

ÉMILE ZOLA

THE THREE CITIES

TRILOGY: PARIS, VOLUME

5

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The Three Cities
Trilogy: Paris, Volume 5

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BOOK V

I

THE GUILLOTINE

FOR some reason of his own Guillaume was bent upon witnessing the execution of Salvat. Pierre tried to dissuade him from doing so; and finding his efforts vain, became somewhat anxious. He accordingly resolved to spend the night at Montmartre, accompany his brother and watch over him. In former times, when engaged with Abbe Rose in charitable work in the Charonne district, he had learnt that the guillotine could be seen from the house where Mege, the Socialist deputy, resided at the corner of the Rue Merlin. He therefore offered himself as a guide. As the execution was to take place as soon as it should legally be daybreak, that is, about half-past four o'clock, the brothers did not go to bed but sat up in the workroom, feeling

somewhat drowsy, and exchanging few words. Then as soon as two o'clock struck, they started off.

The night was beautifully serene and clear. The full moon, shining like a silver lamp in the cloudless, far-stretching heavens, threw a calm, dreamy light over the vague immensity of Paris, which was like some spell-bound city of sleep, so overcome by fatigue that not a murmur arose from it. It was as if beneath the soft radiance which spread over its roofs, its panting labour and its cries of suffering were lulled to repose until the dawn. Yet, in a far, out of the way district, dark work was even now progressing, a knife was being raised on high in order that a man might be killed.

Pierre and Guillaume paused in the Rue St. Eleuthere, and gazed at the vaporous, tremulous city spread out below them. And as they turned they perceived the basilica of the Sacred Heart, still domeless but already looking huge indeed in the moonbeams, whose clear white light accentuated its outlines and brought them into sharp relief against a mass of shadows. Under the pale nocturnal sky, the edifice showed like a colossal monster, symbolical of provocation and sovereign dominion. Never before had Guillaume found it so huge, never had it appeared to him to dominate Paris, even in the latter's hours of slumber, with such stubborn and overwhelming might.

This wounded him so keenly in the state of mind in which he found himself, that he could not help exclaiming: "Ah! they chose a good site for it, and how stupid it was to let them do so! I

know of nothing more nonsensical; Paris crowned and dominated by that temple of idolatry! How impudent it is, what a buffet for the cause of reason after so many centuries of science, labour, and battle! And to think of it being reared over Paris, the one city in the world which ought never to have been soiled in this fashion! One can understand it at Lourdes and Rome; but not in Paris, in the very field of intelligence which has been so deeply ploughed, and whence the future is sprouting. It is a declaration of war, an insolent proclamation that they hope to conquer Paris also!"

Guillaume usually evinced all the tolerance of a *savant*, for whom religions are simply social phenomena. He even willingly admitted the grandeur or grace of certain Catholic legends. But Marie Alacoque's famous vision, which has given rise to the cult of the Sacred Heart, filled him with irritation and something like physical disgust. He suffered at the mere idea of Christ's open, bleeding breast, and the gigantic heart which the saint asserted she had seen beating in the depths of the wound – the huge heart in which Jesus placed the woman's little heart to restore it to her inflated and glowing with love. What base and loathsome materialism there was in all this! What a display of viscera, muscles and blood suggestive of a butcher's shop! And Guillaume was particularly disgusted with the engraving which depicted this horror, and which he found everywhere, crudely coloured with red and yellow and blue, like some badly executed anatomical plate.

Pierre on his side was also looking at the basilica as, white with moonlight, it rose out of the darkness like a gigantic fortress raised to crush and conquer the city slumbering beneath it. It had already brought him suffering during the last days when he had said mass in it and was struggling with his torments. "They call it the national votive offering," he now exclaimed. "But the nation's longing is for health and strength and restoration to its old position by work. That is a thing the Church does not understand. It argues that if France was stricken with defeat, it was because she deserved punishment. She was guilty, and so today she ought to repent. Repent of what? Of the Revolution, of a century of free examination and science, of the emancipation of her mind, of her initiatory and liberative labour in all parts of the world? That indeed is her real transgression; and it is as a punishment for all our labour, search for truth, increase of knowledge and march towards justice that they have reared that huge pile which Paris will see from all her streets, and will never be able to see without feeling derided and insulted in her labour and glory."

With a wave of his hand he pointed to the city, slumbering in the moonlight as beneath a sheet of silver, and then set off again with his brother, down the slopes, towards the black and deserted streets.

They did not meet a living soul until they reached the outer boulevard. Here, however, no matter what the hour may be, life continues with scarcely a pause. No sooner are the wine

shops, music and dancing halls closed, than vice and want, cast into the street, there resume their nocturnal existence. Thus the brothers came upon all the homeless ones: low prostitutes seeking a pallet, vagabonds stretched on the benches under the trees, rogues who prowled hither and thither on the lookout for a good stroke. Encouraged by their accomplice – night, all the mire and woe of Paris had returned to the surface. The empty roadway now belonged to the breadless, homeless starvelings, those for whom there was no place in the sunlight, the vague, swarming, despairing herd which is only espied at night-time. Ah! what spectres of destitution, what apparitions of grief and fright there were! What a sob of agony passed by in Paris that morning, when as soon as the dawn should rise, a man – a pauper, a sufferer like the others – was to be guillotined!

As Guillaume and Pierre were about to descend the Rue des Martyrs, the former perceived an old man lying on a bench with his bare feet protruding from his gaping, filthy shoes. Guillaume pointed to him in silence. Then, a few steps farther on, Pierre in his turn pointed to a ragged girl, crouching, asleep with open mouth, in the corner of a doorway. There was no need for the brothers to express in words all the compassion and anger which stirred their hearts. At long intervals policemen, walking slowly two by two, shook the poor wretches and compelled them to rise and walk on and on. Occasionally, if they found them suspicious or refractory, they marched them off to the police-station. And then rancour and the contagion of imprisonment

often transformed a mere vagabond into a thief or a murderer.

In the Rue des Martyrs and the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, the brothers found night-birds of another kind, women who slunk past them, close to the house-fronts, and men and hussies who belaboured one another with blows. Then, upon the grand boulevards, on the thresholds of lofty black houses, only one row of whose windows flared in the night, pale-faced individuals, who had just come down from their clubs, stood lighting cigars before going home. A lady with a ball wrap over her evening gown went by accompanied by a servant. A few cabs, moreover, still jogged up and down the roadway, while others, which had been waiting for hours, stood on their ranks in rows, with drivers and horses alike asleep. And as one boulevard after another was reached, the Boulevard Poissonniere, the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, the Boulevard St. Denis, and so forth, as far as the Place de la Republique, there came fresh want and misery, more forsaken and hungry ones, more and more of the human "waste" that is cast into the streets and the darkness. And on the other hand, an army of street-sweepers was now appearing to remove all the filth of the past four and twenty hours, in order that Paris, spruce already at sunrise, might not blush for having thrown up such a mass of dirt and loathsomeness in the course of a single day.

It was, however, more particularly after following the Boulevard Voltaire, and drawing near to the districts of La Roquette and Charonne, that the brothers felt they were returning

to a sphere of labour where there was often lack of food, and where life was but so much pain. Pierre found himself at home here. In former days, accompanied by good Abbe Rose, visiting despairing ones, distributing alms, picking up children who had sunk to the gutter, he had a hundred times perambulated every one of those long, densely populated streets. And thus a frightful vision arose before his mind's eye; he recalled all the tragedies he had witnessed, all the shrieks he had heard, all the tears and bloodshed he had seen, all the fathers, mothers and children huddled together and dying of want, dirt and abandonment: that social hell in which he had ended by losing his last hopes, fleeing from it with a sob in the conviction that charity was a mere amusement for the rich, and absolutely futile as a remedy. It was this conviction which now returned to him as he again cast eyes upon that want and grief stricken district which seemed fated to everlasting destitution. That poor old man whom Abbe Rose had revived one night in yonder hovel, had he not since died of starvation? That little girl whom he had one morning brought in his arms to the refuge after her parents' death, was it not she whom he had just met, grown but fallen to the streets, and shrieking beneath the fist of a bully? Ah! how great was the number of the wretched! Their name was legion! There were those whom one could not save, those who were hourly born to a life of woe and want, even as one may be born infirm, and those, too, who from every side sank in the sea of human injustice, that ocean which has ever been the same for centuries past, and which

though one may strive to drain it, still and for ever spreads. How heavy was the silence, how dense the darkness in those working-class streets where sleep seems to be the comrade of death! Yet hunger prowls, and misfortune sobs; vague spectral forms slink by, and then are lost to view in the depths of the night.

As Pierre and Guillaume went along they became mixed with dark groups of people, a whole flock of inquisitive folk, a promiscuous, passionate tramp, tramp towards the guillotine. It came from all Paris, urged on by brutish fever, a hankering for death and blood. In spite, however, of the dull noise which came from this dim crowd, the mean streets that were passed remained quite dark, not a light appeared at any of their windows; nor could one hear the breathing of the weary toilers stretched on their wretched pallets from which they would not rise before the morning twilight.

On seeing the jostling crowd which was already assembled on the Place Voltaire, Pierre understood that it would be impossible for him and his brother to ascend the Rue de la Roquette. Barriers, moreover, must certainly have been thrown across that street. In order therefore to reach the corner of the Rue Merlin, it occurred to him to take the Rue de la Folie Regnault, which winds round in the rear of the prison, farther on.

Here indeed they found solitude and darkness again.

The huge, massive prison with its great bare walls on which a moonray fell, looked like some pile of cold stones, dead for centuries past. At the end of the street they once more fell in

with the crowd, a dim restless mass of beings, whose pale faces alone could be distinguished. The brothers had great difficulty in reaching the house in which Mege resided at the corner of the Rue Merlin. All the shutters of the fourth-floor flat occupied by the Socialist deputy were closed, though every other window was wide open and crowded with surging sightseers. Moreover, the wine shop down below and the first-floor room connected with it flared with gas, and were already crowded with noisy customers, waiting for the performance to begin.

"I hardly like to go and knock at Mege's door," said Pierre.

"No, no, you must not do so!" replied Guillaume.

"Let us go into the wine shop. We may perhaps be able to see something from the balcony."

The first-floor room was provided with a very large balcony, which women and gentlemen were already filling. The brothers nevertheless managed to reach it, and for a few minutes remained there, peering into the darkness before them. The sloping street grew broader between the two prisons, the "great" and the "little" Roquette, in such wise as to form a sort of square, which was shaded by four clumps of plane-trees, rising from the footways. The low buildings and scrubby trees, all poor and ugly of aspect, seemed almost to lie on a level with the ground, under a vast sky in which stars were appearing, as the moon gradually declined. And the square was quite empty save that on one spot yonder there seemed to be some little stir. Two rows of guards prevented the crowd from advancing, and even threw it back into the

neighbouring streets. On the one hand, the only lofty houses were far away, at the point where the Rue St. Maur intersects the Rue de la Roquette; while, on the other, they stood at the corners of the Rue Merlin and the Rue de la Folie Regnault, so that it was almost impossible to distinguish anything of the execution even from the best placed windows. As for the inquisitive folk on the pavement they only saw the backs of the guards. Still this did not prevent a crush. The human tide flowed on from all sides with increasing clamour.

Guided by the remarks of some women who, leaning forward on the balcony, had been watching the square for a long time already, the brothers were at last able to perceive something. It was now half-past three, and the guillotine was nearly ready. The little stir which one vaguely espied yonder under the trees, was that of the headsman's assistants fixing the knife in position. A lantern slowly came and went, and five or six shadows danced over the ground. But nothing else could be distinguished, the square was like a large black pit, around which ever broke the waves of the noisy crowd which one could not see. And beyond the square one could only identify the flaring wine shops, which showed forth like lighthouses in the night. All the surrounding district of poverty and toil was still asleep, not a gleam as yet came from workrooms or yards, not a puff of smoke from the lofty factory chimneys.

"We shall see nothing," Guillaume remarked.

But Pierre silenced him, for he has just discovered that an

elegantly attired gentleman leaning over the balcony near him was none other than the amiable deputy Duthil. He had at first fancied that a woman muffled in wraps who stood close beside the deputy was the little Princess de Harn, whom he had very likely brought to see the execution since he had taken her to see the trial. On closer inspection, however, he had found that this woman was Silviane, the perverse creature with the virginal face. Truth to tell, she made no concealment of her presence, but talked on in an extremely loud voice, as if intoxicated; and the brothers soon learnt how it was that she happened to be there. Duvillard, Duthil, and other friends had been supping with her at one o'clock in the morning, when on learning that Salvat was about to be guillotined, the fancy of seeing the execution had suddenly come upon her. Duvillard, after vainly entreating her to do nothing of the kind, had gone off in a fury, for he felt that it would be most unseemly on his part to attend the execution of a man who had endeavoured to blow up his house. And thereupon Silviane had turned to Duthil, whom her caprice greatly worried, for he held all such loathsome spectacles in horror, and had already refused to act as escort to the Princess. However, he was so infatuated with Silviane's beauty, and she made him so many promises, that he had at last consented to take her.

"He can't understand people caring for amusement," she said, speaking of the Baron. "And yet this is really a thing to see... But no matter, you'll find him at my feet again to-morrow."

Duthil smiled and responded: "I suppose that peace has been

signed and ratified now that you have secured your engagement at the Comedie."

"Peace? No!" she protested. "No, no. There will be no peace between us until I have made my *debut*. After that, we'll see."

They both laughed; and then Duthil, by way of paying his court, told her how good-naturedly Dauvergne, the new Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, had adjusted the difficulties which had hitherto kept the doors of the Comedie closed upon her. A really charming man was Dauvergne, the embodiment of graciousness, the very flower of the Monferrand ministry. His was the velvet hand in that administration whose leader had a hand of iron.

"He told me, my beauty," said Duthil, "that a pretty girl was in place everywhere." And then as Silviane, as if flattered, pressed closely beside him, the deputy added: "So that wonderful revival of 'Polyeucte,' in which you are going to have such a triumph, is to take place on the day after to-morrow. We shall all go to applaud you, remember."

"Yes, on the evening of the day after to-morrow," said Silviane, "the very same day when the wedding of the Baron's daughter will take place. There'll be plenty of emotion that day!"

"Ah! yes, of course!" retorted Duthil, "there'll be the wedding of our friend Gerard with Mademoiselle Camille to begin with. We shall have a crush at the Madeleine in the morning and another at the Comedie in the evening. You are quite right, too; there will be several hearts throbbing in the Rue Godot-de-

Mauroy."

Thereupon they again became merry, and jested about the Duvillard family – father, mother, lover and daughter – with the greatest possible ferocity and crudity of language. Then, all at once Silviane exclaimed: "Do you know, I'm feeling awfully bored here, my little Duthil. I can't distinguish anything, and I should like to be quite near so as to see it all plainly. You must take me over yonder, close to that machine of theirs."

This request threw Duthil into consternation, particularly as at that same moment Silviane perceived Massot outside the wine shop, and began calling and beckoning to him imperiously. A brief conversation then ensued between the young woman and the journalist: "I say, Massot!" she called, "hasn't a deputy the right to pass the guards and take a lady wherever he likes?"

"Not at all!" exclaimed Duthil. "Massot knows very well that a deputy ought to be the very first to bow to the laws."

This exclamation warned Massot that Duthil did not wish to leave the balcony. "You ought to have secured a card of invitation, madame," said he, in reply to Silviane. "They would then have found you room at one of the windows of La Petite Roquette. Women are not allowed elsewhere... But you mustn't complain, you have a very good place up there."

"But I can see nothing at all, my dear Massot."

"Well, you will in any case see more than Princess de Harn will. Just now I came upon her carriage in the Rue du Chemin Vert. The police would not allow it to come any nearer."

This news made Silviane merry again, whilst Duthil shuddered at the idea of the danger he incurred, for Rosemonde would assuredly treat him to a terrible scene should she see him with another woman. Then, an idea occurring to him, he ordered a bottle of champagne and some little cakes for his "beautiful friend," as he called Silviane. She had been complaining of thirst, and was delighted with the opportunity of perfecting her intoxication. When a waiter had managed to place a little table near her, on the balcony itself, she found things very pleasant, and indeed considered it quite brave to tipple and sup afresh, while waiting for that man to be guillotined close by.

It was impossible for Pierre and Guillaume to remain up there any longer. All that they heard, all that they beheld filled them with disgust. The boredom of waiting had turned all the inquisitive folks of the balcony and the adjoining room into customers. The waiter could hardly manage to serve the many glasses of beer, bottles of expensive wine, biscuits, and plates of cold meat which were ordered of him. And yet the spectators here were all *bourgeois*, rich gentlemen, people of society! On the other hand, time has to be killed somehow when it hangs heavily on one's hands; and thus there were bursts of laughter and paltry and horrible jests, quite a feverish uproar arising amidst the clouds of smoke from the men's cigars. When Pierre and Guillaume passed through the wine shop on the ground-floor they there found a similar crush and similar tumult, aggravated by the disorderly behaviour of the big fellows in blouses who were

drinking draught wine at the pewter bar which shone like silver. There were people, too, at all the little tables, besides an incessant coming and going of folks who entered the place for a "wet," by way of calming their impatience. And what folks they were! All the scum, all the vagabonds who had been dragging themselves about since daybreak on the lookout for whatever chance might offer them, provided it were not work!

On the pavement outside, Pierre and Guillaume felt yet a greater heart-pang. In the throng which the guards kept back, one simply found so much mire stirred up from the very depths of Paris life: prostitutes and criminals, the murderers of to-morrow, who came to see how a man ought to die. Loathsome, bareheaded harlots mingled with bands of prowlers or ran through the crowd, howling obscene refrains. Bandits stood in groups chatting and quarrelling about the more or less glorious manner in which certain famous *guillotines* had died. Among these was one with respect to whom they all agreed, and of whom they spoke as of a great captain, a hero whose marvellous courage was deserving of immortality. Then, as one passed along, one caught snatches of horrible phrases, particulars about the instrument of death, ignoble boasts, and filthy jests reeking with blood. And over and above all else there was bestial fever, a lust for death which made this multitude delirious, an eagerness to see life flow forth fresh and ruddy beneath the knife, so that as it coursed over the soil they might dip their feet in it. As this execution was not an ordinary one, however, there were yet spectators of

another kind; silent men with glowing eyes who came and went all alone, and who were plainly thrilled by their faith, intoxicated with the contagious madness which incites one to vengeance or martyrdom.

Guillaume was just thinking of Victor Mathis, when he fancied that he saw him standing in the front row of sightseers whom the guards held in check. It was indeed he, with his thin, beardless, pale, drawn face. Short as he was, he had to raise himself on tiptoes in order to see anything. Near him was a big, red-haired girl who gesticulated; but for his part he never stirred or spoke. He was waiting motionless, gazing yonder with the round, ardent, fixed eyes of a night-bird, seeking to penetrate the darkness. At last a guard pushed him back in a somewhat brutal way; but he soon returned to his previous position, ever patient though full of hatred against the executioners, wishing indeed to see all he could in order to increase his hate.

Then Massot approached the brothers. This time, on seeing Pierre without his cassock, he did not even make a sign of astonishment, but gaily remarked: "So you felt curious to see this affair, Monsieur Froment?"

"Yes, I came with my brother," Pierre replied. "But I very much fear that we shan't see much."

"You certainly won't if you stay here," rejoined Massot. And thereupon in his usual good-natured way – glad, moreover, to show what power a well-known journalist could wield – he inquired: "Would you like me to pass you through? The inspector

here happens to be a friend of mine."

Then, without waiting for an answer, he stopped the inspector and hastily whispered to him that he had brought a couple of colleagues, who wanted to report the proceedings. At first the inspector hesitated, and seemed inclined to refuse Massot's request; but after a moment, influenced by the covert fear which the police always has of the press, he made a weary gesture of consent.

"Come, quick, then," said Massot, turning to the brothers, and taking them along with him.

A moment later, to the intense surprise of Pierre and Guillaume, the guards opened their ranks to let them pass. They then found themselves in the large open space which was kept clear. And on thus emerging from the tumultuous throng they were quite impressed by the death-like silence and solitude which reigned under the little plane-trees. The night was now paling. A faint gleam of dawn was already falling from the sky.

After leading his companions slantwise across the square, Massot stopped them near the prison and resumed: "I'm going inside; I want to see the prisoner roused and got ready. In the meantime, walk about here; nobody will say anything to you. Besides, I'll come back to you in a moment."

A hundred people or so, journalists and other privileged spectators, were scattered about the dark square. Movable wooden barriers – such as are set up at the doors of theatres when there is a press of people waiting for admission – had

been placed on either side of the pavement running from the prison gate to the guillotine; and some sightseers were already leaning over these barriers, in order to secure a close view of the condemned man as he passed by. Others were walking slowly to and fro, and conversing in undertones. The brothers, for their part, approached the guillotine.

It stood there under the branches of the trees, amidst the delicate greenery of the fresh leaves of spring. A neighbouring gas-lamp, whose light was turning yellow in the rising dawn, cast vague gleams upon it. The work of fixing it in position – work performed as quietly as could be, so that the only sound was the occasional thud of a mallet – had just been finished; and the headsman's "valets" or assistants, in frock-coats and tall silk hats, were waiting and strolling about in a patient way. But the instrument itself, how base and shameful it looked, squatting on the ground like some filthy beast, disgusted with the work it had to accomplish! What! those few beams lying on the ground, and those others barely nine feet high which rose from it, keeping the knife in position, constituted the machine which avenged Society, the instrument which gave a warning to evil-doers! Where was the big scaffold painted a bright red and reached by a stairway of ten steps, the scaffold which raised high bloody arms over the eager multitude, so that everybody might behold the punishment of the law in all its horror! The beast had now been felled to the ground, where it simply looked ignoble, crafty and cowardly. If on the one hand there was no majesty in the manner

in which human justice condemned a man to death at its assizes: on the other, there was merely horrid butchery with the help of the most barbarous and repulsive of mechanical contrivances, on the terrible day when that man was executed.

As Pierre and Guillaume gazed at the guillotine, a feeling of nausea came over them. Daylight was now slowly breaking, and the surroundings were appearing to view: first the square itself with its two low, grey prisons, facing one another; then the distant houses, the taverns, the marble workers' establishments, and the shops selling flowers and wreaths, which are numerous hereabouts, as the cemetery of Pere-Lachaise is so near. Before long one could plainly distinguish the black lines of the spectators standing around in a circle, the heads leaning forward from windows and balconies, and the people who had climbed to the very house roofs. The prison of La Petite Roquette over the way had been turned into a kind of tribune for guests; and mounted Gardes de Paris went slowly to and fro across the intervening expanse. Then, as the sky brightened, labour awoke throughout the district beyond the crowd, a district of broad, endless streets lined with factories, work-shops and work-yards. Engines began to snort, machinery and appliances were got ready to start once more on their usual tasks, and smoke already curled away from the forest of lofty brick chimneys which, on all sides, sprang out of the gloom.

It then seemed to Guillaume that the guillotine was really in its right place in that district of want and toil. It stood in its own

realm, like a *terminus* and a threat. Did not ignorance, poverty and woe lead to it? And each time that it was set up amidst those toilsome streets, was it not charged to overawe the disinherited ones, the starvelings, who, exasperated by everlasting injustice, were always ready for revolt? It was not seen in the districts where wealth and enjoyment reigned. It would there have seemed purposeless, degrading and truly monstrous. And it was a tragical and terrible coincidence that the bomb-thrower, driven mad by want, should be guillotined there, in the very centre of want's dominion.

But daylight had come at last, for it was nearly half-past four. The distant noisy crowd could feel that the expected moment was drawing nigh. A shudder suddenly sped through the atmosphere.

"He's coming," exclaimed little Massot, as he came back to Pierre and Guillaume. "Ah! that Salvat is a brave fellow after all."

Then he related how the prisoner had been awakened; how the governor of the prison, magistrate Amadiou, the chaplain, and a few other persons had entered the cell where Salvat lay fast asleep; and then how the condemned man had understood the truth immediately upon opening his eyes. He had risen, looking pale but quite composed. And he had dressed himself without assistance, and had declined the nip of brandy and the cigarette proffered by the good-hearted chaplain, in the same way as with a gentle but stubborn gesture he had brushed the crucifix aside. Then had come the "toilette" for death. With all rapidity and without a word being exchanged, Salvat's hands had been tied

behind his back, his legs had been loosely secured with a cord, and the neckband of his shirt had been cut away. He had smiled when the others exhorted him to be brave. He only feared some nervous weakness, and had but one desire, to die like a hero, to remain the martyr of the ardent faith in truth and justice for which he was about to perish.

"They are now drawing up the death certificate in the register," continued Massot in his chattering way. "Come along, come along to the barriers if you wish a good view... I turned paler, you know, and trembled far more than he did. I don't care a rap for anything as a rule; but, all the same, an execution isn't a pleasant business... You can't imagine how many attempts were made to save Salvat's life. Even some of the papers asked that he might be reprieved. But nothing succeeded, the execution was regarded as inevitable, it seems, even by those who consider it a blunder. Still, they had such a touching opportunity to reprieve him, when his daughter, little Celine, wrote that fine letter to the President of the Republic, which I was the first to publish in the 'Globe.' Ah! that letter, it cost me a lot of running about!"

Pierre, who was already quite upset by this long wait for the horrible scene, felt moved to tears by Massot's reference to Celine. He could again see the child standing beside Madame Theodore in that bare, cold room whither her father would never more return. It was thence that he had set out on a day of desperation with his stomach empty and his brain on fire, and it was here that he would end, between yonder beams, beneath

yonder knife.

Massot, however, was still giving particulars. The doctors, said he, were furious because they feared that the body would not be delivered to them immediately after the execution. To this Guillaume did not listen. He stood there with his elbows resting on the wooden barrier and his eyes fixed on the prison gate, which still remained shut. His hands were quivering, and there was an expression of anguish on his face as if it were he himself who was about to be executed. The headsman had again just left the prison. He was a little, insignificant-looking man, and seemed annoyed, anxious to have done with it all. Then, among a group of frock-coated gentlemen, some of the spectators pointed out Gascogne, the Chief of the Detective Police, who wore a cold, official air, and Amadiou, the investigating magistrate, who smiled and looked very spruce, early though the hour was. He had come partly because it was his duty, and partly because he wished to show himself now that the curtain was about to fall on a wonderful tragedy of which he considered himself the author. Guillaume glanced at him, and then as a growing uproar rose from the distant crowd, he looked up for an instant, and again beheld the two grey prisons, the plane-trees with their fresh young leaves, and the houses swarming with people beneath the pale blue sky, in which the triumphant sun was about to appear.

"Look out, here he comes!"

Who had spoken? A slight noise, that of the opening gate, made every heart throb. Necks were outstretched, eyes gazed

fixedly, there was laboured breathing on all sides. Salvat stood on the threshold of the prison. The chaplain, stepping backwards, had come out in advance of him, in order to conceal the guillotine from his sight, but he had stopped short, for he wished to see that instrument of death, make acquaintance with it, as it were, before he walked towards it. And as he stood there, his long, aged sunken face, on which life's hardships had left their mark, seemed transformed by the wondrous brilliancy of his flaring, dreamy eyes. Enthusiasm bore him up – he was going to his death in all the splendour of his dream. When the executioner's assistants drew near to support him he once more refused their help, and again set himself in motion, advancing with short steps, but as quickly and as straightly as the rope hampering his legs permitted.

All at once Guillaume felt that Salvat's eyes were fixed upon him. Drawing nearer and nearer the condemned man had perceived and recognised his friend; and as he passed by, at a distance of no more than six or seven feet, he smiled faintly and darted such a deep penetrating glance at Guillaume, that ever afterwards the latter felt its smart. But what last thought, what supreme legacy had Salvat left him to meditate upon, perhaps to put into execution? It was all so poignant that Pierre feared some involuntary call on his brother's part; and so he laid his hand upon his arm to quiet him.

"Long live Anarchy!"

It was Salvat who had raised this cry. But in the deep silence

his husky, altered voice seemed to break. The few who were near at hand had turned very pale; the distant crowd seemed bereft of life. The horse of one of the Gardes de Paris was alone heard snorting in the centre of the space which had been kept clear.

Then came a loathsome scramble, a scene of nameless brutality and ignominy. The headsman's helps rushed upon Salvat as he came up slowly with brow erect. Two of them seized him by the head, but finding little hair there, could only lower it by tugging at his neck. Next two others grasped him by the legs and flung him violently upon a plank which tilted over and rolled forward. Then, by dint of pushing and tugging, the head was got into the "lunette," the upper part of which fell in such wise that the neck was fixed as in a ship's port-hole – and all this was accomplished amidst such confusion and with such savagery that one might have thought that head some cumbrous thing which it was necessary to get rid of with the greatest speed. But the knife fell with a dull, heavy, forcible thud, and two long jets of blood spurted from the severed arteries, while the dead man's feet moved convulsively. Nothing else could be seen. The executioner rubbed his hands in a mechanical way, and an assistant took the severed blood-streaming head from the little basket into which it had fallen and placed it in the large basket into which the body had already been turned.

Ah! that dull, that heavy thud of the knife! It seemed to Guillaume that he had heard it echoing far away all over that district of want and toil, even in the squalid rooms where

thousands of workmen were at that moment rising to perform their day's hard task! And there the echo of that thud acquired formidable significance; it spoke of man's exasperation with injustice, of zeal for martyrdom, and of the dolorous hope that the blood then spilt might hasten the victory of the disinherited.

Pierre, for his part, at the sight of that loathsome butchery, the abject cutthroat work of that killing machine, had suddenly felt his chilling shudder become more violent; for before him arose a vision of another corpse, that of the fair, pretty child ripped open by a bomb and stretched yonder, at the entrance of the Duvillard mansion. Blood streamed from her delicate flesh, just as it had streamed from that decapitated neck. It was blood paying for blood; it was like payment for mankind's debt of wretchedness, for which payment is everlastingly being made, without man ever being able to free himself from suffering.

Above the square and the crowd all was still silent in the clear sky. How long had the abomination lasted? An eternity, perhaps, compressed into two or three minutes. And now came an awakening: the spectators emerged from their nightmare with quivering hands, livid faces, and eyes expressive of compassion, disgust and fear.

"That makes another one. I've now seen four executions," said Massot, who felt ill at ease. "After all, I prefer to report weddings. Let us go off, I have all I want for my article."

Guillaume and Pierre followed him mechanically across the square, and again reached the corner of the Rue Merlin. And

here they saw little Victor Mathis, with flaming eyes and white face, still standing in silence on the spot where they had left him. He could have seen nothing distinctly; but the thud of the knife was still echoing in his brain. A policeman at last gave him a push, and told him to move on. At this he looked the policeman in the face, stirred by sudden rage and ready to strangle him. Then, however, he quietly walked away, ascending the Rue de la Roquette, atop of which the lofty foliage of Pere-Lachaise could be seen, beneath the rising sun.

The brothers meantime fell upon a scene of explanations, which they heard without wishing to do so. Now that the sight was over, the Princess de Harn arrived, and she was the more furious as at the door of the wine shop she could see her new friend Duthil accompanying a woman.

"I say!" she exclaimed, "you are nice, you are, to have left me in the lurch like this! It was impossible for my carriage to get near, so I've had to come on foot through all those horrid people who have been jostling and insulting me."

Thereupon Duthil, with all promptitude, introduced Silviane to her, adding, in an aside, that he had taken a friend's place as the actress's escort. And then Rosemonde, who greatly wished to know Silviane, calmed down as if by enchantment, and put on her most engaging ways. "It would have delighted me, madame," said she, "to have seen this sight in the company of an *artiste* of your merit, one whom I admire so much, though I have never before had an opportunity of telling her so."

"Well, dear me, madame," replied Silviane, "you haven't lost much by arriving late. We were on that balcony there, and all that I could see were a few men pushing another one about... It really isn't worth the trouble of coming."

"Well, now that we have become acquainted, madame," said the Princess, "I really hope that you will allow me to be your friend."

"Certainly, madame, my friend; and I shall be flattered and delighted to be yours."

Standing there, hand in hand, they smiled at one another. Silviane was very drunk, but her virginal expression had returned to her face; whilst Rosemonde seemed feverish with vicious curiosity. Duthil, whom the scene amused, now had but one thought, that of seeing Silviane home; so calling to Massot, who was approaching, he asked him where he should find a cab-rank. Rosemonde, however, at once offered her carriage, which was waiting in an adjacent street.

She would set the actress down at her door, said she, and the deputy at his; and such was her persistence in the matter that Duthil, greatly vexed, was obliged to accept her offer.

"Well, then, till to-morrow at the Madeleine," said Massot, again quite sprightly, as he shook hands with the Princess.

"Yes, till to-morrow, at the Madeleine and the Comedie."

"Ah! yes, of course!" he repeated, taking Silviane's hand, which he kissed. "The Madeleine in the morning and the Comedie in the evening... We shall all be there to applaud you."

"Yes, I expect you to do so," said Silviane. "Till to-morrow, then!"

"Till to-morrow!"

The crowd was now wearily dispersing, to all appearance disappointed and ill at ease. A few enthusiasts alone lingered in order to witness the departure of the van in which Salvat's corpse would soon be removed; while bands of prowlers and harlots, looking very wan in the daylight, whistled or called to one another with some last filthy expression before returning to their dens. The headsman's assistants were hastily taking down the guillotine, and the square would soon be quite clear.

Pierre for his part wished to lead his brother away. Since the fall of the knife, Guillaume had remained as if stunned, without once opening his lips. In vain had Pierre tried to rouse him by pointing to the shutters of Mege's flat, which still remained closed, whereas every other window of the lofty house was wide open. Although the Socialist deputy hated the Anarchists, those shutters were doubtless closed as a protest against capital punishment. Whilst the multitude had been rushing to that frightful spectacle, Mege, still in bed, with his face turned to the wall, had probably been dreaming of how he would some day compel mankind to be happy beneath the rigid laws of Collectivism. Affectionate father as he was, the recent death of one of his children had quite upset his private life. His cough, too, had become a very bad one; but he ardently wished to live, for as soon as that new Monferrand ministry should have fallen beneath

the interpellation which he already contemplated, his own turn would surely come: he would take the reins of power in hand, abolish the guillotine and decree justice and perfect felicity.

"Do you see, Guillaume?" Pierre gently repeated. "Mege hasn't opened his windows. He's a good fellow, after all; although our friends Bache and Morin dislike him." Then, as his brother still refrained from answering, Pierre added, "Come, let us go, we must get back home."

They both turned into the Rue de la Folie Regnault, and reached the outer Boulevards by way of the Rue du Chemin Vert. All the toilers of the district were now at work. In the long streets edged with low buildings, work-shops and factories, one heard engines snorting and machinery rumbling, while up above, the smoke from the lofty chimneys was assuming a rosy hue in the sunrise. Afterwards, when the brothers reached the Boulevard de Menilmontant and the Boulevard de Belleville, which they followed in turn at a leisurely pace, they witnessed the great rush of the working classes into central Paris. The stream poured forth from every side; from all the wretched streets of the faubourgs there was an endless exodus of toilers, who, having risen at dawn, were now hurrying, in the sharp morning air, to their daily labour. Some wore short jackets and others blouses; some were in velveteen trousers, others in linen overalls. Their thick shoes made their tramp a heavy one; their hanging hands were often deformed by work. And they seemed half asleep, not a smile was to be seen on any of those wan, weary faces turned yonder

towards the everlasting task – the task which was begun afresh each day, and which – 'twas their only chance – they hoped to be able to take up for ever and ever. There was no end to that drove of toilers, that army of various callings, that human flesh fated to manual labour, upon which Paris preys in order that she may live in luxury and enjoyment.

Then the procession continued across the Boulevard de la Villette, the Boulevard de la Chapelle, and the Boulevard de Rochechouart, where one reached the height of Montmartre. More and more workmen were ever coming down from their bare cold rooms and plunging into the huge city, whence, tired out, they would that evening merely bring back the bread of rancour. And now, too, came a stream of work-girls, some of them in bright skirts, some glancing at the passers-by; girls whose wages were so paltry, so insufficient, that now and again pretty ones among them never more turned their faces homewards, whilst the ugly ones wasted away, condemned to mere bread and water. A little later, moreover, came the *employes*, the clerks, the counter-jumpers, the whole world of frock-coated penury – "gentlemen" who devoured a roll as they hastened onward, worried the while by the dread of being unable to pay their rent, or by the problem of providing food for wife and children until the end of the month should come.¹ And now the sun was fast ascending on the horizon, the whole army of ants was out and about, and the

¹ In Paris nearly all clerks and shop-assistants receive monthly salaries, while most workmen are paid once a fortnight. – Trans.

toilsome day had begun with its ceaseless display of courage, energy and suffering.

Never before had it been so plainly manifest to Pierre that work was a necessity, that it healed and saved. On the occasion of his visit to the Grandidier works, and later still, when he himself had felt the need of occupation, there had come to him the thought that work was really the world's law. And after that hateful night, after that spilling of blood, after the slaughter of that toiler maddened by his dreams, there was consolation and hope in seeing the sun rise once more, and everlasting labour take up its wonted task. However hard it might prove, however unjustly it might be lotted out, was it not work which would some day bring both justice and happiness to the world?

All at once, as the brothers were climbing the steep hillside towards Guillaume's house, they perceived before and above them the basilica of the Sacred Heart rising majestically and triumphantly to the sky. This was no sublunar apparition, no dreamy vision of Domination standing face to face with nocturnal Paris. The sun now clothed the edifice with splendour, it looked golden and proud and victorious, flaring with immortal glory.

Then Guillaume, still silent, still feeling Salvat's last glance upon him, seemed to come to some sudden and final decision. He looked at the basilica with glowing eyes, and pronounced sentence upon it.

II

IN VANITY FAIR

THE wedding was to take place at noon, and for half an hour already guests had been pouring into the magnificently decorated church, which was leafy with evergreens and balmy with the scent of flowers. The high altar in the rear glowed with countless candles, and through the great doorway, which was wide open, one could see the peristyle decked with shrubs, the steps covered with a broad carpet, and the inquisitive crowd assembled on the square and even along the Rue Royale, under the bright sun.

After finding three more chairs for some ladies who had arrived rather late, Duthil remarked to Massot, who was jotting down names in his note-book: "Well, if any more come, they will have to remain standing."

"Who were those three?" the journalist inquired.

"The Duchess de Boisemont and her two daughters."

"Indeed! All the titled people of France, as well as all the financiers and politicians, are here! It's something more even than a swell Parisian wedding."

As a matter of fact all the spheres of "society" were gathered together there, and some at first seemed rather embarrassed at finding themselves beside others. Whilst Duvillard's name attracted all the princes of finance and politicians in power, Madame de Quinsac and her son were supported by the highest

of the French aristocracy. The mere names of the witnesses sufficed to indicate what an extraordinary medley there was. On Gerard's side these witnesses were his uncle, General de Bozonnet, and the Marquis de Morigny; whilst on Camille's they were the great banker Louvard, and Monferrand, the President of the Council and Minister of Finances. The quiet bravado which the latter displayed in thus supporting the bride after being compromised in her father's financial intrigues imparted a piquant touch of impudence to his triumph. And public curiosity was further stimulated by the circumstance that the nuptial blessing was to be given by Monseigneur Martha, Bishop of Persepolis, the Pope's political agent in France, and the apostle of the endeavours to win the Republic over to the Church by pretending to "rally" to it.

"But, I was mistaken," now resumed Massot with a sneer. "I said a really Parisian wedding, did I not? But in point of fact this wedding is a symbol. It's the apotheosis of the *bourgeoisie*, my dear fellow – the old nobility sacrificing one of its sons on the altar of the golden calf in order that the Divinity and the gendarmes, being the masters of France once more, may rid us of those scoundrelly Socialists!"

Then, again correcting himself, he added: "But I was forgetting. There are no more Socialists. Their head was cut off the other morning."

Duthil found this very funny. Then in a confidential way he remarked: "You know that the marriage wasn't settled without a

good deal of difficulty... Have you read Sagnier's ignoble article this morning?"

"Yes, yes; but I knew it all before, everybody knew it."

Then in an undertone, understanding one another's slightest allusion, they went on chatting. It was only amidst a flood of tears and after a despairing struggle that Baroness Duvillard had consented to let her lover marry her daughter. And in doing so she had yielded to the sole desire of seeing Gerard rich and happy. She still regarded Camille with all the hatred of a defeated rival. Then, an equally painful contest had taken place at Madame de Quinsac's. The Countess had only overcome her revolt and consented to the marriage in order to save her son from the dangers which had threatened him since childhood; and the Marquis de Morigny had been so affected by her maternal abnegation, that in spite of all his anger he had resignedly agreed to be a witness, thus making a supreme sacrifice, that of his conscience, to the woman whom he had ever loved. And it was this frightful story that Sagnier – using transparent nicknames – had related in the "Voix du Peuple" that morning. He had even contrived to make it more horrid than it really was; for, as usual, he was badly informed, and he was naturally inclined to falsehood and invention, as by sending an ever thicker and more poisonous torrent from his sewer, he might, day by day, increase his paper's sales. Since Monferrand's victory had compelled him to leave the African Railways scandal on one side, he had fallen back on scandals in private life, stripping whole families bare and pelting

them with mud.

All at once Duthil and Massot were approached by Chaigneux, who, with his shabby frock coat badly buttoned, wore both a melancholy and busy air. "Well, Monsieur Massot," said he, "what about your article on Silviane? Is it settled? Will it go in?"

As Chaigneux was always for sale, always ready to serve as a valet, it had occurred to Duvillard to make use of him to ensure Silviane's success at the Comedie. He had handed this sorry deputy over to the young woman, who entrusted him with all manner of dirty work, and sent him scouring Paris in search of applauders and advertisements. His eldest daughter was not yet married, and never had his four women folk weighed more heavily on his hands. His life had become a perfect hell; they had ended by beating him, if he did not bring a thousand-franc note home on the first day of every month.

"My article!" Massot replied; "no, it surely won't go in, my dear deputy. Fongue says that it's written in too laudatory a style for the 'Globe.' He asked me if I were having a joke with the paper."

Chaigneux became livid. The article in question was one written in advance, from the society point of view, on the success which Silviane would achieve in "Polyeucte," that evening, at the Comedie. The journalist, in the hope of pleasing her, had even shown her his "copy"; and she, quite delighted, now relied upon finding the article in print in the most sober and solemn organ of the Parisian press.

"Good heavens! what will become of us?" murmured the wretched Chaigneux. "It's absolutely necessary that the article should go in."

"Well, I'm quite agreeable. But speak to the governor yourself. He's standing yonder between Vignon and Dauvergne, the Minister of Public Instruction."

"Yes, I certainly will speak to him – but not here. By-and-by in the sacristy, during the procession. And I must also try to speak to Dauvergne, for our Silviane particularly wants him to be in the ministerial box this evening. Monferrand will be there; he promised Duvillard so."

Massot began to laugh, repeating the expression which had circulated through Paris directly after the actress's engagement: "The Silviane ministry... Well, Dauvergne certainly owes that much to his godmother!" said he.

Just then the little Princess de Harn, coming up like a gust of wind, broke in upon the three men. "I've no seat, you know!" she cried.

Duthil fancied that it was a question of finding her a well-placed chair in the church. "You mustn't count on me," he answered. "I've just had no end of trouble in stowing the Duchess de Boisemont away with her two daughters."

"Oh, but I'm talking of this evening's performance. Come, my dear Duthil, you really must find me a little corner in somebody's box. I shall die, I know I shall, if I can't applaud our delicious, our incomparable friend!"

Ever since setting Silviane down at her door on the previous day, Rosemonde had been overflowing with admiration for her.

"Oh! you won't find a single remaining seat, madame," declared Chaigneux, putting on an air of importance. "We have distributed everything. I have just been offered three hundred francs for a stall."

"That's true, there has been a fight even for the bracket seats, however badly they might be placed," Duthil resumed. "I am very sorry, but you must not count on me... Duvillard is the only person who might take you in his box. He told me that he would reserve me a seat there. And so far, I think, there are only three of us, including his son... Ask Hyacinthe by-and-by to procure you an invitation."

Rosemonde, whom Hyacinthe had so greatly bored that she had given him his dismissal, felt the irony of Duthil's suggestion. Nevertheless, she exclaimed with an air of delight: "Ah, yes! Hyacinthe can't refuse me that. Thanks for your information, my dear Duthil. You are very nice, you are; for you settle things gaily even when they are rather sad... And don't forget, mind, that you have promised to teach me politics. Ah! politics, my dear fellow, I feel that nothing will ever impassion me as politics do!"

Then she left them, hustled several people, and in spite of the crush ended by installing herself in the front row.

"Ah! what a crank she is!" muttered Massot with an air of amusement.

Then, as Chaigneux darted towards magistrate Amadieu to

ask him in the most obsequious way if he had received his ticket, the journalist said to Duthil in a whisper: "By the way, my dear friend, is it true that Duvillard is going to launch his famous scheme for a Trans-Saharan railway? It would be a gigantic enterprise, a question of hundreds and hundreds of millions this time... At the 'Globe' office yesterday evening, Fongueue shrugged his shoulders and said it was madness, and would never come off!"

Duthil winked, and in a jesting way replied: "It's as good as done, my dear boy. Fongueue will be kissing the governor's feet before another forty-eight hours are over."

Then he gaily gave the other to understand that golden manna would presently be raining down on the press and all faithful friends and willing helpers. Birds shake their feathers when the storm is over, and he, Duthil, was as spruce and lively, as joyous at the prospect of the presents he now expected, as if there had never been any African Railways scandal to upset him and make him turn pale with fright.

"The deuce!" muttered Massot, who had become serious. "So this affair here is more than a triumph: it's the promise of yet another harvest. Well, I'm no longer surprised at the crush of people."

At this moment the organs suddenly burst into a glorious hymn of greeting. The marriage procession was entering the church. A loud clamour had gone up from the crowd, which spread over the roadway of the Rue Royale and impeded the traffic there, while

the *cortege* pompously ascended the steps in the bright sunshine. And it was now entering the edifice and advancing beneath the lofty, re-echoing vaults towards the high altar which flared with candles, whilst on either hand crowded the congregation, the men on the right and the women on the left. They had all risen and stood there smiling, with necks outstretched and eyes glowing with curiosity.

First, in the rear of the magnificent beadle, came Camille, leaning on the arm of her father, Baron Duvillard, who wore a proud expression befitting a day of victory. Veiled with superb *point d'Alencon* falling from her diadem of orange blossom, gowned in pleated silk muslin over an underskirt of white satin, the bride looked so extremely happy, so radiant at having conquered, that she seemed almost pretty. Moreover, she held herself so upright that one could scarcely detect that her left shoulder was higher than her right.

Next came Gerard, giving his arm to his mother, the Countess de Quinsac, – he looking very handsome and courtly, as was proper, and she displaying impassive dignity in her gown of peacock-blue silk embroidered with gold and steel beads. But it was particularly Eve whom people wished to see, and every neck was craned forward when she appeared on the arm of General Bozonnet, the bridegroom's first witness and nearest male relative. She was gowned in "old rose" taffetas trimmed with Valenciennes of priceless value, and never had she looked younger, more deliciously fair. Yet her eyes betrayed

her emotion, though she strove to smile; and her languid grace bespoke her widowhood, her compassionate surrender of the man she loved. Monferrand, the Marquis de Morigny, and banker Louvard, the three other witnesses, followed the Baroness and General Bozonnet, each giving his arm to some lady of the family. A considerable sensation was caused by the appearance of Monferrand, who seemed on first-rate terms with himself, and jested familiarly with the lady he accompanied, a little brunette with a giddy air. Another who was noticed in the solemn, interminable procession was the bride's eccentric brother Hyacinthe, whose dress coat was of a cut never previously seen, with its tails broadly and symmetrically pleated.

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