

6 STORIES OF THE FRENCH ARTISTS

Another fact which serves to show how essentially national was French painting at this time, is the injury done to a French picture by removing it from its original surroundings. It requires to be seen and studied in the setting for which it was intended. And this because the cabinetmakers and other craftsmen were as great artists as the painters, and were, moreover, working under the same impulses. The result was the most perfectly harmonious whole the world has ever seen. Tear one piece from its surroundings, and not only will the beauty of that piece itself be injured but the remainder loses its unity and completeness. From this it will be seen that French pictures are not in their proper place upon the walls of a gallery; and that when there they suffer from the lack of their proper surroundings, which accounts for the disparaging remarks one sometimes hears about French pictorial art.

No other nation has so consistently maintained a fine feeling for line; whence its undoubted supremacy in the decorative arts. The magical lines of a Caffieri or Cressent commode are a necessary corollary to a Boucher or a van Loo. They emanated from brains similarly constructed, whose one unconscious idea was the treatment of