

artist to individualise distant action. The bodies of troops now appear as vague masses arranged in squares or files in the distance, and the centre of interest is shifted to the immediate foreground, generally an eminence from which the commanding general or king surveys the development of the battle. The paintings at Versailles, in which Van der Meulen has recorded the campaigns of his patron, Louis XIV., belong to this category. The troops far down in the plain may be engaged in bloody fighting. For the leaders, on prancing horses, and in extravagantly showy attire, the affair is a kind of splendid pic-nic, with an exciting spectacle thrown in. "It is the period towards the end of which the Prince de Soubise set out for his campaigns with an endless retinue of servants, cooks, and baggage waggons laden with everything that was needed for the uninterrupted enjoyment of the luxuries which formed the setting to court life in days of peace."* When the tent of a princely commander fell into the enemy's hands, the booty sometimes included priceless tapestry hangings and other objects of art.

The pictorial war memorials of the Napoleonic era naturally resolve themselves into a panegyric of the great conqueror's deeds and character. He was an inspiring personality, and the painters of the Napoleonic legend were as much under his spell as his generals and his troops. He is invariably the centre of interest in the battle pictures of Gros, Gérard and Giraudet. And the enthusiasm he inspired in those around him was like a drink from the waters of Lethe, which made them all oblivious of the trail of death and suffering that attended his victorious progress. The sufferers themselves are depicted as sharing in this enthusiasm—the plague-stricken of Jaffa, the wounded of Eylau, the dying Duc de Montebello, are as eager to do homage to their hero as those who have passed unscathed through the ordeal of

battle, and who acclaim him with flashing swords and waving hats. "The heroic gesture of David's pseudo-classicism is not altogether absent, but it is almost justified by the epic grandeur of the theme."** The series of contemporary paintings of the Napoleonic wars, whatever their artistic merits or demerits may be, form an imposing epic of the last phases of what may be called dramatic and spectacular warfare.

There are many reasons which made for a complete change in the pictorial representation of art in the course of the nineteenth century. The most obvious of all is to be found in the changed conditions of warfare. The deadly improvements in the range and effectiveness of firearms has necessitated, as a protective measure, the adoption of uniforms that cannot be easily distinguished from the surrounding landscape. The panoply and pageantry of war have been gradually abandoned since the days when Napoleon's staff went into battle in the gay motley of their gorgeous uniforms. To-day, invisibility is aimed at. The "tactical" battle picture has become impossible, since a modern battle ranges over an enormous stretch of territory and the opposing forces are, more often than not, beyond the reach of sight. To-day the panoramic battle picture is practically a landscape in which the progress of the fight is indicated by the smoke clouds of bursting shells. Hand to hand fighting is comparatively rare, and offers the painter poor opportunities owing to the absence of colour. Everything is dingy and drab. The commander-in-chief and his staff are no longer seen in stately groups or on carcolling horses watching the movements of their troops from a hill close to the battlefield. They are more probably gathered in some corrugated iron hut, many miles from the fighting front, poring over maps or busy with the telephone—a difficult subject for a dramatic picture.

* Modern War: Paintings by C. R. W. Nevinson.

** Ibid.