

spend there a part of every year, preserved the palace-monastery and its contents from the rude touch of Time. But what the hand of Time had spared the hand of violence destroyed. The French, who in the early part of the present century swept like a horde of Vandals over the Peninsula, did not overlook the Escorial. For in it they saw the monument designed to commemorate their own humiliating defeat. A body of dragoons under La Houssaye burst into the monastery in the winter of 1808; and the ravages of a few days demolished what it had cost years and the highest efforts of art to construct. The apprehension of similar violence from the Carlists, in 1837, led to the removal of the finest paintings to Madrid. The Escorial ceased to be a royal residence. Tenantless and unprotected, it was left to the fury of the blasts which swept down the hills of the Guadarrama.

The traveller who now visits the place will find its condition very different from what it was in the beginning of the century. The bare and mildewed walls no longer glow with the magical tints of Raphael and Titian and the sober pomp of the Castilian school. The exquisite specimens of art with which the halls were filled have been wantonly demolished, or more frequently pilfered for the sake of the rich materials. The monks, so long the guardians of the place, have shared the fate of their brethren elsewhere since the suppression of religious houses, and their venerable forms have disappeared. Silence and solitude reign throughout the courts, undisturbed by any sound save that of the ceaseless winds, which seem to be ever chanting their melancholy dirge over the faded glories