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978-0-521-10480-7 - The Eagle and the Spade: Archaeology in Rome during the Napoleonic Era

Ronald T. Ridley

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This book is an account of an almost completely neglected archaeological epic, the uncovering and restoration of all the classical monuments of Rome during the French occupation (1809–14). This was the first large-scale archaeological programme in the city. Based on archives in Rome and Paris, the archaeology of these five years is placed against its essential background: the fate of the monuments since antiquity, and the contemporary Napoleonic political and cultural history. Dr Ridley describes the enormously complicated organisation which carried out the work, and identifies the leading administrators, archaeologists and architects. The bulk of the work is a detailed account of the excavation and restoration work on the Forum Romanum, the Colosseum, and the Forum of Trajan, the main classical monuments. There are numerous illustrations of the monuments both before and after the French intervention, as well as unpublished plans from the archives, and an extensive specialist bibliography.

The book is intended for anyone interested in archaeology, in Napoleonic Europe, and, above all, in Rome.

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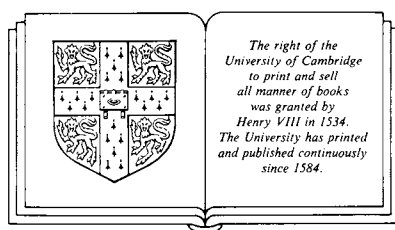
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The eagle and the spade

Archaeology in Rome during the Napoleonic era

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*for
Piero Treves
great scholar and generous friend*

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Abbreviations

<i>Ann. Ist.</i>	<i>Annali dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica</i>
ASL	<i>Accademia Nazionale di S. Luca</i>
ASR	<i>Archivio dello Stato, Rome</i>
<i>Atti Accad. Arch.</i>	<i>Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia</i>
BCAR	<i>Bollettino della Commissione Archeologica di Roma</i>
BG	<i>Buon Governo (Archivio dello Stato)</i>
<i>Bull. Ist.</i>	<i>Bollettino dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica</i>
<i>Bull. Soc. Hist. Art. Fr.</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Française</i>
<i>Bull. Soc. Nat. Antiq. Fr.</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CRAIBL	<i>Comptes-Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
CT	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i>
DBF	<i>Dictionnaire de biographie française</i>
DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli italiani</i>
<i>Diss. Accad. Arch.</i>	<i>Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of national biography</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i>
JDAI	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts</i>
MEFR	<i>Mémoires de l'Ecole Française de Rome</i>
<i>Mél. Arch. Hist.</i>	<i>Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire</i>
<i>Mem. Accad. Arch.</i>	<i>Memorie della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia</i>
NS	<i>Notizie degli scavi</i>
PBSR	<i>Proceedings of the British School in Rome</i>

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Abbreviations

<i>RAL</i>	<i>Rendiconti dell'Accademia dei Lincei</i>
<i>Rend. Accad. Arch.</i>	<i>Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia</i>
<i>Rev. Arch.</i>	<i>Revue Archéologique</i>
<i>Rev. Etudes Nap.</i>	<i>Revue des Etudes Napoléoniennes</i>
<i>Rev. Etudes Ital.</i>	<i>Revue des Etudes Italiennes</i>
<i>Rev. Inst. Nap.</i>	<i>Revue de l'Institut Napoléon</i>
<i>RM</i>	<i>Römische Mitteilungen</i>

Prologue

By universal agreement, Rome is one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. Some would say that the Roman Forum was the most 'sacred' of all such sites.

The Roman monuments had been subject to decay and destruction since the end of antiquity, then to endless plundering from the Renaissance.¹ A systematic excavation and restoration of the main classical remains of the city was undertaken for the first time during the French occupation, 1809–14. Although the work was motivated by political and economic considerations, this was the beginning of archaeology in Rome. The French instituted a huge programme at enormous expense, centring on the Forum. This vast undertaking has, however, been ignored, save for two general works, one Italian and one French, on Rome under Napoleon, and one specialist work in Swedish, which devotes one chapter to the subject.

By way of prologue, a survey is offered of basic bibliography, to demonstrate how little attention has been paid to this crucial subject by precisely the works where one would expect to find it. Three categories of published writings are considered: contemporary travellers, both English and French; works on the Napoleonic period; and specialist archaeological studies.

There are few French travellers to Italy during the French occupation, and little mention is made of archaeology. Stendhal (Henri Beyle) was in Rome from 30 September to 3 October 1811 and from 13 to 15 October. Apart from his obsession with the Colosseum, he mentions the French operations only in connection with Martial Daru's excavations in the Forum of Trajan.² The first impressions of his visit appear in a letter to his sister, dated 2 October, and *Journal d'Italie*.³ There is nothing about Daru in *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*. Stendhal's interest began with his *Vie de Rossini*, 1823, and Daru was especially praised in the second edition of *Rome, Naples et Florence*, 1826.⁴ The simple key to these comments is the fact that Daru was Stendhal's cousin. The writer stated that it was he who gave him the idea of going to Italy.⁵

Another visitor in 1811 was Alphonse de Lamartine, who arrived in Rome about October. He concentrates in his memoirs on the friends he met in the coach from Florence, including a singer, on Baron von Humboldt, the Prussian ambassador, and on a woman painter, with whom he fell in love. There is the usual casual reference to monuments, but more surprisingly, in the very midst of the Embellishments which must have been at fever pitch all around him, Lamartine writes with studied vagueness: 'On voyait le matin les moines traîner la brouette, au pied du temple contigu, pour en débayer la poussière.'⁶

In April 1813 arrived Jeanne Françoise Récamier. She spent the summer at Canova's apartment at Albano and met antiquarians such as Aubin-Louis Millin, also visiting, and Jean-Baptiste Dagecourt. Despite a claimed interest in antiquities, Mme Récamier's only note of the current situation was the obligatory visit to the Colosseum. In December she went off to Naples, where she stayed until Easter 1814, and the usual show excavation was made for her at Pompeii. The most amusing anecdote of her stay in Rome, in fact, is her mentioning *Corinne* to the Governor, General Miollis, who thought it was an Italian town!⁷

Two notable French writers had the benefit of two visits to Rome, one before and one after the French occupation. Here, if anywhere, one might expect the contrasts to be noted. Germaine de Staël left Switzerland for Italy in December 1804. She was in Rome 3–17 February 1805 and from about 13 March to 11 May. Her letters reveal that her major interest in monuments was in St Peter's and (once again) moonlight visits to the Colosseum. The contrast between past greatness and present insignificance was compelling: 'Tant de grandeur dans les souvenirs and tant de petitesse dans ce qui nous reste.'⁸ The main antiquarian results of this visit may be found better in *Corinne*, 1807, where the heroine leads Lord Nelvil on a guided tour.⁹ They visit the Pantheon, Castel Sant'Angelo, the Pyramid of Cestius, the Via Appia, the monuments of the Palatine, Aventine and Esquiline, and, of course, the Forum. All the remains bear their traditional names and exhibit their appearance just before the French intervention.

Mme de Staël made a second visit to Italy from late 1815 until mid 1816. She was in Rome very briefly. The visit was for two purposes: the health of her husband Albert Rocca and to obtain a Papal dispensation for the marriage of her daughter.¹⁰

The other visitor who came twice was Chateaubriand, first as secretary to the French embassy in 1803, then as ambassador, 1828–9. In his *Mémoires d'outre tombe*, he mentions very summarily at the end of his account the main undertakings of the French: the clearing of the Temple of Vespasian, of Saturn, of part of the Via Sacra, the stairs of the Colosseum and its arena, repairs to 'seven or eight rooms' of the Domus Aurea, and exploration of the Forum of Trajan.¹¹

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Of English visitors to Italy during the French period, there were, of course, few. Italy was closed to the English, in fact, from 1795 until 1815, save for the brief period of the Peace of Amiens (27 March 1802 until the end of the year). Thereby hangs an interesting story. A young Scotsman, Joseph Forsyth, was one of perhaps a number who took advantage of the lull in hostilities, which doubtless was expected to be more permanent. With the resumption of war, he was arrested and held prisoner until 1814. When many representations on his behalf proved unsuccessful, he finally descended to a literary appeal to Napoleon, publishing his travel notes.¹² The author was justifiably unhappy with the shortcomings of his work, and his notes on Rome are extremely poor. Even the Forum is hardly mentioned.

Such works of English travellers could be decidedly deceitful. John Chetwood Eustace visited Italy in 1802. His account was not published until 1813, but attained at least eight editions by 1841. As late as the third, 1815, the text recorded Rome as he saw it originally, with a postscript which the inattentive might miss, where some more up-to-date, albeit second-hand, ‘information’ was given. English prejudice in those years knew no bounds: ‘The French under the pretext of beautifying the city, but in reality to discover and seize the treasures of art still supposed to be buried under its ruins, have commenced several excavations, and of course made some discoveries.’¹³

Examples of the French clearings are the Column of Phocas, seemingly ascribed to a ‘Greek exarch in the seventh century’; the Basilica of Maxentius, where nothing was found but ‘remnants of marble shafts and capitals’; the Colosseum, where Eustace takes up the arena debate,¹⁴ unfortunately on the wrong side; the temples in the Forum Boarium; the temples of Saturn and Vespasian, which ‘now exhibit a most majestic appearance’ (far and away his most generous tribute); and Trajan’s Column. On the other hand, Pius ‘perfected and commenced’ many of the excavations and improvements; the museums were plundered, the Vatican library robbed of all its manuscripts, and the population reduced from 180–200,000 to 90,000!

One of the first visitors after Napoleon’s fall was the Irish barrister, John Mayne, in Rome from October 1814 until January 1815. He mentions various classical monuments, but all in passing: the columns of Trajan and Aurelius, triumphal arches, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Palatine, the Mausoleum of Augustus, the Pyramid of Cestius, the Baths of Caracalla, the Tomb of the Scipios and of Caecilia Metella. Of the Forum he says only: ‘I wish the Forum had not got the name of Campo Vaccino. It sounds mighty unpoetical. They who gave it did not feel the “magic of the name”.’¹⁵ Mayne was not antagonistic to the French, but had little interest in antiquities, and so was unable to recognise what they had done. He seems to have been more interested in finding strings for his violin.

Another Irish lawyer, Sylvester Douglas, Baron Glenbervie, was in Rome from November 1815 until March 1816. Despite his reputedly being a classics

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Prologue

scholar, and having the most authoritative guide, he reveals in his diary nothing of the classical remains. His guide was none other than the Papal Commissario delle Antichità, Carlo Fea, and he records a precious picture of the antiquarian (although the ignorant editor has made an egregious error with the name):

The Avvocato Fece [sic] sat with me above three hours yesterday morning, and gave me much interesting information concerning some of the principal remains of antiquity here. He has an office which Winckelmann once had, and afterwards I believe Venuti, viz. President of Antiquities, and being also a 'legale', or lawyer, what he told me partook of antiquarian and legal knowledge. He is the editor of an edition, with notes and additions by himself, of the Italian translation of Winckelmann's *History of Art*. He is a man of acknowledged learning, but splenetic and satirical, and has brought upon himself much animosity and abuse from his fellow antiquarians by combating the hitherto received opinions concerning the Colosseo, the Pantheon etc.¹⁶

Here is an excellent characterisation of Fea who will play a leading part in the following pages. It is undoubtedly significant, and a great pity, that Glenbervie did not choose to share Fea's information with his readers.

The most famous English visitor after the French period was Byron. His letters reveal his presence in Rome from 29 April until 20 May 1817, but they are singularly uninformative. He was mostly taken up with his divorce.

I am delighted with Rome – as I would be with a bandbox – that it is a fine thing to see – finer than Greece . . . I have been riding my saddle horse every day – and been to Albano – it's [sic] lakes – and to the top of the Alban mount – and to Frascati – Aricia – etc. etc. – with an etc. etc. etc. about the city and in the city – for all which – vide Guide-book – As a whole – ancient and modern – it beats Greece – Constantinople – every thing – at least that I have ever seen – but I can't describe because my first impressions are always strong and confused . . .¹⁷

He mentions to everyone his most exciting experience: the sight of a live Pope and a dead Cardinal (Bracchi was lying in state).

There were also guidebooks. One of the most popular was *Rome in the nineteenth century*, which appeared anonymously in 1820, ran to a fourth edition by 1826, and reappeared in a fifth as late as 1849 in Bohn's Library. It was in fact by Charlotte Waldie (Mrs Eaton), who was in Rome in 1817. The work is remarkable for its anti-Papal sentiments and a refusal to name any contemporary antiquarian, although reference is constantly made to their views. The French undertakings are also often mentioned, but most ungenerously.¹⁸

The Rev. Edward Burton devoted a book to the antiquities of Rome, after his visit in 1818–19, a *Description of the antiquities and other curiosities of Rome*, 1821. Although purportedly specialising in notes on the classical

remains, the only credit given to the French is for the Domus Aurea. Other monuments are noted as ‘lately’ cleared, but the French are nowhere mentioned. There are other disquieting elements: although Burton knows that the Temple of Concord has recently been found, the discovery of the Column of Phocas inscription is ascribed to the Duchess of Devonshire in 1816, Fea’s identification of the Temple of the Dioscuri in 1817 is unrecorded, and Nibby’s correct identification of the Basilica of Maxentius is credited to Vasi!¹⁹

So much for French and English visitors and guidebooks in the early nineteenth century. In these one gains only an erratic, prejudiced and entirely unreliable picture of the great undertakings so often carried out before these visitors’ very eyes. We turn to general works on the French occupation.

In the first place, and rightly so under all heads, is the account by none other than the Prefect himself, Count Camille de Tournon. His *Etudes statistiques sur Rome* saw two editions (1831, 1855). Book 5, chapter 10 is devoted to ‘Des travaux exécutés par l’administration française, pour la restauration et la conservation des monumens’. Tournon describes the monuments one by one as they were in 1809 and then the French clearances and restoration. The accounts are succinct but comprehensive. The book has been justifiably the main source for most modern writers wanting to give a brief but reliable account, without resort to the archives. This book will be cited throughout the third chapter on the individual monuments.

Of more recent general works, the classic study is by Louis Madelin, *La Rome de Napoléon*, 1909. Despite its length, however, it devotes only a few pages to archaeology.²⁰ These are based solely on French archives, which Madelin had consulted exhaustively. The only ‘Italian’ source is the *Giornale del Campidoglio*. It is for this reason that Madelin completely ignored the two commissions of 1810 and 1811.

The monumental study of Edouard Driault, *Napoléon et l’Europe* in five volumes, devotes a chapter to Rome.²¹ His sources are essentially Madelin and Tournon. Valadier and Camporese, the two main architects of the works, are hardly mentioned: Stern, Gisors and Berthault²² are the creative geniuses.

André Fugier’s *Napoleone e l’Italia*, 1970, has only one or two pages on the Embellishments, derived from Madelin and Boyer. More recently there is Fiorella Bartoccini’s *Roma nell’Ottocento*, 1985. The French work receives quite unreliable notice.²³ The monuments singled out are the Forum Boarium, the Temple of Vespasian and that of Jupiter Tonans (the same thing), the Colosseum, the Arch of Titus (on which little was done), and the Forum of Trajan. There is mention of a ‘vast archaeological park’ from the Forum to the Via Appia (nowhere known to me). Creation of ‘open spaces’ is illustrated by projects for the Pantheon, the Portico of Octavia, the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Forum of Trajan but, as is well known, the French quite neglected the portico and mausoleum. The architects mentioned are

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Berthault – but where is the much more important Gisors? – and Valadier – but where is the equally important Camporese?

Our third and final category of published sources is specialist archaeological studies, where surely one might count on reliable and detailed information, as well as proper care to place the French undertakings in their historical context, namely treatment of the monuments and archaeological investigation in Rome, both before and after the first decade of the nineteenth century.

It is extraordinary that the proceedings of the Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, which begin in 1821 and reprint papers delivered in the Accademia from its refounding in 1810 by the French, contain only one contribution on the archaeological work 1809–14: Bianchi and Re's paper on the Colosseum.²⁴

In 1829 began the *Bollettino* of the Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica (later the German Archaeological Institute). In the first volume is a paper by Karl Bunsen on excavations in the Roman Forum, celebrating the resumption in 1827 of the grand plan, talked of by the French, for the total excavation of the Forum. He includes discussion of excavations going back to the beginning of the century, with a chronological table of excavations. This is both inaccurate (many dates are wrong) and so summary as to be quite inadequate. No special credit, certainly, is given to the French administration for having made the most important contribution up until 1814 to the recovery of the whole Forum area.²⁵

A French archaeologist visited Italy in 1811 and 1812: Louis Charles François Petit-Radel. In his *Voyage historique . . . dans les principales villes de l'Italie*, 1815, scattered through its pages, are only the most fleeting and general allusions to the French achievements. He knows nothing, for example, of the Forum of Trajan, the clearing of the Colosseum seems to be ascribed to Pius VII, and work on the Temple of Vesta had barely begun.²⁶

One of the most famous Italian archaeologists and topographers of the early nineteenth century was Antonio Nibby. His *Del Foro Romano*, 1819, hardly mentions the French.²⁷

It would have been of the greatest interest to have Rodolfo Lanciani's *Storia degli scavi* for the nineteenth century. The Istituto di Archeologia in Rome possesses what exists of a sketch of the later volumes, never completed, but they are only the barest notes, virtually all culled from *CIL*, and so listing only the main inscriptions found. We do, however, have his *Ruins and excavations of ancient Rome*, 1897. The French work is frequently mentioned but often can be detected only by those already conversant with these accomplishments, because the French are not named and sometimes dates are not given. These references, scattered as they are throughout the volume, cannot give any coherent idea of what was achieved between 1809 and 1814.²⁸ There is, however, a brief passage in another of Lanciani's books,

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which in fact excited my interest in this whole question. It is succinct, but at least lists in one place the main monuments to which the French paid attention, so that the extent of their work becomes apparent:

Under the wise administration of Count de Tournon not less than one million dollars were spent in works of public utility, and in excavating and laying bare to archaeological investigation such monuments as the temples of Vespasian, of Castor and Pollux, of Antoninus and Faustina, of Venus and Rome, of the Mater Matuta, of the Fortuna Virilis, the basilica of Constantine, the Colosseum, the Golden House of Nero, the Janus of the Forum Boarium, the Basilica Ulpia, the Forum of Trajan, etc.²⁹

The great archaeological era opened by the work of Giacomo Boni at the very end of the nineteenth century stimulated many new guides to classical Rome. One of the standard works is by Christian Hülsen, *Das Forum Romanum*, 1904. Hülsen was a student of the history of archaeology, so it was only fitting that he devoted some pages to the history of that subject in the Forum. Credit is given first to Fea, who proposed the complete excavation of that area, and although the French did not carry this out, they turned 'their attention' to the Forum. Hülsen credits them with demolition of the houses around the temples of Saturn and Vespasian, the freeing of the Tabularium, the restoration of the Temple of Vespasian, and the identification of the Column of Phocas (but seemingly dated to 1811). The first exact plan of the area was attributed to Caristie in 1811, published in 1821.³⁰

The Italian student Orazio Marucchi, *The Roman Forum and Palatine*, 1906, stated simply that the work of Pius VI was 'continued by the French government from 1811 to 1814', but specified only work on the Clivus Capitolinus (which should have been dated to 1817) and the discovery of the base of the Column of Phocas.³¹

The most detailed book on the Forum is by Ettore de Ruggiero, *Il Foro Romano*, 1913. He similarly provided the briefest – even misleading – allusions. The French are mentioned as such only once, excavations of that time are grouped with later work, and the only person named is Fea. The vainglorious abbot could not have asked for more.³²

Not unexpectedly the book by Henri Thedenat, *Le forum romain*, 1904, paid attention to the French. Chapters 4–6 discuss the history of the excavations, and the Napoleonic period is at least given its due.³³ His source is, however, simply Tournon.

One might have expected a detailed account of the French contribution in Adolf Michaelis, *A century of archaeological discoveries*, 1908, an otherwise excellent account of nineteenth-century archaeology. The second chapter, in fact, is devoted to the Napoleonic period, and discusses in detail Egypt, Pompeii and the Museum in Paris – but there is not a word about Rome. The great expedition to Egypt with its army of savants was truly the opening of Egyptian antiquities to the modern Western world, and the energy displayed at Pompeii gave the work its first great impetus, but the

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French literally uncovered the major classical remains of Rome and made the first serious excavations. All of that was neglected by Michaelis.

More specialist archaeological discussions are extraordinary. Some might turn with great expectations to A. Ladolini's study of the excavations in the Forum from 1800 to 1836, only to find that the detail commences only in 1817, from which time the account is most valuable.³⁴

There are, indeed, two books on Napoleonic activities in Rome, particularly archaeology and town-planning, one in Italian and one in French. Attilio La Padula's *Roma e la regione nell'epoca napoleonica*, 1969, is virtually a reprint of his *Contributo alla storia dell'urbanistica Roma 1809-1814*, 1958. Whole pages are taken over word for word. The later version is, however, soundly based on Roman archival material and well illustrated. It gives the main story of the organisation of the programme of works, but almost no details on the individual monuments.

Ferdinand Boyer's *Le monde des arts en Italie et la France de la Révolution à l'Empire*, 1969, is again mostly a reprint, this time of the many articles Boyer published previously. This book is based on French archives. It sets out to give a complete survey of each area of work, and is more complete than La Padula, but still very summary, as will be demonstrated.

In sum, an Italian writer has used Italian sources, and a French writer used French archives. Since the various archival sources are divided between Paris and Rome, the central bureaucracy and the provincial administration, each tells half of the story. It is one of the archival worker's greatest enjoyments to be able to recognise in one archive the letter to which he or she has already seen the answer in another. One might also note that La Padula and Boyer persist in using the almost universally erroneous names given to the main monuments of Rome in the French period.

There is, finally, one specialist account of these excavations and restorations by Marita Jonsson, *Monumentvårdens Begynnelse*, 1976. This work in Swedish tells of clearances from 1800 until 1830. It is an admirable book, based on archives and well illustrated. The main difficulty of the work's accessibility has now been overcome by a well-deserved Italian translation.³⁵ The French period is, however, covered in only one chapter of sixty pages. Most fundamentally, anyone acquainted with the archives will be taken aback by the deadeningly impersonal account, when the story of these years is so full of striking and conflicting personalities.

THE PLAN OF THE PRESENT WORK

Various parts of the story of the French archaeological work in Rome have already been told, mostly very summarily. The major problem is how to organise the narrative to make it connected and at the same time to allow easy consultation under the main monuments.

The book is therefore set out as follows:

1. A prologue offers some survey of preceding bibliography, demonstrating the paucity of existing references.
2. An introduction traces the background to the French occupation through a sketch of Roman influences on French culture in the eighteenth century and a thematic discussion of Rome 1809–14.
3. The first chapter is the essential prelude, the condition and history of the monuments from the end of antiquity until the arrival of the French. This vast story is given only in its main lines. The discovery and digesting of all the archival documents were too much even for the genius of Rodolfo Lanciani, whose *Storia degli scavi* reaches only to 1600. My account divides the matter into two fundamental sections: the theory of Papal legislation and the reality.
4. The second chapter is the history of the French antiquities and embellishments organisations. Here the various commissions, the main plans, the work-force and the fascinating gallery of administrators, architects and antiquarians are all introduced.
5. The third chapter discusses the major monuments in turn in alphabetical order. In this way, information about French work on any of them is instantly and completely accessible. The monuments, it should be noted, are without exception given their modern names, in contrast to all other writers, who persist in using the early nineteenth-century ones, which are today unintelligible and create confusions. Most modern discussions combine and confuse, moreover, what is here divided into two chapters.
6. A final chapter describes the bitter controversies which arose as a result of the archaeological work: the interpretation of the Colosseum arena, and of the podium.
7. A conclusion puts the French work into perspective, by listing major later work on the most important monuments and other archaeological discoveries, at least to the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the ‘Boni era’.

THE ARCHIVES

The bibliography reveals an extensive already-published array of sources, although most of them are either very general or devoted to matters of detail. The most fundamental sources are the archives in Paris and Rome. Work on archives, as its devotees know well, can be the epitome of frustration or of exhilaration: either what you seek cannot be found or the answers to all your questions are there, and perhaps some treasure trove which you never expected. It is very different from reading books: archives cannot be borrowed, there is usually only one copy, the text may be illegible rather than clearly printed, and conditions are often crowded, dusty and noisy.

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I must say, however, that I found the research for this book a memorable experience. I was shown great courtesy by all staff, but the most unforgettable part was to hold in one's hands the letters written by some of the most important and famous people in Europe of the time. This experience increasingly will be unknown to later generations. Archival material is, for good reasons, being transferred to microfilm. Documents will not be held in the hand any more. I am glad to have known the thrill of the old system.

A major concern is legibility. I can state categorically that with one exception all the documents I used were easily readable. People from many different social classes, with varying degrees of education, all had clear hands. The one almost inscrutable exception was Antonio Canova.

As an historian, finally, my use of these documents produced a reassuring and strengthening conviction. After reading thousands and thousands of letters, reports and so on, I came to realise that an historian even hundreds of years after the events can know such leading characters and many simple people better than almost any of their contemporaries. Most of the latter saw only one side of each person, whereas the historian reading extensive archives can study people from many points of view. I soon came to make a character estimate of the main people in my story, to see them, for example, as honest, hard-working, civilised and thinking of others – or the opposite. I make not the slightest excuse for my partisanship: it rests, as just explained, on the most extensive evidence and long acquaintance with it, under conditions which require commitment.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Very great care has been taken in choosing illustrations which serve the vital purpose of showing the monuments both before and after the French work. In the eighteenth century, when little work was being undertaken, the problem is not very pressing. In the nineteenth century, however, preference must be given to those which can be precisely dated, for so much changed so quickly after the French had given the lead.