When we consider the permanence of paper, the solidest stone monument seems transitory. Of the actual works of Philibert Delorme few remain standing. The tomb of Francis I at Saint-Denis and the bridge and gallery at Chenonceaux have resisted the waves of history and shifting taste, but the great horseshoe staircase in the Cour du Cheval Blanc at Fontainebleau was ripped out to please Louis XIV's craving for perspective. When the Tuileries were burned by the Commune in 1871, Delorme's elegant façade vanished with it. The châteaux of Meudon, Madrid, Saint-Maur are gone. At Anet the chapel and the entrance are still to be seen, but the rest of that celebrated and matchless dwelling was sold for building stones early in the nineteenth century. For the most part it is in the engravings of Ducerceau and Marot that the work of one of the truly great builders of France has survived.

Ironically, a work he carried out on paper rather than in masonry remains as Delorme's most enduring memorial: his Livre d'architecture, the first edition of which appeared in 1567. It is an extraordinary and brilliant book. Delorme wrote it late in life when, fallen from power and royal grace, he retired from the court to lick his wounds. He ended by producing his masterpiece, crammed with the learning of a lifetime. In it he set down everything he knew about design, the practical and technical directions for putting a building together, and also the rules whereby an architect could move most smoothly in the precarious orbit between client and workmen. Every page he wrote is stamped with his stormy personality. From this book rises the full-length figure of a vigorous, crotchety, lovable, and exasperating man of genius.

His pride overshadows everything. Quick to take offense, he was involved in constant quarrels, the most famous of them being with the poet Ronsard, who struck back savagely in an épître addressed to Charles IX:

J'ay veu trop de macons Bastir les Tuileries, Et en trop de facons Faire les morneres.

Of Delorme's literary partisans, perhaps the most illustrious was Rabelais. In Book iv of Pantagruel he refers to his friend "Messer Philibert de l'Orme, grand architecte du roi Mégiste." Messer Philibert, however, scarcely felt the need of defenders. He leaves no doubt of his own opinion of himself and his abilities. He could not understand why every step of his career was accompanied by storm—unless it was his success that caused the bitter envy of his contemporaries (who were also, naturally, his inferiors). His life reads like a classic drama, a Senecan rise and fall on the grand scale, with capricious monarchs in the roles of the gods. And yet something of the Gothic manner, a
dark and distorted element, clings to the story.

A passage in his book indicates that Delorme was born in 1515. The date is significant: the Renaissance in France might be said to have begun in that year on the day Francis I ascended the throne. The Delormes lived in Lyons, where Philibert’s father seems to have been a contractor, a man of the lower middle class, of moderate fortune but no particular position. Lyons at the time was far from being a provincial city. It buzzed with an intellectual life almost as active as that of Paris and was one of the great publishing centers. Lyons also had a cultural advantage over Paris in being closer to Italy. The silk trade, in fact, had made it the most Italianate city west of the Alps. From boyhood Delorme was familiar with Italians and their language, and it was inevitable that while still young he somehow managed to get to Rome.

The time was ripe. The ideas of the Renaissance were beginning to take hold in France, but they had not crystallized as yet. The social conditions that had created the architecture of the Middle Ages no longer existed, and yet the French still huddled in castle walls that were useless against the force of heavy artillery. The Italian campaign of Charles VIII in 1494 had been a military and political disaster. Nevertheless, the French, retreating from Naples after more than a year in the peninsula, carried a sort of victory with them; for with their own eyes they had seen the splendors of Italian art and the culture of the Renaissance. They had discovered a life infinitely more pleasant than that which they led in the gloom of their own feudal castles. With a shock of immediacy they recognized the possibilities of an art that celebrated the joy and graciousness of life, a point of view which had never been revealed to them by artists of the Gothic north, so mortality-minded after the Black Death. The Italians were realists; they had no trust in promises; their home on earth was more real to them than that vouchsafed in heaven.

In its earlier days in France the Renaissance was called “the new fashion.” At the time it seemed to be little more than that, and the years between Charles VIII’s expedition and the emergence of Delorme were a curious and unsettled period in French architecture. The new fashion in building was still the toy of the noble classes, the delight of the dilettanti, rather than an inevitable outcome of growing social and economic pressures. It was a pattern of caprice. Builders and ornamentalists were blundering about in an attempt to capture the Italian spirit, and they all failed signally. There was no evident purpose behind the welter of experiment. The old medieval formula no longer worked, but no new standard of architecture had taken its place. The Renaissance came to the French first as ornamentation; only later did they understand that it was even more a matter of elimination and emphasis. The nobleman who imagined he was creating an Italian palazzo actually achieved a late Gothic house, plastered with incongruous Italian decorative details.

The figure who really established the new manner in France was “le roi qui aimait fort à bâtir.” Both as a man and as a monarch, Francis I casts a curious, equivocal glimmer through history. Hard, brilliant, often adored, more often hated, the man who ruled France in Delorme’s youth was ruled, in turn, by his own restless and uncertain temperament. But he responded to the spirit of the humanists with genuine excitement. His feeling for literature and the arts amounted to a real passion, and he had an agate core of practicality to back up his enthusiasm. The Venetian envoy, Marino Cavalli, reported: “There is neither study nor art which he cannot discuss with much knowledge... His attainments are not limited to war but also include literature, painting, and the languages.”

The intellectual ferment radiating from the court served to encourage a whole generation of French scholars and students to delve for themselves around the original sources of the new movement. In Italy Delorme joined the hosts of artists who were engaged in an assiduous absorption of the classical remains. The road to Rome proved to be the shortest route to Paris and the patronage of his volatile monarch.

“Being in Rome in the days of my young manhood,” Delorme wrote, “I busied myself with taking the measurements of edifices and antiquities... and there came a day when measuring
the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Nova that several cardinals and gentlemen came visiting the vestiges of antiquity, and, passing the place where I was, the Cardinal of Santa Croce, who was at that time only a simple bishop (but Cardinal since, and Pope under the name of Marcellus, a man much learned in diverse sciences, and architecture also, in which at that time he took great delight, to the point of ordering and making models and drawings, just as some time after this he showed them to me in his palace), said to me in his Roman tongue that he desired to make my acquaintance in that he had seen me several times measuring diverse antique edifices, just as I customarily did with great labor, charges, and expenses, so far as I was able to do, not only in ladders and ropes but also in excavating foundations, which I was not able to perform without being followed by a number of men, some to earn two centimes a day, others to learn, for they were workmen, cabinetmakers, carvers, and the like, who wished to know what I was doing and get the benefit of what I discovered, which matter gave great pleasure to the aforesaid Lord Cardinal.”

The date of their meeting must have been in 1534 or 1535, when Delorme was about twenty. His new friend introduced him to Pope Paul III, who gave him “une belle charge a St. Martin dello Bosco,” in Calabria. The Calabrian affair is a little misty; perhaps the “charge” was not so brilliant as Delorme would have us think. At any rate, in 1536, at the instigation of the Du Bellays, he was back in Lyons. The Du Bellays were a brilliant and influential family. Jean, Cardinal du Bellay, was twice ambassador to Rome, and it was probably during his second embassy that Delorme made his acquaintance. In later years he held it against them that he gave up the Calabrian assignment, but it was the pivotal point of his career. The cardinal brought him to the attention of the French court. Once launched, his fortunes soared steadily until the death of Henry II.

His first important works near Paris seem to have been the chateaux of Meudon and Saint-Maur-des-Fosses. The latter commission he owed to Du Bellay. Saint-Maur was near Charenton on land overlooking the Marne. In order to reach solid ground he had to go down forty feet. Out of consideration for his client, “qui n’avait pas lor beaucoup d’écus de rente,” Delorme sank shafts about four or five feet square, twelve feet apart, down to the firm ground. He then built up piers of masonry, with arches from pier to pier that carried the works above. To architects today this seems elementary enough. At that time, however, it amounted to a minor miracle of scientific engineering. Although Delorme says he invented it, in actuality this was no innovation. The construction was not unlike that of a medieval market hall. What he had done was to apply old methods in a new and difficult situation.

Throughout his career Delorme demonstrated his careful study of building construction. He was an unusually skillful engineer, and in many of his works the constructor seems to have been predominant over the artist.

In 1545, or possibly later, Delorme was appointed conductor general of buildings and fortifications in Brittany. His duties included visiting twice a year all the ports and fortifications, inspecting military and naval stores, galleys, and ships. With characteristic self-justification he tells us that he discharged these duties with prodigious zeal, uncovering embezzlements and pillagerings at Saint-Malo, Nantes, and Concarneau.

Despite such marks of favor Delorme in his later days felt that the king had dealt hardly with him. Francis did not recognize his talents as an architect. This is not surprising when the king’s nature is taken into account.

The king, Ducerceau wrote, “estoit merveilleusement adonné apres ses batimens, de sorte que c’était le plus grand de ses plaisirs.” Unable to remain still very long, spiritually or geographically, his court was literally a flying court. Between January 1530 and October 1531, for instance, he was established successively at Compiegne, Amiens, Dieppe, Rouen, Argentan, Caen, Cherbourg, Rennes, Nantes, Angers, Tours, Chambord, and Fontainebleau. At each of these places suitable lodgment had to be provided for him and for his entire court. This would explain in some measure the extraordinary amount of building that went on through-
Title page for the first edition of Philibert Delorme's "Book of Architecture," Paris, 1567. Delorme had planned an encyclopedic treatise, but he lived only to complete the first volume. Dick Fund, 1927
out his reign. The real reason was inherent in his own character: unstable, unsatisfied, and unsatisfiable. Once a building was completed he lost interest in it utterly and never bothered to see that it was maintained. When informed that a certain château was in good order the king replied at once that it could not be his. His real interest lay in giving orders for the work and seeing the project grow.

The invaluable Ducerceau also observed that Francis was so well versed in building that it was hardly possible to call anyone else the architect of his palaces. He employed the medieval method, in which the patron gave his builder detailed instructions as to the general plan and elevation and left the master builder to his own devices as to the execution. When the walls were up, the masons cleared out and the ornamentalist appeared to spray the decoration on the masonry. This system of procedure accounts for the strange mixture of traditions that coexist in the buildings of the early French Renaissance.

In all likelihood no plans were ever measured out for the projects of Francis I, nor were there any working drawings to scale. The only specifications were the “devis” which served in the drawing up of a contract for the work. As a result, Francis’s palaces suffered from the same haphazardness. They are all, in the final analysis, the product of an amateur. And although he was an “amateur du premier rang” his omissions and the errors created by the lack of foresight had to be patched and corrected by the improvisations of the builders. The long tradition of the building trades was all that prevented a succession of disasters. Delorme pointed this out with great bitterness after the king’s death.

In many ways Francis’s artistic temperament was his own greatest drawback. He was too strong-headed and self-willed to give way to any artist of real training and competence. Throughout his reign he favored only Italians, which was one reason for his neglecting to employ Delorme’s architectural talents. But despite all his inducements no Italian artist who came to work for him stayed on permanently, with the exception of Leonardo, who came to France in his extreme old age and died there. Cellini, as volatile and touchy as his master, went off in a characteristic rage, Andrea del Sarto fled back to Florence and never returned, in spite of the promise given before his departure. Other Italians entered the picture and then disappeared before they had been able to contribute much more to the scene than their own fleeting shadows. Some were shoved out of place by rivals; others were murdered. Bands of these artisans, hoping to profit by the sudden vogue for their talents, set off across the Alps to set up their workshops in various towns, where apparently they established schools of design. But they had no real connection with what was slowly emerging in France. Exiles in a country which was still Gothic, they found occasional patrons but left no consecutive following. Serlio, the only architect of the lot, was stranded at Fontainebleau with nothing to do in a place where, in his own words, he found himself “in the company of beasts rather than men.” As for Primaticcio, he did not achieve his eventual prominence until long after Francis had died.

Francis, meanwhile, went on building. With all his wild enthusiasm for the new style he persistently missed its point. He did not know how to achieve the spaciousness and unity of the Italian courts. He had not perceived their fundamental simplicity. Instead of architecture he threw up buildings with ornamental details copied from the second-best models of the Italian Renaissance. For one thing, Italy is dry enough for flat roofs. France’s climate dictated steep slate roofs, which blended oddly with the new southern style. Francis was blind to such basic problems. He felt that to have the best architecture in the world it was sufficient to create plenty of wall space for an Italian to cover with stucco and with plaster forests of carved capitals and device-festooned pillars, and to have plenty of rooms to hold the works of art for which Italy had been raided. It was no accident that when the industrial barons in the United States built their granite palaces along Fifth Avenue the architecture they favored was François Premier: the perfect new-rich style, the style of booty. And yet, at their best, Francis’s buildings had
The château of Anet, in Normandy, designed by Philibert Delorme for Diane de Poitiers and begun in 1548. Engraving by Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau, from "Le Second Volume des plus excellents bastiments de France," Paris, 1579. Dick Fund, 1930. Du Cerceau writes: "The building is placed in a plain, accommodated with all that is needed to make a place perfect, such as a park, woods, canals. . . . The late Madame . . . much enriched it with buildings and other beauties. . . . The principal court is enclosed by living quarters on all sides. . . . At the right hand of the entrance is a round chapel, well furnished and worthy of seeing for the good disposal with which it was made." Jean Goujon's celebrated fountain of Diana, now in the Louvre, is seen at the left.
a dramatic quality. Loose, irregular, they were erected in an idiom of transition—an idiom which inspires invention.

Francis died in 1547. We are told that when the news was published five thousand foreign scholars and artists fled Paris. But meanwhile the scholars and artists of France had learned to stand on their own feet. The new generation which Francis left behind was fired with the renaissance enthusiasm for the classics, a passion which blazed through all the arts. In ornament this movement flowered into the mannerism of the school of Fontainebleau. Joachim du Bellay was ready to write his Defense and Ennoblement of the French Language, calling upon his colleagues to abandon the medieval tradition and write in the exalted style of the ancients. French poets should “loot the Roman city and the Delphic temple” and equal the grandest achievements of Greek and Latin literature in French. At the same time French scholars were publishing essential translations of the classics. Amyot’s Plutarch, which modernized the antique world without altering it, had a direct and immediate appeal throughout Europe. Shakespeare’s plays are only one instance of its widespread effect. It was the proper moment for Philibert Delorme to come into his own.

Henry II, Francis’s successor and Delorme’s great patron, was a morose, taciturn, and melancholy human being. He seems to have hated his father bitterly, possibly because all Francis’s paternal affection had been centered on the dauphin, who had died suddenly in 1536. Henry was twenty-nine when he ascended the throne, and he had only two interests in life. One of these was hunting. The other was a woman of forty-eight who had for a time also been the mistress of Francis I and who, a widow for six years, still wore only black and white, not so much out of mourning for the deceased Senechal of Normandy as because it so well set off her fair complexion. Henry’s infatuation with Diane de Poitiers prompted and colored all his actions, to the neglect not only of his queen, Catherine de’ Medici, but of his kingdom as well. At his accession began the great triumph of Diane, “the beautiful huntress, she whom Jean Goujon has sculptured, nude and triumphant, embracing with marble arms a mysterious stag, enamoured like Leda’s swan, . . . the wondrous woman of eternal youth . . . whom Primaticcio’s frescoes at Fontainebleau sometimes represent as the luminous Queen of Night, and sometimes as a sombre Hecate surrounded by eternal fires.” Her contemporaries credited her with extraordinary powers. “We are not in a natural world,” Michelet wrote. “This is an enchantment; and it can only be carried out by violent spells and dramatic strokes. The Armida of fifty years who holds a king of thirty in bonds must daily use her magic wand.” Whatever the source of her power, “Henri regnait sur la France, et Diane sur le roi.”

Henry showed none of the expansiveness and humanistic inquiry that had characterized his father. But then he never broke through—if indeed he ever wanted to—the limits of his personal obsession. Curiously enough, this helped rather than hindered the development of the arts during his reign. Unlike his father Henry did not meddle. He had observed his father’s building methods, in which one grandiose scheme after another got under way at vast expense, never to be finished. His indifference worked to the advantage of his purse and to that of French art as well. At last the younger generation of artists had the opportunity to carry out their new ideas unimpeded.

One of Henry’s first acts was to appoint Delorme architect to the king and inspector of all the royal buildings. This in itself is an indication that a new idea had taken hold. At the time when Fontainebleau and most of the great châteaux along the Loire were being built, the architect as such did not exist. The conception of his special function, as distinguished from that of the builder, had now emerged. It was finally realized that serious and detailed designs were needed, beyond the models prepared at the employer’s dictation. Every thing Philibert Delorme had done prior to his appointment as royal architect had been a preparation for the task.

Delorme set about his commission in that drastic, uncomprising spirit that was to make him eventually one of the most unpopular men
in France. One of his duties was to inquire how Francis had been served in his buildings and to compel all defaulters to make good their defects and malversations. He laid a heavy hand on the master builders and with no compunction whatsoever compelled them to disgorge their ill-gotten gains. With his typical incontinence of spirit he seems to have taken a reckless delight in his power. It is no wonder that to men like Palissy and Ronsard he seemed not so much a genius as a successful upstart.

Throughout Henry’s reign Delorme’s prosperity mounted. In 1558 he was already councilor and almoner-in-ordinary to the king and abbot of Geveton in Brittany, of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Éloi at Noyon, of Ivry in the diocese of Évreux. The total revenue of these abbeys was thirty-three hundred livres per annum, but his enemies claimed that the amount was twenty thousand, a charge which Delorme repudiated with indignation. Far from being overpaid, he claimed, he had maintained ten or twelve horses in the king’s service and kept open house, wherever he was, for captains, concierges, controllers, masons, carpenters, and whoever it might be, without receiving a farthing in return; nay, more, he had never been paid for the models he had made for the king and the court, sometimes at a cost of two or three hundred crowns each. This possibly explains why he felt justified in declining to help his monks at Noyon when they wished to rebuild their abbey in 1560. One commentator on the clerical aspect of Delorme’s career remarks that “his pious ejaculations a little recall the religious fervor of Cellini, who was in the habit of thanking his maker for having enabled him to stab his enemy in a vital place.”

It is clear from these benefactions that Delorme must have gained the royal favor before Henry’s accession. His having been passed over by Francis may have been what chiefly recommended him to Francis’s son. Through Henry he came into Diane’s favor, and it was Diane, soon after the king’s succession, who employed him to design the great house of Anet in Normandy. Diane was immensely rich. Henry’s purse was also at her disposal. Anet, where Delorme had carte blanche and a free hand, is therefore most typical of his manner. More than half has disappeared, but what stands is the most important remaining example of Delorme’s architecture.

With its elaborate refinement of technique and the predominant symmetry of its entire composition, Anet marks a considerable and astonishing advance over the work of Francis’s time. Delorme revealed his profound classical scholarship as well as his genius in its conception: a central court with an advanced entrance, flanked by subordinate courts and backed up by great enclosed gardens, with recesses on either side to give value and importance to the principal entrance. The difference between Fontainebleau and Anet is one of a haphazard pile of masonry contrasted with a serious and deliberately designed structure. It was a complete triumph throughout. Everything in it was planned to set off the golden
autumn of Diane's beauty. Brantôme praised "la belle Maison d'Anet qui devait servir pour jamais d'une telle décoration à la France qu'on ne peut dire pareille." Gabriel Simeoni, who was not easily impressed, being both a Florentine and a considerable traveler, wrote in 1557, "La Maison dorée de Neron n'eust sceu estre ni plus riche ni plus belle." No less a poet than Joachim du Bellay, in sonnet L from his Regrets, enumerated the principal beauties of the "Paradise of Anet":

De vostre Dianet—de vostre nom j'appelle
Vostre Maison d'Anet—la belle architecture,
Les marbres animez, la vivant peinture,
Qui la font estimer des maisons la plus belle.
Les beaux lambris dorez, la luisante chapelle,
Les superbes dongeons, la riche couverture,
Le jardin tapisse d'eternelle verdure,
Et la vive fontaine à la source immortelle . . .
Montrent un artifice et despence admirable.

Above the door of the entrance, where a great clock stood with Diana sculptured on one side and a handsome stag on the other, was set a black marble tablet with a Latin inscription: "By Phoebus has this magnificent dwelling been consecrated to the fair Diana, and Diana offers him in return all that she has been given." And executed in countless graceful variations throughout the entire château, on gates, ceilings, locks, doors, tapestries, tableware, were to be found the initials of Diane and Henry intertwined with his royal crown and her symbolic crescent.

The idyll came to an abrupt end in July 1559, when Henry died as the result of a lance thrust through his eye at a court tournament. Catherine de' Medici had been waiting with sheathed claws in the background. Now she pounced. She moved at once to the Louvre with the young king. Diane was compelled to surrender most of her property and retired to Anet, to "spend her few remaining years in the pursuit of virtues which had received somewhat scanty attention in her long and brilliant life." In 1566 she died at Limours.

The change in Delorme's fortunes was no less disastrous and immediate. Even before the funeral of the feu Roy his architect was dismissed. Primaticcio—"Francisque Primadiccy de Bologna en Italie"—was installed in his place, the king (according to the patent) having such confidence "in his sense, sufficiency, loyalty, probity, diligence, and great experience in the art of architecture." The king, to be sure, was a sickly youth of sixteen who had been on the throne two days, and Primaticcio, so far as is known, had not had any specific training in architecture.

Delorme's sun had shone too long for him to let it set without a protest. With his usual impetuousness he dashed off his Instructions de Monsieur d'Ivy, dict de Lorme, Abbé de St. Sierge, the manuscript of which was discovered in the Imperial Library in Paris in 1859, exactly three hundred years after it was written. In this memoir, so full of choler and outrage as to be scarcely coherent, Delorme recounts his services and the harsh returns he had received for them, setting all this down not for his own glory but on account of the great calumnies and hatreds that pursued him, "and in order that all princes, seigneurs, and gentlemen of honor might know the truth of the facts." But protest was vain. The princes and gentlemen of honor did not choose to listen. Delorme had to put aside his compasses and occupy his enforced leisure with writing a book of practical architectural carpentry, the Nouvelles Inventions pour bien bastir, which was issued separately in 1561, and the Livre d'architecture. Attributing his disgrace to the will of God, who had punished him "pour s'estre rendu plus subject au service des hommes qu'à celuy de Dieu," he added not without grandeur, "Au lieu que j'ay appris à édifier chasteauxx et maisons, j'apprendray à édifier des hommes."

Delorme's idea was to publish an encyclopedia of architecture, drawn up on a methodical plan analogous to those of Vitruvius and Alberti, which would contain the sum of his studies and his long building experience.

The first and only volume to appear begins with a dedication to the queen mother and a bristling epistle to the readers. Nine sections follow. The first discusses such generalities as the site and the materials to be used. The second deals with foundations. The third and fourth are in themselves a definitive work on stereotomy, the art of setting out and cutting stones
Cross section of the Anet chapel, engraving by Ducerceau, showing Delorme’s adaptation of classic models
for given positions in masonry. By the end of the Middle Ages this was already an advanced science, but the principles had remained the privilege of a small number of constructors who surrounded the process and technique with mystery. It is owing to Delorme that stonecutting in France ceased to be a stonemason’s secret and became a matter for the architect’s drafting table. For fully a century his was practically the only existing treatise on the subject. The remaining five sections are concerned with the architectural orders and their use and the problem of stoves and heating.

The book’s value is several-fold. While Delorme did not live long enough to realize his original plan he did succeed in writing not only the first important work on architecture by a Frenchman but the first really practical treatise in modern times as well. It was not a mere echo of the Italian books but dealt in a completely independent manner with problems of construction, masonry, and the qualities of materials. Architects were even more indebted to Delorme for the chapters on stereotomy than for his artistic efforts.

Delorme’s book also marks the definite cleavage between the Gothic and the classical styles of building in France. Delorme described the Gothic structure as having “point de feuillage ny basse taille qui ne r’amassent qu’ordures, villennies, nids d’oiseaux, de mouches et semblable vermine.” In its stead he offered a style of building that was clean, sanitary, and graceful. He was concerned with the relation of the house to the sun, winds, and water, as contrasted with the old castle, which fought them all out indiscriminately. He understood the modern idea of a dwelling as a machine for living, and instructed his fellow architects to study not only the terrain for the projected house but its purpose and also the character and needs of the family for whom it was to be built.

Finally, it is a great book about its time. Its pages hold a vivid picture of the personalities, the manners, and the intricate patterns of court life in sixteenth-century France.

In his latter days Delorme’s talents were allowed one more chance. Catherine de’ Medici, who had a way of going back on her actions, employed him first at Chenonceaux, which she had compelled Diane to give up to her, and then on the Tuileries. Restless and inconsequent, the queen mother never finished her buildings. One reason was a superstition that she would die if she did; the other was the treasury’s inconvenient habit of constantly running dry. When she died in 1589 her debts were tremendous (estimated in 1869 at one million pounds sterling), and Brantôme says she died not worth a sou. But she had been thinking of starting a vast pleasure house on the outskirts of Paris.

In 1564 she ordered the demolition of the Hôtel des Tournelles and bought up various outlying properties to the west of the Louvre. Delorme was instructed to design the palace of the Tuileries. He conceived a grandiose project, which Catherine, fired to make something incomparable and marvelous, ardently attempted to realize.

But Delorme’s ill luck clung to him. The work at the Tuileries progressed fitfully. Catherine got large gifts from the king, she wangled loans from French and Florentine bankers, but there was never enough money for her schemes. She also interfered at every point. Delorme wrote: “J’y procède tout aussi qu’il plaît à sa dicte Majesté me le commander, sauf les ornements, symmetries et mesures, pour lesquelles elle me fait cette grâce et faveur de s’en fier à moy.” It is not difficult to read between those lines.

Delorme’s project was never executed as a whole. Before his death only a part of the façade on the garden side was erected.

An appraisal of the Tuileries as an architectural design would be difficult now. Only through the plates of Ducerceau and Marot have we any idea of the Tuileries as built by Delorme and Bullant. They show us a structure of elegant, light, and airy simplicity compared to the heavy, dark quadrangle that the Louis XIV period left behind. It was, however, the first of the great modern palaces of Europe, and fifty years later when Inigo Jones designed the palace of Whitehall he had no hesitation in following the general lines of Delorme’s plan.

On January 8, 1570, Philibert Delorme died in his canon’s house of Notre-Dame.

He had played a considerable part in the life
The Good Architect and the Bad Architect, woodcuts from Delorme's "Architecture." Delorme is specific in listing the requirements for the successful following of his profession. Besides mastering the principles of design the good architect must also be adept in diplomacy, for "in rich houses the wife, children, relatives, and servants bear a grudge against the architect if only because they fear the lord's outlay in pushing through his buildings will make less soup for the pot."
of his times, he had written an immense book, and he had designed some of the most notable buildings in France. In his own opinion he had simply re-established architecture in France. "Have I not also done a great service in having brought into France the fashion of good building, done away with barbarous manners, and great gaping joints in masonry, shown to all how one should observe the measures of architecture, and made the best workmen of the day, as they admit themselves? Let people recollect how they built when I began Saint-Maur for my lord the Cardinal du Bellay. . . . Moreover, let it be recollected that all I have ever done has been found to be very good and to give great contentment to all."

There are two woodcuts at the conclusion of Philibert Delorme’s Livre d’architecture. One shows a figure without eyes and hands moving aimlessly across a Gothic landscape. Behind him stands a medieval castle with its moat and turrets, a cloudburst filling the sky above it. This is his concept of the Bad Architect. The other is a scene of classic architecture, fruitful vines, and playing fountains. The sky is serene, and in the ordered court stands the Good Architect, triple-eyed and double-handed, presenting a roll of plans to a willing workman. “Fortunate indeed is the man who has found wisdom and who is full of that discretion which is better than all the acquiring, trafficking, and possession of gold and silver. . . . I dwell (so says Wisdom) in good and salutary counsel, and am present at learned and wise cogitations. Therefore must a man seek this Wisdom and, having found it, take care to hold it well, that in its time and place it may be of help to him. The ensuing representation will set before your eyes the treatise which I have propounded.”

Could it have been a sketch for a self-portrait that Messer Philibert Delorme was setting before our eyes?

Woodcut of a triumphal arch designed by Philibert Delorme for the occasion of Henry II’s entry into Paris, 1549. Dick Fund, 1928