

burnt, or otherwise destroyed whatever there was in the arsenal or the harbor, lest Venetian ships and stores should enable the German Emperor to construct a fleet.

It is not difficult to imagine the impression made on the ravaged population by this long-continued and systematic work of unprecedented vandalism. Italy had been overrun by foreign armies for many centuries. After a brief respite during the era of the Republic of the Middle Ages, the country had become the battlefield of all nations, and had passed successively into the possession of almost all of them. But the right of conquest had never been exercised at the expense of Italian genius. The French themselves had under Charles VIII., Louis XII., and Francis I., come into Italy as little better than barbarians: their brains had caught fire at the sight of all that southern beauty and magnificence; the last named monarch made his palace a home to Italian artists, but he showed as much veneration as love for Italian art. In the hands of the Spaniards, the most bigoted and improvident, and of the Germans, the most harsh and unsympathetic of rulers, Art had suffered no outrage. Centuries had elapsed since pictures or statues had come in as spoils in the train of victorious armies. The Venetians and other Italians had brought home the stupendous works of the East; among others those bronze horses from the Bosphorus, and those lions from the Piræus, of which they were in their turn robbed by the French.* But those were deeds of the Middle Ages. The Italians were the last of the Europeans who fell back from the East before the tide of Mohammedan invasion. They knew that only what they took could be saved; that what remained behind would perish either through the violence or the neglect of the Moslem. It was not only with the consent, but with the co-operation of the Greek and other Levantine populations, that these treasures were shipped off to the West. Greek artists and scholars migrated to

Italy, together with their art and literature. Had not Italy been prepared for their reception by her advanced culture, the relics of Greek learning, the monuments of Greek genius, would have found nowhere a resting place. But far different were the conditions of Italy at the close of the eighteenth century. The Italians have at all times carried their love of the Beautiful to a fault. Art, on its re-awakening, was by them associated with religion. The noblest masterpieces were till eighty years ago safely deposited in the churches were some of them had been conveyed in solemn procession by the pious population. The fame of their artists was a subject of domestic pride to the Italian cities. Almost every one of those old masters is at home in some locality of his own—Correggio in Parma, Guido in Bologna, Perugino in the town of which he bears the name. Not to have stopped at the painter's favored spot was to be imperfectly acquainted with his real manner and power. Hence the importance attached to many of those dull, decayed, Tuscan, Lombard, and Æmilian communities among which a civilized stranger loved to linger. Hence one of the main attractions by which Italy was endeared to her visitors above all other European regions. And the day had now come in which that poor boast of Art was to be taken from the Italians; in which all that was valuable and portable was to be carried across the Alps—carried away not by an enemy making good his right of conquest, but by a friend inaugurating the era of liberty, proclaiming the universal brotherhood of nations, and laying claims to the most advanced civilization. The infatuation of the Italian people for their liberators exceeded all limits, and at first there were among the most ardent republicans men who looked upon their spoilers with something like indulgence. It was natural, after all, they urged, that Art should in a free age be used as an ornament to freedom, as in pious times it lent its loftiest charms to religion. It was the claim of the Brave to the Fair. Italy was rich enough in canvas and marble to be able to give a few specimens of her skill to a deserving sister. Her hand would not for all that forget its cunning, and it would always be in the power of living

* In the darkest Middle Ages, during the wars between Venice and Genoa, it is on record that Doria, Master of the Lagoons, vowed that he would "bridle" the horses of St. Mark, but he never thought of stealing them.