

mous wealth of art which had come to her from every corner of the tributary world. Many of the cases lay for years in storerooms and cellars, and went back unopened as they had come. Even of what had been publicly taken much was privately abstracted, and we have seen that most of those who marched with or after the French armies did not suffer their zeal in their country's service to interfere with a little business on their own account. In Spain, for instance, Napoleon's Marshals took the lion's share for themselves, and Soult laid hold of a few Murillos, for one of which France afterwards paid 25,000*l.*, and which Spain would gladly buy back at twice the price.

A proof of the extent to which all feelings of justice had by that long age of violence been blunted throughout Europe may be found in the indifference with which the Allies of 1814 had suffered vanquished France to keep all the spoils of the victorious nations. By the first Treaty of Paris, as M. Thiers says, "Nous conservons les immenses richesses en objets d'Art acquises au prix de notre sang." The patriotic historian attributes that forbearance to fear; and, certainly, it would be difficult to say how the plundered people would ever have come by their own had Napoleon never broken from the Isle of Elba. But as the Allies had again to find their way to Paris, they stipulated in the second Treaty dated from that city, that whatever France had ever got by victory she should now lose by defeat. The thing was, of course, easier said than done, and it is possible that no very great zeal was displayed in the execution of the convention, especially by those among the contracting parties who had no direct interest in it. Poor Italy was only represented by Austria and by Princes who looked upon their subjects as no better than rebels, and who had to struggle against the lingering vestiges of those French sympathies which had powerfully contributed to hurl them from the throne. At all events, the demands of the commissioners sent from the ravaged countries to recover the plunder were in a thousand instances met with blank denial, with arrogant resistance, with evasion or subterfuge. No doubt such a picture had been taken from Italy;

but it could not be proved that it had ever reached France. It had somehow disappeared half-way: it was hidden somewhere in that huge limbo where unpacked cases lay still pell-mell, mountain high. And when the day of keen search was over, the stolen property came forth from its lurking-places, and was laid out unblushingly and conspicuously:—here the marble Gladiator that ought to be back on its pedestal in the Borghese Garden, near Rome—there the panels of the grand Mantegna picture, only part of which is now to be seen above the desecrated main altar of St. Zeno at Verona.

Even of what was rescued not a little still bears evidence of the indignities to which it had to submit during those years of Gallic captivity. There are Correggios and Caraccis at Parma still seamed by the cracks caused by the large canvas being folded up by rough soldiers to fit it to the size of their vans. Of fragments of marble broken on their way to Paris and back, the Vatican and the Musco Borbonico could muster large heaps. But French restoration was even more fatal than French damage. The Madonna della Seggiola had, on its return to Florence, to be covered with glass to throw a film over the opaque white with which it had been plastered over in Paris, so as in some manner to disguise and soften it. And Senor Madrazo, the conservator of the Madrid Gallery, when the brick dust with which the "Spasimo di Sicilia" is all daubed over is pointed out to him, declares that the disfigurement of that and other masterpieces in the same collection is the result of the treatment the pictures of Spain met with at the hands of their French captors. That the French should leave well alone, that they should not think they knew better than the Italians or the Spaniards of the sixteenth century, was not, indeed, to be expected: and it is only a matter of wonder that the Madonna del Cardellino did not go back to her country graced with a chignon, or that the Moses of Michael Angelo was not "*coiffe à la Brutus*." Time was not allowed for the solution of the problem whether, after so many years' spoliation, French art was to be modified by its imported treasures, or whether, on the contrary, it was the world's art that was to be