THE EXHIBITION OF FRENCH TAPESTRIES

By ROLAND L. REDMOND, President

In the summer of 1946 an extraordinary collection of the finest tapestries woven in France from the fourteenth century down to our own day was exhibited in Paris under the auspices of the Louvre. This exhibition provided the most complete display of the ancient and lovely art of woven pictures ever staged, including as it did the outstanding examples in the public and private collections of France. During the months following, important selections from the exhibition were shown at Amsterdam, Brussels, and London. Now it is the privilege of this Museum to present the greater part of the original Paris exhibition in New York.

Thanks to the co-operation of the French Government, the cruiser Georges Leygues has brought to America two hundred historic hangings, which will be shown in the Museum for fourteen weeks following the opening ceremonies on November 21. Rarely, if ever, have we been able to present such a stirring loan exhibition. Here, for example, is a sequence of twenty-four panels from the incomparable fourteenth-century Apocalypse tapestries, one of the greatest treasures of the Museum at Angers and one of the most celebrated achievements of French art. Here, too, are the complete series of hangings illustrating the legend of Saint Stephen from the Cluny Museum in Paris and, from that same source, the six tapestries representing the Lady with the Unicorn, which remind us so happily of our own Unicorn series at The Cloisters. The famous Gobelins factory is represented by such sumptuous hangings as the Story of the King series, lent by the Mobi- lier National, five of the series depicting the Hunts of Louis XV, lent by the château at Compiègne, and other equally extraordinary products. It is impossible to select for special comment all the masterpieces from such a consistently distinguished catalogue.

The exhibition also includes a representa-
tive collection of tapestries designed and woven in France in our own day. We in America may well find in these contemporary creations the most convincing evidence of the vigor and significance of this typically French art. Taken together, these ancient and modern tapestries give a clear and balanced picture of the culture and civilization of France over more than five centuries. We are happy indeed to offer such a unique and memorable event in our galleries.

The exhibition was assembled through the helpful efforts of many persons and agencies: Foremost among those to whom the Museum is indebted are Georges Salles, Director of the Museums of France; Jacques Jaujard, Director General of Arts and Letters; Louis Joxe, Director General of Cultural Relations; Jean Verrier, Inspector General of the Historic Monu-
ments of France; Georges Fontaine, Adminis-
trator General of the Mobilier National; and Roger Seydoux, Director of Cultural Services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They received the valuable support and collaboration of His Excellency the French Ambassador to the United States, Henri Bonnet; His Excellency the American Ambassador to the French Gov-
ernment, Jefferson Caffery; the Minister of Marine, Louis Jacquinot; the Minister for Arts and Letters, Pierre Bourdan; and the officials of the Quai d’Orsay and of the several government departments involved. The choice and arrange-
ment of the tapestries have been in the capable hands of Pierre Verlet, Curator in Chief of the Department of Decorative Arts of the Louvre. To the cathedrals, museums, and private indi-
viduals who have so generously entrusted their priceless treasures to our care, we tender heartfelt gratitude in the name of the American people. Our cordial thanks are due to the French Government for the friendly interest which has made it possible to display the exhibition in this country.