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The Life and Times of Francis the First, King of France

James Bacon

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Francis, a great-great-grandson of Charles V but with two male cousins closer to the throne than he — born without any expectations of a brilliant career, except by his doting mother — became heir presumptive at the age of four, and king at the age of twenty. He was already an experienced soldier and he began his reign with a successful campaign to regain the Milanese, the gateway to Italy. Wars and intrigues figured largely throughout his life — much, if not all, the product of the lasting jealousy and resentment that subsisted between Francis and his subtler rival, Charles V of Spain who thwarted Francis in his desire to be elected Holy Roman Emperor and much later captured and held Francis prisoner.

As king, Francis was served by many noble and notable soldiers and statesmen whose lives and, too often early deaths in battle, are described. He also experienced treachery and treason, ranging from the man he had created Constable of France on his accession, the Duke of Bourbon, to his own mistress, the Duchess of Étampes. It's quite enlightening to see how much of the fortunes of war was determined by this or that commander's fit of the sulks at some real or imagined slight.

Francis was not merely a soldier. He was a noted patron of the arts, drawing scholars and artists to France, expanding the royal library, and engaging in splendid building works.

This Kindle edition contains both volumes of the original publication.

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— The Pearl of Princesses: The Life of Marguerite of Angoulème, Queen of Navarre by H Noel Williams[B00WOJUGWM], about Francis's sister, and including a good deal of information about their mother and about Francis himself.
— The Story of the Chevalier Bayard from the French of the Loyal Servant [B00TMMDHHA], the primary source of information about the life of Bayard.
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