

Think of living in a house containing (as the guide books tell us), 20 courts and 11,000 rooms, many a single one of which contains enough of priceless worth to make the best of our American museums seem poor by comparison.

True, the Sistine Chapel is so overloaded with decoration as to produce a sense of bewilderment and fatigue rather than of pleasure: and as for the Stanze of Raphael, I cannot but agree with Taine, that "the painter here is secondary: the apartment was not made for his work, but it for the apartment. The light is dim, and half of the frescoes are in shadow. The ceiling is overcharged—the subjects stifle each other; and nineteen out of twenty of those who visit the place must certainly be disenchanted." Can you recall his criticism of the "Incendio del Borgo?" If not, it is worth re-reading. Considered as a representation of a terrific conflagration, the picture is simply ludicrous, but as a series of studies of "the human form divine" in various and always striking attitudes, it is superb. "The Liberation of St. Peter from Prison," though placed in the worst possible place for light—for you remember its position just over the principal window of the room—is magnificent, and grows upon one more the longer one studies it.

But it is when you visit the Sculpture Galleries (the entrance is now away at the back of St. Peter's, half a mile, at least, from the end of the tramway), that you feel thankful that the Popes of the Renaissance and later periods, were so rich and such munificent patrons of art. Is there anything finer anywhere in the world than that *Sala Rotonda* of Pius VI, where one does not know whether to admire most, the Jupiter from Otricoli, the grandest realization in marble of a heathen's conception of God, or the Barberini Juno, or that lovely head of Antinous, or the colossal sitting statue of Nerva, of which *Merivale* says:

"Among the treasures of antiquity preserved in modern Rome, none surpasses—none perhaps equals—in force and dignity, the sitting statue of Nerva, which draws all eyes in the *Rotonda* of the Vatican, embodying the highest ideal of a Roman magnate, the finished warrior, statesman, and gentleman of an age of varied training and wide, practical experience."

Speaking of Nerva reminds me how familiar and "at home" one grows to feel with these old Roman Emperors, meeting them almost daily in the Museums of the Vatican, the Capitol, the Casino Borghese, and in so many similar places. As Story says in "*Roba di Roma*":

"At Rome the Emperors become as familiar as the Popes. Who does not know the curly-headed Marcus Aurelius, with his lifted brow and projecting eyes, from the full round beauty of his youth, to the more haggard look of his latest years? Are there any more modern portraits more familiar to us than the severe, wedge-like head of Augustus, with his sharp-cut lips and nose, or the dull phiz of Hadrian; with his hair combed down over his low forehead, or the vain, perking face of Lucius Verus, with his thin nose, low brow and profusion of curls.—or the brutal head of Caracalla, or the bestial, bloated features of Vitellius?"

"These men, who were but lay figures to us at school, mere pegs of names to hang historic robes upon, thus interpreted by the living history of their portraits, the incidental illustrations of the places were they lived and moved and died, and the buildings and monuments which they had erected, become like men of yesterday. Art has made them our contemporaries. They are as near to us as Pius VII or Napoleon."

There is a head of Nero here, in this "Hall of Busts," which makes me sure that history (as in the case of our own Cromwell), has grossly maligned that poor young fellow. No man with such an angelic countenance could possibly have been wicked "one little bit." Just as the thermometer has been the ruin of our Canadian North-West, I believe that (but for those wretched historians), Nero (judging from his face), might have been canonized and worshipped as a saint. Indeed, that very fate did befall two of the statues in this same "Hall of Busts." They are two life-sized sitting figures, now