlemagne” (possibly Charles VIII), which had been “coppé en trois” (see Pinchard). Unfortunately this tapestry, which could possibly have been ours, was described as twenty-five aulnes in length, or about fifty feet. Göbel writes, in describing the manufacture of early tapestries, that “not only are the borders separately worked but parts of the middle representation are produced on different looms or even in other studios.” In the year 1566 the Antwerp weaver de Ram made the landscape and fitted into it the figures woven by the Brussels master de Buck. “The separate working of the borders can be traced as far back as the fifteenth century. In urgent cases, and provided the person ordering the tapestry has expressly given his consent, the Brussels decree of 1525 permits . . . the upper and probably also the lower border to be worked separately.” The two end borders of our tapestry are woven as part of the picture; the upper and lower borders were attached after they were woven; however, the lower sill of the architectural framework was woven with the columns.

The red, yellow, white, and blue architectural members are the unifying framework which gives a certain homogeneity to the disparate scenes of the ensemble. Each compartment is crowded with elements of the story. The scenes remind one of those great stage settings in which one scene at a time is brought into focus, but the perspective in the tapestry is such that an all-over unity is achieved. The luxurious costumes and accessories create a pattern which is everywhere varied by voluminous folds, magnificent facial types—some bearded, some clean shaven—and sumptuous color. The yellow silk threads wrapped with thin strips of gilded silver produce an opulence which originally glistened even more than today. The metal has been abraded in varying degrees by use and cleaning. But the brightness of the reds, yellows, blues, and other colors and the generally superb condition of the tapestry are comparable to the finest surviving examples. As in many tapestries in the great European collections, some of the colors in the faces have been reinforced with tinting. Jules Houdoy quotes an ordinance of the emperor Charles V, issued in 1538, permitting tapestry-weavers to tint faces and flesh parts.

We have decided to entitle this tapestry The Glorification of Charles VIII (1470-1498), as we believe that the principal figure (see cover), appearing at least five times in the tapestry, represents this monarch in his youth. In 1483, at the age of thirteen, Charles succeeded his father, Louis XI, to the French throne. At twelve he had been married to Margaret of Austria, who was then three. She took up residence at the French court. We believe that Margaret is depicted at about the age of ten in a group in the central section. It may be that the tapestry was ordered to honor the young Charles and given to him by
his father-in-law, Maximilian. The fact that the earliest records of all three of the parts of the tapestry have been found in France would suggest that it was continuously there after it left the Brussels looms.

The clue to the identification of Charles VIII was given by the inscription karlus woven prominently in white letters across the figure of Charlemagne in the small compartment to the right and above the enthroned Charles in the large vertical panel. The French monarchs, and Charles in particular, pointed proudly to this forebear who had ruled over a great empire. Charlemagne holds a shield displaying his coat-of-arms, the double-headed eagle of the empire divided with the fleur-de-lis of France. There are no inscriptions on the figures of the two other Christian Heroes (Worthies), Godfrey of Bouillon and King Arthur, who are shown together in another small compartment, with their coats-of-arms. Godfrey displays the cross of Jerusalem and Arthur the three crowns standing for the three countries Brittany, Scotland, and England, over which he was sovereign in the romances. Charles’s forebear has been singled out, enabling the designer to emphasize the relationship of Charles and Charlemagne.

King Charles, in the principal representation of him in the vertical scene occupying the full height of the tapestry, wears the French crown with fleurs-de-lis over a blue velvet cap and a red and gold mantle lined with royal ermine over a blue and gold robe. Blue was the color of royal France, and red and yellow (gold) were the king’s colors. These colors predominate throughout the tapestry. The framework is red, white, yellow, and blue. Even such a detail as the statue being carved in the last scene of the upper register is red and gold, and the banner held by the figure displays Charles’s colors.

The king’s features, with his large nose and flowing hair, although somewhat idealized, are like those in contemporary portraits. According to Viollet-le-Duc, a tapestry in the treasury of the cathedral of Sens represents Charles as King Solomon. It may be, as we shall see later, that he is also so depicted in our tapestry. The Sens tapestry (p. 282), made as an altar retable for Cardinal Charles of Bourbon, Archbishop of Lyons (1475–1488), must have been woven before the cardinal’s death. As King Charles (born in 1470) is shown as a young man between fifteen and twenty years of age, the Sens tapestry was probably woven after 1485 and before 1488. A tapestry of the Triumph of the Virgin in the Louvre, dated 1485, is stylistically of the same period. The dedication page of “Le Livre des Tournois” (p. 283), an illuminated manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale (fr. 2692, fol. 1), shows King Charles receiving the book from Louis de Bruges, an event which occurred in the year 1489. A miniature of the king and his advisor Pierre de Beaujeu (p. 284), husband of his sister, who was Regent of France, is in the “Statuts de l’ordre de Saint-Michel” (B.N., fr. 14363, fol. 3), which is a copy of the statutes of the Order of Saint Michael given to the king in 1493. We also illustrate a panel painting in a New York private collection showing King Charles. As these portraits testify, the study of portraiture in works of art in the fifteenth cen-

Charles VIII, by an unidentified French painter of the xv century. In a private collection, New York
The emperor Octavian (Augustus), detail of the Cloisters tapestry
Charles VIII, perhaps representing King Ahasuerus, detail of the tapestry
tury is complicated by variations in scale, technique, and the individuality of the artists. Charles appears five times (perhaps a sixth time as King Arthur) in the Cloisters tapestry, and in each rendering salient characteristics are somewhat altered to suit the requirements of the individual scenes in which he is shown as the principal actor. And although he can always be identified by his crown, his features vary considerably (even photography shows surprising variations of likeness).

The French kings' custom of identifying themselves with distant forebears and having themselves represented in the guise of Old Testament and historical personages has, as in our tapestry, made recognition even more difficult. At the marriage of Charles to Margaret of Austria in 1483, a sermon preached by the abbot of Saint Bertin compared this marriage to that of King Ahasuerus and Esther. This would account for the inclusion of at least three scenes from the life of Esther and Ahasuerus, with Charles as Ahasuerus, in the three compartments at the left and would offer an explanation of related scenes elsewhere in the tapestry (pp. 300-301). Esther and Ahasuerus are represented in the somewhat earlier tapestry fragments (Louvre and Lorraine Museum, Nancy), fully discussed by Leprieur. But here as in three large Esther tapestries in Saragossa cathedral, which belonged to King Ferdinand the Catholic and then to his son, Alfonso of Aragon, Archbishop of Saragossa, the inscriptions from the Book of Esther afford comparatively easy recognition of the scenes. In the Sens tapestry already referred to, the inscriptions identify the young Charles VIII as Solomon with the Queen of Sheba; Esther and Ahasuerus are in another group at the right.

The French monarchs also liked to be thought of as Roman Caesars. At the ordination of King Charles VIII, a Roman cameo was carried in solemn procession. This cameo, which is known as the Grande Camée de France (discussed at length by Babelon), was considered one of the most remarkable objects inherited from antiquity and was kept for centuries in the Sainte-Chapelle prior to being placed in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale. According to Bruns it had been ordered in the year 136 for the family of the emperor Julius Claudius. It was altered for Catherine de' Medici in 1573 or 1574 so that the portraits would correspond to members of the French court. Bruns also tells that Francis I thought of himself as a second

Margaret of Austria, from the tapestry and a Burgundian painting of about 1493, National Gallery, London
Caesar, and in a tapestry now in Vienna made soon after 1540 allowed himself to be represented in antique draperies. Thus it is not unusual that in a tapestry designed to do honor to Charles VIII an important scene should show the emperor Augustus (inscribed Octavian) and the Tiburtine Sibyl (inscribed Sebilla). The fact that the figures are inscribed leaves no doubt as to the scene represented. When Augustus asked the Sibyl whether there were anyone alive as great as he, he was answered with a vision of the Virgin holding the Christ Child in her arms appearing in the center of the noonday sun.

Charles was only a boy of thirteen when his father died leaving him the kingdom and appointing his sister, Anne de Beaujeu, ten years his senior, as regent. La Dame de Beaujeu, as Anne preferred to be known, even when she and her husband, Pierre, became the Duke and Duchess of Bourbon, directed the affairs of France until she had rearranged the marriage of Charles. In 1491 Charles renounced his marriage to Margaret and married Anne of Brittany, who had been married by proxy to Margaret's father, Maximilian. Following the annulment of her marriage to Charles, Margaret lingered at the French court for two years and then returned to Austria before marrying John of Aragon, son of Ferdinand and Isabella. Anne de Beaujeu (see cover), wearing the crown of a princess royal and the royal ermine, is shown in the tapestry ascending the steps of her brother's throne. A comparable contemporary portrait of her (below) was painted by the Master of Moulins about 1491 in the right panel of part of a triptych in the Louvre. Pierre de Beaujeu took an active part in the problems of government, but it is not admissible to recognize the courtier standing facing Anne as her husband. In our tapestry, as in the Ghent altarpiece, the Lord sits enthroned in Judgment, surrounded by angels and two Virtues, Justice holding a sword and Mercy with a lily. Adam and Eve, as the progenitors of mankind, figure prominently in both compositions. The placing of Margaret, her father, Maximilian, and her grandfather, Frederick III, with the secular dignitaries facing the dignitaries of the Church enabled the designer of the tapestry to separate

Anne de Beaujeu, from the Cloisters tapestry and a painting by the Master of Moulins, about 1491, Louvre
Above, the central section of the Cloisters tapestry. Below, tapestry in the cathedral of La Seo, in Saragossa, based on the same cartoons. Flemish, after 1496
the young girl from the other scenes and thus give due prominence to the Hapsburgs, who had pledged their child to France. She has been placed as an Austrian princess and not as Queen of France.

Our identification of Margaret is substantiated by the pendant with the double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire hanging from her necklace. A Burgundian portrait in the National Gallery in London, painted about 1493 (p. 288), shows her at about the age of thirteen. Here, as in the tapestry, where she is depicted as a girl of about ten, there are the same distinguishing features—a high brow, long nose, and pointed chin.

Portraits of Maximilian are well known; Baldass illustrates and discusses many contemporary pictures of the family. In the Weisskunig, Frederick III, Maximilian’s father is shown bearded as in the tapestry, and in an early sixteenth-century woodcut by Burgkmair in the Genealogie of Maximilian, Frederick also wears the imperial crown which Maximilian did not acquire until 1508, although he was given the title of King of the Romans in 1486. Frederick went into retirement in 1486 and died in 1493.

With this identification of the various dramatis personae established, it appears certain that the tapestry must have been well under way if not delivered before 1491, when Charles married Anne of Brittany and the relations between the Hapsburgs and the French were again strained. If we choose the year 1489 for the designing of the tapestry, allowing two years for the completion at top speed of the weaving, Charles is shown at the age of nineteen, Margaret would have been nine years old, Maximilian thirty, Frederick seventy-four, and Anne de Beaujeu twenty-nine.

The reassembling of the tapestry makes it possible to interpret several previously unidentified scenes and to revise some of the earlier interpretations of certain scenes which have been related to the Speculum humanae salvationis (Mirror of Man’s Salvation). This book, written in the fourteenth century, was a great favorite in the fifteenth century in numerous manuscripts and printed editions with illustrations, and was the inspiration for many works of art in the late Middle Ages. Margaret B. Freeman has pre-
pared notes on the religious iconography of the

tapestry with special reference to the Speculum

on pages 300 and 301.

The importance of the Cloisters tapestry as

a forerunner of an important group of related

tapestries must not be overlooked. Three tape-

stries repeat the same central and other scenes

with minor variations (pp. 290, 291).

The tapestry from the cathedral of El Pilar,

now stored in the cathedral of La Seo at Sara-

gossa, is copied from ours or from the parent

cartoons, and the basic similarities remain in

spite of changes. This little-known tapestry was

published in 1906 by W. G. Thomson, who was

misled, however, in saying that it did not have

"the all-pervading gold and silver threads"; like

our tapestry, it is "rich with gold." Documents

at Saragossa have revealed nothing to date about

this tapestry, but perhaps it will some day be

possible to prove from as yet undeveloped

sources that the original cartoons for our tap-

estry were re-used when in 1496 Margaret of

Austria, divorced from Charles VIII, married

John of Aragon. The weavers of the Saragossa

tapestry copied freely the middle section of our

tapestry, which is limited by the columns left of

Charlemagne and right of King Arthur. Mar-

garet is shown several years older and is not

wearing the pendant with the double-headed

imperial eagle. Figure for figure, many of the

characters in the two tapestries, in spite of vari-

ations, could be the same. The crowns worn by

the kings are higher and somewhat more exag-

gerated, as in some contemporary Spanish

paintings. The facial types have been changed

by darkening the deeper-set eyes and by accen-

tuating the modeling of the features (in part by

weaving and in part by painting), and the hair

is generally darker. Perhaps in our tapestry the

designer was endeavoring to represent more

northern ethnic types and in carrying out his

pictorial realism had studied Spanish types for

the Saragossa piece. Instead of standing on

variously patterned floors the figures are set out

of doors on a flowery mead. Everyone is garbed

in sumptuous brocades and damasks, thereby

sacrificing some of the individuality.

That our tapestry antedates Saragossa is evi-
dent also from stylistic considerations. A com-

parison of the head and raised hand of Adam in
the two tapestries (above) reveals the greater sensitivity in the drawing of the Cloisters tapestry. The foliage behind Adam is a space-filler in the one case and sensitively drawn in the other.

There are two companion pieces to the Saragossa tapestry, one with the Three Hebrew Heroes and one with the Three Ancient Heroes in the corners of the upper register. The former, illustrating scenes from the life of Jeptha, was published by Bertaux in 1909. Recent Saragossa publications omit mention of all three.

The relationship of our tapestry to the four famous tapestries (paños de oro) in Madrid, illustrating the History of the Virgin, is striking. These tapestries belonged to the Mad Joanna (Juana la Loca), daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, and their continuous history can be traced to Philip II, who sent them to the Escorial. They are now in storage in the former Royal Palace at Madrid, where they were briefly unfolded for this study. The scenes are subdivided by similar architectural framework with columns. And can we not again, in the first of the series (p. 295), recognize Maximilian and Margaret in approximately the central location as in our tapestry? Maximilian's crown is similar in both instances, as if to single him out, whereas the other crowns in the Madrid hanging are of the Spanish type seen in the Saragossa tapestry. These Madrid paños de oro are thought to have been brought from Brussels by Philip the Fair, Maximilian's son, to celebrate the alliance between Austria and Spain through his marriage in 1496 to Joanna and Margaret's marriage to John. Our Spanish colleagues have recognized the relationships to the Charles VIII tapestry and have promised to amplify our conclusions. In particular Sanchez Cantón has contributed considerably to the study of the tapestries of Isabella and her daughter Joanna, most recently in 1950, and has singled out a tapestry fragment woven about 1485 in which he sees Maximilian playing chess with Mary of Burgundy.

The so-called Mazarin tapestry, once belonging to Cardinal Mazarin and bequeathed to the National Gallery in Washington by Joseph E. Widener, depended on the same cartoons as our tapestry for the central and two left-hand scenes.
In the principal scene at the right various scholars have recognized the two figures inscribed Esther and Ahasuerus as Charles VIII giving the marriage ring to Anne of Brittany. Under the circumstances the artist had to eliminate Margaret and substitute a kneeling courtier in her place, although the other figures are still present as in our tapestry. The Mazarin tapestry is much more closely woven than ours, having twenty-one to twenty-two ribs to the inch.

A tapestry from the Somzée collection and now in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels is a crude follower of the Cloisters Glorification of Charles VIII (p. 291).

Our study of the Charles VIII tapestry has contributed further information about an artist active in Brussels in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The inscription reoon (with letters backwards), boldly woven on the leg of the page in the left corner of the Cloisters tapestry, was first recognized as the artist's signature by George Leland Hunter in 1925. Another tapestry in the Museum's collections has a comparable inscription, roem. This tapestry, the Fall and Redemption of Man (p. 297), is closely related in style and weave to the Mazarin tapestry in the National Gallery. Various common features, such as the subdivision of the scenes by architectural framework, the facial types, the figures of Adam and Eve, the patterned brocades, the occasional landscape backgrounds behind the figures, and the little figures sur-
Above, detail of the central scene of the Cloisters tapestry, probably a self-portrait of the designer, Jan van Roome. Below, inscription REOON, at the left end of the tapestry, probably his signature mounting the corner columns, all place the Charles VIII tapestry, the Mazarin tapestry, and the Fall and Redemption in a group dependent on a single designer.

The inscriptions are variations of those used by an artist who has been identified in extensive discussions as Jan van Roome (Roem, Romme, Roon, Roomen; it has been pointed out that Rome is the name of a farm about five miles from Brussels). This Brussels designer, known also as Jan van Brussel, has been unconditionally accepted as the designer of the Herkinbald tapestry in Brussels. As recorded in a contemporary account book of 1513, he furnished the model and the painter Philip the cartoon. But there is no general agreement regarding his authorship of other tapestries, including several woven with variations of his name. It will require further study to determine whether there can be any relationship between Jan van Roome and “Jhan der niderlendische Maler,” active between 1491 and 1495 at the court of Frederick the Wise of Saxony, who is mentioned by both Kumsch and Bruck in their discussions of the large series of late fifteenth-century tapestries belonging to Frederick. Kumsch identifies Jan of the Netherlands as Jan Gossert and associates with him a Tree of Jesse tapestry fragment in the house of Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, which he dates 1497 because of the presence of various members of the German and Spanish royal families, including Maximilian, Frederick, and Margaret. A Jan van Roome is mentioned in a Brussels document of 1479. The first certain mention of our artist is in 1498 in the record of his marriage. He appears in the first two decades of the sixteenth century as an artist working for Margaret of Austria, in 1516 designing three tombs she erected at Brou, making sketches for stained glass and for a variety of objects. In the Heures de la Princesse de Croÿ, Mély has recognized the signature of Jan Rome on a headdress in the Circumcision scene. The style of this manuscript is consistent with that of our Charles VIII tapestry. The facial types, especially the Christ blessing, and the crowding of the scenes are characteristic of the artist's productions.

It does not require an unusual extension of
the span of an artist's career to assume that Jan van Roome could have been designing the Charles VIII tapestry in 1489 and still be active until 1521. His style goes back to Hugo van der Goes and leads up to his successor, Bernard van Orley (1488-1541), with whom he collaborated in preparing tapestry designs. Our tapestry may even provide a self-portrait of the artist. Just behind Maximilian appear the head and shoulders of a man (p. 296) in a three-quarter profile, wearing a cap. Artists often represented themselves in this fashion, looking out of the composition at the spectator without particular relation to the other figures.

Two virtually identical tapestries (p. 298), one in Madrid and one in Saragossa, representing Episodes in the Life of the Virgin, may provide the link between the Saragossa copy of our tapestry and other tapestries in Madrid. The inscription MOER (REOM in reverse) appears on the belt of Aaron in the Madrid Episodes tapestry but not in the Saragossa version. One or the other of these tapestries may be the one mentioned in the Inventory of Joanna's possessions put in safekeeping between 1509 and 1555 and may be the one representing the Seven Joys of
Two tapestries representing Episodes in the Life of the Virgin. Above, Saragossa version; below, Madrid version, with the inscription MOER on the belt of Aaron (REOM in reverse)
Our Lady mentioned in Ferdinand's will (in the Diputación, Saragossa, fol. 1476). The letters MOER are found repeated several times in another Madrid tapestry representing David receiving Bathsheba. The similarities and dissimilarities among the tapestries inscribed MOER point to great changes in the artist's style with the introduction of renaissance ideas and motifs.

To the bibliography of Jan van Roome in Thieme-Becker (1934) must be added Dhanens' hundred-page account. Whether or not we accept Göbel's attribution of more than a hundred tapestries to Jan van Roome, or those selected by A. Thiéry and others writing a generation or more ago, we do think that our Charles VIII tapestry is the forerunner of a considerable group of tapestries designed by this artist.

Most of the great tapestries brought and sent by the Hapsburgs and others to Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have been folded away for generations. Some are scarcely known, if at all. But in recent years the Spanish have taken a renewed interest in their masterpieces. The former royal palaces in Madrid and at La Granja have many extraordinary tapestries on view for the public, and a new exhibition has opened in the halls of La Seo in Saragossa.

At The Cloisters the reassembled Glorification of Charles VIII dramatically supplements our other late Gothic tapestries. It hangs opposite the tapestry, once in Burgos cathedral, which according to tradition and supporting research was woven in Brussels about 1495 in the workshop of Pieter van Aelst for Maximilian and given as a wedding present to his son Philip the Fair in 1496. In the adjoining Unicorn Tapestry Hall are shown Louis XII, Charles VIII's successor to the French throne, and his wife Anne of Brittany. When Charles VIII married Anne in 1491, the marriage contract stipulated that Anne would never marry anyone except Charles's successor to the French throne.

Gradually we are able to turn back additional pages of history and explain their meaning. Reuniting the parts of the Charles VIII tapestry has given new life to its original decorative splendor; and the identification of its characters and events helps to illuminate a dramatic period in European history.

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