

artists to fill up the void that French greed for the old masters might create behind the main altars of Italian churches or on the walls of Italian mansions. Others again, with heads filled with mock heroic notions of Roman or even Spartan stoicism, declared that the loss of those artistic "baubles" was to be accounted gain to Italy: that the Italians had too long been held in just contempt by their neighbors as "mere daubers and fiddlers," and that the removal of their enervating gewgaws would best foster among them those stern, manly Republican virtues which might fit them for companionship with the generous nation that summoned them to a new existence. The work of depredation went, however, beyond the endurance even of those stout believers, and the indignation of the trodden people knew no limits at the sight of the irreparable losses caused by the wanton recklessness and the awful disorder with which the spoliation was accomplished. The thought that what made Italy so much poorer made, after all, France no richer—that so large a part of what was to be only stolen was hopelessly destroyed—wrung every patriotic heart. In many instances conspicuous citizens, aggravated at the havoc made by the brutal soldiery among the treasures of their art-repositories, volunteered their aid in the removal—so offering, like the real mother before Solomon's judgment seat, to give up her own child rather than have it hewn asunder. Their help was not always accepted; but again, in some cases, it was tyrannically enforced. By a decree of the Directory an agent was appointed who should follow the French armies in Italy to "extract" and despatch to France such objects of art, science, etc., as might be found in the "conquered towns," independently of the objects of art already ceded by the Italian Powers in virtue of the treaties of peace and suspensions of hostilities contracted with the Armies of the Republic. By a clause in the decree, whenever the French military authorities were unable to provide their agent with the means necessary for the conveyance of the "property," the said agent was authorized to requisition horses and carriages from the towns in which these "extractions" should take place. There is only too much evidence

that the agent availed himself of the power thus conferred upon him without stint. But even by lending a hand, either voluntarily or by compulsion, the Italians failed to save from the wreck a large proportion of the art-treasure which the pioneers of civilization who called them to liberty were conveying into captivity. At times, the surprise of the pillaged population evidently threatened to give way to indignation. It is on record that at Venice and throughout the towns of Venetia the spoilers could not do their work without the protection of a formidable array of bayonets. At Florence, among a gentler and more quick-witted people, popular displeasure found its vent in bitter taunts and jeers. French superior officers who stood wrapt in admiration before Giotto's elegant belfry, were asked by the street urchins whether "they were meditating how they could pack up the Campanile in their military vans?" And within the Uffizi Gallery, as the Venus de Medici was being taken down from her pedestal, together with Raphaels and Titians, preparatory for her journey to the North, the old conservator to whom that precious marble had been an object of worship for the best part of his life, was so overcome as to burst into tears: whereupon one of the sneering Frenchmen, affecting to console him, observed that "the dear goddess was not so much to be pitied, as she was only going to Paris, where the Belvedere Apollo was already among the recent arrivals, and where preparations would soon be made to marry the Roman to the Florentine statue." The sorrow of the conservator was turned to rage, as he retorted: "Marry the statues as much as you like: out of such a union in your country there will never be issue." The old man meant that all the masterpieces of Phidias and Praxiteles in the world would never make the French a nation of sculptors.

For, after all, what could be the object or the pretext for all these wholesale robberies? "Leave nothing behind of what can be of the least use to us." Such were the general instructions; such the invariable rule and practice. But when France had taken all that could be taken, what was she to do with it? All Italian art was already in her possession; and,