

part of its interest. French art of any kind or period is, perhaps, the most perfect outcome of the contemporary life and customs of a nation the world has ever had. It was purely national, and cared nothing for the outside world; this is especially true of that great period which had its beginning in the reign of Louis XIV, and lasted without interruption till the uprising of the school of 1830. This explains the remarkable adaptability it manifested under changing conditions. Had a revolution of the magnitude of that of France occurred in any other country, it would probably have brought art to a complete standstill for a time; and when the gigantic upheaval had at length quieted down, a new art would have arisen, having little or no connection with that which had preceded it; whereas, in France, we find no break in continuity, but simply new tendencies; that is to say, new and reformed ideas of national life finding expression in the pictorial, plastic, and decorative arts, thereby showing not only phenomenal mobility of thought and action, but an extraordinary capacity for assimilating and expounding the entirely changed outlook on life. This intense originality, frequently applied in a misguided,