ÉMILE ZOLA

THE THREE CITIES TRILOGY: ROME, VOLUME 4

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PART IV

X

IN his anxiety to bring things to a finish, Pierre wished to begin his campaign on the very next day. But on whom should he first call if he were to steer clear of blunders in that intricate and conceited ecclesiastical world? The question greatly perplexed him; however, on opening his door that morning he luckily perceived Don Vigilio in the passage, and with a sudden inspiration asked him to step inside. He realised that this thin little man with the saffron face, who always trembled with fever and displayed such exaggerated, timorous discretion, was in reality well informed, mixed up in everything. At one period it had seemed to Pierre that the secretary purposely avoided him, doubtless for fear of compromising himself; but recently Don Vigilio had proved less unsociable, as though he were not far from sharing the impatience which must be consuming the young

Frenchman amidst his long enforced inactivity. And so, on this occasion, he did not seek to avoid the chat on which Pierre was bent.

"I must apologise," said the latter, "for asking you in here when things are in such disorder. But I have just received some more linen and some winter clothing from Paris. I came, you know, with just a little valise, meaning to stay for a fortnight, and yet I've now been here for nearly three months, and am no more advanced than I was on the morning of my arrival."

Don Vigilio nodded. "Yes, yes, I know," said he.

Thereupon Pierre explained to him that Monsignor Nani had informed him, through the Contessina, that he now ought to act and see everybody for the defence of his book. But he was much embarrassed, as he did not know in what order to make his visits so that they might benefit him. For instance, ought he to call in the first place on Monsignor Fornaro, the /consultore/ selected to report on his book, and whose name had been given him?

"Ah!" exclaimed Don Vigilio, quivering; "has Monsignor Nani gone as far as that – given you the reporter's name? That's even more than I expected." Then, forgetting his prudence, yielding to his secret interest in the affair, he resumed: "No, no; don't begin with Monsignor Fornaro. Your first visit should be a very humble one to the Prefect of the Congregation of the Index – his Eminence Cardinal Sanguinetti; for he would never forgive you for having offered your first homage to another should he some day hear of it." And, after a pause, Don Vigilio added, in a

low voice, amidst a faint, feverish shiver: "And he /would/ hear of it; everything becomes known."

Again he hesitated, and then, as if yielding to sudden, sympathetic courage, he took hold of the young Frenchman's hands. "I swear to you, my dear Monsieur Froment," he said, "that I should be very happy to help you, for you are a man of simple soul, and I really begin to feel worried for you. But you must not ask me for impossibilities. Ah! if you only knew – if I could only tell you of all the perils which surround us! However, I think I can repeat to you that you must in no wise rely on my patron, his Eminence Cardinal Boccanera. He has expressed absolute disapproval of your book in my presence on several occasions. Only he is a saint, a most worthy, honourable man; and, though he won't defend you, he won't attack you – he will remain neutral out of regard for his niece, whom he loves so dearly, and who protects you. So, when you see him, don't plead your cause; it would be of no avail, and might even irritate him."

Pierre was not particularly distressed by this news, for at his first interview with the Cardinal, and on the few subsequent occasions when he had respectfully visited him, he had fully understood that his Eminence would never be other than an adversary. "Well," said he, "I will wait on him to thank him for his neutrality."

But at this all Don Vigilio's terrors returned. "No, no, don't do that; he would perhaps realise that I have spoken to you, and then what a disaster – my position would be compromised. I've

said nothing, nothing! See the cardinals to begin with, see all the cardinals. Let it be understood between us that I've said nothing more." And, on that occasion at any rate, Don Vigilio would speak no further, but left the room shuddering and darting fiery, suspicious glances on either side of the corridor.

Pierre at once went out to call on Cardinal Sanguinetti. It was ten o'clock, and there was a chance that he might find him at home. This cardinal resided on the first floor of a little palazzo in a dark, narrow street near San Luigi dei Francesi.[1] There was here none of the giant ruin full of princely and melancholy grandeur amidst which Cardinal Boccanera so stubbornly remained. The old regulation gala suite of rooms had been cut down just like the number of servants. There was no throne-room, no red hat hanging under a /baldacchino/, no arm-chair turned to the wall pending a visit from the Pope. A couple of apartments served as ante-rooms, and then came a /salon/ where the Cardinal received; and there was no luxury, indeed scarcely any comfort; the furniture was of mahogany, dating from the empire period, and the hangings and carpets were dusty and faded by long use. Moreover, Pierre had to wait a long time for admittance, and when a servant, leisurely putting on his jacket, at last set the door ajar, it was only to say that his Eminence had been away at Frascati since the previous day.

Pierre then remembered that Cardinal Sanguinetti was one of

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[1] This is the French church of Rome, and is under the protection of the French Government. – Trans.

the suburban bishops. At his see of Frascati he had a villa where he occasionally spent a few days whenever a desire for rest or some political motive impelled him to do so.

"And will his Eminence soon return?" Pierre inquired.

"Ah! we don't know. His Eminence is poorly, and expressly desired us to send nobody to worry him."

When Pierre reached the street again he felt quite bewildered by this disappointment. At first he wondered whether he had not better call on Monsignor Fornaro without more ado, but he recollected Don Vigilio's advice to see the cardinals first of all, and, an inspiration coming to him, he resolved that his next visit should be for Cardinal Sarno, whose acquaintance he had eventually made at Donna Serafina's Mondays. In spite of Cardinal Sarno's voluntary self-effacement, people looked upon him as one of the most powerful and redoubtable members of the Sacred College, albeit his nephew Narcisse Habert declared that he knew no man who showed more obtuseness in matters which did not pertain to his habitual occupations. At all events, Pierre thought that the Cardinal, although not a member of the Congregation of the Index, might well give him some good advice, and possibly bring his great influence to bear on his colleagues.

The young man straightway betook himself to the Palace of the Propaganda, where he knew he would find the Cardinal. This palace, which is seen from the Piazza di Spagna, is a bare, massive corner pile between two streets. And Pierre, hampered

by his faulty Italian, quite lost himself in it, climbing to floors whence he had to descend again, and finding himself in a perfect labyrinth of stairs, passages, and halls. At last he luckily came across the Cardinal's secretary, an amiable young priest, whom he had already seen at the Boccanera mansion. "Why, yes," said the secretary, "I think that his Eminence will receive you. You did well to come at this hour, for he is always here of a morning. Kindly follow me, if you please."

Then came a fresh journey. Cardinal Sarno, long a Secretary of the Propaganda, now presided over the commission which controlled the organisation of worship in those countries of Europe, Africa, America, and Oceanica where Catholicism had lately gained a footing; and he thus had a private room of his own with special officers and assistants, reigning there with the ultra-methodical habits of a functionary who had grown old in his arm-chair, closely surrounded by nests of drawers, and knowing nothing of the world save the usual sights of the street below his window.

The secretary left Pierre on a bench at the end of a dark passage, which was lighted by gas even in full daylight. And quite a quarter of an hour went by before he returned with his eager, affable air. "His Eminence is conferring with some missionaries who are about to leave Rome," he said; "but it will soon be over, and he told me to take you to his room, where you can wait for him."

As soon as Pierre was alone in the Cardinal's sanctum he

examined it with curiosity. Fairly spacious, but in no wise luxurious, it had green paper on its walls, and its furniture was of black wood and green damask. From two windows overlooking a narrow side street a mournful light reached the dark wall-paper and faded carpets. There were a couple of pier tables and a plain black writing-table, which stood near one window, its worn mole-skin covering littered with all sorts of papers. Pierre drew near to it for a moment, and glanced at the arm-chair with damaged, sunken seat, the screen which sheltered it from draughts, and the old inkstand splotched with ink. And then, in the lifeless and oppressive atmosphere, the disquieting silence, which only the low rumbles from the street disturbed, he began to grow impatient.

However, whilst he was softly walking up and down he suddenly espied a map affixed to one wall, and the sight of it filled him with such absorbing thoughts that he soon forgot everything else. It was a coloured map of the world, the different tints indicating whether the territories belonged to victorious Catholicism or whether Catholicism was still warring there against unbelief; these last countries being classified as vicariates or prefectures, according to the general principles of organisation. And the whole was a graphic presentment of the long efforts of Catholicism in striving for the universal dominion which it has sought so unremittingly since its earliest hour. God has given the world to His Church, but it is needful that she should secure possession of it since error so stubbornly abides.

From this has sprung the eternal battle, the fight which is carried on, even in our days, to win nations over from other religions, as it was in the days when the Apostles quitted Judaea to spread abroad the tidings of the Gospel. During the middle ages the great task was to organise conquered Europe, and this was too absorbing an enterprise to allow of any attempt at reconciliation with the dissident churches of the East. Then the Reformation burst forth, schism was added to schism, and the Protestant half of Europe had to be reconquered as well as all the orthodox East.

War-like ardour, however, awoke at the discovery of the New World. Rome was ambitious of securing that other side of the earth, and missions were organised for the subjection of races of which nobody had known anything the day before, but which God had, nevertheless, given to His Church, like all the others. And by degrees the two great divisions of Christianity were formed, on one hand the Catholic nations, those where the faith simply had to be kept up, and which the Secretariate of State installed at the Vatican guided with sovereign authority, and on the other the schismatical or pagan nations which were to be brought back to the fold or converted, and over which the Congregation of the Propaganda sought to reign. Then this Congregation had been obliged to divide itself into two branches in order to facilitate its work – the Oriental branch, which dealt with the dissident sects of the East, and the Latin branch, whose authority extended over all the other lands of mission: the two forming a vast organisation – a huge, strong, closely meshed net

cast over the whole world in order that not a single soul might escape.

It was in presence of that map that Pierre for the first time became clearly conscious of the mechanism which for centuries had been working to bring about the absorption of humanity. The Propaganda, richly dowered by the popes, and disposing of a considerable revenue, appeared to him like a separate force, a papacy within the papacy, and he well understood that the Prefect of the Congregation should be called the "Red Pope," for how limitless were the powers of that man of conquest and domination, whose hands stretched from one to the other end of the earth. Allowing that the Cardinal Secretary held Europe, that diminutive portion of the globe, did not he, the Prefect, hold all the rest – the infinity of space, the distant countries as yet almost unknown? Besides, statistics showed that Rome's uncontested dominion was limited to 200 millions of Apostolic and Roman Catholics; whereas the schismatics of the East and the Reformation, if added together, already exceeded that number, and how small became the minority of the true believers when, besides the schismatics, one brought into line the 1000 millions of infidels who yet remained to be converted. The figures struck Pierre with a force which made him shudder. What! there were 5 million Jews, nearly 200 million Mahommedans, more than 700 million Brahmanists and Buddhists, without counting another 100 million pagans of divers creeds, the whole making 1000 millions, and against these the

Christians could marshal barely more than 400 millions, who were divided among themselves, ever in conflict, one half with Rome and the other half against her?[2] Was it possible that in 1800 years Christianity had not proved victorious over even one-third of mankind, and that Rome, the eternal and all-powerful, only counted a sixth part of the nations among her subjects? Only one soul saved out of every six – how fearful was the disproportion! However, the map spoke with brutal eloquence: the red-tinted empire of Rome was but a speck when compared with the yellow-hued empire of the other gods – the endless countries which the Propaganda still had to conquer. And the question arose: How many centuries must elapse before the promises of the Christ were realised, before the whole world were gained to Christianity, before religious society spread over secular society, and there remained but one kingdom and one belief? And in presence of this question, in presence of the prodigious labour yet to be accomplished, how great was one's astonishment when one thought of Rome's tranquil serenity, her patient stubbornness, which has never known doubt or weariness, her bishops and ministers toiling without cessation in

[2] Some readers may question certain of the figures given by M. Zola, but it must be remembered that all such calculations (even those of the best "authorities") are largely guesswork. I myself think that there are more than 5 million Jews, and more than 200 millions of Mahommedans, but I regard the alleged number of Brahmanists and Buddhists as exaggerated. On the other hand, some statistical tables specify 80 millions of Confucianists, of whom M. Zola makes no separate mention. However, as regards the number of Christians in the world, the figures given above are, within a few millions, probably accurate. – Trans.

the conviction that she alone will some day be the mistress of the world!

Narcisse had told Pierre how carefully the embassies at Rome watched the doings of the Propaganda, for the missions were often the instruments of one or another nation, and exercised decisive influence in far-away lands. And so there was a continual struggle, in which the Congregation did all it could to favour the missionaries of Italy and her allies. It had always been jealous of its French rival, "L'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi," installed at Lyons, which is as wealthy in money as itself, and richer in men of energy and courage. However, not content with levelling tribute on this French association, the Propaganda thwarted it, sacrificed it on every occasion when it had reason to think it might achieve a victory. Not once or twice, but over and over again had the French missionaries, the French orders, been driven from the scenes of their labours to make way for Italians or Germans. And Pierre, standing in that mournful, dusty room, which the sunlight never brightened, pictured the secret hot-bed of political intrigue masked by the civilising ardour of faith. Again he shuddered as one shudders when monstrous, terrifying things are brought home to one. And might not the most sensible be overcome? Might not the bravest be dismayed by the thought of that universal engine of conquest and domination, which worked with the stubbornness of eternity, not merely content with the gain of souls, but ever seeking to ensure its future sovereignty over the whole of corporeal humanity, and – pending

the time when it might rule the nations itself – disposing of them, handing them over to the charge of this or that temporary master, in accordance with its good pleasure. And then, too, what a prodigious dream! Rome smiling and tranquilly awaiting the day when she will have united Christians, Mahommedans, Brahmanists, and Buddhists into one sole nation, of whom she will be both the spiritual and the temporal queen!

However, a sound of coughing made Pierre turn, and he started on perceiving Cardinal Sarno, whom he had not heard enter. Standing in front of that map, he felt like one caught in the act of prying into a secret, and a deep flush overspread his face. The Cardinal, however, after looking at him fixedly with his dim eyes, went to his writing-table, and let himself drop into the arm-chair without saying a word. With a gesture he dispensed Pierre of the duty of kissing his ring.

"I desired to offer my homage to your Eminence," said the young man. "Is your Eminence unwell?"

"No, no, it's nothing but a dreadful cold which I can't get rid of. And then, too, I have so many things to attend to just now."

Pierre looked at the Cardinal as he appeared in the livid light from the window, puny, lopsided, with the left shoulder higher than the right, and not a sign of life on his worn and ashen countenance. The young priest was reminded of one of his uncles, who, after thirty years spent in the offices of a French public department, displayed the same lifeless glance, parchment-like skin, and weary hebetation. Was it possible that

this withered old man, so lost in his black cassock with red edging, was really one of the masters of the world, with the map of Christendom so deeply stamped on his mind, albeit he had never left Rome, that the Prefect of the Propaganda did not take a decision without asking his opinion?

"Sit down, Monsieur l'Abbe," said the Cardinal. "So you have come to see me – you have something to ask of me!" And, whilst disposing himself to listen, he stretched out his thin bony hands to finger the documents heaped up before him, glancing at each of them like some general, some strategist, profoundly versed in the science of his profession, who, although his army is far away, nevertheless directs it to victory from his private room, never for a moment allowing it to escape his mind.

Pierre was somewhat embarrassed by such a plain enunciation of the interested object of his visit; still, he decided to go to the point. "Yes, indeed," he answered, "it is a liberty I have taken to come and appeal to your Eminence's wisdom for advice. Your Eminence is aware that I am in Rome for the purpose of defending a book of mine, and I should be grateful if your Eminence would help and guide me." Then he gave a brief account of the present position of the affair, and began to plead his cause; but as he continued speaking he noticed that the Cardinal gave him very little attention, as though indeed he were thinking of something else, and failed to understand.

"Ah! yes," the great man at last muttered, "you have written a book. There was some question of it at Donna Serafina's one

evening. But a priest ought not to write; it is a mistake for him to do so. What is the good of it? And the Congregation of the Index must certainly be in the right if it is prosecuting your book. At all events, what can I do? I don't belong to the Congregation, and I know nothing, nothing about the matter."

Pierre, pained at finding him so listless and indifferent, went on trying to enlighten and move him. But he realised that this man's mind, so far-reaching and penetrating in the field in which it had worked for forty years, closed up as soon as one sought to divert it from its specialty. It was neither an inquisitive nor a supple mind. All trace of life faded from the Cardinal's eyes, and his entire countenance assumed an expression of mournful imbecility. "I know nothing, nothing," he repeated, "and I never recommend anybody." However, at last he made an effort: "But Nani is mixed up in this," said he. "What does Nani advise you to do?"

"Monsignor Nani has been kind enough to reveal to me that the reporter is Monsignor Fornaro, and advises me to see him."

At this Cardinal Sarno seemed surprised and somewhat roused. A little light returned to his eyes. "Ah! really," he rejoined, "ah! really – Well, if Nani has done that he must have some idea. Go and see Monsignor Fornaro." Then, after rising and dismissing his visitor, who was compelled to thank him, bowing deeply, he resumed his seat, and a moment later the only sound in the lifeless room was that of his bony fingers turning over the documents before him.

Pierre, in all docility, followed the advice given him, and immediately betook himself to the Piazza Navona, where, however, he learnt from one of Monsignor Fornaro's servants that the prelate had just gone out, and that to find him at home it was necessary to call in the morning at ten o'clock. Accordingly it was only on the following day that Pierre was able to obtain an interview. He had previously made inquiries and knew what was necessary concerning Monsignor Fornaro. Born at Naples, he had there begun his studies under the Barnabites, had finished them at the Seminario Romano, and had subsequently, for many years, been a professor at the University Gregoriana. Nowadays Consultor to several Congregations and a Canon of Santa Maria Maggiore, he placed his immediate ambition in a Canonry at St. Peter's, and harboured the dream of some day becoming Secretary of the Consistorial Congregation, a post conducting to the cardinalate. A theologian of remarkable ability, Monsignor Fornaro incurred no other reproach than that of occasionally sacrificing to literature by contributing articles, which he carefully abstained from signing, to certain religious reviews. He was also said to be very worldly.

Pierre was received as soon as he had sent in his card, and perhaps he would have fancied that his visit was expected had not an appearance of sincere surprise, blended with a little anxiety, marked his reception.

"Monsieur l'Abbe Froment, Monsieur l'Abbe Froment," repeated the prelate, looking at the card which he still held.

"Kindly step in – I was about to forbid my door, for I have some urgent work to attend to. But no matter, sit down."

Pierre, however, remained standing, quite charmed by the blooming appearance of this tall, strong, handsome man who, although five and forty years of age, was quite fresh and rosy, with moist lips, caressing eyes, and scarcely a grey hair among his curly locks. Nobody more fascinating and decorative could be found among the whole Roman prelacy. Careful of his person undoubtedly, and aiming at a simple elegance, he looked really superb in his black cassock with violet collar. And around him the spacious room where he received his visitors, gaily lighted as it was by two large windows facing the Piazza Navona, and furnished with a taste nowadays seldom met with among the Roman clergy, diffused a pleasant odour and formed a setting instinct with kindly cheerfulness.

"Pray sit down, Monsieur l'Abbe Froment," he resumed, "and tell me to what I am indebted for the honour of your visit."

He had already recovered his self-possession and assumed a /naif/, purely obliging air; and Pierre, though the question was only natural, and he ought to have foreseen it, suddenly felt greatly embarrassed, more embarrassed indeed than in Cardinal Sarno's presence. Should he go to the point at once, confess the delicate motive of his visit? A moment's reflection showed him that this would be the best and worthier course. "Dear me, Monseigneur," he replied, "I know very well that the step I have taken in calling on you is not usually taken, but it has been advised

me, and it has seemed to me that among honest folks there can never be any harm in seeking in all good faith to elucidate the truth."

"What is it, what is it, then?" asked the prelate with an expression of perfect candour, and still continuing to smile.

"Well, simply this. I have learnt that the Congregation of the Index has handed you my book 'New Rome,' and appointed you to examine it; and I have ventured to present myself before you in case you should have any explanations to ask of me."

But Monsignor Fornaro seemed unwilling to hear any more. He had carried both hands to his head and drawn back, albeit still courteous. "No, no," said he, "don't tell me that, don't continue, you would grieve me dreadfully. Let us say, if you like, that you have been deceived, for nothing ought to be known, in fact nothing is known, either by others or myself. I pray you, do not let us talk of such matters."

Pierre, however, had fortunately remarked what a decisive effect was produced when he had occasion to mention the name of the Assessor of the Holy Office. So it occurred to him to reply: "I most certainly do not desire to give you the slightest cause for embarrassment, Monseigneur, and I repeat to you that I would never have ventured to importune you if Monsignor Nani himself had not acquainted me with your name and address."

This time the effect was immediate, though Monsignor Fornaro, with that easy grace which he introduced into all things, made some ceremony about surrendering. He began by

a demurrer, speaking archly with subtle shades of expression. "What! is Monsignor Nani the tattler! But I shall scold him, I shall get angry with him! And what does he know? He doesn't belong to the Congregation; he may have been led into error. You must tell him that he has made a mistake, and that I have nothing at all to do with your affair. That will teach him not to reveal needful secrets which everybody respects!" Then, in a pleasant way, with winning glance and flowery lips, he went on: "Come, since Monsignor Nani desires it, I am willing to chat with you for a moment, my dear Monsieur Froment, but on condition that you shall know nothing of my report or of what may have been said or done at the Congregation."

Pierre in his turn smiled, admiring how easy things became when forms were respected and appearances saved. And once again he began to explain his case, the profound astonishment into which the prosecution of his book had thrown him, and his ignorance of the objections which were taken to it, and for which he had vainly sought a cause.

"Really, really," repeated the prelate, quite amazed at so much innocence. "The Congregation is a tribunal, and can only act when a case is brought before it. Proceedings have been taken against your book simply because it has been denounced."

"Yes, I know, denounced."

"Of course. Complaint was laid by three French bishops, whose names you will allow me to keep secret, and it consequently became necessary for the Congregation to examine

the incriminated work."

Pierre looked at him quite scared. Denounced by three bishops? Why? With what object? Then he thought of his protector. "But Cardinal Bergerot," said he, "wrote me a letter of approval, which I placed at the beginning of my work as a preface. Ought not a guarantee like that to have been sufficient for the French episcopacy?"

Monsignor Fornaro wagged his head in a knowing way before making up his mind to reply: "Ah! yes, no doubt, his Eminence's letter, a very beautiful letter. I think, however, that it would have been much better if he had not written it, both for himself and for you especially." Then as the priest, whose surprise was increasing, opened his mouth to urge him to explain himself, he went on: "No, no, I know nothing, I say nothing. His Eminence Cardinal Bergerot is a saintly man whom everybody venerates, and if it were possible for him to sin it would only be through pure goodness of heart."

Silence fell. Pierre could divine that an abyss was opening, and dared not insist. However, he at last resumed with some violence: "But, after all, why should my book be prosecuted, and the books of others be left untouched? I have no intention of acting as a denouncer myself, but how many books there are to which Rome closes her eyes, and which are far more dangerous than mine can be!"

This time Monsignor Fornaro seemed glad to be able to support Pierre's views. "You are right," said he, "we cannot deal

with every bad book, and it greatly distresses us. But you must remember what an incalculable number of works we should be compelled to read. And so we have to content ourselves with condemning the worst /en bloc/."

Then he complacently entered into explanations. In principle, no printer ought to send any work to press without having previously submitted the manuscript to the approval of the bishop of the diocese. Nowadays, however, with the enormous output of the printing trade, one could understand how terribly embarrassed the bishops would be if the printers were suddenly to conform to the Church's regulation. There was neither the time nor the money, nor were there the men necessary for such colossal labour. And so the Congregation of the Index condemned /en masse/, without examination, all works of certain categories: first, books which were dangerous for morals, all erotic writings, and all novels; next the various bibles in the vulgar tongue, for the perusal of Holy Writ without discretion was not allowable; then the books on magic and sorcery, and all works on science, history, or philosophy that were in any way contrary to dogma, as well as the writings of heresiarchs or mere ecclesiastics discussing religion, which should never be discussed. All these were wise laws made by different popes, and were set forth in the preface to the catalogue of forbidden books which the Congregation published, and without them this catalogue, to have been complete, would in itself have formed a large library. On turning it over one found that the works singled

out for interdiction were chiefly those of priests, the task being so vast and difficult that Rome's concern extended but little beyond the observance of good order within the Church. And Pierre and his book came within the limit.

"You will understand," continued Monsignor Fornaro, "that we have no desire to advertise a heap of unwholesome writings by honouring them with special condemnation. Their name is legion in every country, and we should have neither enough paper nor enough ink to deal with them all. So we content ourselves with condemning one from time to time, when it bears a famous name and makes too much noise, or contains disquieting attacks on the faith. This suffices to remind the world that we exist and defend ourselves without abandoning aught of our rights or duties."

"But my book, my book," exclaimed Pierre, "why these proceedings against my book?"

"I am explaining that to you as far as it is allowable for me to do, my dear Monsieur Froment. You are a priest, your book is a success, you have published a cheap edition of it which sells very readily; and I don't speak of its literary merit, which is remarkable, for it contains a breath of real poetry which transported me, and on which I must really compliment you. However, under the circumstances which I have enumerated, how could we close our eyes to such a work as yours, in which the conclusion arrived at is the annihilation of our holy religion and the destruction of Rome?"

Pierre remained open-mouthed, suffocating with surprise.

"The destruction of Rome!" he at last exclaimed; "but I desire to see Rome rejuvenated, eternal, again the queen of the world." And, once more mastered by his glowing enthusiasm, he defended himself and confessed his faith: Catholicism reverting to the principles and practices of the primitive Church, drawing the blood of regeneration from the fraternal Christianity of Jesus; the Pope, freed from all terrestrial royalty, governing the whole of humanity with charity and love, and saving the world from the frightful social cataclysm that threatens it by leading it to the real Kingdom of God: the Christian communion of all nations united in one nation only. "And can the Holy Father disavow me?" he continued. "Are not these his secret ideas, which people are beginning to divine, and does not my only offence lie in having expressed them perhaps too soon and too freely? And if I were allowed to see him should I not at once obtain from him an order to stop these proceedings?"

Monsignor Fornaro no longer spoke, but wagged his head without appearing offended by the priest's juvenile ardour. On the contrary, he smiled with increasing amiability, as though highly amused by so much innocence and imagination. At last he gaily responded, "Oh! speak on, speak on; it isn't I who will stop you. I'm forbidden to say anything. But the temporal power, the temporal power."

"Well, what of the temporal power?" asked Pierre.

The prelate had again become silent, raising his amiable face to heaven and waving his white hands with a pretty gesture. And

when he once more opened his mouth it was to say: "Then there's your new religion – for the expression occurs twice: the new religion, the new religion – ah, /Dio/!"

Again he became restless, going off into an ecstasy of wonderment, at sight of which Pierre impatiently exclaimed: "I do not know what your report will be, Monseigneur, but I declare to you that I have had no desire to attack dogma. And, candidly now, my whole book shows that I only sought to write a work of pity and salvation. It is only justice that some account should be taken of one's intentions."

Monsignor Fornaro had become very calm and paternal again. "Oh! intentions! intentions!" he said as he rose to dismiss his visitor. "You may be sure, my dear Monsieur Froment, that I feel much honoured by your visit. Naturally I cannot tell you what my report will be; as it is, we have talked too much about it, and, in fact, I ought to have refused to listen to your defence. At the same time, you will always find me ready to be of service to you in anything that does not go against my duty. But I greatly fear that your book will be condemned." And then, as Pierre again started, he added: "Well, yes. It is facts that are judged, you know, not intentions. So all defence is useless; the book is there, and we take it such as it is. However much you may try to explain it, you cannot alter it. And this is why the Congregation never calls the accused parties before it, and never accepts from them aught but retraction pure and simple. And, indeed, the wisest course would be for you to withdraw your book and make your submission.

No? You won't? Ah! how young you are, my friend!"

He laughed yet more loudly at the gesture of revolt, of indomitable pride which had just escaped his young friend, as he called him. Then, on reaching the door, he again threw off some of his reserve, and said in a low voice, "Come, my dear Abbe, there is something I will do for you. I will give you some good advice. At bottom, I myself am nothing. I deliver my report, and it is printed, and the members of the Congregation read it, but are quite free to pay no attention to it. However, the Secretary of the Congregation, Father Dangelis, can accomplish everything, even impossibilities. Go to see him; you will find him at the Dominican convent behind the Piazza di Spagna. Don't name me. And for the present good-bye, my dear fellow, good-bye."

Pierre once more found himself on the Piazza Navona, quite dazed, no longer knowing what to believe or hope. A cowardly idea was coming over him; why should he continue this struggle, in which his adversaries remained unknown and indiscernible? Why carry obstinacy any further, why linger any longer in that impassionating but deceptive Rome? He would flee that very evening, return to Paris, disappear there, and forget his bitter disillusion in the practice of humble charity. He was traversing one of those hours of weakness when the long-dreamt-of task suddenly seems to be an impossibility. However, amidst his great confusion he was nevertheless walking on, going towards his destination. And when he found himself in the Corso, then in the Via dei Condotti, and finally in the Piazza di Spagna, he resolved

that he would at any rate see Father Dangelis. The Dominican convent is there, just below the Trinity de' Monti.

Ah! those Dominicans! Pierre had never thought of them without a feeling of respect with which mingled a little fear. What vigorous pillars of the principle of authority and theocracy they had for centuries proved themselves to be! To them the Church had been indebted for its greatest measure of authority; they were the glorious soldiers of its triumph. Whilst St. Francis won the souls of the humble over to Rome, St. Dominic, on Rome's behalf, subjected all the superior souls – those of the intelligent and powerful. And this he did with passion, amidst a blaze of faith and determination, making use of all possible means, preachings, writings, and police and judicial pressure. Though he did not found the Inquisition, its principles were his, and it was with fire and sword that his fraternal, loving heart waged war on schism. Living like his monks, in poverty, chastity, and obedience – the great virtues of those times of pride and licentiousness – he went from city to city, exhorting the impious, striving to bring them back to the Church and arraigning them before the ecclesiastical courts when his preachings did not suffice. He also laid siege to science, sought to make it his own, dreamt of defending God with the weapons of reason and human knowledge like a true forerunner of the angelic St. Thomas, that light of the middle ages, who joined the Dominican order and set everything in his "Summa Theologiae," psychology, logic, policy, and morals. And thus it was that the

Dominicans filled the world, upholding the doctrines of Rome in the most famous pulpits of every nation, and contending almost everywhere against the free sprit of the Universities, like the vigilant guardians of dogma that they were, the unwearying artisans of the fortunes of the popes, the most powerful amongst all the artistic, scientific, and literary workers who raised the huge edifice of Catholicism such as it exists to-day.

However, Pierre, who could feel that this edifice was even now tottering, though it had been built, people fancied, so substantially as to last through all eternity, asked himself what could be the present use of the Dominicans, those toilers of another age, whose police system and whose tribunals had perished beneath universal execration, whose voices were no longer listened to, whose books were but seldom read, and whose /role/ as /savants/ and civilisers had come to an end in presence of latter-day science, the truths of which were rending dogma on all sides. Certainly the Dominicans still form an influential and prosperous order; but how far one is from the times when their general reigned in Rome, Master of the Holy Palace, with convents and schools, and subjects throughout Europe! Of all their vast inheritance, so far as the Roman curia is concerned, only a few posts now remain to them, and among others the Secretaryship of the Congregation of the Index, a former dependency of the Holy Office where they once despotically ruled.

Pierre was immediately ushered into the presence of Father

Dangelis. The convent parlour was vast, bare, and white, flooded with bright sunshine. The only furniture was a table and some stools; and a large brass crucifix hung from the wall. Near the table stood the Father, a very thin man of about fifty, severely draped in his ample white habit and black mantle. From his long ascetic face, with thin lips, thin nose, and pointed, obstinate chin, his grey eyes shone out with a fixity that embarrassed one. And, moreover, he showed himself very plain and simple of speech, and frigidly polite in manner.

"Monsieur l'Abbe Froment – the author of 'New Rome,' I suppose?" Then seating himself on one stool and pointing to another, he added: "Pray acquaint me with the object of your visit, Monsieur l'Abbe."

Thereupon Pierre had to begin his explanation, his defence, all over again; and the task soon became the more painful as his words fell from his lips amidst death-like silence and frigidity. Father Dangelis did not stir; with his hands crossed upon his knees he kept his sharp, penetrating eyes fixed upon those of the priest. And when the latter had at last ceased speaking, he slowly said: "I did not like to interrupt you, Monsieur l'Abbe, but it was not for me to hear all this. Process against your book has begun, and no power in the world can stay or impede its course. I do not therefore realise what it is that you apparently expect of me."

In a quivering voice Pierre was bold enough to answer: "I look for some kindness and justice."

A pale smile, instinct with proud humility, arose to the

Dominican's lips. "Be without fear," he replied, "God has ever deigned to enlighten me in the discharge of my modest duties. Personally, be it said, I have no justice to render; I am but an employee whose duty is to classify matters and draw up documents concerning them. Their Eminences, the members of the Congregation, will alone pronounce judgment on your book. And assuredly they will do so with the help of the Holy Spirit. You will only have to bow to their sentence when it shall have been ratified by his Holiness."

Then he broke off the interview by rising, and Pierre was obliged to do the same. The Dominican's words were virtually identical with those that had fallen from Monsignor Fornaro, but they were spoken with cutting frankness, a sort of tranquil bravery. On all sides Pierre came into collision with the same anonymous force, the same powerful engine whose component parts sought to ignore one another. For a long time yet, no doubt, he would be sent from one to the other, without ever finding the volitional element which reasoned and acted. And the only thing that he could do was to bow to it all.

However, before going off, it occurred to him once more to mention the name of Monsignor Nani, the powerful effect of which he had begun to realise. "I ask your pardon," he said, "for having disturbed you to no purpose, but I simply deferred to the kind advice of Monsignor Nani, who has condescended to show me some interest."

The effect of these words was unexpected. Again did Father

Dangelis's thin face brighten into a smile, but with a twist of the lips, sharp with ironical contempt. He had become yet paler, and his keen intelligent eyes were flaming. "Ah! it was Monsignor Nani who sent you!" he said. "Well, if you think you need a protector, it is useless for you to apply to any other than himself. He is all-powerful. Go to see him; go to see him!"

And that was the only encouragement Pierre derived from his visit: the advice to go back to the man who had sent him. At this he felt that he was losing ground, and he resolved to return home in order to reflect on things and try to understand them before taking any further steps. The idea of questioning Don Vigilio at once occurred to him, and that same evening after supper he luckily met the secretary in the corridor, just as, candle in hand, he was on his way to bed.

"I have so many things that I should like to say to you," Pierre said to him. "Can you kindly come to my rooms for a moment?"

But the other promptly silenced him with a gesture, and then whispered:

"Didn't you see Abbe Paparelli on the first floor? He was following us, I'm sure."

Pierre often saw the train-bearer roaming about the house, and greatly disliked his stealthy, prying ways. However, he had hitherto attached no importance to him, and was therefore much surprised by Don Vigilio's question. The other, without awaiting his reply, had returned to the end of the corridor, where for a long while he remained listening. Then he came back on tip-toe,

blew out his candle, and darted into Pierre's sitting-room. "There – that's done," he murmured directly the door was shut. "But if it is all the same to you, we won't stop in this sitting-room. Let us go into your bed-room. Two walls are better than one."

When the lamp had been placed on the table and they found themselves seated face to face in that bare, faded bed-chamber, Pierre noticed that the secretary was suffering from a more violent attack of fever than usual. His thin puny figure was shivering from head to foot, and his ardent eyes had never before blazed so blackly in his ravaged, yellow face. "Are you poorly?" asked Pierre. "I don't want to tire you."

"Poorly, yes, I am on fire – but I want to talk. I can't bear it any longer. One always has to relieve oneself some day or other."

Was it his complaint that he desired to relieve; or was he anxious to break his long silence in order that it might not stifle him? This at first remained uncertain. He immediately asked for an account of the steps that Pierre had lately taken, and became yet more restless when he heard how the other had been received by Cardinal Sarno, Monsignor Fornaro, and Father Dangelis. "Yes, that's quite it," he repeated, "nothing astonishes me nowadays, and yet I feel indignant on your account. Yes, it doesn't concern me, but all the same it makes me ill, for it reminds me of all my own troubles. You must not rely on Cardinal Sarno, remember, for he is always elsewhere, with his mind far away, and has never helped anybody. But that Fornaro, that Fornaro!"

"He seemed to me very amiable, even kindly disposed," replied Pierre; "and I really think that after our interview, he will considerably soften his report."

"He! Why, the gentler he was with you the more grievously he will saddle you! He will devour you, fatten himself with such easy prey. Ah! you don't know him, /dilizioso/ that he is, ever on the watch to rear his own fortune on the troubles of poor devils whose defeat is bound to please the powerful. I prefer the other one, Father Dangelis, a terrible man, no doubt, but frank and brave and of superior mind. I must admit, however, that he would burn you like a handful of straw if he were the master. And ah! if I could tell you everything, if I could show you the frightful underside of this world of ours, the monstrous, ravenous ambition, the abominable network of intrigues, venality, cowardice, treachery, and even crime!"

On seeing Don Vigilio so excited, in such a blaze of spite, Pierre thought of extracting from him some of the many items of information which he had hitherto sought in vain. "Well, tell me merely what is the position of my affair," he responded. "When I questioned you on my arrival here you said that nothing had yet reached Cardinal Boccanera. But all information must now have been collected, and you must know of it. And, by the way, Monsignor Fornaro told me that three French bishops had asked that my book should be prosecuted. Three bishops, is it possible?"

Don Vigilio shrugged his shoulders. "Ah!" said he, "yours is

an innocent soul! I'm surprised that there were /only/ three! Yes, several documents relating to your affair are in our hands; and, moreover, things have turned out much as I suspected. The three bishops are first the Bishop of Tarbes, who evidently carries out the vengeance of the Fathers of Lourdes; and then the Bishops of Poitiers and Evreux, who are both known as uncompromising Ultramontanists and passionate adversaries of Cardinal Bergerot. The Cardinal, you know, is regarded with disfavour at the Vatican, where his Gallican ideas and broad liberal mind provoke perfect anger. And don't seek for anything else. The whole affair lies in that: an execution which the powerful Fathers of Lourdes demand of his Holiness, and a desire to reach and strike Cardinal Bergerot through your book, by means of the letter of approval which he imprudently wrote to you and which you published by way of preface. For a long time past the condemnations of the Index have largely been secret knock-down blows levelled at Churchmen. Denunciation reigns supreme, and the law applied is that of good pleasure. I could tell you some almost incredible things, how perfectly innocent books have been selected among a hundred for the sole object of killing an idea or a man; for the blow is almost always levelled at some one behind the author, some one higher than he is. And there is such a hot-bed of intrigue, such a source of abuses in this institution of the Index, that it is tottering, and even among those who surround the Pope it is felt that it must soon be freshly regulated if it is not to fall into complete discredit. I well understand that the Church

should endeavour to retain universal power, and govern by every fit weapon, but the weapons must be such as one can use without their injustice leading to revolt, or their antique childishness provoking merriment!"

Pierre listened with dolorous astonishment in his heart. Since he had been at Rome and had seen the Fathers of the Grotto saluted and feared there, holding an authoritative position, thanks to the large alms which they contributed to the Peter's Pence, he had felt that they were behind the proceedings instituted against him, and realised that he would have to pay for a certain page of his book in which he had called attention to an iniquitous displacement of fortune at Lourdes, a frightful spectacle which made one doubt the very existence of the Divinity, a continual cause of battle and conflict which would disappear in the truly Christian society of to-morrow. And he could also now understand that his delight at the loss of the temporal power must have caused a scandal, and especially that the unfortunate expression "a new religion" had alone been sufficient to arm /delatores/ against him. But that which amazed and grieved him was to learn that Cardinal Bergerot's letter was looked upon as a crime, and that his (Pierre's) book was denounced and condemned in order that adversaries who dared not attack the venerable pastor face to face might, deal him a cowardly blow from behind. The thought of afflicting that saintly man, of serving as the implement to strike him in his ardent charity, cruelly grieved Pierre. And how bitter and disheartening it was

to find the most hideous questions of pride and money, ambition and appetite, running riot with the most ferocious egotism, beneath the quarrels of those leaders of the Church who ought only to have contended together in love for the poor!

And then Pierre's mind revolted against that supremely odious and idiotic Index. He now understood how it worked, from the arrival of the denunciations to the public posting of the titles of the condemned works. He had just seen the Secretary of the Congregation, Father Dangelis, to whom the denunciations came, and who then investigated the affair, collecting all documents and information concerning it with the passion of a cultivated authoritarian monk, who dreamt of ruling minds and consciences as in the heroic days of the Inquisition. Then, too, Pierre had visited one of the consultive prelates, Monsignor Fornaro, who was so ambitious and affable, and so subtle a theologian that he would have discovered attacks against the faith in a treatise on algebra, had his interests required it. Next there were the infrequent meetings of the cardinals, who at long intervals voted for the interdiction of some hostile book, deeply regretting that they could not suppress them all; and finally came the Pope, approving and signing the decrees, which was a mere formality, for were not all books guilty? But what an extraordinary wretched Bastille of the past was that aged Index, that senile institution now sunk into second childhood. One realised that it must have been a formidable power when books were rare and the Church had tribunals of blood and

fire to enforce her edicts. But books had so greatly multiplied, the written, printed thoughts of mankind had swollen into such a deep broad river, that they had swept all opposition away, and now the Index was swamped and reduced to powerlessness, compelled more and more to limit its field of action, to confine itself to the examination of the writings of ecclesiastics, and even in this respect it was becoming corrupt, fouled by the worst passions and changed into an instrument of intrigue, hatred, and vengeance. Ah! that confession of decay, of paralysis which grew more and more complete amidst the scornful indifference of the nations. To think that Catholicism, the once glorious agent of civilisation, had come to such a pass that it cast books into hell-fire by the heap; and what books they were, almost the entire literature, history, philosophy, and science of the past and the present! Few works, indeed, are published nowadays that would not fall under the ban of the Church. If she seems to close her eyes, it is in order to avoid the impossible task of hunting out and destroying everything. Yet she stubbornly insists on retaining a semblance of sovereign authority over human intelligence, just as some very aged queen, dispossessed of her states and henceforth without judges or executioners, might continue to deliver vain sentences to which only an infinitesimal minority would pay heed. But imagine the Church momentarily victorious, miraculously mastering the modern world, and ask yourself what she, with her tribunals to condemn and her gendarmes to enforce, would do with human thought. Imagine a

strict application of the Index regulations: no printer able to put anything whatever to press without the approval of his bishop, and even then every book laid before the Congregation, the past expunged, the present throttled, subjected to an intellectual Reign of Terror! Would not the closing of every library perforce ensue, would not the long heritage of written thought be cast into prison, would not the future be barred, would not all progress, all conquest of knowledge, be totally arrested? Rome herself is nowadays a terrible example of such a disastrous experiment – Rome with her congealed soil, her dead sap, killed by centuries of papal government, Rome which has become so barren that not a man, not a work has sprung from her midst even after five and twenty years of awakening and liberty! And who would accept such a state of things, not among people of revolutionary mind, but among those of religious mind that might possess any culture and breadth of view? Plainly enough it was all mere childishness and absurdity.

Deep silence reigned, and Pierre, quite upset by his reflections, made a gesture of despair whilst glancing at Don Vigilio, who sat speechless in front of him. For a moment longer, amidst the death-like quiescence of that old sleeping mansion, both continued silent, seated face to face in the closed chamber which the lamp illumined with a peaceful glow. But at last Don Vigilio leant forward, his eyes sparkling, and with a feverish shiver murmured: "It is they, you know, always they, at the bottom of everything."

Pierre, who did not understand, felt astonished, indeed somewhat anxious at such a strange remark coming without any apparent transition. "Who are /they/?" he asked.

"The Jesuits!"

In this reply the little, withered, yellow priest had set all the concentrated rage of his exploding passion. Ah! so much the worse if he had perpetrated a fresh act of folly. The cat was out of the bag at last! Nevertheless, he cast a final suspicious glance around the walls. And then he relieved his mind at length, with a flow of words which gushed forth the more irresistibly since he had so long held them in check. "Ah! the Jesuits, the Jesuits! You fancy that you know them, but you haven't even an idea of their abominable actions and incalculable power. They it is whom one always comes upon, everywhere, in every circumstance. Remember /that/ whenever you fail to understand anything, if you wish to understand it. Whenever grief or trouble comes upon you, whenever you suffer, whenever you weep, say to yourself at once: 'It is they; they are there!' Why, for all I know, there may be one of them under that bed, inside that cupboard. Ah! the Jesuits, the Jesuits! They have devoured me, they are devouring me still, they will leave nothing of me at last, neither flesh nor bone."

Then, in a halting voice, he related the story of his life, beginning with his youth, which had opened so hopefully. He belonged to the petty provincial nobility, and had been dowered with a fairly large income, besides a keen, supple intelligence, which looked smilingly towards the future. Nowadays, he would

assuredly have been a prelate, on the road to high dignities, but he had been foolish enough to speak ill of the Jesuits and to thwart them in two or three circumstances. And from that moment, if he were to be believed, they had caused every imaginable misfortune to rain upon him: his father and mother had died, his banker had robbed him and fled, good positions had escaped him at the very moment when he was about to occupy them, the most awful misadventures had pursued him amidst the duties of his ministry to such a point indeed, that he had narrowly escaped interdiction. It was only since Cardinal Boccanera, compassionating his bad luck, had taken him into his house and attached him to his person, that he had enjoyed a little repose. "Here I have a refuge, an asylum," he continued. "They execrate his Eminence, who has never been on their side, but they haven't yet dared to attack him or his servants. Oh! I have no illusions, they will end by catching me again, all the same. Perhaps they will even hear of our conversation this evening, and make me pay dearly for it; for I do wrong to speak, I speak in spite of myself. They have stolen all my happiness, and brought all possible misfortune on me, everything that was possible, everything – you hear me!"

Increasing discomfort was taking possession of Pierre, who, seeking to relieve himself by a jest, exclaimed: "Come, come, at any rate it wasn't the Jesuits who gave you the fever."

"Yes, yes, it was!" Don Vigilio violently declared. "I caught it on the bank of the Tiber one evening, when I went to weep there

in my grief at having been driven from the little church where I officiated."

Pierre, hitherto, had never believed in the terrible legend of the Jesuits. He belonged to a generation which laughed at the idea of wehr-wolves, and considered the /bourgeois/ fear of the famous black men, who hid themselves in walls and terrorised families, to be a trifle ridiculous. To him all such things seemed to be nursery tales, exaggerated by religious and political passion. And so it was with amazement that he examined Don Vigilio, suddenly fearing that he might have to deal with a maniac.

Nevertheless he could not help recalling the extraordinary story of the Jesuits. If St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic are the very soul and spirit of the middle ages, its masters and teachers, the former a living expression of all the ardent, charitable faith of the humble, and the other defending dogma and fixing doctrines for the intelligent and the powerful, on the other hand Ignatius de Loyola appeared on the threshold of modern times to save the tottering heritage by accommodating religion to the new developments of society, thereby ensuring it the empire of the world which was about to appear.

At the advent of the modern era it seemed as if the Deity were to be vanquished in the uncompromising struggle with sin, for it was certain that the old determination to suppress Nature, to kill the man within man, with his appetites, passions, heart, and blood, could only result in a disastrous defeat, in which, indeed, the Church found herself on the very eve of

sinking; and it was the Jesuits who came to extricate her from this peril and reinvigorate her by deciding that it was she who now ought to go to the world, since the world seemed unwilling to go any longer to her. All lay in that; you find the Jesuits declaring that one can enter into arrangements with heaven; they bend and adjust themselves to the customs, prejudices, and even vices of the times; they smile, all condescension, cast rigourism aside, and practice the diplomacy of amiability, ever ready to turn the most awful abominations "to the greater glory of God." That is their motto, their battle-cry, and thence springs the moral principle which many regard as their crime: that all means are good to attain one's end, especially when that end is the furtherance of the Deity's interests as represented by those of the Church. And what overwhelming success attends the efforts of the Jesuits! they swarm and before long cover the earth, on all sides becoming uncontested masters. They shrive kings, they acquire immense wealth, they display such victorious power of invasion that, however humbly they may set foot in any country, they soon wholly possess it: souls, bodies, power, and fortune alike falling to them. And they are particularly zealous in founding schools, they show themselves to be incomparable moulders of the human brain, well understanding that power always belongs to the morrow, to the generations which are growing up and whose master one must be if one desire to reign eternally. So great is their power, based on the necessity of compromise with sin, that, on the morrow of the Council of

Trent, they transform the very spirit of Catholicism, penetrate it, identify it with themselves and become the indispensable soldiers of the papacy which lives by them and for them. And from that moment Rome is theirs, Rome where their general so long commands, whence so long go forth the directions for the obscure tactics which are blindly followed by their innumerable army, whose skilful organisation covers the globe as with an iron network hidden by the velvet of hands expert in dealing gently with poor suffering humanity. But, after all, the most prodigious feature is the stupefying vitality of the Jesuits who are incessantly tracked, condemned, executed, and yet still and ever erect. As soon as their power asserts itself, their unpopularity begins and gradually becomes universal. Hoots of execration arise around them, abominable accusations, scandalous law cases in which they appear as corruptors and felons. Pascal devotes them to public contempt, parliaments condemn their books to be burnt, universities denounce their system of morals and their teaching as poisonous. They foment such disturbances, such struggles in every kingdom, that organised persecution sets in, and they are soon driven from everywhere. During more than a century they become wanderers, expelled, then recalled, passing and repassing frontiers, leaving a country amidst cries of hatred to return to it as soon as quiet has been restored. Finally, for supreme disaster, they are suppressed by one pope, but another re-establishes them, and since then they have been virtually tolerated everywhere. And in the diplomatic self-effacement, the

shade in which they have the prudence to sequester themselves, they are none the less triumphant, quietly confident of their victory like soldiers who have once and for ever subdued the earth.

Pierre was aware that, judging by mere appearances, the Jesuits were nowadays dispossessed of all influence in Rome. They no longer officiated at the Gesu, they no longer directed the Collegio Romano, where they formerly fashioned so many souls; and with no abode of their own, reduced to accept foreign hospitality, they had modestly sought a refuge at the Collegio Germanico, where there is a little chapel. There they taught and there they still confessed, but without the slightest bustle or display. Was one to believe, however, that this effacement was but masterly cunning, a feigned disappearance in order that they might really remain secret, all-powerful masters, the hidden hand which directs and guides everything? People certainly said that the proclamation of papal Infallibility had been their work, a weapon with which they had armed themselves whilst feigning to bestow it on the papacy, in readiness for the coming decisive task which their genius foresaw in the approaching social upheavals. And thus there might perhaps be some truth in what Don Vigilio, with a shiver of mystery, related about their occult sovereignty, a seizin, as it were, of the government of the Church, a royalty ignored but nevertheless complete.

As this idea occurred to Pierre, a dim connection between certain of his experiences arose in his mind and he all at once

inquired: "Is Monsignor Nani a Jesuit, then?"

These words seemed to revive all Don Vigilio's anxious passion. He waved his trembling hand, and replied: "He? Oh, he's too clever, too skilful by far to have taken the robe. But he comes from that Collegio Romano where his generation grew up, and he there imbibed that Jesuit genius which adapted itself so well to his own. Whilst fully realising the danger of wearing an unpopular and embarrassing livery, and wishing to be free, he is none the less a Jesuit in his flesh, in his bones, in his very soul. He is evidently convinced that the Church can only triumph by utilising the passions of mankind, and withal he is very fond of the Church, very pious at bottom, a very good priest, serving God without weakness in gratitude for the absolute power which God gives to His ministers. And besides, he is so charming, incapable of any brutal action, full of the good breeding of his noble Venetian ancestors, and deeply versed in knowledge of the world, thanks to his experiences at the nunciatures of Paris, Vienna, and other places, without mentioning that he knows everything that goes on by reason of the delicate functions which he has discharged for ten years past as Assessor of the Holy Office. Yes, he is powerful, all-powerful, and in him you do not have the furtive Jesuit whose robe glides past amidst suspicion, but the head, the brain, the leader whom no uniform designates."

This reply made Pierre grave, for he was quite willing to admit that an opportunist code of morals, like that of the Jesuits, was inoculable and now predominated throughout the Church.

Indeed, the Jesuits might disappear, but their doctrine would survive them, since it was the one weapon of combat, the one system of strategy which might again place the nations under the dominion of Rome. And in reality the struggle which continued lay precisely in the attempts to accommodate religion to the century, and the century to religion. Such being the case, Pierre realised that such men as Monsignor Nani might acquire vast and even decisive importance.

"Ah! if you knew, if you knew," continued Don Vigilio, "he's everywhere, he has his hand in everything. For instance, nothing has ever happened here, among the Boccaneras, but I've found him at the bottom of it, tangling or untangling the threads according to necessities with which he alone is acquainted."

Then, in the unquenchable fever for confiding things which was now consuming him, the secretary related how Monsignor Nani had most certainly brought on Benedetta's divorce case. The Jesuits, in spite of their conciliatory spirit, have always taken up a hostile position with regard to Italy, either because they do not despair of reconquering Rome, or because they wait to treat in due season with the ultimate and real victor, whether King or Pope. And so Nani, who had long been one of Donna Serafina's intimates, had helped to precipitate the rupture with Prada as soon as Benedetta's mother was dead. Again, it was he who, to prevent any interference on the part of the patriotic Abbe Pisoni, the young woman's confessor and the artisan of her marriage, had urged her to take the same spiritual director as her

aunt, Father Lorenza, a handsome Jesuit with clear and kindly eyes, whose confessional in the chapel of the Collegio Germanico was incessantly besieged by penitents. And it seemed certain that this manoeuvre had brought about everything; what one cleric working for Italy had done, was to be undone by another working against Italy. Why was it, however, that Nani, after bringing about the rupture, had momentarily ceased to show all interest in the affair to the point even of jeopardising the suit for the dissolution of the marriage? And why was he now again busying himself with it, setting Donna Serafina in action, prompting her to buy Monsignor Palma's support, and bringing his own influence to bear on the cardinals of the Congregation? There was mystery in all this, as there was in everything he did, for his schemes were always complicated and distant in their effects. However, one might suppose that he now wished to hasten the marriage of Benedetta and Dario, in order to stop all the abominable rumours which were circulating in the white world; unless, indeed, this divorce secured by pecuniary payments and the pressure of notorious influences were an intentional scandal at first spun out and now hastened, in order to harm Cardinal Boccanera, whom the Jesuits might desire to brush aside in certain eventualities which were possibly near at hand.

"To tell the truth, I rather incline to the latter view," said Don Vigilio, "the more so indeed as I learnt this evening that the Pope is not well. With an old man of eighty-four the end may come at any moment, and so the Pope can never catch cold but

what the Sacred College and the prelacies are all agog, stirred by sudden ambitious rivalries. Now, the Jesuits have always opposed Cardinal Boccanera's candidature. They ought to be on his side, on account of his rank, and his uncompromising attitude towards Italy, but the idea of giving themselves such a master disquiets them, for they consider him unseasonably rough and stern, too violent in his faith, which unbending as it is would prove dangerous in these diplomatic times through which the Church is passing. And so I should in no wise be astonished if there were an attempt to discredit him and render his candidature impossible, by employing the most underhand and shameful means."

A little quiver of fear was coming over Pierre. The contagion of the unknown, of the black intrigues plotted in the dark, was spreading amidst the silence of the night in the depths of that palace, near that Tiber, in that Rome so full of legendary tragedies. But all at once the young man's mind reverted to himself, to his own affair. "But what is my part in all this?" he asked: "why does Monsignor Nani seem to take an interest in me? Why is he mixed up in the proceedings against my book?"

"Oh! one never knows, one never knows exactly!" replied Don Vigilio, waving his arms. "One thing I can say, that he only knew of the affair when the denunciations of the three bishops were already in the hands of Father Dangelis; and I have also learnt that he then tried to stop the proceedings, which he no doubt thought both useless and impolitic. But when a matter is once before

the Congregation it is almost impossible for it to be withdrawn, and Monsignor Nani must also have come into collision with Father Dangelis who, like a faithful Dominican, is the passionate adversary of the Jesuits. It was then that he caused the Contessina to write to Monsieur de la Choue, requesting him to tell you to hasten here in order to defend yourself, and to arrange for your acceptance of hospitality in this mansion, during your stay."

This revelation brought Pierre's emotion to a climax. "You are sure of that?" he asked.

"Oh! quite sure. I heard Nani speak of you one Monday, and some time ago I told you that he seemed to know all about you, as if he had made most minute inquiries. My belief is that he had already read your book, and was extremely preoccupied about it."

"Do you think that he shares my ideas, then? Is he sincere, is he defending himself while striving to defend me?"

"Oh! no, no, not at all. Your ideas, why he certainly hates them, and your book and yourself as well. You have no idea what contempt for the weak, what hatred of the poor, and love of authority and domination he conceals under his caressing amiability. Lourdes he might abandon to you, though it embodies a marvellous weapon of government; but he will never forgive you for being on the side of the little ones of the world, and for pronouncing against the temporal power. If you only heard with what gentle ferocity he derides Monsieur de la Choue, whom he calls the weeping willow of Neo-Catholicism!"

Pierre carried his hands to his temples and pressed his head

despairingly. "Then why, why, tell me I beg of you, why has he brought me here and kept me here in this house at his disposal? Why has he promenaded me up and down Rome for three long months, throwing me against obstacles and wearying me, when it was so easy for him to let the Index condemn my book if it embarrassed him? It's true, of course, that things would not have gone quietly, for I was disposed to refuse submission and openly confess my new faith, even against the decisions of Rome."

Don Vigilio's black eyes flared in his yellow face: "Perhaps it was that which he wished to prevent. He knows you to be very intelligent and enthusiastic, and I have often heard him say that intelligence and enthusiasm should not be fought openly."

Pierre, however, had risen to his feet, and instead of listening, was striding up and down the room as though carried away by the whirlwind of his thoughts. "Come, come," he said at last, "it is necessary that I should know and understand things if I am to continue the struggle. You must be kind enough to give me some detailed particulars about each of the persons mixed up in my affair. Jesuits, Jesuits everywhere? /Mon Dieu/, it may be so, you are perhaps right! But all the same you must point out the different shades to me. Now, for instance, what of that Fornaro?"

"Monsignor Fornaro, oh! he's whatever you like. Still he also was brought up at the Collegio Romano, so you may be certain that he is a Jesuit, a Jesuit by education, position, and ambition. He is longing to become a cardinal, and if he some day becomes one, he'll long to be the next pope. Besides, you know, every

one here is a candidate to the papacy as soon as he enters the seminary."

"And Cardinal Sanguinetti?"

"A Jesuit, a Jesuit! To speak plainly, he was one, then ceased to be one, and is now undoubtedly one again. Sanguinetti has flirted with every influence. It was long thought that he was in favour of conciliation between the Holy See and Italy; but things drifted into a bad way, and he violently took part against the usurpers. In the same style he has frequently fallen out with Leo XIII and then made his peace. To-day at the Vatican, he keeps on a footing of diplomatic reserve. Briefly he only has one object, the tiara, and even shows it too plainly, which is a mistake, for it uses up a candidate. Still, just at present the struggle seems to be between him and Cardinal Boccanera. And that's why he has gone over to the Jesuits again, utilising their hatred of his rival, and anticipating that they will be forced to support /him/ in order to defeat the other. But I doubt it, they are too shrewd, they will hesitate to patronise a candidate who is already so compromised. He, blunder-head, passionate and proud as he is, doubts nothing, and since you say that he is now at Frascati, I'm certain that he made all haste to shut himself up there with some grand strategical object in view, as soon as he heard of the Pope's illness."

"Well, and the Pope himself, Leo XIII?" asked Pierre.

This time Don Vigilio slightly hesitated, his eyes blinking. Then he said: "Leo XIII? He is a Jesuit, a Jesuit! Oh! I know it is

said that he sides with the Dominicans, and this is in a measure true, for he fancies that he is animated with their spirit and he has brought St. Thomas into favour again, and has restored all the ecclesiastical teaching of doctrine. But there is also the Jesuit, remember, who is one involuntarily and without knowing it, and of this category the present Pope will prove the most famous example. Study his acts, investigate his policy, and you will find that everything in it emanates from the Jesuit spirit. The fact is that he has unwittingly become impregnated with that spirit, and that all the influence, directly or indirectly brought to bear on him comes from a Jesuit centre. Ah! why don't you believe me? I repeat that the Jesuits have conquered and absorbed everything, that all Rome belongs to them from the most insignificant cleric to his Holiness in person."

Then he continued, replying to each fresh name that Pierre gave with the same obstinate, maniacal cry: "Jesuit, Jesuit!" It seemed as if a Churchman could be nothing else, as if each answer were a confirmation of the proposition that the clergy must compound with the modern world if it desired to preserve its Deity. The heroic age of Catholicism was accomplished, henceforth it could only live by dint of diplomacy and ruses, concessions and arrangements. "And that Paparelli, he's a Jesuit too, a Jesuit!" Don Vigilio went on, instinctively lowering his voice. "Yes, the humble but terrible Jesuit, the Jesuit in his most abominable /role/ as a spy and a perverter! I could swear that he has merely been placed here in order to keep watch

on his Eminence! And you should see with what supple talent and craft he has performed his task, to such a point indeed that it is now he alone who wills and orders things. He opens the door to whomsoever he pleases, uses his master like something belonging to him, weighs on each of his resolutions, and holds him in his power by dint of his stealthy unremitting efforts. Yes! it's the lion conquered by the insect; the infinitesimally small disposing of the infinitely great; the train-bearer – whose proper part is to sit at his cardinal's feet like a faithful hound – in reality reigning over him, and impelling him in whatsoever direction he chooses. Ah! the Jesuit! the Jesuit! Mistrust him when you see him gliding by in his shabby old cassock, with the flabby wrinkled face of a devout old maid. And make sure that he isn't behind the doors, or in the cupboards, or under the beds. Ah! I tell you that they'll devour you as they've devoured me; and they'll give you the fever too, perhaps even the plague if you are not careful!"

Pierre suddenly halted in front of his companion. He was losing all assurance, both fear and rage were penetrating him. And, after all, why not? These extraordinary stories must be true. "But in that case give me some advice," he exclaimed, "I asked you to come in here this evening precisely because I no longer know what to do, and need to be set in the right path – " Then he broke off and again paced to and fro, as if urged into motion by his exploding passion. "Or rather no, tell me nothing!" he abruptly resumed. "It's all over; I prefer to go away. The thought

occurred to me before, but it was in a moment of cowardice and with the idea of disappearing and of returning to live in peace in my little nook: whereas now, if I go off, it will be as an avenger, a judge, to cry aloud to all the world from Paris, to proclaim what I have seen in Rome, what men have done there with the Christianity of Jesus, the Vatican falling into dust, the corpse-like odour which comes from it, the idiotic illusions of those who hope that they will one day see a renascence of the modern soul arise from a sepulchre where the remnants of dead centuries rot and slumber. Oh! I will not yield, I will not make my submission, I will defend my book by a fresh one. And that book, I promise you, will make some noise in the world, for it will sound the last agony of a dying religion, which one must make all haste to bury lest its remains should poison the nations!"

All this was beyond Don Vigilio's mind. The Italian priest, with narrow belief and ignorant terror of the new ideas, awoke within him. He clasped his hands, affrighted. "Be quiet, be quiet! You are blaspheming! And, besides, you cannot go off like that without again trying to see his Holiness. He alone is sovereign. And I know that I shall surprise you; but Father Dangelis has given you in jest the only good advice that can be given: Go back to see Monsignor Nani, for he alone will open the door of the Vatican for you."

Again did Pierre give a start of anger: "What! It was with Monsignor Nani that I began, from him that I set out; and I am to go back to him? What game is that? Can I consent to be a

shuttlecock sent flying hither and thither by every battledore? People are having a game with me!"

Then, harassed and distracted, the young man fell on his chair in front of Don Vigilio, who with his face drawn by his prolonged vigil, and his hands still and ever faintly trembling, remained for some time silent. At last he explained that he had another idea. He was slightly acquainted with the Pope's confessor, a Franciscan father, a man of great simplicity, to whom he might recommend Pierre. This Franciscan, despite his self-effacement, would perhaps prove of service to him. At all events he might be tried. Then, once more, silence fell, and Pierre, whose dreamy eyes were turned towards the wall, ended by distinguishing the old picture which had touched him so deeply on the day of his arrival. In the pale glow of the lamp it gradually showed forth and lived, like an incarnation of his own case, his own futile despair before the sternly closed portal of truth and justice. Ah! that outcast woman, that stubborn victim of love, weeping amidst her streaming hair, her visage hidden whilst with pain and grief she sank upon the steps of that palace whose door was so pitilessly shut – how she resembled him! Draped with a mere strip of linen, she was shivering, and amidst the overpowering distress of her abandonment she did not reveal her secret, misfortune, or transgression, whichever it might be. But he, behind her close-pressed hands, endowed her with a face akin to his own: she became his sister, as were all the poor creatures without roof or certainty who weep because they are naked and alone, and

wear out their strength in seeking to force the wicked thresholds of men. He could never gaze at her without pitying her, and it stirred him so much that evening to find her ever so unknown, nameless and visageless, yet steeped in the most bitter tears, that he suddenly began to question his companion.

"Tell me," said he, "do you know who painted that old picture? It stirs me to the soul like a masterpiece."

Stupefied by this unexpected question, the secretary raised his head and looked, feeling yet more astonished when he had examined the blackened, forsaken panel in its sorry frame.

"Where did it come from?" resumed Pierre; "why has it been stowed away in this room?"

"Oh!" replied Don Vigilio, with a gesture of indifference, "it's nothing. There are heaps of valueless old paintings everywhere. That one, no doubt, has always been here. But I don't know; I never noticed it before."

Whilst speaking he had at last risen to his feet, and this simple action had brought on such a fit of shivering that he could scarcely take leave, so violently did his teeth chatter with fever. "No, no, don't show me out," he stammered, "keep the lamp here. And to conclude: the best course is for you to leave yourself in the hands of Monsignor Nani, for he, at all events, is a superior man. I told you on your arrival that, whether you would or not, you would end by doing as he desired. And so what's the use of struggling? And mind, not a word of our conversation to-night; it would mean my death."

Then he noiselessly opened the doors, glanced distrustfully into the darkness of the passage, and at last ventured out and disappeared, regaining his own room with such soft steps that not the faintest footfall was heard amidst the tomb-like slumber of the old mansion.

On the morrow, Pierre, again mastered by a desire to fight on to the very end, got Don Vigilio to recommend him to the Pope's confessor, the Franciscan friar with whom the secretary was slightly acquainted. However, this friar proved to be an extremely timid if worthy man, selected precisely on account of his great modesty, simplicity, and absolute lack of influence in order that he might not abuse his position with respect to the Holy Father. And doubtless there was an affectation of humility on the latter's part in taking for confessor a member of the humblest of the regular orders, a friend of the poor, a holy beggar of the roads. At the same time the friar certainly enjoyed a reputation for oratory; and hidden by a veil the Pope at times listened to his sermons; for although as infallible Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII could not receive lessons from any priest, it was admitted that as a man he might reap profit by listening to good discourse. Nevertheless apart from his natural eloquence, the worthy friar was really a mere washer of souls, a confessor who listens and absolves without even remembering the impurities which he removes in the waters of penitence. And Pierre, finding him really so poor and such a cipher, did not insist on an intervention which he realised would be futile.

All that day the young priest was haunted by the figure of that ingenuous lover of poverty, that delicious St. Francis, as Narcisse Habert was wont to say. Pierre had often wondered how such an apostle, so gentle towards both animate and inanimate creation, and so full of ardent charity for the wretched, could have arisen in a country of egotism and enjoyment like Italy, where the love of beauty alone has remained queen. Doubtless the times have changed; yet what a strong sap of love must have been needed in the old days, during the great sufferings of the middle ages, for such a consoler of the humble to spring from the popular soil and preach the gift of self to others, the renunciation of wealth, the horror of brutal force, the equality and obedience which would ensure the peace of the world. St. Francis trod the roads clad as one of the poorest, a rope girdling his grey gown and his bare feet shod with sandals, and he carried with him neither purse nor staff. And he and his brethren spoke aloud and freely, with sovereign florescence of poetry and boldness of truth, attacking the rich and the powerful, and daring even to denounce the priests of evil life, the debauched, simoniacal, and perjured bishops. A long cry of relief greeted the Franciscans, the people followed them in crowds – they were the friends, the liberators of all the humble ones who suffered. And thus, like revolutionaries, they at first so alarmed Rome, that the popes hesitated to authorise their Order. When they at last gave way it was assuredly with the hope of using this new force for their own profit, by conquering the whole vague mass of the lowly whose covert threats have ever

growled through the ages, even in the most despotic times. And thenceforward in the sons of St. Francis the Church possessed an ever victorious army – a wandering army which spread over the roads, in the villages and through the towns, penetrating to the firesides of artisan and peasant, and gaining possession of all simple hearts. How great the democratic power of such an Order which had sprung from the very entrails of the people! And thence its rapid prosperity, its teeming growth in a few years, friaries arising upon all sides, and the third Order[3]

[3] The Franciscans, like the Dominicans and others, admit, in addition to the two Orders of friars and nuns, a third Order comprising devout persons of either sex who have neither the vocation nor the opportunity for cloistered life, but live in the world, privately observing the chief principles of the fraternity with which they are connected. In central and southern Europe members of these third Orders are still numerous. – Trans.

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