

lost its gladiatorial character and the warrior had ceased to be an athlete.

The Romans were really the first to realize this. They have left us no war paintings, but in their relief sculpture they always aimed at an essentially pictorial illusion of space. They also recognized the necessity of introducing landscape backgrounds for which sculpture can never be a satisfactory medium. It is only natural that, when the fine arts began to rise again, after the interval of many centuries between the fall of the Empire and the rise of the Italian principalities and commonwealths, the interpretation and commemoration of war became the function of pictorial art. The history of the war memorial becomes merged in the evolution of the war painting.

No pictorial war records of any account claim attention before we reach the second quarter of the fifteenth century, when Cosimo dei Medici had a room of his palace in the Via Larga in Florence, decorated with three large battle pictures by Paolo Uccello, representing incidents in the Rout of San Romano (1432), when the Florentine Condottieri Niccolò da Tolentino and Michelotto Attendolo put the Sienese forces to flight. The three panels are now in the National Gallery, the Louvre, and the Uffizi respectively. They are magnificent decorations—illuminations on a large scale—in which war is treated as a sumptuous pageant of chivalry, jousting knights displaying the rich trappings of their horses, their costly damascened armour and gaily coloured waving plumes. Mr. Wyndham Lewis has pointed out recently that a battle-piece by Uccello is “a magnificent still-life, a pageant of armours, cloths, etc., the trappings and wardrobe of war, but in the lines and spirit of it as peaceable and bland as any tapestry representing a civic banquet could be.” Of the psychology and drama of war there is scarcely a trace in the work of Uccello or his contemporaries and immediate successors. It belongs to an age

when warfare was the sport of knights in armour, who tilted at each other with wooden lances, when decisions were brought about by forces which would now appear ridiculously inadequate, and when the loss of life was comparatively slight. It was the age of decorative war, and this war was interpreted in terms of purely decorative art.

With the introduction of gunpowder, the aspect of war changes completely. The landscape assumes far greater relative importance. The flat, pattern-like treatment of the decorators gives way to the study of atmospheric effects. The dramatic aspect of the battle receives the artist's consideration. Leonardo da Vinci, in the early part of the 16th century, jotted down in his note-books his advice to artists engaged upon painting a battle picture. “You will first of all make the smoke of artillery, which mingles with the air, together with the dust whirled up by the movement of horses and warriors . . .” Then follow explanations of the atmospheric effects caused by smoke and dust, and advice on how the emotional effect of the struggle is to be shown both in the conquerors and the vanquished, how the wounded and the dead are to be treated; and finally an exhortation to “make no level spot of ground that is not trampled over with blood.”

Leonardo da Vinci, and also his great rival Michelangelo, were given an opportunity to give a practical demonstration of their conception of war painting, when the gonfaloniere Piero Soderini entrusted them with the decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Leonardo chose for his subject the Battle of Anghiari, in which the Florentines fought the Milanese in 1440; Michelangelo, an incident from the Pisan War in 1364, when a group of soldiers bathing in the Arno were surprised by the enemy. Both pictures were to be of gigantic scale, but were never carried beyond the cartoon stage,