

Napoleon in Rome

THE year 1787 saw the beginning of the French Revolution, in which the scum and rabble of the country deluged fair France with the blood of her best citizens. Everything gave place to the worship of the goddess "Reason." They even tried to put down the Catholic Church from the exalted position it had held in France for ages by forcing the clergy to take what was called the Constitutional oath which had been condemned by the Pope. For this the mob in their blind fury wished for revenge on the Church as a whole and on the Pope in particular.

About 1793 an excuse which would be accepted by European nations was found in the murder of Banville. This was brought about by the man himself as he drove about Rome displaying tricolored bannerets against the papal protest. Popular feeling was aroused and a mob followed him to, and murdered him in, the house of a French banker, La Montte.

It was not, however, until 1796 that this matter was taken up by the French authorities who were too busy at home to bother with external affairs. They then planned to send an army into Italy, and thus draw off some of the Austrian forces from the Rhine, where a desultory war had been carried on for some time. There was another motive, however, and that was to crush the Pope, as was shown by the original plan which was to convey the French forces to Civita Vecchia, the principal port of the Papal States.

Napoleon was then a young Republican general, 26 years of age, and comparatively unknown. He found the plan of conveyance impracticable, so, like another Hannibal, he marched across the Alps. After routing the Austrians, he prepared to march against the Pope, but Pius VI, knowing the inferiority of his troops and unwilling to shed blood unless compelled to do so, sent Azara, the Spanish minister, and others, to treat with Napoleon. The latter eagerly accepted any suspension of hostilities for he knew that he would need all his forces against the Austrians who were concentrating their forces in the north. By this treaty the Pope was compelled to give up Ferrara and Bologna, pay a large indemnity and give up 100 of the best pictures, statues and other works of art in Rome. The last were to be selected by French commissioners.

Not having to watch the south, Napoleon turned all his attention to the north, and soon drove the Austrians back into