

as far as her victories extended, the galleries of Antwerp and Brussels, of Dresden and Munich, of Madrid and Seville, were made to add their tribute to the vast mass of spoils with which the Louvre was encumbered. Paris was the world's museum; was it likely to become the world's school of art? The First Empire was, perhaps, the epoch in France in which genius and taste were at the lowest ebb.* The nation had as little leisure for thought or feeling as its restless ruler; and one of the most remarkable phenomena of the period was the apparent indifference with which the French looked on the accumulation of all that immense artistic treasure. Beyond a little flourish of gratified vanity, there is, at least, no evidence of any great enthusiasm evinced by the Parisians at the appearance of their new acquisitions; no evidence of any extraordinary frequency of visitors at the Louvre, not even from mere motives of curiosity. It may be suggested that the popular apathy was to be attributed to the varied vicissitudes of those stirring times; that the Empire had toiled not for its own generation, but for after ages; that what its short period had devoured would remain for the digestion of future epochs; so that the issue to be expected from the intermarriage of all the ancient and modern schools in Paris would eventually be a French school combining the merits, and eclipsing the achievements, of all ages and countries.

But it is very questionable whether, even if France had been able to retain permanent possession of her ill-gotten goods, the sublime conceit of national selfishness could ever have been realized. Art is not to be more easily transplanted than literature: genius is, in a great measure, a matter of soil and climate; it chooses its own time and place for its peculiar development; it takes its own growth regardless of culture, rebellious

against the shelter and restraint of the forcing-house. All the knowledge of Greek in the world would never have made of Shakespeare a Homer; nor could many years' contemplation of the Madonna di San Sisto have made of Jacques Louis David a Raphael. In Italy itself it has been found that too intense a reverence for ancient art is as apt to stunt and cripple modern art as to mature it. Admiration begets imitation; manner is taken for law; religion degenerates into superstition; and with the rise of academies the decline of creative power too generally sets in. Both before and after the first Republic and Empire France had artistic as well as literary instincts of her own; but it may be freely asserted that the bane of French genius in all its efforts has been its exaggerated worship of what it considered classicism.

It may be imagined, however, that neither Bonaparte nor the officers in his suite gave themselves much thought about the remote results of their brigand exploits. They plundered for plunder's sake; a kind of thievish monomania seemed to have seized those lawless warriors; and the demoralization had at a very early period, reached the lowest ranks. The charming pages of Erckmann-Chatrian describe the earnestness with which men and women from the quietest and most unsophisticated districts, set out in quest of adventure in the train of the armies, under some vague impression that the world was the oyster which the soldier's sword was to open for them; they went forth, they rambled far and wide, and came back to startle their families and friends with the display of toys and trinkets which they often could tell neither the use nor the value, and when reproached for dishonesty, they claimed it as a merit that they had rifled a mere "*tas de Prêtres et d'Aristocrates*," and mulcted a stolid people who "even so many years after the inroad of their armies could not yet utter one word of intelligible French."

As to Napoleon himself he pleaded patriotism in justification of brigandage; and whatever fault might be found with all the other acts of his reign, in the mere spoliation of inoffensive neighbours, he could rely on the complicity of the French

*M. Jules Janin said at a recent meeting of the French Academy: "On ne savait plus guère parmi nous les noms des grands poètes. On eût dit qu'Homère et Virgile étaient morts tout entiers; Athènes et Rome étaient tout au plus un souvenir." Yet that was the age of mock Brutuses and Cæsars, of *Plebscites* and *Senatus-Consultes*, and of all that hodge-podge of pseudo-Roman institutions which have since been made to cloak with grand words the hideousness and repulsiveness of Napoleonic despotism.