

## CORNEILLE DE LYON

French school, active 1533-34, --died 1574.

This artist was born in the Hague, probably around 1500-1510, and moved to France from there. His family name is unknown ; it has been suggested that Corneille may represent a gallicization of the Dutch family name Corneliszen. He established himself in the city of Lyons (hence the eponym "de Lyon"), residing there from before 1534 until his death. He is mentioned in 1541 as painter to the Dauphin (the future Henry II), received French naturalization in 1547, and is recorded in 1551 as bearing the title of "painter and valet of the king's bedchamber". The last mention of him comes in 1574.

He is known through other sixteenth century records to have had a high reputation as a painter of portraits, mostly of members of the French court. But no certain work of his is known, and the situation as regards attributions is a confused and difficult one. Briefly, the sole basis for the ascription of works to him is that certain portraits in the collection of Roger de Gagnières (1642-1715), who bought pictures in Lyons in the seventeenth century, were attested then as being by Corneille de Lyon. A group of five portraits which found their way to Versailles, Chantilly, the Louvre, and from there passed into the Pierpont Morgan collection, have been identified as coming from Gagnières' collection ; and so have other portraits on the basis of seals on the backs of them. Further attributions to the artist have to depend upon this core of works ; but it would appear that studio-pieces are involved even here, all that one can legitimately speak of is of a type of portrait associated with the practice of Corneille de Lyon --a type involving small, bust-length depictions of men and women of the French nobility, with pale flesh, small hands and most often a green background.

It is evident from the number of repetitions that Corneille must have maintained a large atelier ; and probably his son, also called Corneille, and his daughter were amongst those employed in this capacity. Remoter derivations and imitations suggest further that he and his atelier created an

international vogue for the type of portrait in question -- a vogue which spread outside France to Germany, the Netherlands and Italy.

Portrait of a Lady (called "Diane de Poitiers")  
oil on panel,  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$  ins.

#### Provenance

Duke of Hamilton, Hamilton Palace ; sold Christie's, Jun.17-Jul.20, 1882, no.1653 (bought by Nosedo ~~par 22~~ <sup>(2)</sup>) ; J.Seligmann and son, Paris (1937) <sup>(3)</sup> ; Seligmann Galleries, New York. Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

#### Literature

C.Sterling, cat. of exhb'n. Chefs d'Oeuvre de l'Art Français, Palais National des Arts, Paris, 1937, p.27, no.44 (no.28 in double vol. of illustrations, ed. R.Burnand) ; R.Huyghe, La Peinture Française du XIV<sup>me</sup> au XVII<sup>me</sup> siècle. Paris, 1937, pl.18a ; J.Baschet, Pour une Renaissance de la Peinture Française, Paris, 1946, p.14 (color plate) ; G.Seligman, Oh, Fickle Taste, or Objectivity in Art, Cambridge, Mass., 1952, pp.119 and 121, fig.55.

#### Exhibited

Paris, 1937 (see lit.) ; Holbein and his Contemporaries, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, 1950, no.48 (cat.by R.O. Parks) ; French Painting 1100-1900, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Oct.-Dec.1951, no.48 ; Ind., 1959, no.17.

#### Versions

1. Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.  $6 \times 5$  ins.  
Called there a portrait of Marie de Lorraine (viz. Marie de

Versions, cont.

Guise, second wife of James V of Scotland and mother of Mary Queen of Scots). Corresponds almost exactly in the details of head and headdress. In keeping with the slightly larger size, more of the bodice and the white part of the sleeves are shown. The background appears to be darker (from a photograph). No provenance.<sup>(4)</sup>

2. Musée de Versailles no.3148, as Femme Inconnue<sup>(5)</sup>. On panel, 16x13 cm. (Dimier no.277, as studio of Corneille, this attribution has been kept). In very bad condition, scratched and disfigured. The dress again exactly the same, with cut-out bodice and chains on the shoulders; more at the bottom, as in the Edinburgh version. No provenance.<sup>(6)</sup>

Attributed to Corneille de Lyon by Sterling in the 1937 catalogue --with a suggested date of 1530-40<sup>(7)</sup>--and also by W.Suida<sup>(8)</sup>. It seems quite feasible in terms of type and quality that this and the Edinburgh version (~~was shown~~) should both be by Corneille<sup>(9)</sup>, but the attribution cannot be made more strongly, because of the problems surrounding this artist's work (see above).

In an effort to establish the sitter's identity, Sterling compared the drawings of Diane de Poitiers at Chantilly. It does not, however, seem likely that she is the lady represented here<sup>(10)</sup>.

Notes.

1. See on this subject the basic but methodologically hazardous studies of L.Dimier, (Histoire de la Peinture de Portrait en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, 3 vols., Paris-Brussels, 1924-26) and E.Moreau-Nélaton (Les Clouet et leur Emules, 3 vols, Paris, 1924); also C.Sterling, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Catalogue of French Paintings I, 1145 ff

Notes, cont.

of French Paintings, XV - XVIII Centuries, Cambridge, Mass., 1955, pp.30ff, and the critical comments on the problem of M.Davies, National Gallery Catalogues, French School, London, 1957,

p.50. In preparing this entry and the following ones the compiler has been much helped by the work that D.Bentley-Cranch has been doing for a book on Corneille, which will include a cat. of his works.

2. Cat. (~~pub. as a book, The Hamilton Palace Collection, London, 1802~~) p.190 : as by Janets, in a tortoise-shell frame. Sold for £42.

3. According to the reproduction in Baschet (see lit.), he still owned the work in 1946.

4. The following notes were provided by the curator, and passed on to the compiler by Miss Bentley-Cranch: "flesh-tones pale (? from overcleaning), dress and head-covering black, hair auburn, sleeves white, background bright green. Seal on the reverse identified as that of C.de Torcy, suggesting that the painting was one of those sold in 1718 from the Gagnières colln.

5. So ~~est~~<sup>attributed</sup> by E.Soulié, Notice des Peintures et Sculptures composant le Musée Imperial de Versailles, 2 vols, 1854-55, II, p.389, no.3054.

6. The colors are hard to make out, but the background appears to be green, the dress black, the sleeves white; the head<sup>dress</sup> black and the hair lightish-brown. Possibly some slight difference in face and expression (notes from Miss Bentley-Cranch).

7. He compared the portrait of M.d'Orléans, one of the sons of Francis I, now in the Brooklyn Museum.

8. Undated doc., Clowes archives.

9. As suggested to the compiler by D.Bentley-Cranch (letter

Notes, cont.

of May 3, 1966). The Versailles version definitely appears to be inferior.

10. See, for her iconography, P. E. J. langer, "Diane de Poitiers -- the Myth", Connoisseur, 163, 1966, pp.83ff.