ÉMILE ZOLA

THE THREE CITIES TRILOGY: ROME, COMPLETE

Émile Zola

The Three Cities Trilogy: Rome, Complete

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25561420
The Three Cities Trilogy: Rome, Complete:

Содержание

Émile Zola
The Three Cities Trilogy: Rome, Complete

PREFACE

IN submitting to the English-speaking public this second volume of M. Zola's trilogy "Lourdes, Rome, Paris," I have no prefatory remarks to offer on behalf of the author, whose views on Rome, its past, present, and future, will be found fully expounded in the following pages. That a book of this character will, like its forerunner "Lourdes," provoke considerable controversy is certain, but comment or rejoinder may well be postponed until that controversy has arisen. At present then I only desire to say, that in spite of the great labour which I have bestowed on this translation, I am sensible of its shortcomings, and in a work of such length, such intricacy, and such a wide range of subject, it will not be surprising if some slips are discovered. Any errors which may be pointed out to me, however, shall be rectified in subsequent editions. I have given, I think, the whole essence of M. Zola's text; but he himself has admitted to me that he has now and again allowed his pen to run away with him, and thus whilst sacrificing nothing of his

sense I have at times abbreviated his phraseology so as slightly to condense the book. I may add that there are no chapter headings in the original, and that the circumstances under which the translation was made did not permit me to supply any whilst it was passing through the press; however, as some indication of the contents of the book – which treats of many more things than are usually found in novels – may be a convenience to the reader, I have prepared a table briefly epitomising the chief features of each successive chapter.

E. A. V.

MERTON, SURREY, ENGLAND,
April, 1896.

PART I

I

THE train had been greatly delayed during the night between Pisa and Civita Vecchia, and it was close upon nine o'clock in the morning when, after a fatiguing journey of twenty-five hours' duration, Abbe Pierre Froment at last reached Rome. He had brought only a valise with him, and, springing hastily out of the railway carriage amidst the scramble of the arrival, he brushed the eager porters aside, intent on carrying his trifling luggage himself, so anxious was he to reach his destination, to be alone, and look around him. And almost immediately, on the Piazza dei Cinquecento, in front of the railway station, he climbed into one of the small open cabs ranged alongside the footwalk, and placed the valise near him after giving the driver this address:

"Via Giulia, Palazzo Boccanera."[1]

It was a Monday, the 3rd of September, a beautifully bright and mild morning, with a clear sky overhead. The cabby, a plump little man with sparkling eyes and white teeth, smiled on realising by Pierre's accent that he had to deal with a French priest. Then he whipped up his lean horse, and the vehicle started off at the

[1] Boccanera mansion, Julia Street.

rapid pace customary to the clean and cheerful cabs of Rome. However, on reaching the Piazza delle Terme, after skirting the greenery of a little public garden, the man turned round, still smiling, and pointing to some ruins with his whip, "The baths of Diocletian," said he in broken French, like an obliging driver who is anxious to court favour with foreigners in order to secure their custom.

Then, at a fast trot, the vehicle descended the rapid slope of the Via Nazionale, which dips down from the summit of the Viminalis,[2] where the railway station is situated. And from that moment the driver scarcely ceased turning round and pointing at the monuments with his whip. In this broad new thoroughfare there were only buildings of recent erection. Still, the wave of the cabman's whip became more pronounced and his voice rose to a higher key, with a somewhat ironical inflection, when he gave the name of a huge and still chalky pile on his left, a gigantic erection of stone, overladen with sculptured work-pediments and statues.

"The National Bank!" he said.

Pierre, however, during the week which had followed his resolve to make the journey, had spent wellnigh every day in studying Roman topography in maps and books. Thus he could have directed his steps to any given spot without inquiring his way, and he anticipated most of the driver's explanations. At

[2] One of the seven hills on which Rome is built. The other six are the Capitoline, Aventine, Quirinal, Esquiline, Coelian, and Palatine. These names will perforce frequently occur in the present narrative.

the same time he was disconcerted by the sudden slopes, the perpetually recurring hills, on which certain districts rose, house above house, in terrace fashion. On his right-hand clumps of greenery were now climbing a height, and above them stretched a long bare yellow building of barrack or convent-like aspect.

"The Quirinal, the King's palace," said the driver.

Lower down, as the cab turned across a triangular square, Pierre, on raising his eyes, was delighted to perceive a sort of aerial garden high above him – a garden which was upheld by a lofty smooth wall, and whence the elegant and vigorous silhouette of a parasol pine, many centuries old, rose aloft into the limpid heavens. At this sight he realised all the pride and grace of Rome.

"The Villa Aldobrandini," the cabman called.

Then, yet lower down, there came a fleeting vision which decisively impassioned Pierre. The street again made a sudden bend, and in one corner, beyond a short dim alley, there was a blazing gap of light. On a lower level appeared a white square, a well of sunshine, filled with a blinding golden dust; and amidst all that morning glory there arose a gigantic marble column, gilt from base to summit on the side which the sun in rising had laved with its beams for wellnigh eighteen hundred years. And Pierre was surprised when the cabman told him the name of the column, for in his mind he had never pictured it soaring aloft in such a dazzling cavity with shadows all around. It was the column of Trajan.

The Via Nazionale turned for the last time at the foot of

the slope. And then other names fell hastily from the driver's lips as his horse went on at a fast trot. There was the Palazzo Colonna, with its garden edged by meagre cypresses; the Palazzo Torlonia, almost ripped open by recent "improvements"; the Palazzo di Venezia, bare and fearsome, with its crenelated walls, its stern and tragic appearance, that of some fortress of the middle ages, forgotten there amidst the commonplace life of nowadays. Pierre's surprise increased at the unexpected aspect which certain buildings and streets presented; and the keenest blow of all was dealt him when the cabman with his whip triumphantly called his attention to the Corso, a long narrow thoroughfare, about as broad as Fleet Street,[3] white with sunshine on the left, and black with shadows on the right, whilst at the far end the Piazza del Popolo (the Square of the People) showed like a bright star. Was this, then, the heart of the city, the vaunted promenade, the street brimful of life, whither flowed all the blood of Rome?

However, the cab was already entering the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, which follows the Via Nazionale, these being the two piercings effected right across the olden city from the railway station to the bridge of St. Angelo. On the left-hand the rounded apsis of the Gesu church looked quite golden in the morning brightness. Then, between the church and the heavy Altieri palace which the "improvers" had not dared to demolish,

[3] M. Zola likens the Corso to the Rue St. Honore in Paris, but I have thought that an English comparison would be preferable in the present version. – Trans.

the street became narrower, and one entered into cold, damp shade. But a moment afterwards, before the facade of the Gesu, when the square was reached, the sun again appeared, dazzling, throwing golden sheets of light around; whilst afar off at the end of the Via di Ara Coeli, steeped in shadow, a glimpse could be caught of some sunlit palm-trees.

"That's the Capitol yonder," said the cabman.

The priest hastily leant to the left, but only espied the patch of greenery at the end of the dim corridor-like street. The sudden alternations of warm light and cold shade made him shiver. In front of the Palazzo di Venezia, and in front of the Gesu, it had seemed to him as if all the night of ancient times were falling icily upon his shoulders; but at each fresh square, each broadening of the new thoroughfares, there came a return to light, to the pleasant warmth and gaiety of life. The yellow sunflashes, in falling from the house fronts, sharply outlined the violescent shadows. Strips of sky, very blue and very benign, could be perceived between the roofs. And it seemed to Pierre that the air he breathed had a particular savour, which he could not yet quite define, but it was like that of fruit, and increased the feverishness which had possessed him ever since his arrival.

The Corso Vittorio Emanuele is, in spite of its irregularity, a very fine modern thoroughfare; and for a time Pierre might have fancied himself in any great city full of huge houses let out in flats. But when he passed before the Cancelleria,[4]

[4] Formerly the residence of the Papal Vice-Chancellors.

Bramante's masterpiece, the typical monument of the Roman Renascence, his astonishment came back to him and his mind returned to the mansions which he had previously espied, those bare, huge, heavy edifices, those vast cubes of stone-work resembling hospitals or prisons. Never would he have imagined that the famous Roman "palaces" were like that, destitute of all grace and fancy and external magnificence. However, they were considered very fine and must be so; he would doubtless end by understanding things, but for that he would require reflection.[5]

All at once the cab turned out of the populous Corso Vittorio Emanuele into a succession of winding alleys, through which it had difficulty in making its way. Quietude and solitude now came back again; the olden city, cold and somniferous, followed the new city with its bright sunshine and its crowds. Pierre remembered the maps which he had consulted, and realised that he was drawing near to the Via Giulia, and thereupon his curiosity, which had been steadily increasing, augmented to such a point that he suffered from it, full of despair at not seeing more and learning more at once. In the feverish state in which he had found himself ever since leaving the station, his astonishment at not finding things such as he had expected, the many shocks that his imagination had received, aggravated his passion beyond endurance, and brought him an acute desire to satisfy himself immediately. Nine o'clock had struck but a few

[5] It is as well to point out at once that a palazzo is not a palace as we understand the term, but rather a mansion. – Trans.

minutes previously, he had the whole morning before him to repair to the Boccanera palace, so why should he not at once drive to the classic spot, the summit whence one perceives the whole of Rome spread out upon her seven hills? And when once this thought had entered into his mind it tortured him until he was at last compelled to yield to it.

The driver no longer turned his head, so that Pierre rose up to give him this new address: "To San Pietro in Montorio!"

On hearing him the man at first looked astonished, unable to understand. He indicated with his whip that San Pietro was yonder, far away. However, as the priest insisted, he again smiled complacently, with a friendly nod of his head. All right! For his own part he was quite willing.

The horse then went on at a more rapid pace through the maze of narrow streets. One of these was pent between high walls, and the daylight descended into it as into a deep trench. But at the end came a sudden return to light, and the Tiber was crossed by the antique bridge of Sixtus IV, right and left of which stretched the new quays, amidst the ravages and fresh plaster-work of recent erections. On the other side of the river the Trastevere district also was ripped open, and the vehicle ascended the slope of the Janiculum by a broad thoroughfare where large slabs bore the name of Garibaldi. For the last time the driver made a gesture of good-natured pride as he named this triumphal route.

"Via Garibaldi!"

The horse had been obliged to slacken its pace, and Pierre,

mastered by childish impatience, turned round to look at the city as by degrees it spread out and revealed itself behind him. The ascent was a long one; fresh districts were ever rising up, even to the most distant hills. Then, in the increasing emotion which made his heart beat, the young priest felt that he was spoiling the contentment of his desire by thus gradually satisfying it, slowly and but partially effecting his conquest of the horizon. He wished to receive the shock full in the face, to behold all Rome at one glance, to gather the holy city together, and embrace the whole of it at one grasp. And thereupon he mustered sufficient strength of mind to refrain from turning round any more, in spite of the impulses of his whole being.

There is a spacious terrace on the summit of the incline. The church of San Pietro in Montorio stands there, on the spot where, as some say, St. Peter was crucified. The square is bare and brown, baked by the hot summer suns; but a little further away in the rear, the clear and noisy waters of the Acqua Paola fall bubbling from the three basins of a monumental fountain amidst sempiternal freshness. And alongside the terrace parapet, on the very crown of the Trastevere, there are always rows of tourists, slim Englishmen and square-built Germans, agape with traditional admiration, or consulting their guide-books in order to identify the monuments.

Pierre sprang lightly from the cab, leaving his valise on the seat, and making a sign to the driver, who went to join the row of waiting cabs, and remained philosophically seated on his box

in the full sunlight, his head drooping like that of his horse, both resigning themselves to the customary long stoppage.

Meantime Pierre, erect against the parapet, in his tight black cassock, and with his bare feverish hands nervously clenched, was gazing before him with all his eyes, with all his soul. Rome! Rome! the city of the Caesars, the city of the Popes, the Eternal City which has twice conquered the world, the predestined city of the glowing dream in which he had indulged for months! At last it was before him, at last his eyes beheld it! During the previous days some rainstorms had abated the intense August heat, and on that lovely September morning the air had freshened under the pale blue of the spotless far-spreading heavens. And the Rome that Pierre beheld was a Rome steeped in mildness, a visionary Rome which seemed to evaporate in the clear sunshine. A fine bluey haze, scarcely perceptible, as delicate as gauze, hovered over the roofs of the low-lying districts; whilst the vast Campagna, the distant hills, died away in a pale pink flush. At first Pierre distinguished nothing, sought no particular edifice or spot, but gave sight and soul alike to the whole of Rome, to the living colossus spread out below him, on a soil compounded of the dust of generations. Each century had renewed the city's glory as with the sap of immortal youth. And that which struck Pierre, that which made his heart leap within him, was that he found Rome such as he had desired to find her, fresh and youthful, with a volatile, almost incorporeal, gaiety of aspect, smiling as at the hope of a new life in the pure dawn of a lovely day.

And standing motionless before the sublime vista, with his hands still clenched and burning, Pierre in a few minutes again lived the last three years of his life. Ah! what a terrible year had the first been, spent in his little house at Neuilly, with doors and windows ever closed, burrowing there like some wounded animal suffering unto death. He had come back from Lourdes with his soul desolate, his heart bleeding, with nought but ashes within him. Silence and darkness fell upon the ruins of his love and his faith. Days and days went by, without a pulsation of his veins, without the faintest gleam arising to brighten the gloom of his abandonment. His life was a mechanical one; he awaited the necessary courage to resume the tenor of existence in the name of sovereign reason, which had imposed upon him the sacrifice of everything. Why was he not stronger, more resistant, why did he not quietly adapt his life to his new opinions? As he was unwilling to cast off his cassock, through fidelity to the love of one and disgust of backsliding, why did he not seek occupation in some science suited to a priest, such as astronomy or archaeology? The truth was that something, doubtless his mother's spirit, wept within him, an infinite, distracted love which nothing had yet satisfied and which ever despaired of attaining contentment. Therein lay the perpetual suffering of his solitude: beneath the lofty dignity of reason regained, the wound still lingered, raw and bleeding.

One autumn evening, however, under a dismal rainy sky, chance brought him into relations with an old priest, Abbe Rose,

who was curate at the church of Ste. Marguerite, in the Faubourg St. Antoine. He went to see Abbe Rose in the Rue de Charonne, where in the depths of a damp ground floor he had transformed three rooms into an asylum for abandoned children, whom he picked up in the neighbouring streets. And from that moment Pierre's life changed, a fresh and all-powerful source of interest had entered into it, and by degrees he became the old priest's passionate helper. It was a long way from Neuilly to the Rue de Charonne, and at first he only made the journey twice a week. But afterwards he bestirred himself every day, leaving home in the morning and not returning until night. As the three rooms no longer sufficed for the asylum, he rented the first floor of the house, reserving for himself a chamber in which ultimately he often slept. And all his modest income was expended there, in the prompt succouring of poor children; and the old priest, delighted, touched to tears by the young devoted help which had come to him from heaven, would often embrace Pierre, weeping, and call him a child of God.

It was then that Pierre knew want and wretchedness – wicked, abominable wretchedness; then that he lived amidst it for two long years. The acquaintance began with the poor little beings whom he picked up on the pavements, or whom kind-hearted neighbours brought to him now that the asylum was known in the district – little boys, little girls, tiny mites stranded on the streets whilst their fathers and mothers were toiling, drinking, or dying. The father had often disappeared, the mother had gone

wrong, drunkenness and debauchery had followed slack times into the home; and then the brood was swept into the gutter, and the younger ones half perished of cold and hunger on the footways, whilst their elders betook themselves to courses of vice and crime. One evening Pierre rescued from the wheels of a stone-dray two little nippers, brothers, who could not even give him an address, tell him whence they had come. On another evening he returned to the asylum with a little girl in his arms, a fair-haired little angel, barely three years old, whom he had found on a bench, and who sobbed, saying that her mother had left her there. And by a logical chain of circumstances, after dealing with the fleshless, pitiful fledglings ousted from their nests, he came to deal with the parents, to enter their hovels, penetrating each day further and further into a hellish sphere, and ultimately acquiring knowledge of all its frightful horror, his heart meantime bleeding, rent by terrified anguish and impotent charity.

Oh! the grievous City of Misery, the bottomless abyss of human suffering and degradation – how frightful were his journeys through it during those two years which distracted his whole being! In that Ste. Marguerite district of Paris, in the very heart of that Faubourg St. Antoine, so active and so brave for work, however hard, he discovered no end of sordid dwellings, whole lanes and alleys of hovels without light or air, cellar-like in their dampness, and where a multitude of wretches wallowed and suffered as from poison. All the way up the shaky

staircases one's feet slipped upon filth. On every story there was the same destitution, dirt, and promiscuity. Many windows were paneless, and in swept the wind howling, and the rain pouring torrentially. Many of the inmates slept on the bare tiled floors, never unclothing themselves. There was neither furniture nor linen, the life led there was essentially an animal life, a commingling of either sex and of every age – humanity lapsing into animality through lack of even indispensable things, through indigence of so complete a character that men, women, and children fought even with tooth and nail for the very crumbs swept from the tables of the rich. And the worst of it all was the degradation of the human being; this was no case of the free naked savage, hunting and devouring his prey in the primeval forests; here civilised man was found, sunk into brutishness, with all the stigmas of his fall, debased, disfigured, and enfeebled, amidst the luxury and refinement of that city of Paris which is one of the queens of the world.

In every household Pierre heard the same story. There had been youth and gaiety at the outset, brave acceptance of the law that one must work. Then weariness had come; what was the use of always toiling if one were never to get rich? And so, by way of snatching a share of happiness, the husband turned to drink; the wife neglected her home, also drinking at times, and letting the children grow up as they might. Sordid surroundings, ignorance, and overcrowding did the rest. In the great majority of cases, prolonged lack of work was mostly to blame; for this

not only empties the drawers of the savings hidden away in them, but exhausts human courage, and tends to confirmed habits of idleness. During long weeks the workshops empty, and the arms of the toilers lose strength. In all Paris, so feverishly inclined to action, it is impossible to find the slightest thing to do. And then the husband comes home in the evening with tearful eyes, having vainly offered his arms everywhere, having failed even to get a job at street-sweeping, for that employment is much sought after, and to secure it one needs influence and protectors. Is it not monstrous to see a man seeking work that he may eat, and finding no work and therefore no food in this great city resplendent and resonant with wealth? The wife does not eat, the children do not eat. And then comes black famine, brutishness, and finally revolt and the snapping of all social ties under the frightful injustice meted out to poor beings who by their weakness are condemned to death. And the old workman, he whose limbs have been worn out by half a century of hard toil, without possibility of saving a copper, on what pallet of agony, in what dark hole must he not sink to die? Should he then be finished off with a mallet, like a crippled beast of burden, on the day when ceasing to work he also ceases to eat? Almost all pass away in the hospitals, others disappear, unknown, swept off by the muddy flow of the streets. One morning, on some rotten straw in a loathsome hovel, Pierre found a poor devil who had died of hunger and had been forgotten there for a week. The rats had devoured his face.

But it was particularly on an evening of the last winter that

Pierre's heart had overflowed with pity. Awful in winter time are the sufferings of the poor in their fireless hovels, where the snow penetrates by every chink. The Seine rolls blocks of ice, the soil is frost-bound, in all sorts of callings there is an enforced cessation of work. Bands of urchins, barefooted, scarcely clad, hungry and racked by coughing, wander about the ragpickers' "rents" and are carried off by sudden hurricanes of consumption. Pierre found families, women with five and six children, who had not eaten for three days, and who huddled together in heaps to try to keep themselves warm. And on that terrible evening, before anybody else, he went down a dark passage and entered a room of terror, where he found that a mother had just committed suicide with her five little ones – driven to it by despair and hunger – a tragedy of misery which for a few hours would make all Paris shudder! There was not an article of furniture or linen left in the place; it had been necessary to sell everything bit by bit to a neighbouring dealer. There was nothing but the stove where the charcoal was still smoking and a half-emptied palliasse on which the mother had fallen, suckling her last-born, a babe but three months old. And a drop of blood had trickled from the nipple of her breast, towards which the dead infant still protruded its eager lips. Two little girls, three and five years old, two pretty little blondes, were also lying there, sleeping the eternal sleep side by side; whilst of the two boys, who were older, one had succumbed crouching against the wall with his head between his hands, and the other had passed through the last throes on the floor, struggling as

though he had sought to crawl on his knees to the window in order to open it. Some neighbours, hurrying in, told Pierre the fearful commonplace story; slow ruin, the father unable to find work, perchance taking to drink, the landlord weary of waiting, threatening the family with expulsion, and the mother losing her head, thirsting for death, and prevailing on her little ones to die with her, while her husband, who had been out since the morning, was vainly scouring the streets. Just as the Commissary of Police arrived to verify what had happened, the poor devil returned, and when he had seen and understood things, he fell to the ground like a stunned ox, and raised a prolonged, plaintive howl, such a poignant cry of death that the whole terrified street wept at it.

Both in his ears and in his heart Pierre carried away with him that horrible cry, the plaint of a condemned race expiring amidst abandonment and hunger; and that night he could neither eat nor sleep. Was it possible that such abomination, such absolute destitution, such black misery leading straight to death should exist in the heart of that great city of Paris, brimful of wealth, intoxicated with enjoyment, flinging millions out of the windows for mere pleasure? What! there should on one side be such colossal fortunes, so many foolish fancies gratified, with lives endowed with every happiness, whilst on the other was found inveterate poverty, lack even of bread, absence of every hope, and mothers killing themselves with their babes, to whom they had nought to offer but the blood of their milkless breast! And a feeling of revolt stirred Pierre; he was for a moment conscious

of the derisive futility of charity. What indeed was the use of doing that which he did – picking up the little ones, succouring the parents, prolonging the sufferings of the aged? The very foundations of the social edifice were rotten; all would soon collapse amid mire and blood. A great act of justice alone could sweep the old world away in order that the new world might be built. And at that moment he realised so keenly how irreparable was the breach, how irremediable the evil, how deathly the cancer of misery, that he understood the actions of the violent, and was himself ready to accept the devastating and purifying whirlwind, the regeneration of the world by flame and steel, even as when in the dim ages Jehovah in His wrath sent fire from heaven to cleanse the accursed cities of the plains.

However, on hearing him sob that evening, Abbe Rose came up to remonstrate in fatherly fashion. The old priest was a saint, endowed with infinite gentleness and infinite hope. Why despair indeed when one had the Gospel? Did not the divine commandment, "Love one another," suffice for the salvation of the world? He, Abbe Rose, held violence in horror and was wont to say that, however great the evil, it would soon be overcome if humanity would but turn backward to the age of humility, simplicity, and purity, when Christians lived together in innocent brotherhood. What a delightful picture he drew of evangelical society, of whose second coming he spoke with quiet gaiety as though it were to take place on the very morrow! And Pierre, anxious to escape from his frightful recollections, ended by

smiling, by taking pleasure in Abbe Rose's bright consoling tale. They chatted until a late hour, and on the following days reverted to the same subject of conversation, one which the old priest was very fond of, ever supplying new particulars, and speaking of the approaching reign of love and justice with the touching confidence of a good if simple man, who is convinced that he will not die till he shall have seen the Deity descend upon earth.

And now a fresh evolution took place in Pierre's mind. The practice of benevolence in that poor district had developed infinite compassion in his breast, his heart failed him, distracted, rent by contemplation of the misery which he despaired of healing. And in this awakening of his feelings he often thought that his reason was giving way, he seemed to be retracing his steps towards childhood, to that need of universal love which his mother had implanted in him, and dreamt of chimerical solutions, awaiting help from the unknown powers. Then his fears, his hatred of the brutality of facts at last brought him an increasing desire to work salvation by love. No time should be lost in seeking to avert the frightful catastrophe which seemed inevitable, the fratricidal war of classes which would sweep the old world away beneath the accumulation of its crimes. Convinced that injustice had attained its apogee, that but little time remained before the vengeful hour when the poor would compel the rich to part with their possessions, he took pleasure in dreaming of a peaceful solution, a kiss of peace exchanged by all men, a return to the pure morals of the Gospel as it had been

preached by Jesus.

Doubts tortured him at the outset. Could olden Catholicism be rejuvenated, brought back to the youth and candour of primitive Christianity? He set himself to study things, reading and questioning, and taking a more and more passionate interest in that great problem of Catholic socialism which had made no little noise for some years past. And quivering with pity for the wretched, ready as he was for the miracle of fraternisation, he gradually lost such scruples as intelligence might have prompted, and persuaded himself that once again Christ would work the redemption of suffering humanity. At last a precise idea took possession of him, a conviction that Catholicism purified, brought back to its original state, would prove the one pact, the supreme law that might save society by averting the sanguinary crisis which threatened it.

When he had quitted Lourdes two years previously, revolted by all its gross idolatry, his faith for ever dead, but his mind worried by the everlasting need of the divine which tortures human creatures, a cry had arisen within him from the deepest recesses of his being: "A new religion! a new religion!" And it was this new religion, or rather this revived religion which he now fancied he had discovered in his desire to work social salvation – ensuring human happiness by means of the only moral authority that was erect, the distant outcome of the most admirable implement ever devised for the government of nations.

During the period of slow development through which

Pierre passed, two men, apart from Abbe Rose, exercised great influence on him. A benevolent action brought him into intercourse with Monseigneur Bergerot, a bishop whom the Pope had recently created a cardinal, in reward for a whole life of charity, and this in spite of the covert opposition of the papal *curia* which suspected the French prelate to be a man of open mind, governing his diocese in paternal fashion. Pierre became more impassioned by his intercourse with this apostle, this shepherd of souls, in whom he detected one of the good simple leaders that he desired for the future community. However, his apostolate was influenced even more decisively by meeting Viscount Philibert de la Choue at the gatherings of certain workingmen's Catholic associations. A handsome man, with military manners, and a long noble-looking face, spoilt by a small and broken nose which seemed to presage the ultimate defeat of a badly balanced mind, the Viscount was one of the most active agitators of Catholic socialism in France. He was the possessor of vast estates, a vast fortune, though it was said that some unsuccessful agricultural enterprises had already reduced his wealth by nearly one-half. In the department where his property was situated he had been at great pains to establish model farms, at which he had put his ideas on Christian socialism into practice, but success did not seem to follow him. However, it had all helped to secure his election as a deputy, and he spoke in the Chamber, unfolding the programme of his party in long and stirring speeches.

Unwearying in his ardour, he also led pilgrimages to Rome, presided over meetings, and delivered lectures, devoting himself particularly to the people, the conquest of whom, so he privately remarked, could alone ensure the triumph of the Church. And thus he exercised considerable influence over Pierre, who in him admired qualities which himself did not possess – an organising spirit and a militant if somewhat blundering will, entirely applied to the revival of Christian society in France. However, though the young priest learnt a good deal by associating with him, he nevertheless remained a sentimental dreamer, whose imagination, disdainful of political requirements, straightway winged its flight to the future abode of universal happiness; whereas the Viscount aspired to complete the downfall of the liberal ideas of 1789 by utilising the disillusion and anger of the democracy to work a return towards the past.

Pierre spent some delightful months. Never before had neophyte lived so entirely for the happiness of others. He was all love, consumed by the passion of his apostolate. The sight of the poor wretches whom he visited, the men without work, the women, the children without bread, filled him with a keener and keener conviction that a new religion must arise to put an end to all the injustice which otherwise would bring the rebellious world to a violent death. And he was resolved to employ all his strength in effecting and hastening the intervention of the divine, the resuscitation of primitive Christianity. His Catholic faith remained dead; he still had no belief in dogmas, mysteries, and

miracles; but a hope sufficed him, the hope that the Church might still work good, by connecting itself with the irresistible modern democratic movement, so as to save the nations from the social catastrophe which impended. His soul had grown calm since he had taken on himself the mission of replanting the Gospel in the hearts of the hungry and growling people of the Faubourgs. He was now leading an active life, and suffered less from the frightful void which he had brought back from Lourdes; and as he no longer questioned himself, the anguish of uncertainty no longer tortured him. It was with the serenity which attends the simple accomplishment of duty that he continued to say his mass. He even finished by thinking that the mystery which he thus celebrated – indeed, that all the mysteries and all the dogmas were but symbols – rites requisite for humanity in its childhood, which would be got rid of later on, when enlarged, purified, and instructed humanity should be able to support the brightness of naked truth.

And in his zealous desire to be useful, his passion to proclaim his belief aloud, Pierre one morning found himself at his table writing a book. This had come about quite naturally; the book proceeded from him like a heart-cry, without any literary idea having crossed his mind. One night, whilst he lay awake, its title suddenly flashed before his eyes in the darkness: "NEW ROME." That expressed everything, for must not the new redemption of the nations originate in eternal and holy Rome? The only existing authority was found there; rejuvenescence

could only spring from the sacred soil where the old Catholic oak had grown. He wrote his book in a couple of months, having unconsciously prepared himself for the work by his studies in contemporary socialism during a year past. There was a bubbling flow in his brain as in a poet's; it seemed to him sometimes as if he dreamt those pages, as if an internal distant voice dictated them to him.

When he read passages written on the previous day to Viscount Philibert de la Choue, the latter often expressed keen approval of them from a practical point of view, saying that one must touch the people in order to lead them, and that it would also be a good plan to compose pious and yet amusing songs for singing in the workshops. As for Monseigneur Bergerot, without examining the book from the dogmatic standpoint, he was deeply touched by the glowing breath of charity which every page exhaled, and was even guilty of the imprudence of writing an approving letter to the author, which letter he authorised him to insert in his work by way of preface. And yet now the Congregation of the Index Expurgatorius was about to place this book, issued in the previous June, under interdict; and it was to defend it that the young priest had hastened to Rome, inflamed by the desire to make his ideas prevail, and resolved to plead his cause in person before the Holy Father, having, he was convinced of it, simply given expression to the pontiff's views.

Pierre had not stirred whilst thus living his three last years afresh: he still stood erect before the parapet, before Rome,

which he had so often dreamt of and had so keenly desired to see. There was a constant succession of arriving and departing vehicles behind him; the slim Englishmen and the heavy Germans passed away after bestowing on the classic view the five minutes prescribed by their guidebooks; whilst the driver and the horse of Pierre's cab remained waiting complacently, each with his head drooping under the bright sun, which was heating the valise on the seat of the vehicle. And Pierre, in his black cassock, seemed to have grown slimmer and elongated, very slight of build, as he stood there motionless, absorbed in the sublime spectacle. He had lost flesh after his journey to Lourdes, his features too had become less pronounced. Since his mother's part in his nature had regained ascendency, the broad, straight forehead, the intellectual air which he owed to his father seemed to have grown less conspicuous, while his kind and somewhat large mouth, and his delicate chin, bespeaking infinite affection, dominated, revealing his soul, which also glowed in the kindly sparkle of his eyes.

Ah! how tender and glowing were the eyes with which he gazed upon the Rome of his book, the new Rome that he had dreamt of! If, first of all, the *ensemble* had claimed his attention in the soft and somewhat veiled light of that lovely morning, at present he could distinguish details, and let his glance rest upon particular edifices. And it was with childish delight that he identified them, having long studied them in maps and collections of photographs. Beneath his feet, at the bottom of the

Janiculum, stretched the Trastevere district with its chaos of old ruddy houses, whose sunburnt tiles hid the course of the Tiber. He was somewhat surprised by the flattish aspect of everything as seen from the terraced summit. It was as though a bird's-eye view levelled the city, the famous hills merely showing like bosses, swellings scarcely perceptible amidst the spreading sea of house-fronts. Yonder, on the right, distinct against the distant blue of the Alban mountains, was certainly the Aventine with its three churches half-hidden by foliage; there, too, was the discrowned Palatine, edged as with black fringe by a line of cypresses. In the rear, the Coelian hill faded away, showing only the trees of the Villa Mattei paling in the golden sunshine. The slender spire and two little domes of Sta. Maria Maggiore alone indicated the summit of the Esquiline, right in front and far away at the other end of the city; whilst on the heights of the neighbouring Viminal, Pierre only perceived a confused mass of whitish blocks, steeped in light and streaked with fine brown lines – recent erections, no doubt, which at that distance suggested an abandoned stone quarry. He long sought the Capitol without being able to discover it; he had to take his bearings, and ended by convincing himself that the square tower, modestly lost among surrounding house-roofs, which he saw in front of Sta. Maria Maggiore was its campanile. Next, on the left, came the Quirinal, recognisable by the long facade of the royal palace, a barrack or hospital-like facade, flat, crudely yellow in hue, and pierced by an infinite number of regularly disposed windows. However, as Pierre was

completing the circuit, a sudden vision made him stop short. Without the city, above the trees of the Botanical Garden, the dome of St. Peter's appeared to him. It seemed to be poised upon the greenery, and rose up into the pure blue sky, sky-blue itself and so ethereal that it mingled with the azure of the infinite. The stone lantern which surmounts it, white and dazzling, looked as though it were suspended on high.

Pierre did not weary, and his glances incessantly travelled from one end of the horizon to the other. They lingered on the noble outlines, the proud gracefulness of the town-sprinkled Sabine and Alban mountains, whose girdle limited the expanse. The Roman Campagna spread out in far stretches, bare and majestic, like a desert of death, with the glaucous green of a stagnant sea; and he ended by distinguishing "the stern round tower" of the tomb of Cecilia Metella, behind which a thin pale line indicated the ancient Appian Way. Remnants of aqueducts strewed the short herbage amidst the dust of the fallen worlds. And, bringing his glance nearer in, the city again appeared with its jumble of edifices, on which his eyes lighted at random. Close at hand, by its loggia turned towards the river, he recognised the huge tawny cube of the Palazzo Farnese. The low cupola, farther away and scarcely visible, was probably that of the Pantheon. Then by sudden leaps came the freshly whitened walls of San Paolo-fuori-le-Mura,[6] similar to those of some huge barn, and the statues crowning San Giovanni in Laterano, delicate, scarcely

[6] St. Paul-beyond-the-walls.

as big as insects. Next the swarming of domes, that of the Gesu, that of San Carlo, that of St'. Andrea della Valle, that of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini; then a number of other sites and edifices, all quivering with memories, the castle of St'. Angelo with its glittering statue of the Destroying Angel, the Villa Medici dominating the entire city, the terrace of the Pincio with its marbles showing whitely among its scanty verdure; and the thick-foliaged trees of the Villa Borghese, whose green crests bounded the horizon. Vainly however did Pierre seek the Colosseum.

The north wind, which was blowing very mildly, had now begun to dissipate the morning haze. Whole districts vigorously disentangled themselves, and showed against the vaporous distance like promontories in a sunlit sea. Here and there, in the indistinct swarming of houses, a strip of white wall glittered, a row of window panes flared, or a garden supplied a black splotch, of wondrous intensity of hue. And all the rest, the medley of streets and squares, the endless blocks of buildings, scattered about on either hand, mingled and grew indistinct in the living glory of the sun, whilst long coils of white smoke, which had ascended from the roofs, slowly traversed the pure sky.

Guided by a secret influence, however, Pierre soon ceased to take interest in all but three points of the mighty panorama. That line of slender cypresses which set a black fringe on the height of the Palatine yonder filled him with emotion: beyond it he saw only a void: the palaces of the Caesars had disappeared, had

fallen, had been razed by time; and he evoked their memory, he fancied he could see them rise like vague, trembling phantoms of gold amidst the purple of that splendid morning. Then his glances reverted to St. Peter's, and there the dome yet soared aloft, screening the Vatican which he knew was beside the colossus, clinging to its flanks. And that dome, of the same colour as the heavens, appeared so triumphant, so full of strength, so vast, that it seemed to him like a giant king, dominating the whole city and seen from every spot throughout eternity. Then he fixed his eyes on the height in front of him, on the Quirinal, and there the King's palace no longer appeared aught but a flat low barracks bedaubed with yellow paint.

And for him all the secular history of Rome, with its constant convulsions and successive resurrections, found embodiment in that symbolical triangle, in those three summits gazing at one another across the Tiber. Ancient Rome blossoming forth in a piling up of palaces and temples, the monstrous florescence of imperial power and splendour; Papal Rome, victorious in the middle ages, mistress of the world, bringing that colossal church, symbolical of beauty regained, to weigh upon all Christendom; and the Rome of to-day, which he knew nothing of, which he had neglected, and whose royal palace, so bare and so cold, brought him disparaging ideas – the idea of some out-of-place, bureaucratic effort, some sacrilegious attempt at modernity in an exceptional city which should have been left entirely to the dreams of the future. However, he shook off the almost painful

feelings which the importunate present brought to him, and would not let his eyes rest on a pale new district, quite a little town, in course of erection, no doubt, which he could distinctly see near St. Peter's on the margin of the river. He had dreamt of his own new Rome, and still dreamt of it, even in front of the Palatine whose edifices had crumbled in the dust of centuries, of the dome of St. Peter's whose huge shadow lulled the Vatican to sleep, of the Palace of the Quirinal repaired and repainted, reigning in homely fashion over the new districts which swarmed on every side, while with its ruddy roofs the olden city, ripped up by improvements, coruscated beneath the bright morning sun.

Again did the title of his book, "NEW ROME," flare before Pierre's eyes, and another reverie carried him off; he lived his book afresh even as he had just lived his life. He had written it amid a flow of enthusiasm, utilising the *data* which he had accumulated at random; and its division into three parts, past, present, and future, had at once forced itself upon him.

The PAST was the extraordinary story of primitive Christianity, of the slow evolution which had turned this Christianity into present-day Catholicism. He showed that an economical question is invariably hidden beneath each religious evolution, and that, upon the whole, the everlasting evil, the everlasting struggle, has never been aught but one between the rich and the poor. Among the Jews, when their nomadic life was over, and they had conquered the land of Canaan, and ownership and property came into being, a class warfare at once

broke out. There were rich, and there were poor; thence arose the social question. The transition had been sudden, and the new state of things so rapidly went from bad to worse that the poor suffered keenly, and protested with the greater violence as they still remembered the golden age of the nomadic life. Until the time of Jesus the prophets are but rebels who surge from out the misery of the people, proclaim its sufferings, and vent their wrath upon the rich, to whom they prophesy every evil in punishment for their injustice and their harshness. Jesus Himself appears as the claimant of the rights of the poor. The prophets, whether socialists or anarchists, had preached social equality, and called for the destruction of the world if it were unjust. Jesus likewise brings to the wretched hatred of the rich. All His teaching threatens wealth and property; and if by the Kingdom of Heaven which He promised one were to understand peace and fraternity upon this earth, there would only be a question of returning to a life of pastoral simplicity, to the dream of the Christian community, such as after Him it would seem to have been realised by His disciples. During the first three centuries each Church was an experiment in communism, a real association whose members possessed all in common – wives excepted. This is shown to us by the apologists and early fathers of the Church. Christianity was then but the religion of the humble and the poor, a form of democracy, of socialism struggling against Roman society. And when the latter toppled over, rotted by money, it succumbed far more beneath the results

of frantic speculation, swindling banks, and financial disasters, than beneath the onslaught of barbarian hordes and the stealthy, termite-like working of the Christians.

The money question will always be found at the bottom of everything. And a new proof of this was supplied when Christianity, at last triumphing by virtue of historical, social, and human causes, was proclaimed a State religion. To ensure itself complete victory it was forced to range itself on the side of the rich and the powerful; and one should see by means of what artfulness and sophistry the fathers of the Church succeeded in discovering a defence of property and wealth in the Gospel of Jesus. All this, however, was a vital political necessity for Christianity; it was only at this price that it became Catholicism, the universal religion. From that time forth the powerful machine, the weapon of conquest and rule, was reared aloft: up above were the powerful and the wealthy, those whose duty it was to share with the poor, but who did not do so; while down below were the poor, the toilers, who were taught resignation and obedience, and promised the kingdom of futurity, the divine and eternal reward – an admirable monument which has lasted for ages, and which is entirely based on the promise of life beyond life, on the inextinguishable thirst for immortality and justice that consumes mankind.

Pierre had completed this first part of his book, this history of the past, by a broad sketch of Catholicism until the present time. First appeared St. Peter, ignorant and anxious, coming

to Rome by an inspiration of genius, there to fulfil the ancient oracles which had predicted the eternity of the Capitol. Then came the first popes, mere heads of burial associations, the slow rise of the all-powerful papacy ever struggling to conquer the world, unremittingly seeking to realise its dream of universal domination. At the time of the great popes of the middle ages it thought for a moment that it had attained its goal, that it was the sovereign master of the nations. Would not absolute truth and right consist in the pope being both pontiff and ruler of the world, reigning over both the souls and the bodies of all men, even like the Deity whose vicar he is? This, the highest and mightiest of all ambitions, one, too, that is perfectly logical, was attained by Augustus, emperor and pontiff, master of all the known world; and it is the glorious figure of Augustus, ever rising anew from among the ruins of ancient Rome, which has always haunted the popes; it is his blood which has pulsated in their veins.

But power had become divided into two parts amidst the crumbling of the Roman empire; it was necessary to content oneself with a share, and leave temporal government to the emperor, retaining over him, however, the right of coronation by divine grant. The people belonged to God, and in God's name the pope gave the people to the emperor, and could take it from him; an unlimited power whose most terrible weapon was excommunication, a superior sovereignty, which carried the papacy towards real and final possession of the empire. Looking at things broadly, the everlasting quarrel

between the pope and the emperor was a quarrel for the people, the inert mass of humble and suffering ones, the great silent multitude whose irremediable wretchedness was only revealed by occasional covert growls. It was disposed of, for its good, as one might dispose of a child. Yet the Church really contributed to civilisation, rendered constant services to humanity, diffused abundant alms. In the convents, at any rate, the old dream of the Christian community was ever coming back: one-third of the wealth accumulated for the purposes of worship, the adornment and glorification of the shrine, one-third for the priests, and one-third for the poor. Was not this a simplification of life, a means of rendering existence possible to the faithful who had no earthly desires, pending the marvellous contentment of heavenly life? Give us, then, the whole earth, and we will divide terrestrial wealth into three such parts, and you shall see what a golden age will reign amidst the resignation and the obedience of all!

However, Pierre went on to show how the papacy was assailed by the greatest dangers on emerging from its all-powerfulness of the middle ages. It was almost swept away amidst the luxury and excesses of the Renascence, the bubbling of living sap which then gushed from eternal nature, downtrodden and regarded as dead for ages past. More threatening still were the stealthy awakenings of the people, of the great silent multitude whose tongue seemed to be loosening. The Reformation burst forth like the protest of reason and justice, like a recall to the disregarded truths of the Gospel; and to escape total annihilation Rome needed

the stern defence of the Inquisition, the slow stubborn labour of the Council of Trent, which strengthened the dogmas and ensured the temporal power. And then the papacy entered into two centuries of peace and effacement, for the strong absolute monarchies which had divided Europe among themselves could do without it, and had ceased to tremble at the harmless thunderbolts of excommunication or to look on the pope as aught but a master of ceremonies, controlling certain rites. The possession of the people was no longer subject to the same rules. Allowing that the kings still held the people from God, it was the pope's duty to register the donation once for all, without ever intervening, whatever the circumstances, in the government of states. Never was Rome farther away from the realisation of its ancient dream of universal dominion. And when the French Revolution burst forth, it may well have been imagined that the proclamation of the rights of man would kill that papacy to which the exercise of divine right over the nations had been committed. And so how great at first was the anxiety, the anger, the desperate resistance with which the Vatican opposed the idea of freedom, the new *credo* of liberated reason, of humanity regaining self-possession and control. It was the apparent *denouement* of the long struggle between the pope and the emperor for possession of the people: the emperor vanished, and the people, henceforward free to dispose of itself, claimed to escape from the pope – an unforeseen solution, in which it seemed as though all the ancient scaffolding of the Catholic world must fall to the very ground.

At this point Pierre concluded the first part of his book by contrasting primitive Christianity with present-day Catholicism, which is the triumph of the rich and the powerful. That Roman society which Jesus had come to destroy in the name of the poor and humble, had not Catholic Rome steadily continued rebuilding it through all the centuries, by its policy of cupidity and pride? And what bitter irony it was to find, after eighteen hundred years of the Gospel, that the world was again collapsing through frantic speculation, rotten banks, financial disasters, and the frightful injustice of a few men gorged with wealth whilst thousands of their brothers were dying of hunger! The whole redemption of the wretched had to be worked afresh. However, Pierre gave expression to all these terrible things in words so softened by charity, so steeped in hope, that they lost their revolutionary danger. Moreover, he nowhere attacked the dogmas. His book, in its sentimental, somewhat poetic form, was but the cry of an apostle glowing with love for his fellow-men.

Then came the second part of the work, the PRESENT, a study of Catholic society as it now exists. Here Pierre had painted a frightful picture of the misery of the poor, the misery of a great city, which he knew so well and bled for, through having laid his hands upon its poisonous wounds. The present-day injustice could no longer be tolerated, charity was becoming powerless, and so frightful was the suffering that all hope was dying away from the hearts of the people. And was it not the monstrous spectacle presented by Christendom,

whose abominations corrupted the people, and maddened it with hatred and vengeance, that had largely destroyed its faith? However, after this picture of rotting and crumbling society, Pierre returned to history, to the period of the French Revolution, to the mighty hope with which the idea of freedom had filled the world. The middle classes, the great Liberal party, on attaining power had undertaken to bring happiness to one and all. But after a century's experience it really seemed that liberty had failed to bring any happiness whatever to the outcasts. In the political sphere illusions were departing. At all events, if the reigning third estate declares itself satisfied, the fourth estate, that of the toilers,[7] still suffers and continues to demand its share of fortune. The working classes have been proclaimed free; political equality has been granted them, but the gift has been valueless, for economically they are still bound to servitude, and only enjoy, as they did formerly, the liberty of dying of hunger. All the socialist revendications have come from that; between labour and capital rests the terrifying problem, the solution of which threatens to sweep away society. When slavery disappeared from the olden world to be succeeded by salaried employment the revolution was immense, and certainly the Christian principle was one of the great factors in the destruction of slavery. Nowadays, therefore, when the question is to replace salaried employment by something else, possibly by the participation of the workman

[7] In England we call the press the fourth estate, but in France and elsewhere the term is applied to the working classes, and in that sense must be taken here. – Trans.

in the profits of his work, why should not Christianity again seek a new principle of action? The fatal and proximate accession of the democracy means the beginning of another phase in human history, the creation of the society of to-morrow. And Rome cannot keep away from the arena; the papacy must take part in the quarrel if it does not desire to disappear from the world like a piece of mechanism that has become altogether useless.

Hence it followed that Catholic socialism was legitimate. On every side the socialist sects were battling with their various solutions for the privilege of ensuring the happiness of the people, and the Church also must offer her solution of the problem. Here it was that New Rome appeared, that the evolution spread into a renewal of boundless hope. Most certainly there was nothing contrary to democracy in the principles of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed she had only to return to the evangelical traditions, to become once more the Church of the humble and the poor, to re-establish the universal Christian community. She is undoubtedly of democratic essence, and if she sided with the rich and the powerful when Christianity became Catholicism, she only did so perforce, that she might live by sacrificing some portion of her original purity; so that if to-day she should abandon the condemned governing classes in order to make common cause with the multitude of the wretched, she would simply be drawing nearer to Christ, thereby securing a new lease of youth and purifying herself of all the political compromises which she formerly was compelled to accept.

Without renouncing aught of her absolutism the Church has at all times known how to bow to circumstances; but she reserves her perfect sovereignty, simply tolerating that which she cannot prevent, and patiently waiting, even through long centuries, for the time when she shall again become the mistress of the world.

Might not that time come in the crisis which was now at hand? Once more, all the powers are battling for possession of the people. Since the people, thanks to liberty and education, has become strong, since it has developed consciousness and will, and claimed its share of fortune, all rulers have been seeking to attach it to themselves, to reign by it, and even with it, should that be necessary. Socialism, therein lies the future, the new instrument of government; and the kings tottering on their thrones, the middle-class presidents of anxious republics, the ambitious plotters who dream of power, all dabble in socialism! They all agree that the capitalist organisation of the State is a return to pagan times, to the olden slave-market; and they all talk of breaking for ever the iron law by which the labour of human beings has become so much merchandise, subject to supply and demand, with wages calculated on an estimate of what is strictly necessary to keep a workman from dying of hunger. And, down in the sphere below, the evil increases, the workmen agonise with hunger and exasperation, while above them discussion still goes on, systems are bandied about, and well-meaning persons exhaust themselves in attempting to apply ridiculously inadequate remedies. There is much stir without

any progress, all the wild bewilderment which precedes great catastrophes. And among the many, Catholic socialism, quite as ardent as Revolutionary socialism, enters the lists and strives to conquer.

After these explanations Pierre gave an account of the long efforts made by Catholic socialism throughout the Christian world. That which particularly struck one in this connection was that the warfare became keener and more victorious whenever it was waged in some land of propaganda, as yet not completely conquered by Roman Catholicism. For instance, in the countries where Protestantism confronted the latter, the priests fought with wondrous passion, as for dear life itself, contending with the schismatical clergy for possession of the people by dint of daring, by unfolding the most audacious democratic theories. In Germany, the classic land of socialism, Mgr. Ketteler was one of the first to speak of adequately taxing the rich; and later he fomented a wide-spread agitation which the clergy now directs by means of numerous associations and newspapers. In Switzerland Mgr. Mermillod pleaded the cause of the poor so loudly that the bishops there now almost make common cause with the democratic socialists, whom they doubtless hope to convert when the day for sharing arrives. In England, where socialism penetrates so very slowly, Cardinal Manning achieved considerable success, stood by the working classes on the occasion of a famous strike, and helped on a popular movement, which was signalised by numerous conversions. But

it was particularly in the United States of America that Catholic socialism proved triumphant, in a sphere of democracy where the bishops, like Mgr. Ireland, were forced to set themselves at the head of the working-class agitation. And there across the Atlantic a new Church seems to be germinating, still in confusion but overflowing with sap, and upheld by intense hope, as at the aurora of the rejuvenated Christianity of to-morrow.

Passing thence to Austria and Belgium, both Catholic countries, one found Catholic socialism mingling in the first instance with anti-semitism, while in the second it had no precise sense. And all movement ceased and disappeared when one came to Spain and Italy, those old lands of faith. The former with its intractable bishops who contented themselves with hurling excommunication at unbelievers as in the days of the Inquisition, seemed to be abandoned to the violent theories of revolutionaries, whilst Italy, immobilised in the traditional courses, remained without possibility of initiative, reduced to silence and respect by the presence of the Holy See. In France, however, the struggle remained keen, but it was more particularly a struggle of ideas. On the whole, the war was there being waged against the revolution, and to some it seemed as though it would suffice to re-establish the old organisation of monarchical times in order to revert to the golden age. It was thus that the question of working-class corporations had become the one problem, the panacea for all the ills of the toilers. But people were far from agreeing; some, those Catholics who rejected State interference

and favoured purely moral action, desired that the corporations should be free; whilst others, the young and impatient ones, bent on action, demanded that they should be obligatory, each with capital of its own, and recognised and protected by the State.

Viscount Philibert de la Choue had by pen and speech carried on a vigorous campaign in favour of the obligatory corporations; and his great grief was that he had so far failed to prevail on the Pope to say whether in his opinion these corporations should be closed or open. According to the Viscount, herein lay the fate of society, a peaceful solution of the social question or the frightful catastrophe which must sweep everything away. In reality, though he refused to own it, the Viscount had ended by adopting State socialism. And, despite the lack of agreement, the agitation remained very great; attempts, scarcely happy in their results, were made; co-operative associations, companies for erecting workmen's dwellings, popular savings' banks were started; many more or less disguised efforts to revert to the old Christian community organisation were tried; while day by day, amidst the prevailing confusion, in the mental perturbation and political difficulties through which the country passed, the militant Catholic party felt its hopes increasing, even to the blind conviction of soon resuming sway over the whole world.

The second part of Pierre's book concluded by a picture of the moral and intellectual uneasiness amidst which the end of the century is struggling. While the toiling multitude suffers from its hard lot and demands that in any fresh division of wealth it shall

be ensured at least its daily bread, the *elite* is no better satisfied, but complains of the void induced by the freeing of its reason and the enlargement of its intelligence. It is the famous bankruptcy of rationalism, of positivism, of science itself which is in question. Minds consumed by need of the absolute grow weary of groping, weary of the delays of science which recognises only proven truths; doubt tortures them, they need a complete and immediate synthesis in order to sleep in peace; and they fall on their knees, overcome by the roadside, distracted by the thought that science will never tell them all, and preferring the Deity, the mystery revealed and affirmed by faith. Even to-day, it must be admitted, science calms neither our thirst for justice, our desire for safety, nor our everlasting idea of happiness after life in an eternity of enjoyment. To one and all it only brings the austere duty to live, to be a mere contributor in the universal toil; and how well one can understand that hearts should revolt and sigh for the Christian heaven, peopled with lovely angels, full of light and music and perfumes! Ah! to embrace one's dead, to tell oneself that one will meet them again, that one will live with them once more in glorious immortality! And to possess the certainty of sovereign equity to enable one to support the abominations of terrestrial life! And in this wise to trample on the frightful thought of annihilation, to escape the horror of the disappearance of the *ego*, and to tranquillise oneself with that unshakable faith which postpones until the portal of death be crossed the solution of all the problems of destiny! This dream will be dreamt by the

nations for ages yet. And this it is which explains why, in these last days of the century, excessive mental labour and the deep unrest of humanity, pregnant with a new world, have awakened religious feeling, anxious, tormented by thoughts of the ideal and the infinite, demanding a moral law and an assurance of superior justice. Religions may disappear, but religious feelings will always create new ones, even with the help of science. A new religion! a new religion! Was it not the ancient Catholicism, which in the soil of the present day, where all seemed conducive to a miracle, was about to spring up afresh, throw out green branches and blossom in a young yet mighty florescence?

At last, in the third part of his book and in the glowing language of an apostle, Pierre depicted the FUTURE: Catholicism rejuvenated, and bringing health and peace, the forgotten golden age of primitive Christianity, back to expiring society. He began with an emotional and sparkling portrait of Leo XIII, the ideal Pope, the Man of Destiny entrusted with the salvation of the nations. He had conjured up a presentment of him and beheld him thus in his feverish longing for the advent of a pastor who should put an end to human misery. It was perhaps not a close likeness, but it was a portrait of the needed saviour, with open heart and mind, and inexhaustible benevolence, such as he had dreamed. At the same time he had certainly searched documents, studied encyclical letters, based his sketch upon facts: first Leo's religious education at Rome, then his brief nunciature at Brussels, and afterwards his long

episcopate at Perugia. And as soon as Leo became pope in the difficult situation bequeathed by Pius IX, the duality of his nature appeared: on one hand was the firm guardian of dogmas, on the other the supple politician resolved to carry conciliation to its utmost limits. We see him flatly severing all connection with modern philosophy, stepping backward beyond the Renascence to the middle ages and reviving Christian philosophy, as expounded by "the angelic doctor," St. Thomas Aquinas, in Catholic schools. Then the dogmas being in this wise sheltered, he adroitly maintains himself in equilibrium by giving securities to every power, striving to utilise every opportunity. He displays extraordinary activity, reconciles the Holy See with Germany, draws nearer to Russia, contents Switzerland, asks the friendship of Great Britain, and writes to the Emperor of China begging him to protect the missionaries and Christians in his dominions. Later on, too, he intervenes in France and acknowledges the legitimacy of the Republic.

From the very outset an idea becomes apparent in all his actions, an idea which will place him among the great papal politicians. It is moreover the ancient idea of the papacy – the conquest of every soul, Rome capital and mistress of the world. Thus Leo XIII has but one desire, one object, that of unifying the Church, of drawing all the dissident communities to it in order that it may be invincible in the coming social struggle. He seeks to obtain recognition of the moral authority of the Vatican in Russia; he dreams of disarming the Anglican Church and of

drawing it into a sort of fraternal truce; and he particularly seeks to come to an understanding with the Schismatical Churches of the East, which he regards as sisters, simply living apart, whose return his paternal heart entreats. Would not Rome indeed dispose of victorious strength if she exercised uncontested sway over all the Christians of the earth?

And here the social ideas of Leo XIII come in. Whilst yet Bishop of Perugia he wrote a pastoral letter in which a vague humanitarian socialism appeared. As soon, however, as he had assumed the triple crown his opinions changed and he anathematised the revolutionaries whose audacity was terrifying Italy. But almost at once he corrected himself, warned by events and realising the great danger of leaving socialism in the hands of the enemies of the Church. Then he listened to the bishops of the lands of propaganda, ceased to intervene in the Irish quarrel, withdrew the excommunications which he had launched against the American "knights of labour," and would not allow the bold works of Catholic socialist writers to be placed in the Index. This evolution towards democracy may be traced through his most famous encyclical letters: *Immortale Dei*, on the constitution of States; *Libertas*, on human liberty; *Sapientoe*, on the duties of Christian citizens; *Rerum novarum*, on the condition of the working classes; and it is particularly this last which would seem to have rejuvenated the Church. The Pope herein chronicles the undeserved misery of the toilers, the undue length of the hours of labour, the insufficiency of salaries. All men have the

right to live, and all contracts extorted by threats of starvation are unjust. Elsewhere he declares that the workman must not be left defenceless in presence of a system which converts the misery of the majority into the wealth of a few. Compelled to deal vaguely with questions of organisation, he contents himself with encouraging the corporative movement, placing it under State patronage; and after thus contributing to restore the secular power, he reinstates the Deity on the throne of sovereignty, and discerns the path to salvation more particularly in moral measures, in the ancient respect due to family ties and ownership. Nevertheless, was not the helpful hand which the august Vicar of Christ thus publicly tendered to the poor and the humble, the certain token of a new alliance, the announcement of a new reign of Jesus upon earth? Thenceforward the people knew that it was not abandoned. And from that moment too how glorious became Leo XIII, whose sacerdotal jubilee and episcopal jubilee were celebrated by all Christendom amidst the coming of a vast multitude, of endless offerings, and of flattering letters from every sovereign!

Pierre next dealt with the question of the temporal power, and this he thought he might treat freely. Naturally, he was not ignorant of the fact that the Pope in his quarrel with Italy upheld the rights of the Church over Rome as stubbornly as his predecessor; but he imagined that this was merely a necessary conventional attitude, imposed by political considerations, and destined to be abandoned when the times were ripe. For his own

part he was convinced that if the Pope had never appeared greater than he did now, it was to the loss of the temporal power that he owed it; for thence had come the great increase of his authority, the pure splendour of moral omnipotence which he diffused.

What a long history of blunders and conflicts had been that of the possession of the little kingdom of Rome during fifteen centuries! Constantine quits Rome in the fourth century, only a few forgotten functionaries remaining on the deserted Palatine, and the Pope naturally rises to power, and the life of the city passes to the Lateran. However, it is only four centuries later that Charlemagne recognises accomplished facts and formally bestows the States of the Church upon the papacy. From that time warfare between the spiritual power and the temporal powers has never ceased; though often latent it has at times become acute, breaking forth with blood and fire. And to-day, in the midst of Europe in arms, is it not unreasonable to dream of the papacy ruling a strip of territory where it would be exposed to every vexation, and where it could only maintain itself by the help of a foreign army? What would become of it in the general massacre which is apprehended? Is it not far more sheltered, far more dignified, far more lofty when disentangled from all terrestrial cares, reigning over the world of souls?

In the early times of the Church the papacy from being merely local, merely Roman, gradually became catholicised, universalised, slowly acquiring dominion over all Christendom. In the same way the Sacred College, at first a continuation

of the Roman Senate, acquired an international character, and in our time has ended by becoming the most cosmopolitan of assemblies, in which representatives of all the nations have seats. And is it not evident that the Pope, thus leaning on the cardinals, has become the one great international power which exercises the greater authority since it is free from all monarchical interests, and can speak not merely in the name of country but in that of humanity itself? The solution so often sought amidst such long wars surely lies in this: Either give the Pope the temporal sovereignty of the world, or leave him only the spiritual sovereignty. Vicar of the Deity, absolute and infallible sovereign by divine delegation, he can but remain in the sanctuary if, ruler already of the human soul, he is not recognised by every nation as the one master of the body also – the king of kings.

But what a strange affair was this new incursion of the papacy into the field sown by the French Revolution, an incursion conducting it perhaps towards the domination, which it has striven for with a will that has upheld it for centuries! For now it stands alone before the people. The kings are down. And as the people is henceforth free to give itself to whomsoever it pleases, why should it not give itself to the Church? The depreciation which the idea of liberty has certainly undergone renders every hope permissible. The liberal party appears to be vanquished in the sphere of economics. The toilers, dissatisfied with 1789 complain of the aggravation of their misery, bestir themselves, seek happiness despairingly. On the other hand the new *regimes*

have increased the international power of the Church; Catholic members are numerous in the parliaments of the republics and the constitutional monarchies. All circumstances seem therefore to favour this extraordinary return of fortune, Catholicism reverting to the vigour of youth in its old age. Even science, remember, is accused of bankruptcy, a charge which saves the *Syllabus* from ridicule, troubles the minds of men, and throws the limitless sphere of mystery and impossibility open once more. And then a prophecy is recalled, a prediction that the papacy shall be mistress of the world on the day when she marches at the head of the democracy after reuniting the Schismatical Churches of the East to the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church. And, in Pierre's opinion, assuredly the times had come since Pope Leo XIII, dismissing the great and the wealthy of the world, left the kings driven from their thrones in exile to place himself like Jesus on the side of the foodless toilers and the beggars of the high roads. Yet a few more years, perhaps, of frightful misery, alarming confusion, fearful social danger, and the people, the great silent multitude which others have so far disposed of, will return to the cradle, to the unified Church of Rome, in order to escape the destruction which threatens human society.

Pierre concluded his book with a passionate evocation of New Rome, the spiritual Rome which would soon reign over the nations, reconciled and fraternising as in another golden age. Herein he even saw the end of superstitions. Without making a direct attack on dogma, he allowed himself to dream of an

enlargement of religious feeling, freed from rites, and absorbed in the one satisfaction of human charity. And still smarting from his journey to Lourdes, he felt the need of contenting his heart. Was not that gross superstition of Lourdes the hateful symptom of the excessive suffering of the times? On the day when the Gospel should be universally diffused and practised, suffering ones would cease seeking an illusory relief so far away, assured as they would be of finding assistance, consolation, and cure in their homes amidst their brothers. At Lourdes there was an iniquitous displacement of wealth, a spectacle so frightful as to make one doubt of God, a perpetual conflict which would disappear in the truly Christian society of to-morrow. Ah! that society, that Christian community, all Pierre's work ended in an ardent longing for its speedy advent: Christianity becoming once more the religion of truth and justice which it had been before it allowed itself to be conquered by the rich and the powerful! The little ones and the poor ones reigning, sharing the wealth of earth, and owing obedience to nought but the levelling law of work! The Pope alone erect at the head of the federation of nations, prince of peace, with the simple mission of supplying the moral rule, the link of charity and love which was to unite all men! And would not this be the speedy realisation of the promises of Christ? The times were near accomplishment, secular and religious society would mingle so closely that they would form but one; and it would be the age of triumph and happiness predicted by all the prophets, no more struggles possible, no more antagonism

between the mind and the body, but a marvellous equilibrium which would kill evil and set the kingdom of heaven upon earth. New Rome, the centre of the world, bestowing on the world the new religion!

Pierre felt that tears were coming to his eyes, and with an unconscious movement, never noticing how much he astonished the slim Englishmen and thick-set Germans passing along the terrace, he opened his arms and extended them towards the *real* Rome, steeped in such lovely sunshine and stretched out at his feet. Would she prove responsive to his dream? Would he, as he had written, find within her the remedy for our impatience and our alarms? Could Catholicism be renewed, could it return to the spirit of primitive Christianity, become the religion of the democracy, the faith which the modern world, overturned and in danger of perishing, awaits in order to be pacified and to live?

Pierre was full of generous passion, full of faith. He again beheld good Abbe Rose weeping with emotion as he read his book. He heard Viscount Philibert de la Choue telling him that such a book was worth an army. And he particularly felt strong in the approval of Cardinal Bergerot, that apostle of inexhaustible charity. Why should the Congregation of the Index threaten his work with interdiction? Since he had been officiously advised to go to Rome if he desired to defend himself, he had been turning this question over in his mind without being able to discover which of his pages were attacked. To him indeed they all seemed to glow with the purest Christianity. However, he had arrived

quivering with enthusiasm and courage: he was all eagerness to kneel before the Pope, and place himself under his august protection, assuring him that he had not written a line without taking inspiration from his ideas, without desiring the triumph of his policy. Was it possible that condemnation should be passed on a book in which he imagined in all sincerity that he had exalted Leo XIII by striving to help him in his work of Christian reunion and universal peace?

For a moment longer Pierre remained standing before the parapet. He had been there for nearly an hour, unable to drink in enough of the grandeur of Rome, which, given all the unknown things she hid from him, he would have liked to possess at once. Oh! to seize hold of her, know her, ascertain at once the true word which he had come to seek from her! This again, like Lourdes, was an experiment, but a graver one, a decisive one, whence he would emerge either strengthened or overcome for evermore. He no longer sought the simple, perfect faith of the little child, but the superior faith of the intellectual man, raising himself above rites and symbols, working for the greatest happiness of humanity as based on its need of certainty. His temples throbbed responsive to his heart. What would be the answer of Rome?

The sunlight had increased and the higher districts now stood out more vigorously against the fiery background. Far away the hills became gilded and empurpled, whilst the nearer house-fronts grew very distinct and bright with their thousands of

windows sharply outlined. However, some morning haze still hovered around; light veils seemed to rise from the lower streets, blurring the summits for a moment, and then evaporating in the ardent heavens where all was blue. For a moment Pierre fancied that the Palatine had vanished, for he could scarcely see the dark fringe of cypresses; it was as though the dust of its ruins concealed the hill. But the Quirinal was even more obscured; the royal palace seemed to have faded away in a fog, so paltry did it look with its low flat front, so vague in the distance that he no longer distinguished it; whereas above the trees on his left the dome of St. Peter's had grown yet larger in the limpid gold of the sunshine, and appeared to occupy the whole sky and dominate the whole city!

Ah! the Rome of that first meeting, the Rome of early morning, whose new districts he had not even noticed in the burning fever of his arrival – with what boundless hopes did she not inspirit him, this Rome which he believed he should find alive, such indeed as he had dreamed! And whilst he stood there in his thin black cassock, thus gazing on her that lovely day, what a shout of coming redemption seemed to arise from her house-roofs, what a promise of universal peace seemed to issue from that sacred soil, twice already Queen of the world! It was the third Rome, it was New Rome whose maternal love was travelling across the frontiers to all the nations to console them and reunite them in a common embrace. In the passionate candour of his dream he beheld her, he heard her, rejuvenated,

full of the gentleness of childhood, soaring, as it were, amidst the morning freshness into the vast pure heavens.

But at last Pierre tore himself away from the sublime spectacle. The driver and the horse, their heads drooping under the broad sunlight, had not stirred. On the seat the valise was almost burning, hot with rays of the sun which was already heavy. And once more Pierre got into the vehicle and gave this address:

"Via Giulia, Palazzo Boccanera."

II

THE Via Giulia, which runs in a straight line over a distance of five hundred yards from the Farnese palace to the church of St. John of the Florentines, was at that hour steeped in bright sunlight, the glow streaming from end to end and whitening the small square paving stones. The street had no footways, and the cab rolled along it almost to the farther extremity, passing the old grey sleepy and deserted residences whose large windows were barred with iron, while their deep porches revealed sombre courts resembling wells. Laid out by Pope Julius II, who had dreamt of lining it with magnificent palaces, the street, then the most regular and handsome in Rome, had served as Corso[8] in the sixteenth century. One could tell that one was in a former luxurious district, which had lapsed into silence, solitude, and abandonment, instinct with a kind of religious gentleness and discretion. The old house-fronts followed one after another, their shutters closed and their gratings occasionally decked with climbing plants. At some doors cats were seated, and dim shops, appropriated to humble trades, were installed in certain dependencies. But little traffic was apparent. Pierre only noticed some bare-headed women dragging children behind them, a hay cart drawn by a mule, a superb monk draped in drugget, and a

[8] The Corso was so called on account of the horse races held in it at carnival time. – Trans.

bicyclist speeding along noiselessly, his machine sparkling in the sun.

At last the driver turned and pointed to a large square building at the corner of a lane running towards the Tiber.

"Palazzo Boccanera."

Pierre raised his head and was pained by the severe aspect of the structure, so bare and massive and blackened by age. Like its neighbours the Farnese and Sacchetti palaces, it had been built by Antonio da Sangallo in the early part of the sixteenth century, and, as with the former of those residences, the tradition ran that in raising the pile the architect had made use of stones pilfered from the Colosseum and the Theatre of Marcellus. The vast, square-looking facade had three upper stories, each with seven windows, and the first one very lofty and noble. Down below, the only sign of decoration was that the high ground-floor windows, barred with huge projecting gratings as though from fear of siege, rested upon large consoles, and were crowned by attics which smaller consoles supported. Above the monumental entrance, with folding doors of bronze, there was a balcony in front of the central first-floor window. And at the summit of the facade against the sky appeared a sumptuous entablature, whose frieze displayed admirable grace and purity of ornamentation. The frieze, the consoles, the attics, and the door-case were of white marble, but marble whose surface had so crumbled and so darkened that it now had the rough yellowish grain of stone. Right and left of the entrance were two antique seats upheld by griffons

also of marble; and incrusted in the wall at one corner, a lovely Renascence fountain, its source dried up, still lingered; and on it a cupid riding a dolphin could with difficulty be distinguished, to such a degree had the wear and tear of time eaten into the sculpture.

Pierre's eyes, however, had been more particularly attracted by an escutcheon carved above one of the ground-floor windows, the escutcheon of the Boccaneras, a winged dragon venting flames, and underneath it he could plainly read the motto which had remained intact: "*Bocca nera, Alma rossa*" (black mouth, red soul). Above another window, as a pendant to the escutcheon, there was one of those little shrines which are still common in Rome, a satin-robed statuette of the Blessed Virgin, before which a lantern burnt in the full daylight.

The cabman was about to drive through the dim and gaping porch, according to custom, when the young priest, overcome by timidity, stopped him. "No, no," he said; "don't go in, it's useless."

Then he alighted from the vehicle, paid the man, and, valise in hand, found himself first under the vaulted roof, and then in the central court without having met a living soul.

It was a square and fairly spacious court, surrounded by a porticus like a cloister. Some remnants of statuary, marbles discovered in excavating, an armless Apollo, and the trunk of a Venus, were ranged against the walls under the dismal arcades; and some fine grass had sprouted between the pebbles which

paved the soil as with a black and white mosaic. It seemed as if the sun-rays could never reach that paving, mouldy with damp. A dimness and a silence instinct with departed grandeur and infinite mournfulness reigned there.

Surprised by the emptiness of this silent mansion, Pierre continued seeking somebody, a porter, a servant; and, fancying that he saw a shadow flit by, he decided to pass through another arch which led to a little garden fringing the Tiber. On this side the facade of the building was quite plain, displaying nothing beyond its three rows of symmetrically disposed windows. However, the abandonment reigning in the garden brought Pierre yet a keener pang. In the centre some large box-plants were growing in the basin of a fountain which had been filled up; while among the mass of weeds, some orange-trees with golden, ripening fruit alone indicated the tracery of the paths which they had once bordered. Between two huge laurel-bushes, against the right-hand wall, there was a sarcophagus of the second century – with fauns offering violence to nymphs, one of those wild *baccanali*, those scenes of eager passion which Rome in its decline was wont to depict on the tombs of its dead; and this marble sarcophagus, crumbling with age and green with moisture, served as a tank into which a streamlet of water fell from a large tragic mask incrusted in the wall. Facing the Tiber there had formerly been a sort of colonnaded loggia, a terrace whence a double flight of steps descended to the river. For the construction of the new quays, however, the river bank was being

raised, and the terrace was already lower than the new ground level, and stood there crumbling and useless amidst piles of rubbish and blocks of stone, all the wretched chalky confusion of the improvements which were ripping up and overturning the district.

Pierre, however, was suddenly convinced that he could see somebody crossing the court. So he returned thither and found a woman somewhat short of stature, who must have been nearly fifty, though as yet she had not a white hair, but looked very bright and active. At sight of the priest, however, an expression of distrust passed over her round face and clear eyes.

Employing the few words of broken Italian which he knew, Pierre at once sought to explain matters: "I am Abbe Pierre Froment, madame – " he began.

However, she did not let him continue, but exclaimed in fluent French, with the somewhat thick and lingering accent of the province of the Ile-de-France: "Ah! yes, Monsieur l'Abbe, I know, I know – I was expecting you, I received orders about you." And then, as he gazed at her in amazement, she added: "Oh! I'm a Frenchwoman! I've been here for five and twenty years, but I haven't yet been able to get used to their horrible lingo!"

Pierre thereupon remembered that Viscount Philibert de la Choue had spoken to him of this servant, one Victorine Bosquet, a native of Auneau in La Beauce, who, when two and twenty, had gone to Rome with a consumptive mistress. The latter's sudden death had left her in as much terror and bewilderment

as if she had been alone in some land of savages; and so she had gratefully devoted herself to the Countess Ernesta Brandini, a Boccanera by birth, who had, so to say, picked her up in the streets. The Countess had at first employed her as a nurse to her daughter Benedetta, hoping in this way to teach the child some French; and Victorine – remaining for some five and twenty years with the same family – had by degrees raised herself to the position of housekeeper, whilst still remaining virtually illiterate, so destitute indeed of any linguistic gift that she could only jabber a little broken Italian, just sufficient for her needs in her intercourse with the other servants.

"And is Monsieur le Vicomte quite well?" she resumed with frank familiarity. "He is so very pleasant, and we are always so pleased to see him. He stays here, you know, each time he comes to Rome. I know that the Princess and the Contessina received a letter from him yesterday announcing you."

It was indeed Viscount Philibert de la Choue who had made all the arrangements for Pierre's sojourn in Rome. Of the ancient and once vigorous race of the Boccaneras, there now only remained Cardinal Pio Boccanera, the Princess his sister, an old maid who from respect was called "Donna" Serafina, their niece Benedetta – whose mother Ernesta had followed her husband, Count Brandini, to the tomb – and finally their nephew, Prince Dario Boccanera, whose father, Prince Onofrio, was likewise dead, and whose mother, a Montefiori, had married again. It so chanced that the Viscount de la Choue was connected with the

family, his younger brother having married a Brandini, sister to Benedetta's father; and thus, with the courtesy rank of uncle, he had, in Count Brandini's time, frequently sojourned at the mansion in the Via Giulia. He had also become attached to Benedetta, especially since the advent of a private family drama, consequent upon an unhappy marriage which the young woman had contracted, and which she had petitioned the Holy Father to annul. Since Benedetta had left her husband to live with her aunt Serafina and her uncle the Cardinal, M. de la Choue had often written to her and sent her parcels of French books. Among others he had forwarded her a copy of Pierre's book, and the whole affair had originated in that wise. Several letters on the subject had been exchanged when at last Benedetta sent word that the work had been denounced to the Congregation of the Index, and that it was advisable the author should at once repair to Rome, where she graciously offered him the hospitality of the Boccanera mansion.

The Viscount was quite as much astonished as the young priest at these tidings, and failed to understand why the book should be threatened at all; however, he prevailed on Pierre to make the journey as a matter of good policy, becoming himself impassioned for the achievement of a victory which he counted in anticipation as his own. And so it was easy to understand the bewildered condition of Pierre, on tumbling into this unknown mansion, launched into an heroic adventure, the reasons and circumstances of which were beyond him.

Victorine, however, suddenly resumed: “But I am leaving you here, Monsieur l’Abbe. Let me conduct you to your rooms. Where is your luggage?”

Then, when he had shown her his valise which he had placed on the ground beside him, and explained that having no more than a fortnight’s stay in view he had contented himself with bringing a second cassock and some linen, she seemed very much surprised.

“A fortnight! You only expect to remain here a fortnight? Well, well, you’ll see.”

And then summoning a big devil of a lackey who had ended by making his appearance, she said: “Take that up into the red room, Giacomo. Will you kindly follow me, Monsieur l’Abbe?”

Pierre felt quite comforted and inspirited by thus unexpectedly meeting such a lively, good-natured compatriot in this gloomy Roman “palace.” Whilst crossing the court he listened to her as she related that the Princess had gone out, and that the Contessina – as Benedetta from motives of affection was still called in the house, despite her marriage – had not yet shown herself that morning, being rather poorly. However, added Victorine, she had her orders.

The staircase was in one corner of the court, under the porticus. It was a monumental staircase with broad, low steps, the incline being so gentle that a horse might easily have climbed it. The stone walls, however, were quite bare, the landings empty and solemn, and a death-like mournfulness fell from the lofty

vault above.

As they reached the first floor, noticing Pierre's emotion, Victorine smiled. The mansion seemed to be uninhabited; not a sound came from its closed chambers. Simply pointing to a large oaken door on the right-hand, the housekeeper remarked: "The wing overlooking the court and the river is occupied by his Eminence. But he doesn't use a quarter of the rooms. All the reception-rooms on the side of the street have been shut. How could one keep up such a big place, and what, too, would be the use of it? We should need somebody to lodge."

With her lithe step she continued ascending the stairs. She had remained essentially a foreigner, a Frenchwoman, too different from those among whom she lived to be influenced by her environment. On reaching the second floor she resumed: "There, on the left, are Donna Serafina's rooms; those of the Contessina are on the right. This is the only part of the house where there's a little warmth and life. Besides, it's Monday to-day, the Princess will be receiving visitors this evening. You'll see."

Then, opening a door, beyond which was a second and very narrow staircase, she went on: "We others have our rooms on the third floor. I must ask Monsieur l'Abbe to let me go up before him."

The grand staircase ceased at the second floor, and Victorine explained that the third story was reached exclusively by this servants' staircase, which led from the lane running down to the Tiber on one side of the mansion. There was a small private

entrance in this lane, which was very convenient.

At last, reaching the third story, she hurried along a passage, again calling Pierre's attention to various doors. "These are the apartments of Don Vigilio, his Eminence's secretary. These are mine. And these will be yours. Monsieur le Vicomte will never have any other rooms when he comes to spend a few days in Rome. He says that he enjoys more liberty up here, as he can come in and go out as he pleases. I gave him a key to the door in the lane, and I'll give you one too. And, besides, you'll see what a nice view there is from here!"

Whilst speaking she had gone in. The apartments comprised two rooms: a somewhat spacious *salon*, with wall-paper of a large scroll pattern on a red ground, and a bed-chamber, where the paper was of a flax grey, studded with faded blue flowers. The sitting-room was in one corner of the mansion overlooking the lane and the Tiber, and Victorine at once went to the windows, one of which afforded a view over the distant lower part of the river, while the other faced the Trastevere and the Janiculum across the water.

"Ah! yes, it's very pleasant!" said Pierre, who had followed and stood beside her.

Giaccomo, who did not hurry, came in behind them with the valise. It was now past eleven o'clock; and seeing that the young priest looked tired, and realising that he must be hungry after such a journey, Victorine offered to have some breakfast served at once in the sitting-room. He would then have the afternoon to

rest or go out, and would only meet the ladies in the evening at dinner. At the mere suggestion of resting, however, Pierre began to protest, declaring that he should certainly go out, not wishing to lose an entire afternoon. The breakfast he readily accepted, for he was indeed dying of hunger.

However, he had to wait another full half hour. Giaccomo, who served him under Victorine's orders, did everything in a most leisurely way. And Victorine, lacking confidence in the man, remained with the young priest to make sure that everything he might require was provided.

"Ah! Monsieur l'Abbe," said she, "what people! What a country! You can't have an idea of it. I should never get accustomed to it even if I were to live here for a hundred years. Ah! if it were not for the Contessina, but she's so good and beautiful."

Then, whilst placing a dish of figs on the table, she astonished Pierre by adding that a city where nearly everybody was a priest could not possibly be a good city. Thereupon the presence of this gay, active, unbelieving servant in the queer old palace again scared him.

"What! you are not religious?" he exclaimed.

"No, no, Monsieur l'Abbe, the priests don't suit me," said Victorine; "I knew one in France when I was very little, and since I've been here I've seen too many of them. It's all over. Oh! I don't say that on account of his Eminence, who is a holy man worthy of all possible respect. And besides, everybody in the house knows

that I've nothing to reproach myself with. So why not leave me alone, since I'm fond of my employers and attend properly to my duties?"

She burst into a frank laugh. "Ah!" she resumed, "when I was told that another priest was coming, just as if we hadn't enough already, I couldn't help growling to myself. But you look like a good young man, Monsieur l'Abbe, and I feel sure we shall get on well together… I really don't know why I'm telling you all this – probably it's because you've come from yonder, and because the Contessina takes an interest in you. At all events, you'll excuse me, won't you, Monsieur l'Abbe? And take my advice, stay here and rest to-day; don't be so foolish as to go running about their tiring city. There's nothing very amusing to be seen in it, whatever they may say to the contrary."

When Pierre found himself alone, he suddenly felt overwhelmed by all the fatigue of his journey coupled with the fever of enthusiasm that had consumed him during the morning. And as though dazed, intoxicated by the hasty meal which he had just made – a couple of eggs and a cutlet – he flung himself upon the bed with the idea of taking half an hour's rest. He did not fall asleep immediately, but for a time thought of those Boccaneras, with whose history he was partly acquainted, and of whose life in that deserted and silent palace, instinct with such dilapidated and melancholy grandeur, he began to dream. But at last his ideas grew confused, and by degrees he sunk into sleep amidst a crowd of shadowy forms, some tragic and some sweet, with vague faces

which gazed at him with enigmatical eyes as they whirled before him in the depths of dreamland.

The Boccaneras had supplied two popes to Rome, one in the thirteenth, the other in the fifteenth century, and from those two favoured ones, those all-powerful masters, the family had formerly derived its vast fortune – large estates in the vicinity of Viterbo, several palaces in Rome, enough works of art to fill numerous spacious galleries, and a pile of gold sufficient to cram a cellar. The family passed as being the most pious of the Roman *patriziato*, a family of burning faith whose sword had always been at the service of the Church; but if it were the most believing family it was also the most violent, the most disputatious, constantly at war, and so fiercely savage that the anger of the Boccaneras had become proverbial. And thence came their arms, the winged dragon spitting flames, and the fierce, glowing motto, with its play on the name "*Bocca sera, Alma rossa*" (black mouth, red soul), the mouth darkened by a roar, the soul flaming like a brazier of faith and love.

Legends of endless passion, of terrible deeds of justice and vengeance still circulated. There was the duel fought by Onfredo, the Boccanera by whom the present palazzo had been built in the sixteenth century on the site of the demolished antique residence of the family. Onfredo, learning that his wife had allowed herself to be kissed on the lips by young Count Costamagna, had caused the Count to be kidnapped one evening and brought to the palazzo bound with cords. And there in one of the large halls,

before freeing him, he compelled him to confess himself to a monk. Then he severed the cords with a stiletto, threw the lamps over and extinguished them, calling to the Count to keep the stiletto and defend himself. During more than an hour, in complete obscurity, in this hall full of furniture, the two men sought one another, fled from one another, seized hold of one another, and pierced one another with their blades. And when the doors were broken down and the servants rushed in they found among the pools of blood, among the overturned tables and broken seats, Costamagna with his nose sliced off and his hips pierced with two and thirty wounds, whilst Onfredo had lost two fingers of his right hand, and had both shoulders riddled with holes! The wonder was that neither died of the encounter.

A century later, on that same bank of the Tiber, a daughter of the Boccaneras, a girl barely sixteen years of age, the lovely and passionate Cassia, filled all Rome with terror and admiration. She loved Flavio Corradini, the scion of a rival and hated house, whose alliance her father, Prince Boccanera, roughly rejected, and whom her elder brother, Ercole, swore to slay should he ever surprise him with her. Nevertheless the young man came to visit her in a boat, and she joined him by the little staircase descending to the river. But one evening Ercole, who was on the watch, sprang into the boat and planted his dagger full in Flavio's heart. Later on the subsequent incidents were unravelled; it was understood that Cassia, wrathful and frantic with despair, unwilling to survive her love and bent on wreaking justice, had

thrown herself upon her brother, had seized both murderer and victim with the same grasp whilst overturning the boat; for when the three bodies were recovered Cassia still retained her hold upon the two men, pressing their faces one against the other with her bare arms, which had remained as white as snow.

But those were vanished times. Nowadays, if faith remained, blood violence seemed to be departing from the Boccaneras. Their huge fortune also had been lost in the slow decline which for a century past has been ruining the Roman *patriziato*. It had been necessary to sell the estates; the palace had emptied, gradually sinking to the mediocrity and bourgeois life of the new times. For their part the Boccaneras obstinately declined to contract any alien alliances, proud as they were of the purity of their Roman blood. And poverty was as nothing to them; they found contentment in their immense pride, and without a plaint sequestered themselves amidst the silence and gloom in which their race was dwindling away.

Prince Ascanio, dead since 1848, had left four children by his wife, a Corvisieri; first Pio, the Cardinal; then Serafina, who, in order to remain with her brother, had not married; and finally Ernesta and Onofrio, both of whom were deceased. As Ernesta had merely left a daughter, Benedetta, behind her, it followed that the only male heir, the only possible continuator of the family name was Onofrio's son, young Prince Dario, now some thirty years of age. Should he die without posterity, the Boccaneras, once so full of life and whose deeds had filled Roman history in

papal times, must fatally disappear.

Dario and his cousin Benedetta had been drawn together by a deep, smiling, natural passion ever since childhood. They seemed born one for the other; they could not imagine that they had been brought into the world for any other purpose than that of becoming husband and wife as soon as they should be old enough to marry. When Prince Onofrio – an amiable man of forty, very popular in Rome, where he spent his modest fortune as his heart listed – espoused La Montefiori's daughter, the little Marchesa Flavia, whose superb beauty, suggestive of a youthful Juno, had maddened him, he went to reside at the Villa Montefiori, the only property, indeed the only belonging, that remained to the two ladies. It was in the direction of St'. Agnese-fuori-le-Mura,[9] and there were vast grounds, a perfect park in fact, planted with centenarian trees, among which the villa, a somewhat sorry building of the seventeenth century, was falling into ruins.

Unfavourable reports were circulated about the ladies, the mother having almost lost caste since she had become a widow, and the girl having too bold a beauty, too conquering an air. Thus the marriage had not met with the approval of Serafina, who was very rigid, or of Onofrio's elder brother Pio, at that time merely a *Cameriere segreto* of the Holy Father and a Canon of the Vatican basilica. Only Ernesta kept up a regular intercourse with Onofrio, fond of him as she was by reason of his gaiety of disposition; and thus, later on, her favourite diversion was to go each week to the

[9] St. Agnes-without-the-walls, N.E. of Rome.

Villa Montefiori with her daughter Benedetta, there to spend the day. And what a delightful day it always proved to Benedetta and Dario, she ten years old and he fifteen, what a fraternal loving day in that vast and almost abandoned garden with its parasol pines, its giant box-plants, and its clumps of evergreen oaks, amidst which one lost oneself as in a virgin forest.

The poor stifled soul of Ernesta was a soul of pain and passion. Born with a mighty longing for life, she thirsted for the sun – for a free, happy, active existence in the full daylight. She was noted for her large limpid eyes and the charming oval of her gentle face. Extremely ignorant, like all the daughters of the Roman nobility, having learnt the little she knew in a convent of French nuns, she had grown up cloistered in the black Boccanera palace, having no knowledge of the world than by those daily drives to the Corso and the Pincio on which she accompanied her mother. Eventually, when she was five and twenty, and was already weary and desolate, she contracted the customary marriage of her caste, espousing Count Brandini, the last-born of a very noble, very numerous and poor family, who had to come and live in the Via Giulia mansion, where an entire wing of the second floor was got ready for the young couple. And nothing changed, Ernesta continued to live in the same cold gloom, in the midst of the same dead past, the weight of which, like that of a tombstone, she felt pressing more and more heavily upon her.

The marriage was, on either side, a very honourable one. Count Brandini soon passed as being the most foolish and

haughty man in Rome. A strict, intolerant formalist in religious matters, he became quite triumphant when, after innumerable intrigues, secret plottings which lasted ten long years, he at last secured the appointment of grand equerry to the Holy Father. With this appointment it seemed as if all the dismal majesty of the Vatican entered his household. However, Ernesta found life still bearable in the time of Pius IX – that is until the latter part of 1870 – for she might still venture to open the windows overlooking the street, receive a few lady friends otherwise than in secrecy, and accept invitations to festivities. But when the Italians had conquered Rome and the Pope declared himself a prisoner, the mansion in the Via Giulia became a sepulchre. The great doors were closed and bolted, even nailed together in token of mourning; and during ten years the inmates only went out and came in by the little staircase communicating with the lane. It was also forbidden to open the window shutters of the facade. This was the sulking, the protest of the black world, the mansion sinking into death-like immobility, complete seclusion; no more receptions, barely a few shadows, the intimates of Donna Serafina who on Monday evenings slipped in by the little door in the lane which was scarcely set ajar. And during those ten lugubrious years, overcome by secret despair, the young woman wept every night, suffered untold agony at thus being buried alive.

Ernesta had given birth to her daughter Benedetta rather late in life, when three and thirty years of age. At first the little one

helped to divert her mind. But afterwards her wonted existence, like a grinding millstone, again seized hold of her, and she had to place the child in the charge of the French nuns, by whom she herself had been educated, at the convent of the Sacred Heart of La Trinita de' Monti. When Benedetta left the convent, grown up, nineteen years of age, she was able to speak and write French, knew a little arithmetic and her catechism, and possessed a few hazy notions of history. Then the life of the two women was resumed, the life of a *gynoeceum*, suggestive of the Orient; never an excursion with husband or father, but day after day spent in closed, secluded rooms, with nought to cheer one but the sole, everlasting, obligatory promenade, the daily drive to the Corso and the Pincio.

At home, absolute obedience was the rule; the tie of relationship possessed an authority, a strength, which made both women bow to the will of the Count, without possible thought of rebellion; and to the Count's will was added that of Donna Serafina and that of Cardinal Pio, both of whom were stern defenders of the old-time customs. Since the Pope had ceased to show himself in Rome, the post of grand equerry had left the Count considerable leisure, for the number of equipages in the pontifical stables had been very largely reduced; nevertheless, he was constant in his attendance at the Vatican, where his duties were now a mere matter of parade, and ever increased his devout zeal as a mark of protest against the usurping monarchy installed at the Quirinal. However, Benedetta had just

attained her twentieth year, when one evening her father returned coughing and shivering from some ceremony at St. Peter's. A week later he died, carried off by inflammation of the lungs. And despite their mourning, the loss was secretly considered a deliverance by both women, who now felt that they were free.

Thenceforward Ernesta had but one thought, that of saving her daughter from that awful life of immurement and entombment. She herself had sorrowed too deeply: it was no longer possible for her to remount the current of existence; but she was unwilling that Benedetta should in her turn lead a life contrary to nature, in a voluntary grave. Moreover, similar lassitude and rebellion were showing themselves among other patrician families, which, after the sulking of the first years, were beginning to draw nearer to the Quirinal. Why indeed should the children, eager for action, liberty, and sunlight, perpetually keep up the quarrel of the fathers? And so, though no reconciliation could take place between the black world and the white world,[10] intermediate tints were already appearing, and some unexpected matrimonial alliances were contracted.

Ernesta for her part was indifferent to the political question; she knew next to nothing about it; but that which she passionately desired was that her race might at last emerge from that hateful sepulchre, that black, silent Boccanera mansion, where her woman's joys had been frozen by so long a death. She had

[10] The "blacks" are the supporters of the papacy, the "whites" those of the King of Italy. – Trans.

suffered very grievously in her heart, as girl, as lover, and as wife, and yielded to anger at the thought that her life should have been so spoiled, so lost through idiotic resignation. Then, too, her mind was greatly influenced by the choice of a new confessor at this period; for she had remained very religious, practising all the rites of the Church, and ever docile to the advice of her spiritual director. To free herself the more, however, she now quitted the Jesuit father whom her husband had chosen for her, and in his stead took Abbe Pisoni, the rector of the little church of Sta. Brigida, on the Piazza Farnese, close by. He was a man of fifty, very gentle, and very good-hearted, of a benevolence seldom found in the Roman world; and archaeology, a passion for the old stones of the past, had made him an ardent patriot. Humble though his position was, folks whispered that he had on several occasions served as an intermediary in delicate matters between the Vatican and the Quirinal. And, becoming confessor not only of Ernesta but of Benedetta also, he was fond of discoursing to them about the grandeur of Italian unity, the triumphant sway that Italy would exercise when the Pope and the King should agree together.

Meantime Benedetta and Dario loved as on the first day, patiently, with the strong tranquil love of those who know that they belong to one another. But it happened that Ernesta threw herself between them and stubbornly opposed their marriage. No, no! her daughter must not espouse that Dario, that cousin, the last of the name, who in his turn would immure his wife

in the black sepulchre of the Boccanera palace! Their union would be a prolongation of entombment, an aggravation of ruin, a repetition of the haughty wretchedness of the past, of the everlasting peevish sulking which depressed and benumbed one! She was well acquainted with the young man's character; she knew that he was egotistical and weak, incapable of thinking and acting, predestined to bury his race with a smile on his lips, to let the last remnant of the house crumble about his head without attempting the slightest effort to found a new family. And that which she desired was fortune in another guise, a new birth for her daughter with wealth and the florescence of life amid the victors and powerful ones of to-morrow.

From that moment the mother did not cease her stubborn efforts to ensure her daughter's happiness despite herself. She told her of her tears, entreated her not to renew her own deplorable career. Yet she would have failed, such was the calm determination of the girl who had for ever given her heart, if certain circumstances had not brought her into connection with such a son-in-law as she dreamt of. At that very Villa Montefiori where Benedetta and Dario had plighted their troth, she met Count Prada, son of Orlando, one of the heroes of the reunion of Italy. Arriving in Rome from Milan, with his father, when eighteen years of age, at the time of the occupation of the city by the Italian Government, Prada had first entered the Ministry of Finances as a mere clerk, whilst the old warrior, his sire, created a senator, lived scantily on a petty income, the last remnant of a

fortune spent in his country's service. The fine war-like madness of the former comrade of Garibaldi had, however, in the son turned into a fierce appetite for booty, so that the young man became one of the real conquerors of Rome, one of those birds of prey that dismembered and devoured the city. Engaged in vast speculations on land, already wealthy according to popular report, he had – at the time of meeting Ernesta – just become intimate with Prince Onofrio, whose head he had turned by suggesting to him the idea of selling the far-spreading grounds of the Villa Montefiori for the erection of a new suburban district on the site. Others averred that he was the lover of the princess, the beautiful Flavia, who, although nine years his senior, was still superb. And, truth to tell, he was certainly a man of violent desires, with an eagerness to rush on the spoils of conquest which rendered him utterly unscrupulous with regard either to the wealth or to the wives of others.

From the first day that he beheld Benedetta he desired her. But she, at any rate, could only become his by marriage. And he did not for a moment hesitate, but broke off all connection with Flavia, eager as he was for the pure virgin beauty, the patrician youth of the other. When he realised that Ernesta, the mother, favoured him, he asked her daughter's hand, feeling certain of success. And the surprise was great, for he was some fifteen years older than the girl. However, he was a count, he bore a name which was already historical, he was piling up millions, he was regarded with favour at the Quirinal, and none could tell to what

heights he might not attain. All Rome became impassioned.

Never afterwards was Benedetta able to explain to herself how it happened that she had eventually consented. Six months sooner, six months later, such a marriage would certainly have been impossible, given the fearful scandal which it raised in the black world. A Boccanera, the last maiden of that antique papal race, given to a Prada, to one of the despoilers of the Church! Was it credible? In order that the wild project might prove successful it had been necessary that it should be formed at a particular brief moment – a moment when a supreme effort was being made to conciliate the Vatican and the Quirinal. A report circulated that an agreement was on the point of being arrived at, that the King consented to recognise the Pope's absolute sovereignty over the Leonine City,[11] and a narrow band of territory extending to the sea. And if such were the case would not the marriage of Benedetta and Prada become, so to say, a symbol of union, of national reconciliation? That lovely girl, the pure lily of the black world, was she not the acquiescent sacrifice, the pledge granted to the whites?

For a fortnight nothing else was talked of; people discussed the question, allowed their emotion rein, indulged in all sorts of hopes. The girl, for her part, did not enter into the political reasons, but simply listened to her heart, which she could not

[11] The Vatican suburb of Rome, called the *Civitas Leonina*, because Leo IV, to protect it from the Saracens and Arabs, enclosed it with walls in the ninth century. – Trans.

bestow since it was hers no more. From morn till night, however, she had to encounter her mother's prayers entreating her not to refuse the fortune, the life which offered. And she was particularly exercised by the counsels of her confessor, good Abbe Pisoni, whose patriotic zeal now burst forth. He weighed upon her with all his faith in the Christian destinies of Italy, and returned heartfelt thanks to Providence for having chosen one of his penitents as the instrument for hastening the reconciliation which would work God's triumph throughout the world. And her confessor's influence was certainly one of the decisive factors in shaping Benedetta's decision, for she was very pious, very devout, especially with regard to a certain Madonna whose image she went to adore every Sunday at the little church on the Piazza Farnese. One circumstance in particular struck her: Abbe Pisoni related that the flame of the lamp before the image in question whitened each time that he himself knelt there to beg the Virgin to incline his penitent to the all-redeeming marriage. And thus superior forces intervened; and she yielded in obedience to her mother, whom the Cardinal and Donna Serafina had at first opposed, but whom they left free to act when the religious question arose.

Benedetta had grown up in such absolute purity and ignorance, knowing nothing of herself, so shut off from existence, that marriage with another than Dario was to her simply the rupture of a long-kept promise of life in common. It was not the violent wrenching of heart and flesh that it would have been in the case

of a woman who knew the facts of life. She wept a good deal, and then in a day of self-surrender she married Prada, lacking the strength to continue resisting everybody, and yielding to a union which all Rome had conspired to bring about.

But the clap of thunder came on the very night of the nuptials. Was it that Prada, the Piedmontese, the Italian of the North, the man of conquest, displayed towards his bride the same brutality that he had shown towards the city he had sacked? Or was it that the revelation of married life filled Benedetta with repulsion since nothing in her own heart responded to the passion of this man? On that point she never clearly explained herself; but with violence she shut the door of her room, locked it and bolted it, and refused to admit her husband. For a month Prada was maddened by her scorn. He felt outraged; both his pride and his passion bled; and he swore to master her, even as one masters a colt, with the whip. But all his virile fury was impotent against the indomitable determination which had sprung up one evening behind Benedetta's small and lovely brow. The spirit of the Boccaneras had awoke within her; nothing in the world, not even the fear of death, would have induced her to become her husband's wife.[12] And then, love being at last revealed to her, there came a return of her heart to Dario, a conviction that she must reserve herself for him alone, since it was to him that she

[12] Many readers will doubtless remember that the situation as here described is somewhat akin to that of the earlier part of M. George Ohnet's *Ironmaster*, which, in its form as a novel, I translated into English many years ago. However, all resemblance between *Rome* and the *Ironmaster* is confined to this one point. – Trans.

had promised herself.

Ever since that marriage, which he had borne like a bereavement, the young man had been travelling in France. She did not hide the truth from him, but wrote to him, again vowing that she would never be another's. And meantime her piety increased, her resolve to reserve herself for the lover she had chosen mingled in her mind with constancy of religious faith. The ardent heart of a great *amorosa* had ignited within her, she was ready for martyrdom for faith's sake. And when her despairing mother with clasped hands entreated her to resign herself to her conjugal duties, she replied that she owed no duties, since she had known nothing when she married. Moreover, the times were changing; the attempts to reconcile the Quirinal and the Vatican had failed, so completely, indeed, that the newspapers of the rival parties had, with renewed violence, resumed their campaign of mutual insult and outrage; and thus that triumphal marriage, to which every one had contributed as to a pledge of peace, crumbled amid the general smash-up, became but a ruin the more added to so many others.

Ernesta died of it. She had made a mistake. Her spoilt life – the life of a joyless wife – had culminated in this supreme maternal error. And the worst was that she alone had to bear all the responsibility of the disaster, for both her brother, the Cardinal, and her sister, Donna Serafina, overwhelmed her with reproaches. For consolation she had but the despair of Abbe Pisoni, whose patriotic hopes had been destroyed, and who was

consumed with grief at having contributed to such a catastrophe. And one morning Ernesta was found, icy white and cold, in her bed. Folks talked of the rupture of a blood-vessel, but grief had been sufficient, for she had suffered frightfully, secretly, without a plaint, as indeed she had suffered all her life long.

At this time Benedetta had been married about a twelvemonth: still strong in her resistance to her husband, but remaining under the conjugal roof in order to spare her mother the terrible blow of a public scandal. However, her aunt Serafina had brought influence to bear on her, by opening to her the hope of a possible nullification of her marriage, should she throw herself at the feet of the Holy Father and entreat his intervention. And Serafina ended by persuading her of this, when, deferring to certain advice, she removed her from the spiritual control of Abbe Pisoni, and gave her the same confessor as herself. This was a Jesuit father named Lorenza, a man scarce five and thirty, with bright eyes, grave and amiable manners, and great persuasive powers. However, it was only on the morrow of her mother's death that Benedetta made up her mind, and returned to the Palazzo Boccanera, to occupy the apartments where she had been born, and where her mother had just passed away.

Immediately afterwards proceedings for annulling the marriage were instituted, in the first instance, for inquiry, before the Cardinal Vicar charged with the diocese of Rome. It was related that the Contessina had only taken this step after a secret audience with his Holiness, who had shown her the most

encouraging sympathy. Count Prada at first spoke of applying to the law courts to compel his wife to return to the conjugal domicile; but, yielding to the entreaties of his old father Orlando, whom the affair greatly grieved, he eventually consented to accept the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He was infuriated, however, to find that the nullification of the marriage was solicited on the ground of its non-consummation through *impotentia mariti*; this being one of the most valid and decisive pleas on which the Church of Rome consents to part those whom she has joined. And far more unhappy marriages than might be imagined are severed on these grounds, though the world only gives attention to those cases in which people of title or renown are concerned, as it did, for instance, with the famous Martinez Campos suit.

In Benedetta's case, her counsel, Consistorial-Advocate Morano, one of the leading authorities of the Roman bar, simply neglected to mention, in his memoir, that if she was still merely a wife in name, this was entirely due to herself. In addition to the evidence of friends and servants, showing on what terms the husband and wife had lived since their marriage, the advocate produced a certificate of a medical character, showing that the non-consummation of the union was certain. And the Cardinal Vicar, acting as Bishop of Rome, had thereupon remitted the case to the Congregation of the Council. This was a first success for Benedetta, and matters remained in this position. She was waiting for the Congregation to deliver its final pronouncement, hoping that the ecclesiastical dissolution of the marriage would

prove an irresistible argument in favour of the divorce which she meant to solicit of the civil courts. And meantime, in the icy rooms where her mother Ernesta, submissive and desolate, had lately died, the Contessina resumed her girlish life, showing herself calm, yet very firm in her passion, having vowed that she would belong to none but Dario, and that she would not belong to him until the day when a priest should have joined them together in God's holy name.

As it happened, some six months previously, Dario also had taken up his abode at the Boccanera palace in consequence of the death of his father and the catastrophe which had ruined him. Prince Onofrio, after adopting Prada's advice and selling the Villa Montefiori to a financial company for ten million *lire*,[13] had, instead of prudently keeping his money in his pockets, succumbed to the fever of speculation which was consuming Rome. He began to gamble, buying back his own land, and ending by losing everything in the formidable *krach* which was swallowing up the wealth of the entire city. Totally ruined, somewhat deeply in debt even, the Prince nevertheless continued to promenade the Corso, like the handsome, smiling, popular man he was, when he accidentally met his death through falling from his horse; and four months later his widow, the ever beautiful Flavia – who had managed to save a modern villa and a personal income of forty thousand *lire*[14] from the disaster – was

[13] 400,000 pounds.

[14] 1,800 pounds.

remarried to a man of magnificent presence, her junior by some ten years. This was a Swiss named Jules Laporte, originally a sergeant in the Papal Swiss Guard, then a traveller for a shady business in "relics," and finally Marchese Montefiore, having secured that title in securing his wife, thanks to a special brief of the Holy Father. Thus the Princess Boccanera had again become the Marchioness Montefiori.

It was then that Cardinal Boccanera, feeling greatly hurt, insisted on his nephew Dario coming to live with him, in a small apartment on the first floor of the palazzo. In the heart of that holy man, who seemed dead to the world, there still lingered pride of name and lineage, with a feeling of affection for his young, slightly built nephew, the last of the race, the only one by whom the old stock might blossom anew. Moreover, he was not opposed to Dario's marriage with Benedetta, whom he also loved with a paternal affection; and so proud was he of the family honour, and so convinced of the young people's pious rectitude that, in taking them to live with him, he absolutely scorned the abominable rumours which Count Prada's friends in the white world had begun to circulate ever since the two cousins had resided under the same roof. Donna Serafina guarded Benedetta, as he, the Cardinal, guarded Dario, and in the silence and the gloom of the vast deserted mansion, ensanguined of olden time by so many tragic deeds of violence, there now only remained these four with their restrained, stilled passions, last survivors of a crumbling world upon the threshold of a new one.

When Abbe Pierre Froment all at once awoke from sleep, his head heavy with painful dreams, he was worried to find that the daylight was already waning. His watch, which he hastened to consult, pointed to six o'clock. Intending to rest for an hour at the utmost, he had slept on for nearly seven hours, overcome beyond power of resistance. And even on awaking he remained on the bed, helpless, as though he were conquered before he had fought. Why, he wondered, did he experience this prostration, this unreasonable discouragement, this quiver of doubt which had come he knew not whence during his sleep, and which was annihilating his youthful enthusiasm of the morning? Had the Boccaneras any connection with this sudden weakening of his powers? He had espied dim disquieting figures in the black night of his dreams; and the anguish which they had brought him continued, and he again evoked them, scared as he was at thus awaking in a strange room, full of uneasiness in presence of the unknown. Things no longer seemed natural to him. He could not understand why Benedetta should have written to Viscount Philibert de la Choue to tell him that his, Pierre's, book had been denounced to the Congregation of the Index. What interest too could she have had in his coming to Rome to defend himself; and with what object had she carried her amiability so far as to desire that he should take up his quarters in the mansion? Pierre's stupefaction indeed arose from his being there, on that bed in that strange room, in that palace whose deep, death-like silence encompassed him. As he lay there, his limbs still overpowered

and his brain seemingly empty, a flash of light suddenly came to him, and he realised that there must be certain circumstances that he knew nothing of that, simple though things appeared, they must really hide some complicated intrigue. However, it was only a fugitive gleam of enlightenment; his suspicions faded; and he rose up shaking himself and accusing the gloomy twilight of being the sole cause of the shivering and the despondency of which he felt ashamed.

In order to bestir himself, Pierre began to examine the two rooms. They were furnished simply, almost meagrely, in mahogany, there being scarcely any two articles alike, though all dated from the beginning of the century. Neither the bed nor the windows nor the doors had any hangings. On the floor of bare tiles, coloured red and polished, there were merely some little foot-mats in front of the various seats. And at sight of this middle-class bareness and coldness Pierre ended by remembering a room where he had slept in childhood – a room at Versailles, at the abode of his grandmother, who had kept a little grocer's shop there in the days of Louis Philippe. However, he became interested in an old painting which hung in the bedroom, on the wall facing the bed, amidst some childish and valueless engravings. But partially discernible in the waning light, this painting represented a woman seated on some projecting stone-work, on the threshold of a great stern building, whence she seemed to have been driven forth. The folding doors of bronze had for ever closed behind her, yet she remained there

in a mere drapery of white linen; whilst scattered articles of clothing, thrown forth chance-wise with a violent hand, lay upon the massive granite steps. Her feet were bare, her arms were bare, and her hands, distorted by bitter agony, were pressed to her face – a face which one saw not, veiled as it was by the tawny gold of her rippling, streaming hair. What nameless grief, what fearful shame, what hateful abandonment was thus being hidden by that rejected one, that lingering victim of love, of whose unknown story one might for ever dream with tortured heart? It could be divined that she was adorably young and beautiful in her wretchedness, in the shred of linen draped about her shoulders; but a mystery enveloped everything else – her passion, possibly her misfortune, perhaps even her transgression – unless, indeed, she were there merely as a symbol of all that shivers and that weeps visageless before the ever closed portals of the unknown. For a long time Pierre looked at her, and so intently that he at last imagined he could distinguish her profile, divine in its purity and expression of suffering. But this was only an illusion; the painting had greatly suffered, blackened by time and neglect; and he asked himself whose work it might be that it should move him so intensely. On the adjoining wall a picture of a Madonna, a bad copy of an eighteenth-century painting, irritated him by the banality of its smile.

Night was falling faster and faster, and, opening the sitting-room window, Pierre leant out. On the other bank of the Tiber facing him arose the Janiculum, the height whence he had gazed

upon Rome that morning. But at this dim hour Rome was no longer the city of youth and dreamland soaring into the early sunshine. The night was raining down, grey and ashen; the horizon was becoming blurred, vague, and mournful. Yonder, to the left, beyond the sea of roofs, Pierre could still divine the presence of the Palatine; and yonder, to the right, there still arose the Dome of St. Peter's, now grey like slate against the leaden sky; whilst behind him the Quirinal, which he could not see, must also be fading away into the misty night. A few minutes went by, and everything became yet more blurred; he realised that Rome was fading, departing in its immensity of which he knew nothing. Then his causeless doubt and disquietude again came on him so painfully that he could no longer remain at the window. He closed it and sat down, letting the darkness submerge him with its flood of infinite sadness. And his despairing reverie only ceased when the door gently opened and the glow of a lamp enlivened the room.

It was Victorine who came in quietly, bringing the light. "Ah! so you are up, Monsieur l'Abbe," said she; "I came in at about four o'clock but I let you sleep on. You have done quite right to take all the rest you required."

Then, as he complained of pains and shivering, she became anxious. "Don't go catching their nasty fevers," she said. "It isn't at all healthy near their river, you know. Don Vigilio, his Eminence's secretary, is always having the fever, and I assure you that it isn't pleasant."

She accordingly advised him to remain upstairs and lie down again. She would excuse his absence to the Princess and the Contessina. And he ended by letting her do as she desired, for he was in no state to have any will of his own. By her advice he dined, partaking of some soup, a wing of a chicken, and some preserves, which Giaccomo, the big lackey, brought up to him. And the food did him a great deal of good; he felt so restored that he refused to go to bed, desiring, said he, to thank the ladies that very evening for their kindly hospitality. As Donna Serafina received on Mondays he would present himself before her.

"Very good," said Victorine approvingly. "As you are all right again it can do you no harm, it will even enliven you. The best thing will be for Don Vigilio to come for you at nine o'clock and accompany you. Wait for him here."

Pierre had just washed and put on the new cassock he had brought with him, when, at nine o'clock precisely, he heard a discreet knock at his door. A little priest came in, a man scarcely thirty years of age, but thin and debile of build, with a long, seared, saffron-coloured face. For two years past attacks of fever, coming on every day at the same hour, had been consuming him. Nevertheless, whenever he forgot to control the black eyes which lighted his yellow face, they shone out ardently with the glow of his fiery soul. He bowed, and then in fluent French introduced himself in this simple fashion: "Don Vigilio, Monsieur l'Abbe, who is entirely at your service. If you are willing, we will go down."

Pierre immediately followed him, expressing his thanks, and Don Vigilio, relapsing into silence, answered his remarks with a smile. Having descended the small staircase, they found themselves on the second floor, on the spacious landing of the grand staircase. And Pierre was surprised and saddened by the scanty illumination, which, as in some dingy lodging-house, was limited to a few gas-jets, placed far apart, their yellow splotches but faintly relieving the deep gloom of the lofty, endless corridors. All was gigantic and funereal. Even on the landing, where was the entrance to Donna Serafina's apartments, facing those occupied by her niece, nothing indicated that a reception was being held that evening. The door remained closed, not a sound came from the rooms, a death-like silence arose from the whole palace. And Don Vigilio did not even ring, but, after a fresh bow, discreetly turned the door-handle.

A single petroleum lamp, placed on a table, lighted the ante-room, a large apartment with bare fresco-painted walls, simulating hangings of red and gold, draped regularly all around in the antique fashion. A few men's overcoats and two ladies' mantles lay on the chairs, whilst a pier table was littered with hats, and a servant sat there dozing, with his back to the wall.

However, as Don Vigilio stepped aside to allow Pierre to enter a first reception-room, hung with red *brocatelle*, a room but dimly lighted and which he imagined to be empty, the young priest found himself face to face with an apparition in black, a woman whose features he could not at first distinguish.

Fortunately he heard his companion say, with a low bow, "Contessina, I have the honour to present to you Monsieur l'Abbe Pierre Froment, who arrived from France this morning."

Then, for a moment, Pierre remained alone with Benedetta in that deserted *salon*, in the sleepy glimmer of two lace-veiled lamps. At present, however, a sound of voices came from a room beyond, a larger apartment whose doorway, with folding doors thrown wide open, described a parallelogram of brighter light.

The young woman at once showed herself very affable, with perfect simplicity of manner: "Ah! I am happy to see you, Monsieur l'Abbe. I was afraid that your indisposition might be serious. You are quite recovered now, are you not?"

Pierre listened to her, fascinated by her slow and rather thick voice, in which restrained passion seemed to mingle with much prudent good sense. And at last he saw her, with her hair so heavy and so dark, her skin so white, the whiteness of ivory. She had a round face, with somewhat full lips, a small refined nose, features as delicate as a child's. But it was especially her eyes that lived, immense eyes, whose infinite depths none could fathom. Was she slumbering? Was she dreaming? Did her motionless face conceal the ardent tension of a great saint and a great *amorosa*? So white, so young, and so calm, her every movement was harmonious, her appearance at once very staid, very noble, and very rhythmical. In her ears she wore two large pearls of matchless purity, pearls which had come from a famous necklace of her mother's, known throughout Rome.

Pierre apologised and thanked her. “You see me in confusion, madame,” said he; “I should have liked to express to you this morning my gratitude for your great kindness.”

He had hesitated to call her madame, remembering the plea brought forward in the suit for the dissolution of her marriage. But plainly enough everybody must call her madame. Moreover, her face had retained its calm and kindly expression.

“Consider yourself at home here, Monsieur l’Abbe,” she responded, wishing to put him at his ease. “It is sufficient that our relative, Monsieur de la Choue, should be fond of you, and take interest in your work. I have, you know, much affection for him.” Then her voice faltered slightly, for she realised that she ought to speak of the book, the one reason of Pierre’s journey and her proffered hospitality. “Yes,” she added, “the Viscount sent me your book. I read it and found it very beautiful. It disturbed me. But I am only an ignoramus, and certainly failed to understand everything in it. We must talk it over together; you will explain your ideas to me, won’t you, Monsieur l’Abbe?”

In her large clear eyes, which did not know how to lie, Pierre then read the surprise and emotion of a child’s soul when confronted by disquieting and undreamt-of problems. So it was not she who had become impassioned and had desired to have him near her that she might sustain him and assist his victory. Once again, and this time very keenly, he suspected a secret influence, a hidden hand which was directing everything towards some unknown goal. However, he was charmed by

so much simplicity and frankness in so beautiful, young, and noble a creature; and he gave himself to her after the exchange of those few words, and was about to tell her that she might absolutely dispose of him, when he was interrupted by the advent of another woman, whose tall, slight figure, also clad in black, stood out strongly against the luminous background of the further reception-room as seen through the open doorway.

"Well, Benedetta, have you sent Giaccomo up to see?" asked the newcomer. "Don Vigilio has just come down and he is quite alone. It is improper."

"No, no, aunt. Monsieur l'Abbe is here," was the reply of Benedetta, hastening to introduce the young priest. "Monsieur l'Abbe Pierre Froment – The Princess Boccanera."

Ceremonious salutations were exchanged. The Princess must have been nearly sixty, but she laced herself so tightly that from behind one might have taken her for a young woman. This tight lacing, however, was her last coquetry. Her hair, though still plentiful, was quite white, her eyebrows alone remaining black in her long, wrinkled face, from which projected the large obstinate nose of the family. She had never been beautiful, and had remained a spinster, wounded to the heart by the selection of Count Brandini, who had preferred her younger sister, Ernesta. From that moment she had resolved to seek consolation and satisfaction in family pride alone, the hereditary pride of the great name which she bore. The Boccaneras had already supplied two Popes to the Church, and she hoped that before she died her

brother would become the third. She had transformed herself into his housekeeper, as it were, remaining with him, watching over him, and advising him, managing all the household affairs herself, and accomplishing miracles in order to conceal the slow ruin which was bringing the ceilings about their heads. If every Monday for thirty years past she had continued receiving a few intimates, all of them folks of the Vatican, it was from high political considerations, so that her drawing-room might remain a meeting-place of the black world, a power and a threat.

And Pierre divined by her greeting that she deemed him of little account, petty foreign priest that he was, not even a prelate. This too again surprised him, again brought the puzzling question to the fore: Why had he been invited, what was expected of him in this society from which the humble were usually excluded? Knowing the Princess to be austerely devout, he at last fancied that she received him solely out of regard for her kinsman, the Viscount, for in her turn she only found these words of welcome: "We are so pleased to receive good news of Monsieur de la Choue! He brought us such a beautiful pilgrimage two years ago."

Passing the first through the doorway, she at last ushered the young priest into the adjoining reception-room. It was a spacious square apartment, hung with old yellow *brocatelle* of a flowery Louis XIV pattern. The lofty ceiling was adorned with a very fine panelling, carved and coloured, with gilded roses in each compartment. The furniture, however, was of all sorts. There were some high mirrors, a couple of superb gilded pier

tables, and a few handsome seventeenth-century arm-chairs; but all the rest was wretched. A heavy round table of first-empire style, which had come nobody knew whence, caught the eye with a medley of anomalous articles picked up at some bazaar, and a quantity of cheap photographs littered the costly marble tops of the pier tables. No interesting article of *virtu* was to be seen. The old paintings on the walls were with two exceptions feebly executed. There was a delightful example of an unknown primitive master, a fourteenth-century Visitation, in which the Virgin had the stature and pure delicacy of a child of ten, whilst the Archangel, huge and superb, inundated her with a stream of dazzling, superhuman love; and in front of this hung an antique family portrait, depicting a very beautiful young girl in a turban, who was thought to be Cassia Boccanera, the *amorosa* and avengeress who had flung herself into the Tiber with her brother Ercole and the corpse of her lover, Flavio Corradini. Four lamps threw a broad, peaceful glow over the faded room, and, like a melancholy sunset, tinged it with yellow. It looked grave and bare, with not even a flower in a vase to brighten it.

In a few words Donna Serafina at once introduced Pierre to the company; and in the silence, the pause which ensued in the conversation, he felt that every eye was fixed upon him as upon a promised and expected curiosity. There were altogether some ten persons present, among them being Dario, who stood talking with little Princess Celia Buongiovanni, whilst the elderly relative who had brought the latter sat whispering to a prelate, Monsignor

Nani, in a dim corner. Pierre, however, had been particularly struck by the name of Consistorial-Advocate Morano, of whose position in the house Viscount de la Choue had thought proper to inform him in order to avert any unpleasant blunder. For thirty years past Morano had been Donna Serafina's *amico*. Their connection, formerly a guilty one, for the advocate had wife and children of his own, had in course of time, since he had been left a widower, become one of those *liaisons* which tolerant people excuse and except. Both parties were extremely devout and had certainly assured themselves of all needful "indulgences." And thus Morano was there in the seat which he had always taken for a quarter of a century past, a seat beside the chimney-piece, though as yet the winter fire had not been lighted, and when Donna Serafina had discharged her duties as mistress of the house, she returned to her own place in front of him, on the other side of the chimney.

When Pierre in his turn had seated himself near Don Vigilio, who, silent and discreet, had already taken a chair, Dario resumed in a louder voice the story which he had been relating to Celia. Dario was a handsome man, of average height, slim and elegant. He wore a full beard, dark and carefully tended, and had the long face and pronounced nose of the Boccaneras, but the impoverishment of the family blood over a course of centuries had attenuated, softened as it were, any sharpness or undue prominence of feature.

"Oh! a beauty, an astounding beauty!" he repeated

emphatically.

"Whose beauty?" asked Benedetta, approaching him.

Celia, who resembled the little Virgin of the primitive master hanging above her head, began to laugh. "Oh! Dario's speaking of a poor girl, a work-girl whom he met to-day," she explained.

Thereupon Dario had to begin his narrative again. It appeared that while passing along a narrow street near the Piazza Navona, he had perceived a tall, shapely girl of twenty, who was weeping and sobbing violently, prone upon a flight of steps. Touched particularly by her beauty, he had approached her and learnt that she had been working in the house outside which she was, a manufactory of wax beads, but that, slack times having come, the workshops had closed and she did not dare to return home, so fearful was the misery there. Amidst the downpour of her tears she raised such beautiful eyes to his that he ended by drawing some money from his pocket. But at this, crimson with confusion, she sprang to her feet, hiding her hands in the folds of her skirt, and refusing to take anything. She added, however, that he might follow her if it so pleased him, and give the money to her mother. And then she hurried off towards the Ponte St'. Angelo.[15]

"Yes, she was a beauty, a perfect beauty," repeated Dario with an air of ecstasy. "Taller than I, and slim though sturdy, with the bosom of a goddess. In fact, a real antique, a Venus of twenty, her chin rather bold, her mouth and nose of perfect form, and

[15] Bridge of St. Angelo.

her eyes wonderfully pure and large! And she was bare-headed too, with nothing but a crown of heavy black hair, and a dazzling face, gilded, so to say, by the sun."

They had all begun to listen to him, enraptured, full of that passionate admiration for beauty which, in spite of every change, Rome still retains in her heart.

"Those beautiful girls of the people are becoming very rare," remarked Morano. "You might scour the Trastevere without finding any. However, this proves that there is at least one of them left."

"And what was your goddess's name?" asked Benedetta, smiling, amused and enraptured like the others.

"Pierina," replied Dario, also with a laugh.

"And what did you do with her?"

At this question the young man's excited face assumed an expression of discomfort and fear, like the face of a child on suddenly encountering some ugly creature amidst its play.

"Oh! don't talk of it," said he. "I felt very sorry afterwards. I saw such misery – enough to make one ill."

Yielding to his curiosity, it seemed, he had followed the girl across the Ponte St'. Angelo into the new district which was being built over the former castle meadows[16]; and there, on the first floor of an abandoned house which was already falling into ruins,

---

[16] The meadows around the Castle of St. Angelo. The district, now covered with buildings, is quite flat and was formerly greatly subject to floods. It is known as the Quartiere dei Prati. – Trans.

though the plaster was scarcely dry, he had come upon a frightful spectacle which still stirred his heart: a whole family, father and mother, children, and an infirm old uncle, dying of hunger and rotting in filth! He selected the most dignified words he could think of to describe the scene, waving his hand the while with a gesture of fright, as if to ward off some horrible vision.

"At last," he concluded, "I ran away, and you may be sure that I shan't go back again."

A general wagging of heads ensued in the cold, irksome silence which fell upon the room. Then Morano summed up the matter in a few bitter words, in which he accused the despoilers, the men of the Quirinal, of being the sole cause of all the frightful misery of Rome. Were not people even talking of the approaching nomination of Deputy Sacco as Minister of Finances – Sacco, that intriguer who had engaged in all sorts of underhand practices? His appointment would be the climax of impudence; bankruptcy would speedily and infallibly ensue.

Meantime Benedetta, who had fixed her eyes on Pierre, with his book in her mind, alone murmured: "Poor people, how very sad! But why not go back to see them?"

Pierre, out of his element and absent-minded during the earlier moments, had been deeply stirred by the latter part of Dario's narrative. His thoughts reverted to his apostolate amidst the misery of Paris, and his heart was touched with compassion at being confronted by the story of such fearful sufferings on the very day of his arrival in Rome. Unwittingly, impulsively, he

raised his voice, and said aloud: “Oh! we will go to see them together, madame; you will take me. These questions impassion me so much.”

The attention of everybody was then again turned upon the young priest. The others questioned him, and he realised that they were all anxious about his first impressions, his opinion of their city and of themselves. He must not judge Rome by mere outward appearances, they said. What effect had the city produced on him? How had he found it, and what did he think of it? Thereupon he politely apologised for his inability to answer them. He had not yet gone out, said he, and had seen nothing. But this answer was of no avail; they pressed him all the more keenly, and he fully understood that their object was to gain him over to admiration and love. They advised him, adjured him not to yield to any fatal disillusion, but to persist and wait until Rome should have revealed to him her soul.

“How long do you expect to remain among us, Monsieur l’Abbe?” suddenly inquired a courteous voice, with a clear but gentle ring.

It was Monsignor Nani, who, seated in the gloom, thus raised his voice for the first time. On several occasions it had seemed to Pierre that the prelate’s keen blue eyes were steadily fixed upon him, though all the while he pretended to be attentively listening to the drawling chatter of Celia’s aunt. And before replying Pierre glanced at him. In his crimson-edged cassock, with a violet silk sash drawn tightly around his waist, Nani still looked young,

although he was over fifty. His hair had remained blond, he had a straight refined nose, a mouth very firm yet very delicate of contour, and beautifully white teeth.

"Why, a fortnight or perhaps three weeks, Monsignor," replied Pierre.

The whole *salon* protested. What, three weeks! It was his pretension to know Rome in three weeks! Why, six weeks, twelve months, ten years were required! The first impression was always a disastrous one, and a long sojourn was needed for a visitor to recover from it.

"Three weeks!" repeated Donna Serafina with her disdainful air. "Is it possible for people to study one another and get fond of one another in three weeks? Those who come back to us are those who have learned to know us."

Instead of launching into exclamations like the others, Nani had at first contented himself with smiling, and gently waving his shapely hand, which bespoke his aristocratic origin. Then, as Pierre modestly explained himself, saying that he had come to Rome to attend to certain matters and would leave again as soon as those matters should have been concluded, the prelate, still smiling, summed up the argument with the remark: "Oh! Monsieur l'Abbe will stay with us for more than three weeks; we shall have the happiness of his presence here for a long time, I hope."

These words, though spoken with quiet cordiality, strangely disturbed the young priest. What was known, what was meant?

He leant towards Don Vigilio, who had remained near him, still and ever silent, and in a whisper inquired: "Who is Monsignor Nani?"

The secretary, however, did not at once reply. His feverish face became yet more livid. Then his ardent eyes glanced round to make sure that nobody was watching him, and in a breath he responded: "He is the Assessor of the Holy Office." [17]

This information sufficed, for Pierre was not ignorant of the fact that the assessor, who was present in silence at the meetings of the Holy Office, waited upon his Holiness every Wednesday evening after the sitting, to render him an account of the matters dealt with in the afternoon. This weekly audience, this hour spent with the Pope in a privacy which allowed of every subject being broached, gave the assessor an exceptional position, one of considerable power. Moreover the office led to the cardinalate; the only "rise" that could be given to the assessor was his promotion to the Sacred College.

Monsignor Nani, who seemed so perfectly frank and amiable, continued to look at the young priest with such an encouraging air that the latter felt obliged to go and occupy the seat beside him, which Celia's old aunt at last vacated. After all, was there not an omen of victory in meeting, on the very day of his arrival, a powerful prelate whose influence would perhaps open every door to him? He therefore felt very touched when Monsignor Nani, immediately after the first words, inquired in a tone of deep

[17] Otherwise the Inquisition.

interest, “And so, my dear child, you have published a book?”

After this, gradually mastered by his enthusiasm and forgetting where he was, Pierre unbosomed himself, and recounted the birth and progress of his burning love amidst the sick and the humble, gave voice to his dream of a return to the olden Christian community, and triumphed with the rejuvenescence of Catholicism, developing into the one religion of the universal democracy. Little by little he again raised his voice, and silence fell around him in the stern, antique reception-room, every one lending ear to his words with increasing surprise, with a growing coldness of which he remained unconscious.

At last Nani gently interrupted him, still wearing his perpetual smile, the faint irony of which, however, had departed. “No doubt, no doubt, my dear child,” he said, “it is very beautiful, oh! very beautiful, well worthy of the pure and noble imagination of a Christian. But what do you count on doing now?”

“I shall go straight to the Holy Father to defend myself,” answered Pierre.

A light, restrained laugh went round, and Donna Serafina expressed the general opinion by exclaiming: “The Holy Father isn’t seen as easily as that.”

Pierre, however, was quite impassioned. “Well, for my part,” he rejoined, “I hope I shall see him. Have I not expressed his views? Have I not defended his policy? Can he let my book be condemned when I believe that I have taken inspiration from all that is best in him?”

"No doubt, no doubt," Nani again hastily replied, as if he feared that the others might be too brusque with the young enthusiast. "The Holy Father has such a lofty mind. And of course it would be necessary to see him. Only, my dear child, you must not excite yourself so much; reflect a little; take your time." And, turning to Benedetta, he added, "Of course his Eminence has not seen Abbe Froment yet. It would be well, however, that he should receive him to-morrow morning to guide him with his wise counsel."

Cardinal Boccanera never attended his sister's Monday-evening receptions. Still, he was always there in the spirit, like some absent sovereign master.

"To tell the truth," replied the Contessina, hesitating, "I fear that my uncle does not share Monsieur l'Abbe's views."

Nani again smiled. "Exactly; he will tell him things which it is good he should hear."

Thereupon it was at once settled with Don Vigilio that the latter would put down the young priest's name for an audience on the following morning at ten o'clock.

However, at that moment a cardinal came in, clad in town costume – his sash and his stockings red, but his simar black, with a red edging and red buttons. It was Cardinal Sarno, a very old intimate of the Boccaneras; and whilst he apologised for arriving so late, through press of work, the company became silent and deferentially clustered round him. This was the first cardinal Pierre had seen, and he felt greatly disappointed, for

the newcomer had none of the majesty, none of the fine port and presence to which he had looked forward. On the contrary, he was short and somewhat deformed, with the left shoulder higher than the right, and a worn, ashen face with lifeless eyes. To Pierre he looked like some old clerk of seventy, half stupefied by fifty years of office work, dulled and bent by incessantly leaning over his writing desk ever since his youth. And indeed that was Sarno's story. The puny child of a petty middle-class family, he had been educated at the Seminario Romano. Then later he had for ten years professed Canon Law at that same seminary, afterwards becoming one of the secretaries of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Finally, five and twenty years ago, he had been created a cardinal, and the jubilee of his cardinalate had recently been celebrated. Born in Rome, he had always lived there; he was the perfect type of the prelate who, through growing up in the shade of the Vatican, has become one of the masters of the world. Although he had never occupied any diplomatic post, he had rendered such important services to the Propaganda, by his methodical habits of work, that he had become president of one of the two commissions which furthered the interests of the Church in those vast countries of the west which are not yet Catholic. And thus, in the depths of his dim eyes, behind his low, dull-looking brow, the huge map of Christendom was stored away.

Nani himself had risen, full of covert respect for the unobtrusive but terrible man whose hand was everywhere, even

in the most distant corners of the earth, although he had never left his office. As Nani knew, despite his apparent nullity, Sarno, with his slow, methodical, ably organised work of conquest, possessed sufficient power to set empires in confusion.

"Has your Eminence recovered from that cold which distressed us so much?" asked Nani.

"No, no, I still cough. There is a most malignant passage at the offices. I feel as cold as ice as soon as I leave my room."

From that moment Pierre felt quite little, virtually lost. He was not even introduced to the Cardinal. And yet he had to remain in the room for nearly another hour, looking around and observing. That antiquated world then seemed to him puerile, as though it had lapsed into a mournful second childhood. Under all the apparent haughtiness and proud reserve he could divine real timidity, unacknowledged distrust, born of great ignorance. If the conversation did not become general, it was because nobody dared to speak out frankly; and what he heard in the corners was simply so much childish chatter, the petty gossip of the week, the trivial echoes of sacristies and drawing-rooms. People saw but little of one another, and the slightest incidents assumed huge proportions. At last Pierre ended by feeling as though he were transported into some *salon* of the time of Charles X, in one of the episcopal cities of the French provinces. No refreshments were served. Celia's old aunt secured possession of Cardinal Sarno; but, instead of replying to her, he simply wagged his head from time to time. Don Vigilio had not opened his mouth the

whole evening. However, a conversation in a very low tone was started by Nani and Morano, to whom Donna Serafina listened, leaning forward and expressing her approval by slowly nodding her head. They were doubtless speaking of the dissolution of Benedetta's marriage, for they glanced at the young woman gravely from time to time. And in the centre of the spacious room, in the sleepy glow of the lamps, there was only the young people, Benedetta, Dario, and Celia who seemed to be at all alive, chattering in undertones and occasionally repressing a burst of laughter.

All at once Pierre was struck by the great resemblance between Benedetta and the portrait of Cassia hanging on the wall. Each displayed the same delicate youth, the same passionate mouth, the same large, unfathomable eyes, set in the same round, sensible, healthy-looking face. In each there was certainly the same upright soul, the same heart of flame. Then a recollection came to Pierre, that of a painting by Guido Reni, the adorable, candid head of Beatrice Cenci, which, at that moment and to his thinking, the portrait of Cassia closely resembled. This resemblance stirred him and he glanced at Benedetta with anxious sympathy, as if all the fierce fatality of race and country were about to fall on her. But no, it could not be; she looked so calm, so resolute, and so patient! Besides, ever since he had entered that room he had noticed none other than signs of gay fraternal tenderness between her and Dario, especially on her side, for her face ever retained the bright serenity of a love which

may be openly confessed. At one moment, it is true, Dario in a joking way had caught hold of her hands and pressed them; but while he began to laugh rather nervously, with a brighter gleam darting from his eyes, she on her side, all composure, slowly freed her hands, as though theirs was but the play of old and affectionate friends. She loved him, though, it was visible, with her whole being and for her whole life.

At last when Dario, after stifling a slight yawn and glancing at his watch, had slipped off to join some friends who were playing cards at a lady's house, Benedetta and Celia sat down together on a sofa near Pierre; and the latter, without wishing to listen, overheard a few words of their confidential chat. The little Princess was the eldest daughter of Prince Matteo Buongiovanni, who was already the father of five children by an English wife, a Mortimer, to whom he was indebted for a dowry of two hundred thousand pounds. Indeed, the Buongiovannis were known as one of the few patrician families of Rome that were still rich, still erect among the ruins of the past, now crumbling on every side. They also numbered two popes among their forerunners, yet this had not prevented Prince Matteo from lending support to the Quirinal without quarrelling with the Vatican. Son of an American woman, no longer having the pure Roman blood in his veins, he was a more supple politician than other aristocrats, and was also, folks said, extremely grasping, struggling to be one of the last to retain the wealth and power of olden times, which he realised were condemned to death. Yet it was in his family,

renowned for its superb pride and its continued magnificence, that a love romance had lately taken birth, a romance which was the subject of endless gossip: Celia had suddenly fallen in love with a young lieutenant to whom she had never spoken; her love was reciprocated, and the passionate attachment of the officer and the girl only found vent in the glances they exchanged on meeting each day during the usual drive through the Corso. Nevertheless Celia displayed a tenacious will, and after declaring to her father that she would never take any other husband, she was waiting, firm and resolute, in the certainty that she would ultimately secure the man of her choice. The worst of the affair was that the lieutenant, Attilio Sacco, happened to be the son of Deputy Sacco, a parvenu whom the black world looked down upon, as upon one sold to the Quirinal and ready to undertake the very dirtiest job.

"It was for me that Morano spoke just now," Celia murmured in Benedetta's ear. "Yes, yes, when he spoke so harshly of Attilio's father and that ministerial appointment which people are talking about. He wanted to give me a lesson."

The two girls had sworn eternal affection in their school-days, and Benedetta, the elder by five years, showed herself maternal. "And so," she said, "you've not become a whit more reasonable. You still think of that young man?"

"What! are you going to grieve me too, dear?" replied Celia. "I love Attilio and mean to have him. Yes, him and not another! I want him and I'll have him, because I love him and he loves

me. It's simple enough."

Pierre glanced at her, thunderstruck. With her gentle virgin face she was like a candid, budding lily. A brow and a nose of blossom-like purity; a mouth all innocence with its lips closing over pearly teeth, and eyes like spring water, clear and fathomless. And not a quiver passed over her cheeks of satiny freshness, no sign, however faint, of anxiety or inquisitiveness appeared in her candid glance. Did she think? Did she know? Who could have answered? She was virginity personified with all its redoubtable mystery.

"Ah! my dear," resumed Benedetta, "don't begin my sad story over again. One doesn't succeed in marrying the Pope and the King."

All tranquillity, Celia responded: "But you didn't love Prada, whereas I love Attilio. Life lies in that: one must love."

These words, spoken so naturally by that ignorant child, disturbed Pierre to such a point that he felt tears rising to his eyes. Love! yes, therein lay the solution of every quarrel, the alliance between the nations, the reign of peace and joy throughout the world! However, Donna Serafina had now risen, shrewdly suspecting the nature of the conversation which was impassioning the two girls. And she gave Don Vigilio a glance, which the latter understood, for he came to tell Pierre in an undertone that it was time to retire. Eleven o'clock was striking, and Celia went off with her aunt. Advocate Morano, however, doubtless desired to retain Cardinal Sarno and Nani

for a few moments in order that they might privately discuss some difficulty which had arisen in the divorce proceedings. On reaching the outer reception-room, Benedetta, after kissing Celia on both cheeks, took leave of Pierre with much good grace.

"In answering the Viscount to-morrow morning," said she, "I shall tell him how happy we are to have you with us, and for longer than you think. Don't forget to come down at ten o'clock to see my uncle, the Cardinal."

Having climbed to the third floor again, Pierre and Don Vigilio, each carrying a candlestick which the servant had handed to them, were about to part for the night, when the former could not refrain from asking the secretary a question which had been worrying him for hours: "Is Monsignor Nani a very influential personage?"

Don Vigilio again became quite scared, and simply replied by a gesture, opening his arms as if to embrace the world. Then his eyes flashed, and in his turn he seemed to yield to inquisitiveness. "You already knew him, didn't you?" he inquired.

"I? not at all!"

"Really! Well, he knows you very well. Last Monday I heard him speak of you in such precise terms that he seemed to be acquainted with the slightest particulars of your career and your character."

"Why, I never even heard his name before."

"Then he must have procured information."

Thereupon Don Vigilio bowed and entered his room; whilst

Pierre, surprised to find his door open, saw Victorine come out with her calm active air.

"Ah! Monsieur l'Abbe, I wanted to make sure that you had everything you were likely to want. There are candles, water, sugar, and matches. And what do you take in the morning, please? Coffee? No, a cup of milk with a roll. Very good; at eight o'clock, eh? And now rest and sleep well. I was awfully afraid of ghosts during the first nights I spent in this old palace! But I never saw a trace of one. The fact is, when people are dead, they are too well pleased, and don't want to break their rest!"

Then off she went, and Pierre at last found himself alone, glad to be able to shake off the strain imposed on him, to free himself from the discomfort which he had felt in that reception-room, among those people who in his mind still mingled and vanished like shadows in the sleepy glow of the lamps. Ghosts, thought he, are the old dead ones of long ago whose distressed spirits return to love and suffer in the breasts of the living of to-day. And, despite his long afternoon rest, he had never felt so weary, so desirous of slumber, confused and foggy as was his mind, full of the fear that he had hitherto not understood things aright. When he began to undress, his astonishment at being in that room returned to him with such intensity that he almost fancied himself another person. What did all those people think of his book? Why had he been brought to this cold dwelling whose hostility he could divine? Was it for the purpose of helping him or conquering him? And again in the yellow glimmer, the dismal

sunset of the drawing-room, he perceived Donna Serafina and Advocate Morano on either side of the chimney-piece, whilst behind the calm yet passionate visage of Benedetta appeared the smiling face of Monsignor Nani, with cunning eyes and lips bespeaking indomitable energy.

He went to bed, but soon got up again, stifling, feeling such a need of fresh, free air that he opened the window wide in order to lean out. But the night was black as ink, the darkness had submerged the horizon. A mist must have hidden the stars in the firmament; the vault above seemed opaque and heavy like lead; and yonder in front the houses of the Trastevere had long since been asleep. Not one of all their windows glittered; there was but a single gaslight shining, all alone and far away, like a lost spark. In vain did Pierre seek the Janiculum. In the depths of that ocean of nihility all sunk and vanished, Rome's four and twenty centuries, the ancient Palatine and the modern Quirinal, even the giant dome of St. Peter's, blotted out from the sky by the flood of gloom. And below him he could not see, he could not even hear the Tiber, the dead river flowing past the dead city.

III

AT a quarter to ten o'clock on the following morning Pierre came down to the first floor of the mansion for his audience with Cardinal Boccanera. He had awoke free of all fatigue and again full of courage and candid enthusiasm; nothing remaining of his strange despondency of the previous night, the doubts and suspicions which had then come over him. The morning was so fine, the sky so pure and so bright, that his heart once more palpitated with hope.

On the landing he found the folding doors of the first ante-room wide open. While closing the gala saloons which overlooked the street, and which were rotting with old age and neglect, the Cardinal still used the reception-rooms of one of his grand-uncles, who in the eighteenth century had risen to the same ecclesiastical dignity as himself. There was a suite of four immense rooms, each sixteen feet high, with windows facing the lane which sloped down towards the Tiber; and the sun never entered them, shut off as it was by the black houses across the lane. Thus the installation, in point of space, was in keeping with the display and pomp of the old-time princely dignitaries of the Church. But no repairs were ever made, no care was taken of anything, the hangings were frayed and ragged, and dust preyed on the furniture, amidst an unconcern which seemed to betoken some proud resolve to stay the course of time.

Pierre experienced a slight shock as he entered the first room, the servants' ante-chamber. Formerly two pontifical *gente d'armi* in full uniform had always stood there amidst a stream of lackeys; and the single servant now on duty seemed by his phantom-like appearance to increase the melancholiness of the vast and gloomy hall. One was particularly struck by an altar facing the windows, an altar with red drapery surmounted by a *baldacchino* with red hangings, on which appeared the escutcheon of the Boccaneras, the winged dragon spitting flames with the device, *Bocca nera, Alma rossa*. And the grand-uncle's red hat, the old huge ceremonial hat, was also there, with the two cushions of red silk, and the two antique parasols which were taken in the coach each time his Eminence went out. And in the deep silence it seemed as if one could almost hear the faint noise of the moths preying for a century past upon all this dead splendour, which would have fallen into dust at the slightest touch of a feather broom.

The second ante-room, that was formerly occupied by the secretary, was also empty, and it was only in the third one, the *anticamera nobile*, that Pierre found Don Vigilio. With his retinue reduced to what was strictly necessary, the Cardinal had preferred to have his secretary near him – at the door, so to say, of the old throne-room, where he gave audience. And Don Vigilio, so thin and yellow, and quivering with fever, sat there like one lost, at a small, common, black table covered with papers. Raising his head from among a batch of documents, he

recognised Pierre, and in a low voice, a faint murmur amidst the silence, he said, "His Eminence is engaged. Please wait."

Then he again turned to his reading, doubtless to escape all attempts at conversation.

Not daring to sit down, Pierre examined the apartment. It looked perhaps yet more dilapidated than the others, with its hangings of green damask worn by age and resembling the faded moss on ancient trees. The ceiling, however, had remained superb. Within a frieze of gilded and coloured ornaments was a fresco representing the Triumph of Amphitrite, the work of one of Raffaelle's pupils. And, according to antique usage, it was here that the *berretta*, the red cap, was placed, on a credence, below a large crucifix of ivory and ebony.

As Pierre grew used to the half-light, however, his attention was more particularly attracted by a recently painted full-length portrait of the Cardinal in ceremonial costume – cassock of red moire, rochet of lace, and *cappa* thrown like a royal mantle over his shoulders. In these vestments of the Church the tall old man of seventy retained the proud bearing of a prince, clean shaven, but still boasting an abundance of white hair which streamed in curls over his shoulders. He had the commanding visage of the Boccaneras, a large nose and a large thin-lipped mouth in a long face intersected by broad lines; and the eyes which lighted his pale countenance were indeed the eyes of his race, very dark, yet sparkling with ardent life under bushy brows which had remained quite black. With laurels about his head he would have resembled

a Roman emperor, very handsome and master of the world, as though indeed the blood of Augustus pulsated in his veins.

Pierre knew his story which this portrait recalled. Educated at the College of the Nobles, Pio Boccanera had but once absented himself from Rome, and that when very young, hardly a deacon, but nevertheless appointed oblegate to convey a *berretta* to Paris. On his return his ecclesiastical career had continued in sovereign fashion. Honours had fallen on him naturally, as by right of birth. Ordained by Pius IX himself, afterwards becoming a Canon of the Vatican Basilica, and *Cameriere segreto*, he had risen to the post of Majordomo about the time of the Italian occupation, and in 1874 had been created a Cardinal. For the last four years, moreover, he had been Papal Chamberlain (*Camerlingo*), and folks whispered that Leo XIII had appointed him to that post, even as he himself had been appointed to it by Pius IX, in order to lessen his chance of succeeding to the pontifical throne; for although the conclave in choosing Leo had set aside the old tradition that the Camerlingo was ineligible for the papacy, it was not probable that it would again dare to infringe that rule. Moreover, people asserted that, even as had been the case in the reign of Pius, there was a secret warfare between the Pope and his Camerlingo, the latter remaining on one side, condemning the policy of the Holy See, holding radically different opinions on all things, and silently waiting for the death of Leo, which would place power in his hands with the duty of summoning the conclave, and provisionally watching over the affairs and

interests of the Church until a new Pope should be elected. Behind Cardinal Pio's broad, stern brow, however, in the glow of his dark eyes, might there not also be the ambition of actually rising to the papacy, of repeating the career of Gioachino Pecci, Camerlingo and then Pope, all tradition notwithstanding? With the pride of a Roman prince Pio knew but Rome; he almost gloried in being totally ignorant of the modern world; and verily he showed himself very pious, austerely religious, with a full firm faith into which the faintest doubt could never enter.

But a whisper drew Pierre from his reflections. Don Vigilio, in his prudent way, invited him to sit down: "You may have to wait some time: take a stool."

Then he began to cover a large sheet of yellowish paper with fine writing, while Pierre seated himself on one of the stools ranged alongside the wall in front of the portrait. And again the young man fell into a reverie, picturing in his mind a renewal of all the princely pomp of the old-time cardinals in that antique room. To begin with, as soon as nominated, a cardinal gave public festivities, which were sometimes very splendid. During three days the reception-rooms remained wide open, all could enter, and from room to room ushers repeated the names of those who came – patricians, people of the middle class, poor folks, all Rome indeed, whom the new cardinal received with sovereign kindliness, as a king might receive his subjects. Then there was quite a princely retinue; some cardinals carried five hundred people about with them, had no fewer than sixteen distinct offices

in their households, lived, in fact, amidst a perfect court. Even when life subsequently became simplified, a cardinal, if he were a prince, still had a right to a gala train of four coaches drawn by black horses. Four servants preceded him in liveries, emblazoned with his arms, and carried his hat, cushion, and parasols. He was also attended by a secretary in a mantle of violet silk, a train-bearer in a gown of violet woollen stuff, and a gentleman in waiting, wearing an Elizabethan style of costume, and bearing the *berretta* with gloved hands. Although the household had then become smaller, it still comprised an *auditore* specially charged with the congregational work, a secretary employed exclusively for correspondence, a chief usher who introduced visitors, a gentleman in attendance for the carrying of the *berretta*, a train-bearer, a chaplain, a majordomo and a *valet-de-chambre*, to say nothing of a flock of underlings, lackeys, cooks, coachmen, grooms, quite a population, which filled the vast mansions with bustle. And with these attendants Pierre mentally sought to fill the three spacious ante-rooms now so deserted; the stream of lackeys in blue liveries broidered with emblazonry, the world of abbes and prelates in silk mantles appeared before him, again setting magnificent and passionate life under the lofty ceilings, illumining all the semi-gloom with resuscitated splendour.

But nowadays – particularly since the Italian occupation of Rome – nearly all the great fortunes of the Roman princes have been exhausted, and the pomp of the great dignitaries of the Church has disappeared. The ruined patricians have kept

aloof from badly remunerated ecclesiastical offices to which little renown attaches, and have left them to the ambition of the petty *bourgeoisie*. Cardinal Boccanera, the last prince of ancient nobility invested with the purple, received scarcely more than 30,000 *lire*[18] a year to enable him to sustain his rank, that is 22,000 *lire*,[19] the salary of his post as Camerlingo, and various small sums derived from other functions. And he would never have made both ends meet had not Donna Serafina helped him with the remnants of the former family fortune which he had long previously surrendered to his sisters and his brother. Donna Serafina and Benedetta lived apart, in their own rooms, having their own table, servants, and personal expenses. The Cardinal only had his nephew Dario with him, and he never gave a dinner or held a public reception. His greatest source of expense was his carriage, the heavy pair-horse coach, which ceremonial usage compelled him to retain, for a cardinal cannot go on foot through the streets of Rome. However, his coachman, an old family servant, spared him the necessity of keeping a groom by insisting on taking entire charge of the carriage and the two black horses, which, like himself, had grown old in the service of the Boccaneras. There were two footmen, father and son, the latter born in the house. And the cook's wife assisted in the kitchen. However, yet greater reductions had been made in the ante-rooms, where the staff, once so brilliant and numerous,

[18] 1,200 pounds.

[19] 880 pounds.

was now simply composed of two petty priests, Don Vigilio, who was at once secretary, auditore, and majordomo, and Abbe Paparelli, who acted as train-bearer, chaplain, and chief usher. There, where a crowd of salaried people of all ranks had once moved to and fro, filling the vast halls with bustle and colour, one now only beheld two little black cassocks gliding noiselessly along, two unobtrusive shadows flitting about amidst the deep gloom of the lifeless rooms.

And Pierre now fully understood the haughty unconcern of the Cardinal, who suffered time to complete its work of destruction in that ancestral mansion, to which he was powerless to restore the glorious life of former times! Built for that shining life, for the sovereign display of a sixteenth-century prince, it was now deserted and empty, crumbling about the head of its last master, who had no servants left him to fill it, and would not have known how to pay for the materials which repairs would have necessitated. And so, since the modern world was hostile, since religion was no longer sovereign, since men had changed, and one was drifting into the unknown, amidst the hatred and indifference of new generations, why not allow the old world to collapse in the stubborn, motionless pride born of its ancient glory? Heroes alone died standing, without relinquishing aught of their past, preserving the same faith until their final gasp, beholding, with pain-fraught bravery and infinite sadness, the slow last agony of their divinity. And the Cardinal's tall figure, his pale, proud face, so full of sovereign despair and courage,

expressed that stubborn determination to perish beneath the ruins of the old social edifice rather than change a single one of its stones.

Pierre was roused by a rustling of furtive steps, a little mouse-like trot, which made him raise his head. A door in the wall had just opened, and to his surprise there stood before him an abbe of some forty years, fat and short, looking like an old maid in a black skirt, a very old maid in fact, so numerous were the wrinkles on his flabby face. It was Abbe Paparelli, the train-bearer and usher, and on seeing Pierre he was about to question him, when Don Vigilio explained matters.

"Ah! very good, very good, Monsieur l'Abbe Froment. His Eminence will condescend to receive you, but you must wait, you must wait."

Then, with his silent rolling walk, he returned to the second ante-room, where he usually stationed himself.

Pierre did not like his face – the face of an old female devotee, whitened by celibacy, and ravaged by stern observance of the rites; and so, as Don Vigilio – his head weary and his hands burning with fever – had not resumed his work, the young man ventured to question him. Oh! Abbe Paparelli, he was a man of the liveliest faith, who from simple humility remained in a modest post in his Eminence's service. On the other hand, his Eminence was pleased to reward him for his devotion by occasionally condescending to listen to his advice.

As Don Vigilio spoke, a faint gleam of irony, a kind of veiled

anger appeared in his ardent eyes. However, he continued to examine Pierre, and gradually seemed reassured, appreciating the evident frankness of this foreigner who could hardly belong to any clique. And so he ended by departing somewhat from his continual sickly distrust, and even engaged in a brief chat.

"Yes, yes," he said, "there is a deal of work sometimes, and rather hard work too. His Eminence belongs to several Congregations, the Consistorial, the Holy Office, the Index, the Rites. And all the documents concerning the business which falls to him come into my hands. I have to study each affair, prepare a report on it, clear the way, so to say. Besides which all the correspondence is carried on through me. Fortunately his Eminence is a holy man, and intrigues neither for himself nor for others, and this enables us to taste a little peace."

Pierre took a keen interest in these particulars of the life led by a prince of the Church. He learnt that the Cardinal rose at six o'clock, summer and winter alike. He said his mass in his chapel, a little room which simply contained an altar of painted wood, and which nobody but himself ever entered. His private apartments were limited to three rooms – a bed-room, dining-room, and study – all very modest and small, contrived indeed by partitioning off portions of one large hall. And he led a very retired life, exempt from all luxury, like one who is frugal and poor. At eight in the morning he drank a cup of cold milk for his breakfast. Then, when there were sittings of the Congregations to which he belonged, he attended them; otherwise he remained

at home and gave audience. Dinner was served at one o'clock, and afterwards came the siesta, lasting until five in summer and until four at other seasons – a sacred moment when a servant would not have dared even to knock at the door. On awaking, if it were fine, his Eminence drove out towards the ancient Appian Way, returning at sunset when the *Ave Maria* began to ring. And finally, after again giving audience between seven and nine, he supped and retired into his room, where he worked all alone or went to bed. The cardinals wait upon the Pope on fixed days, two or three times each month, for purposes connected with their functions. For nearly a year, however, the Camerlingo had not been received in private audience by his Holiness, and this was a sign of disgrace, a proof of secret warfare, of which the entire black world spoke in prudent whispers.

"His Eminence is sometimes a little rough," continued Don Vigilio in a soft voice. "But you should see him smile when his niece the Contessina, of whom he is very fond, comes down to kiss him. If you have a good reception, you know, you will owe it to the Contessina."

At this moment the secretary was interrupted. A sound of voices came from the second ante-room, and forthwith he rose to his feet, and bent very low at sight of a stout man in a black cassock, red sash, and black hat, with twisted cord of red and gold, whom Abbe Paparelli was ushering in with a great display of deferential genuflections. Pierre also had risen at a sign from Don Vigilio, who found time to whisper to him, "Cardinal

Sanguinetti, Prefect of the Congregation of the Index."

Meantime Abbe Paparelli was lavishing attentions on the prelate, repeating with an expression of blissful satisfaction: "Your most reverend Eminence was expected. I have orders to admit your most reverend Eminence at once. His Eminence the Grand Penitentiary is already here."

Sanguinetti, loud of voice and sonorous of tread, spoke out with sudden familiarity, "Yes, yes, I know. A number of importunate people detained me! One can never do as one desires. But I am here at last."

He was a man of sixty, squat and fat, with a round and highly coloured face distinguished by a huge nose, thick lips, and bright eyes which were always on the move. But he more particularly struck one by his active, almost turbulent, youthful vivacity, scarcely a white hair as yet showing among his brown and carefully tended locks, which fell in curls about his temples. Born at Viterbo, he had studied at the seminary there before completing his education at the Universita Gregoriana in Rome. His ecclesiastical appointments showed how rapidly he had made his way, how supple was his mind: first of all secretary to the nunciature at Lisbon; then created titular Bishop of Thebes, and entrusted with a delicate mission in Brazil; on his return appointed nuncio first at Brussels and next at Vienna; and finally raised to the cardinalate, to say nothing of the fact that he had lately secured the suburban episcopal see of Frascati.[20] Trained

[20] Cardinals York and Howard were Bishops of Frascati. – Trans.

to business, having dealt with every nation in Europe, he had nothing against him but his ambition, of which he made too open a display, and his spirit of intrigue, which was ever restless. It was said that he was now one of the irreconcilables who demanded that Italy should surrender Rome, though formerly he had made advances to the Quirinal. In his wild passion to become the next Pope he rushed from one opinion to the other, giving himself no end of trouble to gain people from whom he afterwards parted. He had twice already fallen out with Leo XIII, but had deemed it politic to make his submission. In point of fact, given that he was an almost openly declared candidate to the papacy, he was wearing himself out by his perpetual efforts, dabbling in too many things, and setting too many people agog.

Pierre, however, had only seen in him the Prefect of the Congregation of the Index; and the one idea which struck him was that this man would decide the fate of his book. And so, when the Cardinal had disappeared and Abbe Paparelli had returned to the second ante-room, he could not refrain from asking Don Vigilio, "Are their Eminences Cardinal Sanguinetti and Cardinal Boccanera very intimate, then?"

An irrepressible smile contracted the secretary's lips, while his eyes gleamed with an irony which he could no longer subdue: "Very intimate – oh! no, no – they see one another when they can't do otherwise."

Then he explained that considerable deference was shown to Cardinal Boccanera's high birth, and that his colleagues often

met at his residence, when, as happened to be the case that morning, any grave affair presented itself, requiring an interview apart from the usual official meetings. Cardinal Sanguinetti, he added, was the son of a petty medical man of Viterbo. "No, no," he concluded, "their Eminences are not at all intimate. It is difficult for men to agree when they have neither the same ideas nor the same character, especially too when they are in each other's way."

Don Vigilio spoke these last words in a lower tone, as if talking to himself and still retaining his sharp smile. But Pierre scarcely listened, absorbed as he was in his own worries. "Perhaps they have met to discuss some affair connected with the Index?" said he.

Don Vigilio must have known the object of the meeting. However, he merely replied that, if the Index had been in question, the meeting would have taken place at the residence of the Prefect of that Congregation. Thereupon Pierre, yielding to his impatience, was obliged to put a straight question. "You know of my affair – the affair of my book," he said. "Well, as his Eminence is a member of the Congregation, and all the documents pass through your hands, you might be able to give me some useful information. I know nothing as yet and am so anxious to know!"

At this Don Vigilio relapsed into scared disquietude. He stammered, saying that he had not seen any documents, which was true. "Nothing has yet reached us," he added; "I assure you

I know nothing."

Then, as the other persisted, he signed to him to keep quiet, and again turned to his writing, glancing furtively towards the second ante-room as if he believed that Abbe Paparelli was listening. He had certainly said too much, he thought, and he made himself very small, crouching over the table, and melting, fading away in his dim corner.

Pierre again fell into a reverie, a prey to all the mystery which enveloped him – the sleepy, antique sadness of his surroundings. Long minutes went by; it was nearly eleven when the sound of a door opening and a buzz of voices roused him. Then he bowed respectfully to Cardinal Sanguinetti, who went off accompanied by another cardinal, a very thin and tall man, with a grey, bony, ascetic face. Neither of them, however, seemed even to see the petty foreign priest who bent low as they went by. They were chatting aloud in familiar fashion.

"Yes! the wind is falling; it is warmer than yesterday."

"We shall certainly have the sirocco to-morrow."

Then solemn silence again fell on the large, dim room. Don Vigilio was still writing, but his pen made no noise as it travelled over the stiff yellow paper. However, the faint tinkle of a cracked bell was suddenly heard, and Abbe Paparelli, after hastening into the throne-room for a moment, returned to summon Pierre, whom he announced in a restrained voice: "Monsieur l'Abbe Pierre Froment."

The spacious throne-room was like the other apartments, a

virtual ruin. Under the fine ceiling of carved and gilded wood-work, the red wall-hangings of *brocatelle*, with a large palm pattern, were falling into tatters. A few holes had been patched, but long wear had streaked the dark purple of the silk – once of dazzling magnificence – with pale hues. The curiosity of the room was its old throne, an arm-chair upholstered in red silk, on which the Holy Father had sat when visiting Cardinal Pio's grand-uncle. This chair was surmounted by a canopy, likewise of red silk, under which hung the portrait of the reigning Pope. And, according to custom, the chair was turned towards the wall, to show that none might sit on it. The other furniture of the apartment was made up of sofas, arm-chairs, and chairs, with a marvellous Louis Quatorze table of gilded wood, having a top of mosaic-work representing the rape of Europa.

But at first Pierre only saw Cardinal Boccanera standing by the table which he used for writing. In his simple black cassock, with red edging and red buttons, the Cardinal seemed to him yet taller and prouder than in the portrait which showed him in ceremonial costume. There was the same curly white hair, the same long, strongly marked face, with large nose and thin lips, and the same ardent eyes, illumining the pale countenance from under bushy brows which had remained black. But the portrait did not express the lofty tranquil faith which shone in this handsome face, a complete certainty of what truth was, and an absolute determination to abide by it for ever.

Boccanera had not stirred, but with black, fixed glance

remained watching his visitor's approach; and the young priest, acquainted with the usual ceremonial, knelt and kissed the large ruby which the prelate wore on his hand. However, the Cardinal immediately raised him.

"You are welcome here, my dear son. My niece spoke to me about you with so much sympathy that I am happy to receive you." With these words Pio seated himself near the table, as yet not telling Pierre to take a chair, but still examining him whilst speaking slowly and with studied politeness: "You arrived yesterday morning, did you not, and were very tired?"

"Your Eminence is too kind – yes, I was worn out, as much through emotion as fatigue. This journey is one of such gravity for me."

The Cardinal seemed indisposed to speak of serious matters so soon. "No doubt; it is a long way from Paris to Rome," he replied. "Nowadays the journey may be accomplished with fair rapidity, but formerly how interminable it was!" Then speaking yet more slowly: "I went to Paris once – oh! a long time ago, nearly fifty years ago – and then for barely a week. A large and handsome city; yes, yes, a great many people in the streets, extremely well-bred people, a nation which has accomplished great and admirable things. Even in these sad times one cannot forget that France was the eldest daughter of the Church. But since that one journey I have not left Rome – "

Then he made a gesture of quiet disdain, expressive of all he left unsaid. What was the use of journeying to a land of doubt

and rebellion? Did not Rome suffice – Rome, which governed the world – the Eternal City which, when the times should be accomplished, would become the capital of the world once more?

Silently glancing at the Cardinal's lofty stature, the stature of one of the violent war-like princes of long ago, now reduced to wearing that simple cassock, Pierre deemed him superb with his proud conviction that Rome sufficed unto herself. But that stubborn resolve to remain in ignorance, that determination to take no account of other nations excepting to treat them as vassals, disquieted him when he reflected on the motives that had brought him there. And as silence had again fallen he thought it politic to approach the subject he had at heart by words of homage.

"Before taking any other steps," said he, "I desired to express my profound respect for your Eminence; for in your Eminence I place my only hope; and I beg your Eminence to be good enough to advise and guide me."

With a wave of the hand Boccanera thereupon invited Pierre to take a chair in front of him. "I certainly do not refuse you my counsel, my dear son," he replied. "I owe my counsel to every Christian who desires to do well. But it would be wrong for you to rely on my influence. I have none. I live entirely apart from others; I cannot and will not ask for anything. However, this will not prevent us from chatting." Then, approaching the question in all frankness, without the slightest artifice, like one

of brave and absolute mind who fears no responsibility however great, he continued: "You have written a book, have you not? – 'New Rome,' I believe – and you have come to defend this book which has been denounced to the Congregation of the Index. For my own part I have not yet read it. You will understand that I cannot read everything. I only see the works that are sent to me by the Congregation which I have belonged to since last year; and, besides, I often content myself with the reports which my secretary draws up for me. However, my niece Benedetta has read your book, and has told me that it is not lacking in interest. It first astonished her somewhat, and then greatly moved her. So I promise you that I will go through it and study the incriminated passages with the greatest care."

Pierre profited by the opportunity to begin pleading his cause. And it occurred to him that it would be best to give his references at once. "Your Eminence will realise how stupefied I was when I learnt that proceedings were being taken against my book," he said. "Monsieur le Vicomte Philibert de la Choue, who is good enough to show me some friendship, does not cease repeating that such a book is worth the best of armies to the Holy See."

"Oh! De la Choue, De la Choue!" repeated the Cardinal with a pout of good-natured disdain. "I know that De la Choue considers himself a good Catholic. He is in a slight degree our relative, as you know. And when he comes to Rome and stays here, I willingly see him, on condition however that no mention is made of certain subjects on which it would be impossible for

us to agree. To tell the truth, the Catholicism preached by De la Choue – worthy, clever man though he is – his Catholicism, I say, with his corporations, his working-class clubs, his cleansed democracy and his vague socialism, is after all merely so much literature!"

This pronouncement struck Pierre, for he realised all the disdainful irony contained in it – an irony which touched himself. And so he hastened to name his other reference, whose authority he imagined to be above discussion: "His Eminence Cardinal Bergerot has been kind enough to signify his full approval of my book."

At this Boccanera's face suddenly changed. It no longer wore an expression of derisive blame, tinged with the pity that is prompted by a child's ill-considered action fated to certain failure. A flash of anger now lighted up the Cardinal's dark eyes, and a pugnacious impulse hardened his entire countenance. "In France," he slowly resumed, "Cardinal Bergerot no doubt has a reputation for great piety. We know little of him in Rome. Personally, I have only seen him once, when he came to receive his hat. And I would not therefore allow myself to judge him if his writings and actions had not recently saddened my believing soul. Unhappily, I am not the only one; you will find nobody here, of the Sacred College, who approves of his doings." Boccanera paused, then in a firm voice concluded: "Cardinal Bergerot is a Revolutionary!"

This time Pierre's surprise for a moment forced him to silence.

A Revolutionary – good heavens! a Revolutionary – that gentle pastor of souls, whose charity was inexhaustible, whose one dream was that Jesus might return to earth to ensure at last the reign of peace and justice! So words did not have the same signification in all places; into what religion had he now tumbled that the faith of the poor and the humble should be looked upon as a mere insurrectional, condemnable passion? As yet unable to understand things aright, Pierre nevertheless realised that discussion would be both discourteous and futile, and his only remaining desire was to give an account of his book, explain and vindicate it. But at his first words the Cardinal interposed.

"No, no, my dear son. It would take us too long and I wish to read the passages. Besides, there is an absolute rule. All books which meddle with the faith are condemnable and pernicious. Does your book show perfect respect for dogma?"

"I believe so, and I assure your Eminence that I have had no intention of writing a work of negation."

"Good: I may be on your side if that is true. Only, in the contrary case, I have but one course to advise you, which is to withdraw your work, condemn it, and destroy it without waiting until a decision of the Index compels you to do so. Whosoever has given birth to scandal must stifle it and expiate it, even if he have to cut into his own flesh. The only duties of a priest are humility and obedience, the complete annihilation of self before the sovereign will of the Church. And, besides, why write at all? For there is already rebellion in expressing an opinion

of one's own. It is always the temptation of the devil which puts a pen in an author's hand. Why, then, incur the risk of being for ever damned by yielding to the pride of intelligence and domination? Your book again, my dear son – your book is literature, literature!"

This expression again repeated was instinct with so much contempt that Pierre realised all the wretchedness that would fall upon the poor pages of his apostolate on meeting the eyes of this prince who had become a saintly man. With increasing fear and admiration he listened to him, and beheld him growing greater and greater.

"Ah! faith, my dear son, everything is in faith – perfect, disinterested faith – which believes for the sole happiness of believing! How restful it is to bow down before the mysteries without seeking to penetrate them, full of the tranquil conviction that, in accepting them, one possesses both the certain and the final! Is not the highest intellectual satisfaction that which is derived from the victory of the divine over the mind, which it disciplines, and contents so completely that it knows desire no more? And apart from that perfect equilibrium, that explanation of the unknown by the divine, no durable peace is possible for man. If one desires that truth and justice should reign upon earth, it is in God that one must place them. He that does not believe is like a battlefield, the scene of every disaster. Faith alone can tranquillise and deliver."

For an instant Pierre remained silent before the great figure

rising up in front of him. At Lourdes he had only seen suffering humanity rushing thither for health of the body and consolation of the soul; but here was the intellectual believer, the mind that needs certainty, finding satisfaction, tasting the supreme enjoyment of doubting no more. He had never previously heard such a cry of joy at living in obedience without anxiety as to the morrow of death. He knew that Boccanera's youth had been somewhat stormy, traversed by acute attacks of sensuality, a flaring of the red blood of his ancestors; and he marvelled at the calm majesty which faith had at last implanted in this descendant of so violent a race, who had no passion remaining in him but that of pride.

"And yet," Pierre at last ventured to say in a timid, gentle voice, "if faith remains essential and immutable, forms change. From hour to hour evolution goes on in all things – the world changes."

"That is not true!" exclaimed the Cardinal, "the world does not change. It continually tramps over the same ground, loses itself, strays into the most abominable courses, and it continually has to be brought back into the right path. That is the truth. In order that the promises of Christ may be fulfilled, is it not necessary that the world should return to its starting point, its original innocence? Is not the end of time fixed for the day when men shall be in possession of the full truth of the Gospel? Yes, truth is in the past, and it is always to the past that one must cling if one would avoid the pitfalls which evil imaginations

create. All those fine novelties, those mirages of that famous so-called progress, are simply traps and snares of the eternal tempter, causes of perdition and death. Why seek any further, why constantly incur the risk of error, when for eighteen hundred years the truth has been known? Truth! why it is in Apostolic and Roman Catholicism as created by a long succession of generations! What madness to desire to change it when so many lofty minds, so many pious souls have made of it the most admirable of monuments, the one instrument of order in this world, and of salvation in the next!"

Pierre, whose heart had contracted, refrained from further protest, for he could no longer doubt that he had before him an implacable adversary of his most cherished ideas. Chilled by a covert fear, as though he felt a faint breath, as of a distant wind from a land of ruins, pass over his face, bringing with it the mortal cold of a sepulchre, he bowed respectfully whilst the Cardinal, rising to his full height, continued in his obstinate voice, resonant with proud courage: "And if Catholicism, as its enemies pretend, be really stricken unto death, it must die standing and in all its glorious integrality. You hear me, Monsieur l'Abbe – not one concession, not one surrender, not a single act of cowardice! Catholicism is such as it is, and cannot be otherwise. No modification of the divine certainty, the entire truth, is possible. The removal of the smallest stone from the edifice could only prove a cause of instability. Is this not evident? You cannot save old houses by attacking them with the pickaxe

under pretence of decorating them. You only enlarge the fissures. Even if it were true that Rome were on the eve of falling into dust, the only result of all the repairing and patching would be to hasten the catastrophe. And instead of a noble death, met unflinchingly, we should then behold the basest of agonies, the death throes of a coward who struggles and begs for mercy! For my part I wait. I am convinced that all that people say is but so much horrible falsehood, that Catholicism has never been firmer, that it imbibes eternity from the one and only source of life. But should the heavens indeed fall, on that day I should be here, amidst these old and crumbling walls, under these old ceilings whose beams are being devoured by the worms, and it is here, erect, among the ruins, that I should meet my end, repeating my *credo* for the last time."

His final words fell more slowly, full of haughty sadness, whilst with a sweeping gesture he waved his arms towards the old, silent, deserted palace around him, whence life was withdrawing day by day. Had an involuntary presentiment come to him, did the faint cold breath from the ruins also fan his own cheeks? All the neglect into which the vast rooms had fallen was explained by his words; and a superb, despondent grandeur enveloped this prince and cardinal, this uncompromising Catholic who, withdrawing into the dim half-light of the past, braved with a soldier's heart the inevitable downfall of the olden world.

Deeply impressed, Pierre was about to take his leave when, to his surprise, a little door opened in the hangings. "What is it?

Can't I be left in peace for a moment?" exclaimed Boccanera with sudden impatience.

Nevertheless, Abbe Paparelli, fat and sleek, glided into the room without the faintest sign of emotion. And he whispered a few words in the ear of the Cardinal, who, on seeing him, had become calm again. "What curate?" asked Boccanera. "Oh! yes, Santobono, the curate of Frascati. I know – tell him I cannot see him just now."

Paparelli, however, again began whispering in his soft voice, though not in so low a key as previously, for some of his words could be overheard. The affair was urgent, the curate was compelled to return home, and had only a word or two to say. And then, without awaiting consent, the train-bearer ushered in the visitor, a *protege* of his, whom he had left just outside the little door. And for his own part he withdrew with the tranquillity of a retainer who, whatever the modesty of his office, knows himself to be all powerful.

Pierre, who was momentarily forgotten, looked at the visitor – a big fellow of a priest, the son of a peasant evidently, and still near to the soil. He had an ungainly, bony figure, huge feet and knotted hands, with a seamy tanned face lighted by extremely keen black eyes. Five and forty and still robust, his chin and cheeks bristling, and his cassock, overlarge, hanging loosely about his big projecting bones, he suggested a bandit in disguise. Still there was nothing base about him; the expression of his face was proud. And in one hand he carried a small wicker

basket carefully covered over with fig-leaves.

Santobono at once bent his knees and kissed the Cardinal's ring, but with hasty unconcern, as though only some ordinary piece of civility were in question. Then, with that commingling of respect and familiarity which the little ones of the world often evince towards the great, he said, "I beg your most reverend Eminence's forgiveness for having insisted. But there were people waiting, and I should not have been received if my old friend Paparelli had not brought me by way of that door. Oh! I have a very great service to ask of your Eminence, a real service of the heart. But first of all may I be allowed to offer your Eminence a little present?"

The Cardinal listened with a grave expression. He had been well acquainted with Santobono in the years when he had spent the summer at Frascati, at a princely residence which the Boccaneras had possessed there – a villa rebuilt in the seventeenth century, surrounded by a wonderful park, whose famous terrace overlooked the Campagna, stretching far and bare like the sea. This villa, however, had since been sold, and on some vineyards, which had fallen to Benedetta's share, Count Prada, prior to the divorce proceedings, had begun to erect quite a district of little pleasure houses. In former times, when walking out, the Cardinal had condescended to enter and rest in the dwelling of Santobono, who officiated at an antique chapel dedicated to St. Mary of the Fields, without the town. The priest had his home in a half-ruined building adjoining this chapel, and

the charm of the place was a walled garden which he cultivated himself with the passion of a true peasant.

"As is my rule every year," said he, placing his basket on the table, "I wished that your Eminence might taste my figs. They are the first of the season. I gathered them expressly this morning. You used to be so fond of them, your Eminence, when you condescended to gather them from the tree itself. You were good enough to tell me that there wasn't another tree in the world that produced such fine figs."

The Cardinal could not help smiling. He was indeed very fond of figs, and Santobono spoke truly: his fig-tree was renowned throughout the district. "Thank you, my dear Abbe," said Boccanera, "you remember my little failings. Well, and what can I do for you?"

Again he became grave, for, in former times, there had been unpleasant discussions between him and the curate, a lack of agreement which had angered him. Born at Nemi, in the core of a fierce district, Santobono belonged to a violent family, and his eldest brother had died of a stab. He himself had always professed ardently patriotic opinions. It was said that he had all but taken up arms for Garibaldi; and, on the day when the Italians had entered Rome, force had been needed to prevent him from raising the flag of Italian unity above his roof. His passionate dream was to behold Rome mistress of the world, when the Pope and the King should have embraced and made cause together. Thus the Cardinal looked on him as a dangerous revolutionary,

a renegade who imperilled Catholicism.

"Oh! what your Eminence can do for me, what your Eminence can do if only condescending and willing!" repeated Santobono in an ardent voice, clasping his big knotty hands. And then, breaking off, he inquired, "Did not his Eminence Cardinal Sanguinetti explain my affair to your most reverend Eminence?"

"No, the Cardinal simply advised me of your visit, saying that you had something to ask of me."

Whilst speaking Boccanera's face had clouded over, and it was with increased sternness of manner that he again waited. He was aware that the priest had become Sanguinetti's "client" since the latter had been in the habit of spending weeks together at his suburban see of Frascati. Walking in the shadow of every cardinal who is a candidate to the papacy, there are familiars of low degree who stake the ambition of their life on the possibility of that cardinal's election. If he becomes Pope some day, if they themselves help him to the throne, they enter the great pontifical family in his train. It was related that Sanguinetti had once already extricated Santobono from a nasty difficulty: the priest having one day caught a marauding urchin in the act of climbing his wall, had beaten the little fellow with such severity that he had ultimately died of it. However, to Santobono's credit it must be added that his fanatical devotion to the Cardinal was largely based upon the hope that he would prove the Pope whom men awaited, the Pope who would make Italy the sovereign nation of the world.

"Well, this is my misfortune," he said. "Your Eminence knows my brother Agostino, who was gardener at the villa for two years in your Eminence's time. He is certainly a very pleasant and gentle young fellow, of whom nobody has ever complained. And so it is hard to understand how such an accident can have happened to him, but it seems that he has killed a man with a knife at Genzano, while walking in the street in the evening. I am dreadfully distressed about it, and would willingly give two fingers of my right hand to extricate him from prison. However, it occurred to me that your Eminence would not refuse me a certificate stating that Agostino was formerly in your Eminence's service, and that your Eminence was always well pleased with his quiet disposition."

But the Cardinal flatly protested: "I was not at all pleased with Agostino. He was wildly violent, and I had to dismiss him precisely because he was always quarrelling with the other servants."

"Oh! how grieved I am to hear your Eminence say that! So it is true, then, my poor little Agostino's disposition has really changed! Still there is always a way out of a difficulty, is there not? You can still give me a certificate, first arranging the wording of it. A certificate from your Eminence would have such a favourable effect upon the law officers."

"No doubt," replied Boccanera; "I can understand that, but I will give no certificate."

"What! does your most reverend Eminence refuse my

prayer?"

"Absolutely! I know that you are a priest of perfect morality, that you discharge the duties of your ministry with strict punctuality, and that you would be deserving of high commendation were it not for your political fancies. Only your fraternal affection is now leading you astray. I cannot tell a lie to please you."

Santobono gazed at him in real stupefaction, unable to understand that a prince, an all-powerful cardinal, should be influenced by such petty scruples, when the entire question was a mere knife thrust, the most commonplace and frequent of incidents in the yet wild land of the old Roman castles.

"A lie! a lie!" he muttered; "but surely it isn't lying just to say what is good of a man, leaving out all the rest, especially when a man has good points as Agostino certainly has. In a certificate, too, everything depends on the words one uses."

He stubbornly clung to that idea; he could not conceive that a person should refuse to soften the rigour of justice by an ingenious presentation of the facts. However, on acquiring a certainty that he would obtain nothing, he made a gesture of despair, his livid face assuming an expression of violent rancour, whilst his black eyes flamed with restrained passion.

"Well, well! each looks on truth in his own way," he said. "I shall go back to tell his Eminence Cardinal Sanguinetti. And I beg your Eminence not to be displeased with me for having disturbed your Eminence to no purpose. By the way, perhaps

the figs are not yet quite ripe; but I will take the liberty to bring another basketful towards the end of the season, when they will be quite nice and sweet. A thousand thanks and a thousand felicities to your most reverend Eminence."

Santobono went off backwards, his big bony figure bending double with repeated genuflections. Pierre, whom the scene had greatly interested, in him beheld a specimen of the petty clergy of Rome and its environs, of whom people had told him before his departure from Paris. This was not the *scagnozzo*, the wretched famished priest whom some nasty affair brings from the provinces, who seeks his daily bread on the pavements of Rome; one of the herd of begowned beggars searching for a livelihood among the crumbs of Church life, voraciously fighting for chance masses, and mingling with the lowest orders in taverns of the worst repute. Nor was this the country priest of distant parts, a man of crass ignorance and superstition, a peasant among the peasants, treated as an equal by his pious flock, which is careful not to mistake him for the Divinity, and which, whilst kneeling in all humility before the parish saint, does not bend before the man who from that saint derives his livelihood. At Frascati the officiating minister of a little church may receive a stipend of some nine hundred *lire* a year,[21] and he has only bread and meat to buy if his garden yields him wine and fruit and vegetables. This one, Santobono, was not without education; he

[21] About 36 pounds. One is reminded of Goldsmith's line: "And passing rich with forty pounds a year." – Trans.

knew a little theology and a little history, especially the history of the past grandeur of Rome, which had inflamed his patriotic heart with the mad dream that universal domination would soon fall to the portion of renascent Rome, the capital of united Italy. But what an insuperable distance still remained between this petty Roman clergy, often very worthy and intelligent, and the high clergy, the high dignitaries of the Vatican! Nobody that was not at least a prelate seemed to count.

"A thousand thanks to your most reverend Eminence, and may success attend all your Eminence's desires."

With these words Santobono finally disappeared, and the Cardinal returned to Pierre, who also bowed preparatory to taking his leave.

"To sum up the matter, Monsieur l'Abbe," said Boccanera, "the affair of your book presents certain difficulties. As I have told you, I have no precise information, I have seen no documents. But knowing that my niece took an interest in you, I said a few words on the subject to Cardinal Sanguinetti, the Prefect of the Index, who was here just now. And he knows little more than I do, for nothing has yet left the Secretary's hands. Still he told me that the denunciation emanated from personages of rank and influence, and applied to numerous pages of your work, in which it was said there were passages of the most deplorable character as regards both discipline and dogma."

Greatly moved by the idea that he had hidden foes, secret adversaries who pursued him in the dark, the young priest

responded: “Oh! denounced, denounced! If your Eminence only knew how that word pains my heart! And denounced, too, for offences which were certainly involuntary, since my one ardent desire was the triumph of the Church! All I can do, then, is to fling myself at the feet of the Holy Father and entreat him to hear my defence.”

Boccanera suddenly became very grave again. A stern look rested on his lofty brow as he drew his haughty figure to its full height. “His Holiness,” said he, “can do everything, even receive you, if such be his good pleasure, and absolve you also. But listen to me. I again advise you to withdraw your book yourself, to destroy it, simply and courageously, before embarking in a struggle in which you will reap the shame of being overwhelmed. Reflect on that.”

Pierre, however, had no sooner spoken of the Pope than he had regretted it, for he realised that an appeal to the sovereign authority was calculated to wound the Cardinal’s feelings. Moreover, there was no further room for doubt. Boccanera would be against his book, and the utmost that he could hope for was to gain his neutrality by bringing pressure to bear on him through those about him. At the same time he had found the Cardinal very plain spoken, very frank, far removed from all the secret intriguing in which the affair of his book was involved, as he now began to realise; and so it was with deep respect and genuine admiration for the prelate’s strong and lofty character that he took leave of him.

"I am infinitely obliged to your Eminence," he said, "and I promise that I will carefully reflect upon all that your Eminence has been kind enough to say to me."

On returning to the ante-room, Pierre there found five or six persons who had arrived during his audience, and were now waiting. There was a bishop, a domestic prelate, and two old ladies, and as he drew near to Don Vigilio before retiring, he was surprised to find him conversing with a tall, fair young fellow, a Frenchman, who, also in astonishment, exclaimed, "What! are you here in Rome, Monsieur l'Abbe?"

For a moment Pierre had hesitated. "Ah! I must ask your pardon, Monsieur Narcisse Habert," he replied, "I did not at first recognise you! It was the less excusable as I knew that you had been an *attache* at our embassy here ever since last year."

Tall, slim, and elegant of appearance, Narcisse Habert had a clear complexion, with eyes of a bluish, almost mauvish, hue, a fair frizzy beard, and long curling fair hair cut short over the forehead in the Florentine fashion. Of a wealthy family of militant Catholics, chiefly members of the bar or bench, he had an uncle in the diplomatic profession, and this had decided his own career. Moreover, a place at Rome was marked out for him, for he there had powerful connections. He was a nephew by marriage of Cardinal Sarno, whose sister had married another of his uncles, a Paris notary; and he was also cousin german of Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, a *Cameriere segreto*, and son of one of his aunts, who had married an Italian colonel. And in some

measure for these reasons he had been attached to the embassy to the Holy See, his superiors tolerating his somewhat fantastic ways, his everlasting passion for art which sent him wandering hither and thither through Rome. He was moreover very amiable and extremely well-bred; and it occasionally happened, as was the case that morning, that with his weary and somewhat mysterious air he came to speak to one or another of the cardinals on some real matter of business in the ambassador's name.

So as to converse with Pierre at his ease, he drew him into the deep embrasure of one of the windows. "Ah! my dear Abbe, how pleased I am to see you!" said he. "You must remember what pleasant chats we had when we met at Cardinal Bergerot's! I told you about some paintings which you were to see for your book, some miniatures of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. And now, you know, I mean to take possession of you. I'll show you Rome as nobody else could show it to you. I've seen and explored everything. Ah! there are treasures, such treasures! But in truth there is only one supreme work; one always comes back to one's particular passion. The Botticelli in the Sixtine Chapel – ah, the Botticelli!"

His voice died away, and he made a faint gesture as if overcome by admiration. Then Pierre had to promise that he would place himself in his hands and accompany him to the Sixtine Chapel. "You know why I am here," at last said the young priest. "Proceedings have been taken against my book; it has been denounced to the Congregation of the Index."

"Your book! is it possible?" exclaimed Narcisse: "a book like that with pages recalling the delightful St. Francis of Assisi!" And thereupon he obligingly placed himself at Pierre's disposal. "But our ambassador will be very useful to you," he said. "He is the best man in the world, of charming affability, and full of the old French spirit. I will present you to him this afternoon or to-morrow morning at the latest; and since you desire an immediate audience with the Pope, he will endeavour to obtain one for you. His position naturally designates him as your intermediary. Still, I must confess that things are not always easily managed. Although the Holy Father is very fond of him, there are times when his Excellency fails, for the approaches are so extremely intricate."

Pierre had not thought of employing the ambassador's good offices, for he had naively imagined that an accused priest who came to defend himself would find every door open. However, he was delighted with Narcisse's offer, and thanked him as warmly as if the audience were already obtained.

"Besides," the young man continued, "if we encounter any difficulties I have relatives at the Vatican, as you know. I don't mean my uncle the Cardinal, who would be of no use to us, for he never stirs out of his office at the Propaganda, and will never apply for anything. But my cousin, Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, is very obliging, and he lives in intimacy with the Pope, his duties requiring his constant attendance on him. So, if necessary, I will take you to see him, and he will no doubt find a means of procuring you an interview, though his extreme prudence keeps

him perpetually afraid of compromising himself. However, it's understood, you may rely on me in every respect."

"Ah! my dear sir," exclaimed Pierre, relieved and happy, "I heartily accept your offer. You don't know what balm your words have brought me; for ever since my arrival everybody has been discouraging me, and you are the first to restore my strength by looking at things in the true French way."

Then, lowering his voice, he told the *attache* of his interview with Cardinal Boccanera, of his conviction that the latter would not help him, of the unfavourable information which had been given by Cardinal Sanguinetti, and of the rivalry which he had divined between the two prelates. Narcisse listened, smiling, and in his turn began to gossip confidentially. The rivalry which Pierre had mentioned, the premature contest for the tiara which Sanguinetti and Boccanera were waging, impelled to it by a furious desire to become the next Pope, had for a long time been revolutionising the black world. There was incredible intricacy in the depths of the affair; none could exactly tell who was pulling the strings, conducting the vast intrigue. As regards generalities it was simply known that Boccanera represented absolutism – the Church freed from all compromises with modern society, and waiting in immobility for the Deity to triumph over Satan, for Rome to be restored to the Holy Father, and for repentant Italy to perform penance for its sacrilege; whereas Sanguinetti, extremely politic and supple, was reported to harbour bold and novel ideas: permission to vote to be granted

to all true Catholics,[22] a majority to be gained by this means in the Legislature; then, as a fatal corollary, the downfall of the House of Savoy, and the proclamation of a kind of republican federation of all the former petty States of Italy under the august protectorate of the Pope. On the whole, the struggle was between these two antagonistic elements – the first bent on upholding the Church by a rigorous maintenance of the old traditions, and the other predicting the fall of the Church if it did not follow the bent of the coming century. But all was steeped in so much mystery that people ended by thinking that, if the present Pope should live a few years longer, his successor would certainly be neither Boccanera nor Sanguinetti.

All at once Pierre interrupted Narcisse: "And Monsignor Nani, do you know him? I spoke with him yesterday evening. And there he is coming in now!"

Nani was indeed just entering the ante-room with his usual smile on his amiable pink face. His cassock of fine texture, and his sash of violet silk shone with discreet soft luxury. And he showed himself very amiable to Abbe Paparelli, who, accompanying him in all humility, begged him to be kind enough to wait until his Eminence should be able to receive him.

---

[22] Since the occupation of Rome by the Italian authorities, the supporters of the Church, obedient to the prohibition of the Vatican, have abstained from taking part in the political elections, this being their protest against the new order of things which they do not recognise. Various attempts have been made, however, to induce the Pope to give them permission to vote, many members of the Roman aristocracy considering the present course impolitic and even harmful to the interests of the Church. – Trans.

"Oh! Monsignor Nani," muttered Narcisse, becoming serious, "he is a man whom it is advisable to have for a friend."

Then, knowing Nani's history, he related it in an undertone. Born at Venice, of a noble but ruined family which had produced heroes, Nani, after first studying under the Jesuits, had come to Rome to perfect himself in philosophy and theology at the Collegio Romano, which was then also under Jesuit management. Ordained when three and twenty, he had at once followed a nuncio to Bavaria as private secretary; and then had gone as *auditore* to the nunciatures of Brussels and Paris, in which latter city he had lived for five years. Everything seemed to predestine him to diplomacy, his brilliant beginnings and his keen and encyclopaedical intelligence; but all at once he had been recalled to Rome, where he was soon afterwards appointed Assessor to the Holy Office. It was asserted at the time that this was done by the Pope himself, who, being well acquainted with Nani, and desirous of having a person he could depend upon at the Holy Office, had given instructions for his recall, saying that he could render far more services at Rome than abroad. Already a domestic prelate, Nani had also lately become a Canon of St. Peter's and an apostolic prothonotary, with the prospect of obtaining a cardinal's hat whenever the Pope should find some other favourite who would please him better as assessor.

"Oh, Monsignor Nani!" continued Narcisse. "He's a superior man, thoroughly well acquainted with modern Europe, and at the same time a very saintly priest, a sincere believer, absolutely

devoted to the Church, with the substantial faith of an intelligent politician – a belief different, it is true, from the narrow gloomy theological faith which we know so well in France. And this is one of the reasons why you will hardly understand things here at first. The Roman prelates leave the Deity in the sanctuary and reign in His name, convinced that Catholicism is the human expression of the government of God, the only perfect and eternal government, beyond the pales of which nothing but falsehood and social danger can be found. While we in our country lag behind, furiously arguing whether there be a God or not, they do not admit that God's existence can be doubted, since they themselves are his delegated ministers; and they entirely devote themselves to playing their parts as ministers whom none can dispossess, exercising their power for the greatest good of humanity, and devoting all their intelligence, all their energy to maintaining themselves as the accepted masters of the nations. As for Monsignor Nani, after being mixed up in the politics of the whole world, he has for ten years been discharging the most delicate functions in Rome, taking part in the most varied and most important affairs. He sees all the foreigners who come to Rome, knows everything, has a hand in everything. Add to this that he is extremely discreet and amiable, with a modesty which seems perfect, though none can tell whether, with his light silent footstep, he is not really marching towards the highest ambition, the purple of sovereignty."

"Another candidate for the tiara," thought Pierre, who had

listened passionately; for this man Nani interested him, caused him an instinctive disquietude, as though behind his pink and smiling face he could divine an infinity of obscure things. At the same time, however, the young priest but ill understood his friend, for he again felt bewildered by all this strange Roman world, so different from what he had expected.

Nani had perceived the two young men and came towards them with his hand cordially outstretched "Ah! Monsieur l'Abbe Froment, I am happy to meet you again. I won't ask you if you have slept well, for people always sleep well at Rome. Good-day, Monsieur Habert; your health has kept good I hope, since I met you in front of Bernini's Santa Teresa, which you admire so much.[23] I see that you know one another. That is very nice. I must tell you, Monsieur l'Abbe, that Monsieur Habert is a passionate lover of our city; he will be able to show you all its finest sights."

Then, in his affectionate way, he at once asked for information respecting Pierre's interview with the Cardinal. He listened attentively to the young man's narrative, nodding his head at certain passages, and occasionally restraining his sharp smile. The Cardinal's severity and Pierre's conviction that he would accord him no support did not at all astonish Nani. It seemed as if he had expected that result. However, on hearing that Cardinal Sanguinetti had been there that morning, and had pronounced

---

[23] The allusion is to a statue representing St. Theresa in ecstasy, with the Angel of Death descending to transfix her with his dart.It stands in a transept of Sta. Maria della Vittoria. – Trans.

the affair of the book to be very serious, he appeared to lose his self-control for a moment, for he spoke out with sudden vivacity:

"It can't be helped, my dear child, my intervention came too late. Directly I heard of the proceedings I went to his Eminence Cardinal Sanguinetti to tell him that the result would be an immense advertisement for your book. Was it sensible? What was the use of it? We know that you are inclined to be carried away by your ideas, that you are an enthusiast, and are prompt to do battle. So what advantage should we gain by embarrassing ourselves with the revolt of a young priest who might wage war against us with a book of which some thousands of copies have been sold already? For my part I desired that nothing should be done. And I must say that the Cardinal, who is a man of sense, was of the same mind. He raised his arms to heaven, went into a passion, and exclaimed that he was never consulted, that the blunder was already committed beyond recall, and that it was impossible to prevent process from taking its course since the matter had already been brought before the Congregation, in consequence of denunciations from authoritative sources, based on the gravest motives. Briefly, as he said, the blunder was committed, and I had to think of something else."

All at once Nani paused. He had just noticed that Pierre's ardent eyes were fixed upon his own, striving to penetrate his meaning. A faint flush then heightened the pinkiness of his complexion, whilst in an easy way he continued, unwilling to reveal how annoyed he was at having said too much: "Yes, I

thought of helping you with all the little influence I possess, in order to extricate you from the worries in which this affair will certainly land you."

An impulse of revolt was stirring Pierre, who vaguely felt that he was perhaps being made game of. Why should he not be free to declare his faith, which was so pure, so free from personal considerations, so full of glowing Christian charity? "Never," said he, "will I withdraw; never will I myself suppress my book, as I am advised to do. It would be an act of cowardice and falsehood, for I regret nothing, I disown nothing. If I believe that my book brings a little truth to light I cannot destroy it without acting criminally both towards myself and towards others. No, never! You hear me – never!"

Silence fell. But almost immediately he resumed: "It is at the knees of the Holy Father that I desire to make that declaration. He will understand me, he will approve me."

Nani no longer smiled; henceforth his face remained as it were closed. He seemed to be studying the sudden violence of the young priest with curiosity; then sought to calm him with his own tranquil kindliness. "No doubt, no doubt," said he. "There is certainly great sweetness in obedience and humility. Still I can understand that, before anything else, you should desire to speak to his Holiness. And afterwards you will see – is that not so? – you will see – "

Then he evinced a lively interest in the suggested application for an audience. He expressed keen regret that Pierre had not

forwarded that application from Paris, before even coming to Rome: in that course would have rested the best chance of a favourable reply. Bother of any kind was not liked at the Vatican, and if the news of the young priest's presence in Rome should only spread abroad, and the motives of his journey be discussed, all would be lost. Then, on learning that Narcisse had offered to present Pierre to the French ambassador, Nani seemed full of anxiety, and deprecated any such proceeding: "No, no! don't do that – it would be most imprudent. In the first place you would run the risk of embarrassing the ambassador, whose position is always delicate in affairs of this kind. And then, too, if he failed – and my fear is that he might fail – yes, if he failed it would be all over; you would no longer have the slightest chance of obtaining an audience by any other means. For the Vatican would not like to hurt the ambassador's feelings by yielding to other influence after resisting his."

Pierre anxiously glanced at Narcisse, who wagged his head, embarrassed and hesitating. "The fact is," the *attache* at last murmured, "we lately solicited an audience for a high French personage and it was refused, which was very unpleasant for us. Monsignor is right. We must keep our ambassador in reserve, and only utilise him when we have exhausted all other means." Then, noticing Pierre's disappointment, he added obligingly: "Our first visit therefore shall be for my cousin at the Vatican."

Nani, his attention again roused, looked at the young man in astonishment. "At the Vatican? You have a cousin there?"

"Why, yes – Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo."

"Gamba! Gamba! Yes, yes, excuse me, I remember now. Ah! so you thought of Gamba to bring influence to bear on his Holiness? That's an idea, no doubt; one must see – one must see."

He repeated these words again and again as if to secure time to see into the matter himself, to weigh the pros and cons of the suggestion. Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo was a worthy man who played no part at the Papal Court, whose nullity indeed had become a byword at the Vatican. His childish stories, however, amused the Pope, whom he greatly flattered, and who was fond of leaning on his arm while walking in the gardens. It was during these strolls that Gamba easily secured all sorts of little favours. However, he was a remarkable poltroon, and had such an intense fear of losing his influence that he never risked a request without having convinced himself by long meditation that no possible harm could come to him through it.

"Well, do you know, the idea is not a bad one," Nani at last declared. "Yes, yes, Gamba can secure the audience for you, if he is willing. I will see him myself and explain the matter."

At the same time Nani did not cease advising extreme caution. He even ventured to say that it was necessary to be on one's guard with the papal *entourage*, for, alas! it was a fact his Holiness was so good, and had such a blind faith in the goodness of others, that he had not always chosen his familiars with the critical care which he ought to have displayed. Thus one never knew to what sort of man one might be applying, or in what trap one might

be setting one's foot. Nani even allowed it to be understood that on no account ought any direct application to be made to his Eminence the Secretary of State, for even his Eminence was not a free agent, but found himself encompassed by intrigues of such intricacy that his best intentions were paralysed. And as Nani went on discoursing in this fashion, in a very gentle, extremely unctuous manner, the Vatican appeared like some enchanted castle, guarded by jealous and treacherous dragons – a castle where one must not take a step, pass through a doorway, risk a limb, without having carefully assured oneself that one would not leave one's whole body there to be devoured.

Pierre continued listening, feeling colder and colder at heart, and again sinking into uncertainty. "*Mon Dieu*!" he exclaimed, "I shall never know how to act. You discourage me, Monsignor."

At this Nani's cordial smile reappeared. "I, my dear child? I should be sorry to do so. I only want to repeat to you that you must wait and do nothing. Avoid all feverishness especially. There is no hurry, I assure you, for it was only yesterday that a *consultore* was chosen to report upon your book, so you have a good full month before you. Avoid everybody, live in such a way that people shall be virtually ignorant of your existence, visit Rome in peace and quietness – that is the best course you can adopt to forward your interests." Then, taking one of the priest's hands between both his own, so aristocratic, soft, and plump, he added: "You will understand that I have my reasons for speaking to you like this. I should have offered my own services; I should have made it a

point of honour to take you straight to his Holiness, had I thought it advisable. But I do not wish to mix myself up in the matter at this stage; I realise only too well that at the present moment we should simply make sad work of it. Later on – you hear me – later on, in the event of nobody else succeeding, I myself will obtain you an audience; I formally promise it. But meanwhile, I entreat you, refrain from using those words 'a new religion,' which, unfortunately, occur in your book, and which I heard you repeat again only last night. There can be no new religion, my dear child; there is but one eternal religion, which is beyond all surrender and compromise – the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion. And at the same time leave your Paris friends to themselves. Don't rely too much on Cardinal Bergerot, whose lofty piety is not sufficiently appreciated in Rome. I assure you that I am speaking to you as a friend."

Then, seeing how disabled Pierre appeared to be, half overcome already, no longer knowing in what direction to begin his campaign, he again strove to comfort him: "Come, come, things will right themselves; everything will end for the best, both for the welfare of the Church and your own. And now you must excuse me, I must leave you; I shall not be able to see his Eminence to-day, for it is impossible for me to wait any longer."

Abbe Paparelli, whom Pierre had noticed prowling around with his ears cocked, now hastened forward and declared to Monsignor Nani that there were only two persons to be received before him. But the prelate very graciously replied that he would

come back again at another time, for the affair which he wished to lay before his Eminence was in no wise pressing. Then he withdrew, courteously bowing to everybody.

Narcisse Habert's turn came almost immediately afterwards. However, before entering the throne-room he pressed Pierre's hand, repeating, "So it is understood. I will go to see my cousin at the Vatican to-morrow, and directly I get a reply I will let you know. We shall meet again soon I hope."

It was now past twelve o'clock, and the only remaining visitor was one of the two old ladies who seemed to have fallen asleep. At his little secretarial table Don Vigilio still sat covering huge sheets of yellow paper with fine handwriting, from which he only lifted his eyes at intervals to glance about him distrustfully, and make sure that nothing threatened him.

In the mournful silence which fell around, Pierre lingered for yet another moment in the deep embrasure of the window. Ah! what anxiety consumed his poor, tender, enthusiastic heart! On leaving Paris things had seemed so simple, so natural to him! He was unjustly accused, and he started off to defend himself, arrived and flung himself at the feet of the Holy Father, who listened to him indulgently. Did not the Pope personify living religion, intelligence to understand, justice based upon truth? And was he not, before aught else, the Father, the delegate of divine forgiveness and mercy, with arms outstretched towards all the children of the Church, even the guilty ones? Was it not meet, then, that he should leave his door wide open so that the humblest

of his sons might freely enter to relate their troubles, confess their transgressions, explain their conduct, imbibe comfort from the source of eternal loving kindness? And yet on the very first day of his, Pierre's, arrival, the doors closed upon him with a bang; he felt himself sinking into a hostile sphere, full of traps and pitfalls. One and all cried out to him "Beware!" as if he were incurring the greatest dangers in setting one foot before the other. His desire to see the Pope became an extraordinary pretension, so difficult of achievement that it set the interests and passions and influences of the whole Vatican agog. And there was endless conflicting advice, long-discussed manoeuvring, all the strategy of generals leading an army to victory, and fresh complications ever arising in the midst of a dim stealthy swarming of intrigues. Ah! good Lord! how different all this was from the charitable reception that Pierre had anticipated: the pastor's house standing open beside the high road for the admission of all the sheep of the flock, both those that were docile and those that had gone astray.

That which began to frighten Pierre, however, was the evil, the wickedness, which he could divine vaguely stirring in the gloom: Cardinal Bergerot suspected, dubbed a Revolutionary, deemed so compromising that he, Pierre, was advised not to mention his name again! The young priest once more saw Cardinal Boccanera's pout of disdain while speaking of his colleague. And then Monsignor Nani had warned him not to repeat those words "a new religion," as if it were not clear to everybody that they simply signified the return of Catholicism to the primitive purity

of Christianity! Was that one of the crimes denounced to the Congregation of the Index? He had begun to suspect who his accusers were, and felt alarmed, for he was now conscious of secret subterranean plotting, a great stealthy effort to strike him down and suppress his work. All that surrounded him became suspicious. If he listened to advice and temporised, it was solely to follow the same politic course as his adversaries, to learn to know them before acting. He would spend a few days in meditation, in surveying and studying that black world of Rome which to him had proved so unexpected. But, at the same time, in the revolt of his apostle-like faith, he swore, even as he had said to Nani, that he would never yield, never change either a page or a line of his book, but maintain it in its integrity in the broad daylight as the unshakable testimony of his belief. Even were the book condemned by the Index, he would not tender submission, withdraw aught of it. And should it become necessary he would quit the Church, he would go even as far as schism, continuing to preach the new religion and writing a new book, *Real Rome*, such as he now vaguely began to espy.

However, Don Vigilio had ceased writing, and gazed so fixedly at Pierre that the latter at last stepped up to him politely in order to take leave. And then the secretary, yielding, despite his fears, to a desire to confide in him, murmured, "He came simply on your account, you know; he wanted to ascertain the result of your interview with his Eminence."

It was not necessary for Don Vigilio to mention Nani by name;

Pierre understood. “Really, do you think so?” he asked.

“Oh! there is no doubt of it. And if you take my advice you will do what he desires with a good grace, for it is absolutely certain that you will do it later on.”

These words brought Pierre’s disquietude and exasperation to a climax. He went off with a gesture of defiance. They would see if he would ever yield.

The three ante-rooms which he again crossed appeared to him blacker, emptier, more lifeless than ever. In the second one Abbe Paparelli saluted him with a little silent bow; in the first the sleepy lackey did not even seem to see him. A spider was weaving its web between the tassels of the great red hat under the *baldacchino*. Would not the better course have been to set the pick at work amongst all that rotting past, now crumbling into dust, so that the sunlight might stream in freely and restore to the purified soil the fruitfulness of youth?

PART II

IV

ON the afternoon of that same day Pierre, having leisure before him, at once thought of beginning his peregrinations through Rome by a visit on which he had set his heart. Almost immediately after the publication of "New Rome" he had been deeply moved and interested by a letter addressed to him from the Eternal City by old Count Orlando Prada, the hero of Italian independence and reunion, who, although unacquainted with him, had written spontaneously after a first hasty perusal of his book. And the letter had been a flaming protest, a cry of the patriotic faith still young in the heart of that aged man, who accused him of having forgotten Italy and claimed Rome, the new Rome, for the country which was at last free and united. Correspondence had ensued, and the priest, while clinging to his dream of Neo-Catholicism saving the world, had from afar grown attached to the man who wrote to him with such glowing love of country and freedom. He had eventually informed him of his journey, and promised to call upon him. But the hospitality which he had accepted at the Boccanera mansion now seemed to him somewhat of an impediment; for after Benedetta's kindly, almost affectionate, greeting, he felt that he could not, on the very

first day and with out warning her, sally forth to visit the father of the man from whom she had fled and from whom she now asked the Church to part her for ever. Moreover, old Orlando was actually living with his son in a little palazzo which the latter had erected at the farther end of the Via Venti Settembre.

Before venturing on any step Pierre resolved to confide in the Contessina herself; and this seemed the easier as Viscount Philibert de la Choue had told him that the young woman still retained a filial feeling, mingled with admiration, for the old hero. And indeed, at the very first words which he uttered after lunch, Benedetta promptly retorted: "But go, Monsieur l'Abbe, go at once! Old Orlando, you know, is one of our national glories – you must not be surprised to hear me call him by his Christian name. All Italy does so, from pure affection and gratitude. For my part I grew up among people who hated him, who likened him to Satan. It was only later that I learned to know him, and then I loved him, for he is certainly the most just and gentle man in the world."

She had begun to smile, but timid tears were moistening her eyes at the recollection, no doubt, of the year of suffering she had spent in her husband's house, where her only peaceful hours had been those passed with the old man. And in a lower and somewhat tremulous voice she added: "As you are going to see him, tell him from me that I still love him, and, whatever happens, shall never forget his goodness."

So Pierre set out, and whilst he was driving in a cab towards

the Via Venti Settembre, he recalled to mind the heroic story of old Orlando's life which had been told him in Paris. It was like an epic poem, full of faith, bravery, and the disinterestedness of another age.

Born of a noble house of Milan, Count Orlando Prada had learnt to hate the foreigner at such an early age that, when scarcely fifteen, he already formed part of a secret society, one of the ramifications of the antique Carbonarism. This hatred of Austrian domination had been transmitted from father to son through long years, from the olden days of revolt against servitude, when the conspirators met by stealth in abandoned huts, deep in the recesses of the forests; and it was rendered the keener by the eternal dream of Italy delivered, restored to herself, transformed once more into a great sovereign nation, the worthy daughter of those who had conquered and ruled the world. Ah! that land of whilom glory, that unhappy, dismembered, parcelled Italy, the prey of a crowd of petty tyrants, constantly invaded and appropriated by neighbouring nations – how superb and ardent was that dream to free her from such long opprobrium! To defeat the foreigner, drive out the despots, awaken the people from the base misery of slavery, to proclaim Italy free and Italy united – such was the passion which then inflamed the young with inextinguishable ardour, which made the youthful Orlando's heart leap with enthusiasm. He spent his early years consumed by holy indignation, proudly and impatiently longing for an opportunity to give his blood for his country, and to die

for her if he could not deliver her.

Quivering under the yoke, wasting his time in sterile conspiracies, he was living in retirement in the old family residence at Milan, when, shortly after his marriage and his twenty-fifth birthday, tidings came to him of the flight of Pius IX and the Revolution of Rome.[24] And at once he quitted everything, wife and hearth, and hastened to Rome as if summoned thither by the call of destiny. This was the first time that he set out scouring the roads for the attainment of independence; and how frequently, yet again and again, was he to start upon fresh campaigns, never wearying, never disheartened! And now it was that he became acquainted with Mazzini, and for a moment was inflamed with enthusiasm for that mystical unitarian Republican. He himself indulged in an ardent dream of a Universal Republic, adopted the Mazzinian device, "*Dio e popolo*" (God and the people), and followed the procession which wended its way with great pomp through insurrectionary Rome. The time was one of vast hopes, one when people already felt a need of renovated religion, and looked to the coming of a humanitarian Christ who would redeem the world yet once again. But before long a man, a captain of the ancient days, Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose epic glory was dawning, made Orlando entirely his own, transformed him into a soldier whose sole cause was freedom and union. Orlando loved Garibaldi as though the latter were a demi-god,

[24] It was on November 24, 1848, that the Pope fled to Gaeta, consequent upon the insurrection which had broken out nine days previously. – Trans.

fought beside him in defence of Republican Rome, took part in the victory of Rieti over the Neapolitans, and followed the stubborn patriot in his retreat when he sought to succour Venice, compelled as he was to relinquish the Eternal City to the French army of General Oudinot, who came thither to reinstate Pius IX. And what an extraordinary and madly heroic adventure was that of Garibaldi and Venice! Venice, which Manin, another great patriot, a martyr, had again transformed into a republican city, and which for long months had been resisting the Austrians! And Garibaldi starts with a handful of men to deliver the city, charters thirteen fishing barks, loses eight in a naval engagement, is compelled to return to the Roman shores, and there in all wretchedness is bereft of his wife, Anita, whose eyes he closes before returning to America, where, once before, he had awaited the hour of insurrection. Ah! that land of Italy, which in those days rumbled from end to end with the internal fire of patriotism, where men of faith and courage arose in every city, where riots and insurrections burst forth on all sides like eruptions – it continued, in spite of every check, its invincible march to freedom!

Orlando returned to his young wife at Milan, and for two years lived there, almost in concealment, devoured by impatience for the glorious morrow which was so long in coming. Amidst his fever a gleam of happiness softened his heart; a son, Luigi, was born to him, but the birth killed the mother, and joy was turned into mourning. Then, unable to remain any longer at Milan,

where he was spied upon, tracked by the police, suffering also too grievously from the foreign occupation, Orlando decided to realise the little fortune remaining to him, and to withdraw to Turin, where an aunt of his wife took charge of the child. Count di Cavour, like a great statesman, was then already seeking to bring about independence, preparing Piedmont for the decisive *role* which it was destined to play. It was the time when King Victor Emmanuel evinced flattering cordiality towards all the refugees who came to him from every part of Italy, even those whom he knew to be Republicans, compromised and flying the consequences of popular insurrection. The rough, shrewd House of Savoy had long been dreaming of bringing about Italian unity to the profit of the Piedmontese monarchy, and Orlando well knew under what master he was taking service; but in him the Republican already went behind the patriot, and indeed he had begun to question the possibility of a united Republican Italy, placed under the protectorate of a liberal Pope, as Mazzini had at one time dreamed. Was that not indeed a chimera beyond realisation which would devour generation after generation if one obstinately continued to pursue it? For his part, he did not wish to die without having slept in Rome as one of the conquerors. Even if liberty was to be lost, he desired to see his country united and erect, returning once more to life in the full sunlight. And so it was with feverish happiness that he enlisted at the outset of the war of 1859; and his heart palpitated with such force as almost to rend his breast, when, after Magenta, he entered Milan

with the French army – Milan which he had quitted eight years previously, like an exile, in despair. The treaty of Villafranca which followed Solferino proved a bitter deception: Venetia was not secured, Venice remained enthralled. Nevertheless the Milanese was conquered from the foe, and then Tuscany and the duchies of Parma and Modena voted for annexation. So, at all events, the nucleus of the Italian star was formed; the country had begun to build itself up afresh around victorious Piedmont.

Then, in the following year, Orlando plunged into epopoeia once more. Garibaldi had returned from his two sojourns in America, with the halo of a legend round him – paladin-like feats in the pampas of Uruguay, an extraordinary passage from Canton to Lima – and he had returned to take part in the war of 1859, forestalling the French army, overthrowing an Austrian marshal, and entering Como, Bergamo, and Brescia. And now, all at once, folks heard that he had landed at Marsala with only a thousand men – the Thousand of Marsala, the ever illustrious handful of braves! Orlando fought in the first rank, and Palermo after three days' resistance was carried. Becoming the dictator's favourite lieutenant, he helped him to organise a government, then crossed the straits with him, and was beside him on the triumphal entry into Naples, whose king had fled. There was mad audacity and valour at that time, an explosion of the inevitable; and all sorts of supernatural stories were current – Garibaldi invulnerable, protected better by his red shirt than by the strongest armour, Garibaldi routing opposing armies like an archangel, by merely

brandishing his flaming sword! The Piedmontese on their side had defeated General Lamoriciere at Castelfidardo, and were invading the States of the Church. And Orlando was there when the dictator, abdicating power, signed the decree which annexed the Two Sicilies to the Crown of Italy; even as subsequently he took part in that forlorn attempt on Rome, when the rageful cry was "Rome or Death!" – an attempt which came to a tragic issue at Aspromonte, when the little army was dispersed by the Italian troops, and Garibaldi, wounded, was taken prisoner, and sent back to the solitude of his island of Caprera, where he became but a fisherman and a tiller of the rocky soil.[25]

Six years of waiting again went by, and Orlando still dwelt at Turin, even after Florence had been chosen as the new capital. The Senate had acclaimed Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy; and Italy was indeed almost built, it lacked only Rome and Venice. But the great battles seemed all over, the epic era was closed; Venice was to be won by defeat. Orlando took part in the unlucky battle of Custozza, where he received two wounds, full of furious grief at the thought that Austria should be triumphant. But at that same moment the latter, defeated at Sadowa, relinquished

[25] M. Zola's brief but glowing account of Garibaldi's glorious achievements has stirred many memories in my mind. My uncle, Frank Vizetelly, the war artist of the *Illustrated London News*, whose bones lie bleaching somewhere in the Soudan, was one of Garibaldi's constant companions throughout the memorable campaign of the Two Sicilies, and afterwards he went with him to Caprera. Later, in 1870, my brother, Edward Vizetelly, acted as orderly-officer to the general when he offered the help of his sword to France. – Trans.

Venetia, and five months later Orlando satisfied his desire to be in Venice participating in the joy of triumph, when Victor Emmanuel made his entry amidst the frantic acclamations of the people. Rome alone remained to be won, and wild impatience urged all Italy towards the city; but friendly France had sworn to maintain the Pope, and this acted as a check. Then, for the third time, Garibaldi dreamt of renewing the feats of the old-world legends, and threw himself upon Rome like a soldier of fortune illumined by patriotism and free from every tie. And for the third time Orlando shared in that fine heroic madness destined to be vanquished at Mentana by the Pontifical Zouaves supported by a small French corps. Again wounded, he came back to Turin in almost a dying condition. But, though his spirit quivered, he had to resign himself; the situation seemed to have no outlet; only an upheaval of the nations could give Rome to Italy.

All at once the thunderclap of Sedan, of the downfall of France, resounded through the world; and then the road to Rome lay open, and Orlando, having returned to service in the regular army, was with the troops who took up position in the Campagna to ensure the safety of the Holy See, as was said in the letter which Victor Emmanuel wrote to Pius IX. There was, however, but the shadow of an engagement: General Kanzler's Pontifical Zouaves were compelled to fall back, and Orlando was one of the first to enter the city by the breach of the Porta Pia. Ah! that twentieth of September – that day when he experienced the greatest happiness of his life – a day of delirium, of complete

triumph, which realised the dream of so many years of terrible contest, the dream for which he had sacrificed rest and fortune, and given both body and mind!

Then came more than ten happy years in conquered Rome – in Rome adored, flattered, treated with all tenderness, like a woman in whom one has placed one's entire hope. From her he awaited so much national vigour, such a marvellous resurrection of strength and glory for the endowment of the young nation. Old Republican, old insurrectional soldier that he was, he had been obliged to adhere to the monarchy, and accept a senatorship. But then did not Garibaldi himself – Garibaldi his divinity – likewise call upon the King and sit in parliament? Mazzini alone, rejecting all compromises, was unwilling to rest content with a united and independent Italy that was not Republican. Moreover, another consideration influenced Orlando, the future of his son Luigi, who had attained his eighteenth birthday shortly after the occupation of Rome. Though he, Orlando, could manage with the crumbs which remained of the fortune he had expended in his country's service, he dreamt of a splendid destiny for the child of his heart. Realising that the heroic age was over, he desired to make a great politician of him, a great administrator, a man who should be useful to the mighty nation of the morrow; and it was on this account that he had not rejected royal favour, the reward of long devotion, desiring, as he did, to be in a position to help, watch, and guide Luigi. Besides, was he himself so old, so used-up, as to be unable to assist in organisation, even as he

had assisted in conquest? Struck by his son's quick intelligence in business matters, perhaps also instinctively divining that the battle would now continue on financial and economic grounds, he obtained him employment at the Ministry of Finances. And again he himself lived on, dreaming, still enthusiastically believing in a splendid future, overflowing with boundless hope, seeing Rome double her population, grow and spread with a wild vegetation of new districts, and once more, in his loving enraptured eyes, become the queen of the world.

But all at once came a thunderbolt. One morning, as he was going downstairs, Orlando was stricken with paralysis. Both his legs suddenly became lifeless, as heavy as lead. It was necessary to carry him up again, and never since had he set foot on the street pavement. At that time he had just completed his fifty-sixth year, and for fourteen years since he had remained in his arm-chair, as motionless as stone, he who had so impetuously trod every battlefield of Italy. It was a pitiful business, the collapse of a hero. And worst of all, from that room where he was for ever imprisoned, the old soldier beheld the slow crumbling of all his hopes, and fell into dismal melancholy, full of unacknowledged fear for the future. Now that the intoxication of action no longer dimmed his eyes, now that he spent his long and empty days in thought, his vision became clear. Italy, which he had desired to see so powerful, so triumphant in her unity, was acting madly, rushing to ruin, possibly to bankruptcy. Rome, which to him had ever been the one necessary capital, the city

of unparalleled glory, requisite for the sovereign people of to-morrow, seemed unwilling to take upon herself the part of a great modern metropolis; heavy as a corpse she weighed with all her centuries on the bosom of the young nation. Moreover, his son Luigi distressed him. Rebellious to all guidance, the young man had become one of the devouring offsprings of conquest, eager to despoil that Italy, that Rome, which his father seemed to have desired solely in order that he might pillage them and batten on them. Orlando had vainly opposed Luigi's departure from the ministry, his participation in the frantic speculations on land and house property to which the mad building of the new districts had given rise. But at the same time he loved his son, and was reduced to silence, especially now when everything had succeeded with Luigi, even his most risky financial ventures, such as the transformation of the Villa Montefiori into a perfect town – a colossal enterprise in which many of great wealth had been ruined, but whence he himself had emerged with millions. And it was in part for this reason that Orlando, sad and silent, had obstinately restricted himself to one small room on the third floor of the little palazzo erected by Luigi in the Via Venti Settembre – a room where he lived cloistered with a single servant, subsisting on his own scanty income, and accepting nothing but that modest hospitality from his son.

As Pierre reached that new Via Venti Settembre[26] which

[26] The name – Twentieth September Street – was given to the thoroughfare to commemorate the date of the occupation of Rome by Victor Emmanuel's army. –

climbs the side and summit of the Viminal hill, he was struck by the heavy sumptuousness of the new "palaces," which betokened among the moderns the same taste for the huge that marked the ancient Romans. In the warm afternoon glow, blent of purple and old gold, the broad, triumphant thoroughfare, with its endless rows of white house-fronts, bore witness to new Rome's proud hope of futurity and sovereign power. And Pierre fairly gasped when he beheld the Palazzo delle Finanze, or Treasury, a gigantic erection, a cyclopean cube with a profusion of columns, balconies, pediments, and sculptured work, to which the building mania had given birth in a day of immoderate pride. And on the other side of the street, a little higher up, before reaching the Villa Bonaparte, stood Count Prada's little palazzo.

After discharging his driver, Pierre for a moment remained somewhat embarrassed. The door was open, and he entered the vestibule; but, as at the mansion in the Via Giulia, no door porter or servant was to be seen. So he had to make up his mind to ascend the monumental stairs, which with their marble balustrades seemed to be copied, on a smaller scale, from those of the Palazzo Boccanera. And there was much the same cold bareness, tempered, however, by a carpet and red door-hangings, which contrasted vividly with the white stucco of the walls. The reception-rooms, sixteen feet high, were on the first floor, and as a door chanced to be ajar he caught a glimpse of two *salons*, one following the other, and both displaying quite modern richness,

---

Trans.

with a profusion of silk and velvet hangings, gilt furniture, and lofty mirrors reflecting a pompous assemblage of stands and tables. And still there was nobody, not a soul, in that seemingly forsaken abode, which exhaled nought of woman's presence. Indeed Pierre was on the point of going down again to ring, when a footman at last presented himself.

"Count Prada, if you please."

The servant silently surveyed the little priest, and seemed to understand. "The father or the son?" he asked.

"The father, Count Orlando Prada."

"Oh! that's on the third floor." And he condescended to add: "The little door on the right-hand side of the landing. Knock loudly if you wish to be admitted."

Pierre indeed had to knock twice, and then a little withered old man of military appearance, a former soldier who had remained in the Count's service, opened the door and apologised for the delay by saying that he had been attending to his master's legs. Immediately afterwards he announced the visitor, and the latter, after passing through a dim and narrow ante-room, was lost in amazement on finding himself in a relatively small chamber, extremely bare and bright, with wall-paper of a light hue studded with tiny blue flowers. Behind a screen was an iron bedstead, the soldier's pallet, and there was no other furniture than the arm-chair in which the cripple spent his days, with a table of black wood placed near him, and covered with books and papers, and two old straw-seated chairs which served for the accommodation

of the infrequent visitors. A few planks, fixed to one of the walls, did duty as book-shelves. However, the broad, clear, curtainless window overlooked the most admirable panorama of Rome that could be desired.

Then the room disappeared from before Pierre's eyes, and with a sudden shock of deep emotion he only beheld old Orlando, the old blanched lion, still superb, broad, and tall. A forest of white hair crowned his powerful head, with its thick mouth, fleshy broken nose, and large, sparkling, black eyes. A long white beard streamed down with the vigour of youth, curling like that of an ancient god. By that leonine muzzle one divined what great passions had growled within; but all, carnal and intellectual alike, had erupted in patriotism, in wild bravery, and riotous love of independence. And the old stricken hero, his torso still erect, was fixed there on his straw-seated arm-chair, with lifeless legs buried beneath a black wrapper. Alone did his arms and hands live, and his face beam with strength and intelligence.

Orlando turned towards his servant, and gently said to him: "You can go away, Batista. Come back in a couple of hours." Then, looking Pierre full in the face, he exclaimed in a voice which was still sonorous despite his seventy years: "So it's you at last, my dear Monsieur Froment, and we shall be able to chat at our ease. There, take that chair, and sit down in front of me."

He had noticed the glance of surprise which the young priest had cast upon the bareness of the room, and he gaily added: "You will excuse me for receiving you in my cell. Yes, I live here like a

monk, like an old invalided soldier, henceforth withdrawn from active life. My son long begged me to take one of the fine rooms downstairs. But what would have been the use of it? I have no needs, and I scarcely care for feather beds, for my old bones are accustomed to the hard ground. And then too I have such a fine view up here, all Rome presenting herself to me, now that I can no longer go to her."

With a wave of the hand towards the window he sought to hide the embarrassment, the slight flush which came to him each time that he thus excused his son; unwilling as he was to tell the true reason, the scruple of probity which had made him obstinately cling to his bare pauper's lodging.

"But it is very nice, the view is superb!" declared Pierre, in order to please him. "I am for my own part very glad to see you, very glad to be able to grasp your valiant hands, which accomplished so many great things."

Orlando made a fresh gesture, as though to sweep the past away. "Pooh! pooh! all that is dead and buried. Let us talk about you, my dear Monsieur Froment, you who are young and represent the present; and especially about your book, which represents the future! Ah! if you only knew how angry your book, your 'New Rome,' made me first of all."

He began to laugh, and took the book from off the table near him; then, tapping on its cover with his big, broad hand, he continued: "No, you cannot imagine with what starts of protest I read your book. The Pope, and again the Pope, and always the

Pope! New Rome to be created by the Pope and for the Pope, to triumph thanks to the Pope, to be given to the Pope, and to fuse its glory in the glory of the Pope! But what about us? What about Italy? What about all the millions which we have spent in order to make Rome a great capital? Ah! only a Frenchman, and a Frenchman of Paris, could have written such a book! But let me tell you, my dear sir, if you are ignorant of it, that Rome has become the capital of the kingdom of Italy, that we here have King Humbert, and the Italian people, a whole nation which must be taken into account, and which means to keep Rome – glorious, resuscitated Rome – for itself!"

This juvenile ardour made Pierre laugh in turn. "Yes, yes," said he, "you wrote me that. Only what does it matter from my point of view? Italy is but one nation, a part of humanity, and I desire concord and fraternity among all the nations, mankind reconciled, believing, and happy. Of what consequence, then, is any particular form of government, monarchy or republic, of what consequence is any question of a united and independent country, if all mankind forms but one free people subsisting on truth and justice?"

To only one word of this enthusiastic outburst did Orlando pay attention. In a lower tone, and with a dreamy air, he resumed: "Ah! a republic. In my youth I ardently desired one. I fought for one; I conspired with Mazzini, a saintly man, a believer, who was shattered by collision with the absolute. And then, too, one had to bow to practical necessities; the most obstinate

ended by submitting. And nowadays would a republic save us? In any case it would differ but little from our parliamentary monarchy. Just think of what goes on in France! And so why risk a revolution which would place power in the hands of the extreme revolutionists, the anarchists? We fear all that, and this explains our resignation. I know very well that a few think they can detect salvation in a republican federation, a reconstitution of all the former little states in so many republics, over which Rome would preside. The Vatican would gain largely by any such transformation; still one cannot say that it endeavours to bring it about; it simply regards the eventuality without disfavour. But it is a dream, a dream!"

At this Orlando's gaiety came back to him, with even a little gentle irony: "You don't know, I suppose, what it was that took my fancy in your book – for, in spite of all my protests, I have read it twice. Well, what pleased me was that Mazzini himself might almost have written it at one time. Yes! I found all my youth again in your pages, all the wild hope of my twenty-fifth year, the new religion of a humanitarian Christ, the pacification of the world effected by the Gospel! Are you aware that, long before your time, Mazzini desired the renovation of Christianity? He set dogma and discipline on one side and only retained morals. And it was new Rome, the Rome of the people, which he would have given as see to the universal Church, in which all the churches of the past were to be fused – Rome, the eternal and predestined city, the mother and queen, whose domination was

to arise anew to ensure the definitive happiness of mankind! Is it not curious that all the present-day Neo-Catholicism, the vague, spiritualistic awakening, the evolution towards communion and Christian charity, with which some are making so much stir, should be simply a return of the mystical and humanitarian ideas of 1848? Alas! I saw all that, I believed and burned, and I know in what a fine mess those flights into the azure of mystery landed us! So it cannot be helped, I lack confidence."

Then, as Pierre on his side was growing impassioned and sought to reply, he stopped him: "No, let me finish. I only want to convince you how absolutely necessary it was that we should take Rome and make her the capital of Italy. Without Rome new Italy could not have existed; Rome represented the glory of ancient time; in her dust lay the sovereign power which we wished to re-establish; she brought strength, beauty, eternity to those who possessed her. Standing in the middle of our country, she was its heart, and must assuredly become its life as soon as she should be awakened from the long sleep of ruin. Ah! how we desired her, amidst victory and amidst defeat, through years and years of frightful impatience! For my part I loved her, and longed for her, far more than for any woman, with my blood burning, and in despair that I should be growing old. And when we possessed her, our folly was a desire to behold her huge, magnificent, and commanding all at once, the equal of the other great capitals of Europe – Berlin, Paris, and London. Look at her! she is still my only love, my only consolation now that I am virtually dead, with

nothing alive in me but my eyes."

With the same gesture as before, he directed Pierre's attention to the window. Under the glowing sky Rome stretched out in its immensity, empurpled and gilded by the slanting sunrays. Across the horizon, far, far away, the trees of the Janiculum stretched a green girdle, of a limpid emerald hue, whilst the dome of St. Peter's, more to the left, showed palely blue, like a sapphire bedimmed by too bright a light. Then came the low town, the old ruddy city, baked as it were by centuries of burning summers, soft to the eye and beautiful with the deep life of the past, an unbounded chaos of roofs, gables, towers, *campanili*, and cupolas. But, in the foreground under the window, there was the new city – that which had been building for the last five and twenty years – huge blocks of masonry piled up side by side, still white with plaster, neither the sun nor history having as yet robed them in purple. And in particular the roofs of the colossal Palazzo delle Finanze had a disastrous effect, spreading out like far, bare steppes of cruel hideousness. And it was upon the desolation and abomination of all the newly erected piles that the eyes of the old soldier of conquest at last rested.

Silence ensued. Pierre felt the faint chill of hidden, unacknowledged sadness pass by, and courteously waited.

"I must beg your pardon for having interrupted you just now," resumed Orlando; "but it seems to me that we cannot talk about your book to any good purpose until you have seen and studied Rome closely. You only arrived yesterday, did you not? Well,

stroll about the city, look at things, question people, and I think that many of your ideas will change. I shall particularly like to know your impression of the Vatican since you have cone here solely to see the Pope and defend your book against the Index. Why should we discuss things to-day, if facts themselves are calculated to bring you to other views, far more readily than the finest speeches which I might make? It is understood, you will come to see me again, and we shall then know what we are talking about, and, maybe, agree together."

"Why certainly, you are too kind," replied Pierre. "I only came to-day to express my gratitude to you for having read my book so attentively, and to pay homage to one of the glories of Italy."

Orlando was not listening, but remained for a moment absorbed in thought, with his eyes still resting upon Rome. And overcome, despite himself, by secret disquietude, he resumed in a low voice as though making an involuntary confession: "We have gone too fast, no doubt. There were expenses of undeniable utility – the roads, ports, and railways. And it was necessary to arm the country also; I did not at first disapprove of the heavy military burden. But since then how crushing has been the war budget – a war which has never come, and the long wait for which has ruined us. Ah! I have always been the friend of France. I only reproach her with one thing, that she has failed to understand the position in which we were placed, the vital reasons which compelled us to ally ourselves with Germany. And then there are

the thousand millions of *lire*[27] swallowed up in Rome! That was the real madness; pride and enthusiasm led us astray. Old and solitary as I've been for many years now, given to deep reflection, I was one of the first to divine the pitfall, the frightful financial crisis, the deficit which would bring about the collapse of the nation. I shouted it from the housetops, to my son, to all who came near me; but what was the use? They didn't listen; they were mad, still buying and selling and building, with no thought but for gambling booms and bubbles. But you'll see, you'll see. And the worst is that we are not situated as you are; we haven't a reserve of men and money in a dense peasant population, whose thrifty savings are always at hand to fill up the gaps caused by big catastrophes. There is no social rise among our people as yet; fresh men don't spring up out of the lower classes to reinvigorate the national blood, as they constantly do in your country. And, besides, the people are poor; they have no stockings to empty. The misery is frightful, I must admit it. Those who have any money prefer to spend it in the towns in a petty way rather than to risk it in agricultural or manufacturing enterprise. Factories are but slowly built, and the land is almost everywhere tilled in the same primitive manner as it was two thousand years ago. And then, too, take Rome – Rome, which didn't make Italy, but which Italy made its capital to satisfy an ardent, overpowering desire – Rome, which is still but a splendid bit of scenery, picturing the glory of the centuries, and which, apart from its historical

[27] 40,000,000 pounds.

splendour, has only given us its degenerate papal population, swollen with ignorance and pride! Ah! I loved Rome too well, and I still love it too well to regret being now within its walls. But, good heavens! what insanity its acquisition brought us, what piles of money it has cost us, and how heavily and triumphantly it weighs us down! Look! look!"

He waved his hand as he spoke towards the livid roofs of the Palazzo delle Finanze, that vast and desolate steppe, as though he could see the harvest of glory all stripped off and bankruptcy appear with its fearful, threatening bareness. Restrained tears were dimming his eyes, and he looked superbly pitiful with his expression of baffled hope and grievous disquietude, with his huge white head, the muzzle of an old blanched lion henceforth powerless and caged in that bare, bright room, whose poverty-stricken aspect was instinct with so much pride that it seemed, as it were, a protest against the monumental splendour of the whole surrounding district! So those were the purposes to which the conquest had been put! And to think that he was impotent, henceforth unable to give his blood and his soul as he had done in the days gone by.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed in a final outburst; "one gave everything, heart and brain, one's whole life indeed, so long as it was a question of making the country one and independent. But, now that the country is ours, just try to stir up enthusiasm for the reorganisation of its finances! There's no ideality in that! And this explains why, whilst the old ones are dying off, not a

new man comes to the front among the young ones – ”

All at once he stopped, looking somewhat embarrassed, yet smiling at his feverishness. “Excuse me,” he said, “I’m off again, I’m incorrigible. But it’s understood, we’ll leave that subject alone, and you’ll come back here, and we’ll chat together when you’ve seen everything.”

From that moment he showed himself extremely pleasant, and it was apparent to Pierre that he regretted having said so much, by the seductive affability and growing affection which he now displayed. He begged the young priest to prolong his sojourn, to abstain from all hasty judgments on Rome, and to rest convinced that, at bottom, Italy still loved France. And he was also very desirous that France should love Italy, and displayed genuine anxiety at the thought that perhaps she loved her no more. As at the Boccanera mansion, on the previous evening, Pierre realised that an attempt was being made to persuade him to admiration and affection. Like a susceptible woman with secret misgivings respecting the attractive power of her beauty, Italy was all anxiety with regard to the opinion of her visitors, and strove to win and retain their love.

However, Orlando again became impassioned when he learnt that Pierre was staying at the Boccanera mansion, and he made a gesture of extreme annoyance on hearing, at that very moment, a knock at the outer door. “Come in!” he called; but at the same time he detained Pierre, saying, “No, no, don’t go yet; I wish to know – ”

But a lady came in – a woman of over forty, short and extremely plump, and still attractive with her small features and pretty smile swamped in fat. She was a blonde, with green, limpid eyes; and, fairly well dressed in a sober, nicely fitting mignonette gown, she looked at once pleasant, modest, and shrewd.

"Ah! it's you, Stefana," said the old man, letting her kiss him.

"Yes, uncle, I was passing by and came up to see how you were getting on."

The visitor was the Signora Sacco, niece of Prada and a Neapolitan by birth, her mother having quitted Milan to marry a certain Pagani, a Neapolitan banker, who had afterwards failed. Subsequent to that disaster Stefana had married Sacco, then merely a petty post-office clerk. He, later on, wishing to revive his father-in-law's business, had launched into all sorts of terrible, complicated, suspicious affairs, which by unforeseen luck had ended in his election as a deputy. Since he had arrived in Rome, to conquer the city in his turn, his wife had been compelled to assist his devouring ambition by dressing well and opening a *salon*; and, although she was still a little awkward, she rendered him many real services, being very economical and prudent, a thorough good housewife, with all the sterling, substantial qualities of Northern Italy which she had inherited from her mother, and which showed conspicuously beside the turbulence and carelessness of her husband, in whom flared Southern Italy with its perpetual, rageful appetite.

Despite his contempt for Sacco, old Orlando had retained

some affection for his niece, in whose veins flowed blood similar to his own. He thanked her for her kind inquiries, and then at once spoke of an announcement which he had read in the morning papers, for he suspected that the deputy had sent his wife to ascertain his opinion.

"Well, and that ministry?" he asked.

The Signora had seated herself and made no haste to reply, but glanced at the newspapers strewn over the table. "Oh! nothing is settled yet," she at last responded; "the newspapers spoke out too soon. The Prime Minister sent for Sacco, and they had a talk together. But Sacco hesitates a good deal; he fears that he has no aptitude for the Department of Agriculture. Ah! if it were only the Finances – However, in any case, he would not have come to a decision without consulting you. What do you think of it, uncle?"

He interrupted her with a violent wave of the hand: "No, no, I won't mix myself up in such matters!"

To him the rapid success of that adventurer Sacco, that schemer and gambler who had always fished in troubled waters, was an abomination, the beginning of the end. His son Luigi certainly distressed him; but it was even worse to think that – whilst Luigi, with his great intelligence and many remaining fine qualities, was nothing at all – Sacco, on the other hand, Sacco, blunderhead and ever-famished battener that he was, had not merely slipped into parliament, but was now, it seemed, on the point of securing office! A little, swarthy, dry man he was, with

big, round eyes, projecting cheekbones, and prominent chin. Ever dancing and chattering, he was gifted with a showy eloquence, all the force of which lay in his voice – a voice which at will became admirably powerful or gentle! And withal an insinuating man, profiting by every opportunity, wheedling and commanding by turn.

"You hear, Stefana," said Orlando; "tell your husband that the only advice I have to give him is to return to his clerkship at the post-office, where perhaps he may be of use."

What particularly filled the old soldier with indignation and despair was that such a man, a Sacco, should have fallen like a bandit on Rome – on that Rome whose conquest had cost so many noble efforts. And in his turn Sacco was conquering the city, was carrying it off from those who had won it by such hard toil, and was simply using it to satisfy his wild passion for power and its attendant enjoyments. Beneath his wheedling air there was the determination to devour everything. After the victory, while the spoil lay there, still warm, the wolves had come. It was the North that had made Italy, whereas the South, eager for the quarry, simply rushed upon the country, preyed upon it. And beneath the anger of the old stricken hero of Italian unity there was indeed all the growing antagonism of the North towards the South – the North industrious, economical, shrewd in politics, enlightened, full of all the great modern ideas, and the South ignorant and idle, bent on enjoying life immediately, amidst childish disorder in action, and an empty show of fine

sonorous words.

Stefana had begun to smile in a placid way while glancing at Pierre, who had approached the window. "Oh, you say that, uncle," she responded; "but you love us well all the same, and more than once you have given me myself some good advice, for which I'm very thankful to you. For instance, there's that affair of Attilio's – "

She was alluding to her son, the lieutenant, and his love affair with Celia, the little Princess Buongiovanni, of which all the drawing-rooms, white and black alike, were talking.

"Attilio – that's another matter!" exclaimed Orlando. "He and you are both of the same blood as myself, and it's wonderful how I see myself again in that fine fellow. Yes, he is just the same as I was at his age, good-looking and brave and enthusiastic! I'm paying myself compliments, you see. But, really now, Attilio warms my heart, for he is the future, and brings me back some hope. Well, and what about his affair?"

"Oh! it gives us a lot of worry, uncle. I spoke to you about it before, but you shrugged your shoulders, saying that in matters of that kind all that the parents had to do was to let the lovers settle their affairs between them. Still, we don't want everybody to repeat that we are urging our son to get the little princess to elope with him, so that he may afterwards marry her money and title."

At this Orlando indulged in a frank outburst of gaiety: "That's a fine scruple! Was it your husband who instructed you to

tell me of it? I know, however, that he affects some delicacy in this matter. For my own part, I believe myself to be as honest as he is, and I can only repeat that, if I had a son like yours, so straightforward and good, and candidly loving, I should let him marry whomsoever he pleased in his own way. The Buongiovannis – good heavens! the Buongiovannis – why, despite all their rank and lineage and the money they still possess, it will be a great honour for them to have a handsome young man with a noble heart as their son-in-law!"

Again did Stefana assume an expression of placid satisfaction. She had certainly only come there for approval. "Very well, uncle," she replied, "I'll repeat that to my husband, and he will pay great attention to it; for if you are severe towards him he holds you in perfect veneration. And as for that ministry – well, perhaps nothing will be done, Sacco will decide according to circumstances."

She rose and took her leave, kissing the old soldier very affectionately as on her arrival. And she complimented him on his good looks, declaring that she found him as handsome as ever, and making him smile by speaking of a lady who was still madly in love with him. Then, after acknowledging the young priest's silent salutation by a slight bow, she went off, once more wearing her modest and sensible air.

For a moment Orlando, with his eyes turned towards the door, remained silent, again sad, reflecting no doubt on all the difficult, equivocal present, so different from the glorious past. But all at

once he turned to Pierre, who was still waiting. “And so, my friend,” said he, “you are staying at the Palazzo Boccanera? Ah! what a grievous misfortune there has been on that side too!”

However, when the priest had told him of his conversation with Benedetta, and of her message that she still loved him and would never forget his goodness to her, no matter whatever happened, he appeared moved and his voice trembled: “Yes, she has a good heart, she has no spite. But what would you have? She did not love Luigi, and he was possibly violent. There is no mystery about the matter now, and I can speak to you freely, since to my great grief everybody knows what has happened.”

Then Orlando abandoned himself to his recollections, and related how keen had been his delight on the eve of the marriage at the thought that so lovely a creature would become his daughter, and set some youth and charm around his invalid’s arm-chair. He had always worshipped beauty, and would have had no other love than woman, if his country had not seized upon the best part of him. And Benedetta on her side loved him, revered him, constantly coming up to spend long hours with him, sharing his poor little room, which at those times became resplendent with all the divine grace that she brought with her. With her fresh breath near him, the pure scent she diffused, the caressing womanly tenderness with which she surrounded him, he lived anew. But, immediately afterwards, what a frightful drama and how his heart had bled at his inability to reconcile the husband and the wife! He could not possibly say that his son was in the

wrong in desiring to be the loved and accepted spouse. At first indeed he had hoped to soften Benedetta, and throw her into Luigi's arms. But when she had confessed herself to him in tears, owning her old love for Dario, and her horror of belonging to another, he realised that she would never yield. And a whole year had then gone by; he had lived for a whole year imprisoned in his arm-chair, with that poignant drama progressing beneath him in those luxurious rooms whence no sound even reached his ears. How many times had he not listened, striving to hear, fearing atrocious quarrels, in despair at his inability to prove still useful by creating happiness. He knew nothing by his son, who kept his own counsel; he only learnt a few particulars from Benedetta at intervals when emotion left her defenceless; and that marriage in which he had for a moment espied the much-needed alliance between old and new Rome, that unconsummated marriage filled him with despair, as if it were indeed the defeat of every hope, the final collapse of the dream which had filled his life. And he himself had ended by desiring the divorce, so unbearable had become the suffering caused by such a situation.

"Ah! my friend!" he said to Pierre; "never before did I so well understand the fatality of certain antagonism, the possibility of working one's own misfortune and that of others, even when one has the most loving heart and upright mind!"

But at that moment the door again opened, and this time, without knocking, Count Luigi Prada came in. And after rapidly bowing to the visitor, who had risen, he gently took hold of his

father's hands and felt them, as if fearing that they might be too warm or too cold.

"I've just arrived from Frascati, where I had to sleep," said he; "for the interruption of all that building gives me a lot of worry. And I'm told that you spent a bad night!"

"No, I assure you."

"Oh! I knew you wouldn't own it. But why will you persist in living up here without any comfort? All this isn't suited to your age. I should be so pleased if you would accept a more comfortable room where you might sleep better."

"No, no – I know that you love me well, my dear Luigi. But let me do as my old head tells me. That's the only way to make me happy."

Pierre was much struck by the ardent affection which sparkled in the eyes of the two men as they gazed at one another, face to face. This seemed to him very touching and beautiful, knowing as he did how many contrary ideas and actions, how many moral divergencies separated them. And he next took an interest in comparing them physically. Count Luigi Prada, shorter, more thick-set than his father, had, however, much the same strong energetic head, crowned with coarse black hair, and the same frank but somewhat stern eyes set in a face of clear complexion, barred by thick moustaches. But his mouth differed – a sensual, voracious mouth it was, with wolfish teeth – a mouth of prey made for nights of rapine, when the only question is to bite, and tear, and devour others. And for this reason, when some praised

the frankness in his eyes, another would retort: “Yes, but I don’t like his mouth.” His feet were large, his hands plump and over-broad, but admirably cared for.

And Pierre marvelled at finding him such as he had anticipated. He knew enough of his story to picture in him a hero’s son spoilt by conquest, eagerly devouring the harvest garnered by his father’s glorious sword. And he particularly studied how the father’s virtues had deflected and become transformed into vices in the son – the most noble qualities being perverted, heroic and disinterested energy lapsing into a ferocious appetite for possession, the man of battle leading to the man of booty, since the great gusts of enthusiasm no longer swept by, since men no longer fought, since they remained there resting, pillaging, and devouring amidst the heaped-up spoils. And the pity of it was that the old hero, the paralytic, motionless father beheld it all – beheld the degeneration of his son, the speculator and company promoter gorged with millions!

However, Orlando introduced Pierre. “This is Monsieur l’Abbe Pierre Froment, whom I spoke to you about,” he said, “the author of the book which I gave you to read.”

Luigi Prada showed himself very amiable, at once talking of home with an intelligent passion like one who wished to make the city a great modern capital. He had seen Paris transformed by the Second Empire; he had seen Berlin enlarged and embellished after the German victories; and, according to him, if Rome did not follow the movement, if it did not become the inhabitable

capital of a great people, it was threatened with prompt death: either a crumbling museum or a renovated, resuscitated city – those were the alternatives.[28]

Greatly struck, almost gained over already, Pierre listened to this clever man, charmed with his firm, clear mind. He knew how skilfully Prada had manoeuvred in the affair of the Villa Montefiori, enriching himself when every one else was ruined, having doubtless foreseen the fatal catastrophe even while the gambling passion was maddening the entire nation. However, the young priest could already detect marks of weariness, precocious wrinkles and a fall of the lips, on that determined, energetic face, as though its possessor were growing tired of the continual struggle that he had to carry on amidst surrounding downfalls, the shock of which threatened to bring the most firmly established fortunes to the ground. It was said that Prada had recently had grave cause for anxiety; and indeed there was no longer any solidity to be found; everything might be swept away by the financial crisis which day by day was becoming more and more serious. In the case of Luigi, sturdy son though he was of Northern Italy, a sort of degeneration had set in, a slow rot, caused by the softening, perversive influence of Rome. He had there rushed upon the satisfaction of every appetite, and

[28] Personally I should have thought the example of Berlin a great deterrent. The enlargement and embellishment of the Prussian capital, after the war of 1870, was attended by far greater roguery and wholesale swindling than even the previous transformation of Paris. Thousands of people too were ruined, and instead of an increase of prosperity the result was the very reverse. – Trans.

prolonged enjoyment was exhausting him. This, indeed, was one of the causes of the deep silent sadness of Orlando, who was compelled to witness the swift deterioration of his conquering race, whilst Sacco, the Italian of the South – served as it were by the climate, accustomed to the voluptuous atmosphere, the life of those sun-baked cities compounded of the dust of antiquity – bloomed there like the natural vegetation of a soil saturated with the crimes of history, and gradually grasped everything, both wealth and power.

As Orlando spoke of Stefana's visit to his son, Sacco's name was mentioned. Then, without another word, the two men exchanged a smile. A rumour was current that the Minister of Agriculture, lately deceased, would perhaps not be replaced immediately, and that another minister would take charge of the department pending the next session of the Chamber.

Next the Palazzo Boccanera was mentioned, and Pierre, his interest awakened, became more attentive. "Ah!" exclaimed Count Luigi, turning to him, "so you are staying in the Via Giulia? All the Rome of olden time sleeps there in the silence of forgetfulness."

With perfect ease he went on to speak of the Cardinal and even of Benedetta – "the Countess," as he called her. But, although he was careful to let no sign of anger escape him, the young priest could divine that he was secretly quivering, full of suffering and spite. In him the enthusiastic energy of his father appeared in a baser, degenerate form. Quitting the yet handsome Princess

Flavia in his passion for Benedetta, her divinely beautiful niece, he had resolved to make the latter his own at any cost, determined to marry her, to struggle with her and overcome her, although he knew that she loved him not, and that he would almost certainly wreck his entire life. Rather than relinquish her, however, he would have set Rome on fire. And thus his hopeless suffering was now great indeed: this woman was but his wife in name, and so torturing was the thought of her disdain, that at times, however calm his outward demeanour, he was consumed by a jealous vindictive sensual madness that did not even recoil from the idea of crime.

"Monsieur l'Abbe is acquainted with the situation," sadly murmured old Orlando.

His son responded by a wave of the hand, as though to say that everybody was acquainted with it. "Ah! father," he added, "but for you I should never have consented to take part in those proceedings for annulling the marriage! The Countess would have found herself compelled to return here, and would not nowadays be deriding us with her lover, that cousin of hers, Dario!"

At this Orlando also waved his hand, as if in protest.

"Oh! it's a fact, father," continued Luigi. "Why did she flee from here if it wasn't to go and live with her lover? And indeed, in my opinion, it's scandalous that a Cardinal's palace should shelter such goings-on!"

This was the report which he spread abroad, the accusation

which he everywhere levelled against his wife, of publicly carrying on a shameless *liaison*. In reality, however, he did not believe a word of it, being too well acquainted with Benedetta's firm rectitude, and her determination to belong to none but the man she loved, and to him only in marriage. However, in Prada's eyes such accusations were not only fair play but also very efficacious.

And now, although he turned pale with covert exasperation, and laughed a hard, vindictive, cruel laugh, he went on to speak in a bantering tone of the proceedings for annulling the marriage, and in particular of the plea put forward by Benedetta's advocate Morano. And at last his language became so free that Orlando, with a glance towards the priest, gently interposed: "Luigi! Luigi!"

"Yes, you are right, father, I'll say no more," thereupon added the young Count. "But it's really abominable and ridiculous. Lisbeth, you know, is highly amused at it."

Orlando again looked displeased, for when visitors were present he did not like his son to refer to the person whom he had just named. Lisbeth Kauffmann, very blonde and pink and merry, was barely thirty years of age, and belonged to the Roman foreign colony. For two years past she had been a widow, her husband having died at Rome whither he had come to nurse a complaint of the lungs. Thenceforward free, and sufficiently well off, she had remained in the city by taste, having a marked predilection for art, and painting a little, herself. In

the Via Principe Amadeo, in the new Viminal district, she had purchased a little palazzo, and transformed a large apartment on its second floor into a studio hung with old stuffs, and balmy in every season with the scent of flowers. The place was well known to tolerant and intellectual society. Lisbeth was there found in perpetual jubilation, clad in a long blouse, somewhat of a *gamine* in her ways, trenchant too and often bold of speech, but nevertheless capital company, and as yet compromised with nobody but Prada. Their *liaison* had begun some four months after his wife had left him, and now Lisbeth was near the time of becoming a mother. This she in no wise concealed, but displayed such candid tranquillity and happiness that her numerous acquaintances continued to visit her as if there were nothing in question, so facile and free indeed is the life of the great cosmopolitan continental cities. Under the circumstances which his wife's suit had created, Prada himself was not displeased at the turn which events had taken with regard to Lisbeth, but none the less his incurable wound still bled.

There could be no compensation for the bitterness of Benedetta's disdain, it was she for whom his heart burned, and he dreamt of one day wreaking on her a tragic punishment.

Pierre, knowing nothing of Lisbeth, failed to understand the allusions of Orlando and his son. But realising that there was some embarrassment between them, he sought to take countenance by picking from off the littered table a thick book which, to his surprise, he found to be a French educational

work, one of those manuals for the *baccalaureat*,[29] containing a digest of the knowledge which the official programmes require. It was but a humble, practical, elementary work, yet it necessarily dealt with all the mathematical, physical, chemical, and natural sciences, thus broadly outlining the intellectual conquests of the century, the present phase of human knowledge.

"Ah!" exclaimed Orlando, well pleased with the diversion, "you are looking at the book of my old friend Theophile Morin. He was one of the thousand of Marsala, you know, and helped us to conquer Sicily and Naples. A hero! But for more than thirty years now he has been living in France again, absorbed in the duties of his petty professorship, which hasn't made him at all rich. And so he lately published that book, which sells very well in France it seems; and it occurred to him that he might increase his modest profits on it by issuing translations, an Italian one among others. He and I have remained brothers, and thinking that my influence would prove decisive, he wishes to utilise it. But he is mistaken; I fear, alas! that I shall be unable to get anybody to take up his book."

At this Luigi Prada, who had again become very composed and amiable, shrugged his shoulders slightly, full as he was of the scepticism of his generation which desired to maintain things in their actual state so as to derive the greatest profit from them.

---

[29] The examination for the degree of bachelor, which degree is the necessary passport to all the liberal professions in France.M. Zola, by the way, failed to secure it, being ploughed for "insufficiency in literature"! – Trans.

"What would be the good of it?" he murmured; "there are too many books already!"

"No, no!" the old man passionately retorted, "there can never be too many books! We still and ever require fresh ones! It's by literature, not by the sword, that mankind will overcome falsehood and injustice and attain to the final peace of fraternity among the nations – Oh! you may smile; I know that you call these ideas my fancies of '48, the fancies of a greybeard, as people say in France. But it is none the less true that Italy is doomed, if the problem be not attacked from down below, if the people be not properly fashioned. And there is only one way to make a nation, to create men, and that is to educate them, to develop by educational means the immense lost force which now stagnates in ignorance and idleness. Yes, yes, Italy is made, but let us make an Italian nation. And give us more and more books, and let us ever go more and more forward into science and into light, if we wish to live and to be healthy, good, and strong!"

With his torso erect, with his powerful leonine muzzle flaming with the white brightness of his beard and hair, old Orlando looked superb. And in that simple, candid chamber, so touching with its intentional poverty, he raised his cry of hope with such intensity of feverish faith, that before the young priest's eyes there arose another figure – that of Cardinal Boccanera, erect and black save for his snow-white hair, and likewise glowing with heroic beauty in his crumbling palace whose gilded ceilings threatened to fall about his head! Ah! the magnificent stubborn

men of the past, the believers, the old men who still show themselves more virile, more ardent than the young! Those two represented the opposite poles of belief; they had not an idea, an affection in common, and in that ancient city of Rome, where all was being blown away in dust, they alone seemed to protest, indestructible, face to face like two parted brothers, standing motionless on either horizon. And to have seen them thus, one after the other, so great and grand, so lonely, so detached from ordinary life, was to fill one's day with a dream of eternity.

Luigi, however, had taken hold of the old man's hands to calm him by an affectionate filial clasp. "Yes, yes, you are right, father, always right, and I'm a fool to contradict you. Now, pray don't move about like that, for you are uncovering yourself, and your legs will get cold again."

So saying, he knelt down and very carefully arranged the wrapper; and then remaining on the floor like a child, albeit he was two and forty, he raised his moist eyes, full of mute, entreating worship towards the old man who, calmed and deeply moved, caressed his hair with a trembling touch.

Pierre had been there for nearly two hours, when he at last took leave, greatly struck and affected by all that he had seen and heard. And again he had to promise that he would return and have a long chat with Orlando. Once out of doors he walked along at random. It was barely four o'clock, and it was his idea to ramble in this wise, without any predetermined programme, through Rome at that delightful hour when the sun sinks in

the refreshed and far blue atmosphere. Almost immediately, however, he found himself in the Via Nazionale, along which he had driven on arriving the previous day. And he recognised the huge livid Banca d'Italia, the green gardens climbing to the Quirinal, and the heaven-soaring pines of the Villa Aldobrandini. Then, at the turn of the street, as he stopped short in order that he might again contemplate the column of Trajan which now rose up darkly from its low piazza, already full of twilight, he was surprised to see a victoria suddenly pull up, and a young man courteously beckon to him.

"Monsieur l'Abbe Froment! Monsieur l'Abbe Froment!"

It was young Prince Dario Boccanera, on his way to his daily drive along the Corso. He now virtually subsisted on the liberality of his uncle the Cardinal, and was almost always short of money. But, like all the Romans, he would, if necessary, have rather lived on bread and water than have forgone his carriage, horse, and coachman. An equipage, indeed, is the one indispensable luxury of Rome.

"If you will come with me, Monsieur l'Abbe Froment," said the young Prince, "I will show you the most interesting part of our city."

He doubtless desired to please Benedetta, by behaving amiably towards her protege. Idle as he was, too, it seemed to him a pleasant occupation to initiate that young priest, who was said to be so intelligent, into what he deemed the inimitable side, the true florescence of Roman life.

Pierre was compelled to accept, although he would have preferred a solitary stroll. Yet he was interested in this young man, the last born of an exhausted race, who, while seemingly incapable of either thought or action, was none the less very seductive with his high-born pride and indolence. Far more a Roman than a patriot, Dario had never had the faintest inclination to rally to the new order of things, being well content to live apart and do nothing; and passionate though he was, he indulged in no follies, being very practical and sensible at heart, as are all his fellow-citizens, despite their apparent impetuosity. As soon as his carriage, after crossing the Piazza di Venezia, entered the Corso, he gave rein to his childish vanity, his desire to shine, his passion for gay, happy life in the open under the lovely sky. All this, indeed, was clearly expressed in the simple gesture which he made whilst exclaiming: "The Corso!"

As on the previous day, Pierre was filled with astonishment. The long narrow street again stretched before him as far as the white dazzling Piazza del Popolo, the only difference being that the right-hand houses were now steeped in sunshine, whilst those on the left were black with shadow. What! was that the Corso then, that semi-obscure trench, close pressed by high and heavy house-fronts, that mean roadway where three vehicles could scarcely pass abreast, and which serried shops lined with gaudy displays? There was neither space, nor far horizon, nor refreshing greenery such as the fashionable drives of Paris could boast! Nothing but jostling, crowding, and stifling on the little

footways under the narrow strip of sky. And although Dario named the pompous and historical palaces, Bonaparte, Doria, Odescalchi, Sciarra, and Chigi; although he pointed out the column of Marcus Aurelius on the Piazza Colonna, the most lively square of the whole city with its everlasting throng of lounging, gazing, chattering people; although, all the way to the Piazza del Popolo, he never ceased calling attention to churches, houses, and side-streets, notably the Via dei Condotti, at the far end of which the Trinity de' Monti, all golden in the glory of the sinking sun, appeared above that famous flight of steps, the triumphal Scala di Spagna – Pierre still and ever retained the impression of disillusion which the narrow, airless thoroughfare had conveyed to him: the "palaces" looked to him like mournful hospitals or barracks, the Piazza Colonna suffered terribly from a lack of trees, and the Trinity de' Monti alone took his fancy by its distant radiance of fairyland.

But it was necessary to come back from the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza di Venezia, then return to the former square, and come back yet again, following the entire Corso three and four times without wearying. The delighted Dario showed himself and looked about him, exchanging salutations. On either footway was a compact crowd of promenaders whose eyes roamed over the equipages and whose hands could have shaken those of the carriage folks. So great at last became the number of vehicles that both lines were absolutely unbroken, crowded to such a point that the coachmen could do no more

than walk their horses. Perpetually going up and coming down the Corso, people scrutinised and jostled one another. It was open-air promiscuity, all Rome gathered together in the smallest possible space, the folks who knew one another and who met here as in a friendly drawing-room, and the folks belonging to adverse parties who did not speak together but who elbowed each other, and whose glances penetrated to each other's soul. Then a revelation came to Pierre, and he suddenly understood the Corso, the ancient custom, the passion and glory of the city. Its pleasure lay precisely in the very narrowness of the street, in that forced elbowing which facilitated not only desired meetings but the satisfaction of curiosity, the display of vanity, and the garnering of endless tittle-tattle. All Roman society met here each day, displayed itself, spied on itself, offering itself in spectacle to its own eyes, with such an indispensable need of thus beholding itself that the man of birth who missed the Corso was like one out of his element, destitute of newspapers, living like a savage. And withal the atmosphere was delightfully balmy, and the narrow strip of sky between the heavy, rusty mansions displayed an infinite azure purity.

Dario never ceased smiling, and slightly inclining his head while he repeated to Pierre the names of princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses – high-sounding names whose flourish had filled history, whose sonorous syllables conjured up the shock of armour on the battlefield and the splendour of papal pomp with robes of purple, tiaras of gold, and sacred vestments sparkling

with precious stones. And as Pierre listened and looked he was pained to see merely some corpulent ladies or undersized gentlemen, bloated or shrunken beings, whose ill-looks seemed to be increased by their modern attire. However, a few pretty women went by, particularly some young, silent girls with large, clear eyes. And just as Dario had pointed out the Palazzo Buongiovanni, a huge seventeenth-century facade, with windows encompassed by foliaged ornamentation deplorably heavy in style, he added gaily:

"Ah! look – that's Attilio there on the footway. Young Lieutenant Sacco – you know, don't you?"

Pierre signed that he understood. Standing there in uniform, Attilio, so young, so energetic and brave of appearance, with a frank countenance softly illumined by blue eyes like his mother's, at once pleased the priest. He seemed indeed the very personification of youth and love, with all their enthusiastic, disinterested hope in the future.

"You'll see by and by, when we pass the palace again," said Dario. "He'll still be there and I'll show you something."

Then he began to talk gaily of the girls of Rome, the little princesses, the little duchesses, so discreetly educated at the convent of the Sacred Heart, quitting it for the most part so ignorant and then completing their education beside their mothers, never going out but to accompany the latter on the obligatory drive to the Corso, and living through endless days, cloistered, imprisoned in the depths of sombre

mansions. Nevertheless what tempests raged in those mute souls to which none had ever penetrated! what stealthy growth of will suddenly appeared from under passive obedience, apparent unconsciousness of surroundings! How many there were who stubbornly set their minds on carving out their lives for themselves, on choosing the man who might please them, and securing him despite the opposition of the entire world! And the lover was chosen there from among the stream of young men promenading the Corso, the lover hooked with a glance during the daily drive, those candid eyes speaking aloud and sufficing for confession and the gift of all, whilst not a breath was wafted from the lips so chastely closed. And afterwards there came love letters, furtively exchanged in church, and the winning-over of maids to facilitate stolen meetings, at first so innocent. In the end, a marriage often resulted.

Celia, for her part, had determined to win Attilio on the very first day when their eyes had met. And it was from a window of the Palazzo Buongiovanni that she had perceived him one afternoon of mortal weariness. He had just raised his head, and she had taken him for ever and given herself to him with those large, pure eyes of hers as they rested on his own. She was but an *amorosa*– nothing more; he pleased her; she had set her heart on him – him and none other. She would have waited twenty years for him, but she relied on winning him at once by quiet stubbornness of will. People declared that the terrible fury of the Prince, her father, had proved impotent against her

respectful, obstinate silence. He, man of mixed blood as he was, son of an American woman, and husband of an English woman, laboured but to retain his own name and fortune intact amidst the downfall of others; and it was rumoured that as the result of a quarrel which he had picked with his wife, whom he accused of not sufficiently watching over their daughter, the Princess had revolted, full not only of the pride of a foreigner who had brought a huge dowry in marriage, but also of such plain, frank egotism that she had declared she no longer found time enough to attend to herself, let alone another. Had she not already done enough in bearing him five children? She thought so; and now she spent her time in worshipping herself, letting Celia do as she listed, and taking no further interest in the household through which swept stormy gusts.

However, the carriage was again about to pass the Buongiovanni mansion, and Dario forewarned Pierre. "You see," said he, "Attilio has come back. And now look up at the third window on the first floor."

It was at once rapid and charming. Pierre saw the curtain slightly drawn aside and Celia's gentle face appear. Closed, candid lily, she did not smile, she did not move. Nothing could be read on those pure lips, or in those clear but fathomless eyes of hers. Yet she was taking Attilio to herself, and giving herself to him without reserve. And soon the curtain fell once more.

"Ah, the little mask!" muttered Dario. "Can one ever tell what there is behind so much innocence?"

As Pierre turned round he perceived Attilio, whose head was still raised, and whose face was also motionless and pale, with closed mouth, and widely opened eyes. And the young priest was deeply touched, for this was love, absolute love in its sudden omnipotence, true love, eternal and juvenescent, in which ambition and calculation played no part.

Then Dario ordered the coachman to drive up to the Pincio; for, before or after the Corso, the round of the Pincio is obligatory on fine, clear afternoons. First came the Piazza del Popolo, the most airy and regular square of Rome, with its conjunction of thoroughfares, its churches and fountains, its central obelisk, and its two clumps of trees facing one another at either end of the small white paving-stones, betwixt the severe and sun-gilt buildings. Then, turning to the right, the carriage began to climb the inclined way to the Pincio – a magnificent winding ascent, decorated with bas-reliefs, statues, and fountains – a kind of apotheosis of marble, a commemoration of ancient Rome, rising amidst greenery. Up above, however, Pierre found the garden small, little better than a large square, with just the four necessary roadways to enable the carriages to drive round and round as long as they pleased. An uninterrupted line of busts of the great men of ancient and modern Italy fringed these roadways. But what Pierre most admired was the trees – trees of the most rare and varied kinds, chosen and tended with infinite care, and nearly always evergreens, so that in winter and summer alike the spot was adorned with lovely foliage of every

imaginable shade of verdure. And beside these trees, along the fine, breezy roadways, Dario's victoria began to turn, following the continuous, unwearying stream of the other carriages.

Pierre remarked one young woman of modest demeanour and attractive simplicity who sat alone in a dark-blue victoria, drawn by a well-groomed, elegantly harnessed horse. She was very pretty, short, with chestnut hair, a creamy complexion, and large gentle eyes. Quietly robed in dead-leaf silk, she wore a large hat, which alone looked somewhat extravagant. And seeing that Dario was staring at her, the priest inquired her name, whereat the young Prince smiled. Oh! she was nobody, La Tonietta was the name that people gave her; she was one of the few *demi-mondaines* that Roman society talked of. Then, with the freeness and frankness which his race displays in such matters, Dario added some particulars. La Tonietta's origin was obscure; some said that she was the daughter of an innkeeper of Tivoli, and others that of a Neapolitan banker. At all events, she was very intelligent, had educated herself, and knew thoroughly well how to receive and entertain people at the little palazzo in the Via dei Mille, which had been given to her by old Marquis Manfredi now deceased. She made no scandalous show, had but one protector at a time, and the princesses and duchesses who paid attention to her at the Corso every afternoon, considered her nice-looking. One peculiarity had made her somewhat notorious. There was some one whom she loved and from whom she never accepted aught but a bouquet of white roses; and folks would

smile indulgently when at times for weeks together she was seen driving round the Pincio with those pure, white bridal flowers on the carriage seat.

Dario, however, suddenly paused in his explanations to address a ceremonious bow to a lady who, accompanied by a gentleman, drove by in a large landau. Then he simply said to the priest: "My mother."

Pierre already knew of her. Viscount de la Choue had told him her story, how, after Prince Onofrio Boccanera's death, she had married again, although she was already fifty; how at the Corso, just like some young girl, she had hooked with her eyes a handsome man to her liking – one, too, who was fifteen years her junior. And Pierre also knew who that man was, a certain Jules Laporte, an ex-sergeant of the papal Swiss Guard, an ex-traveller in relics, compromised in an extraordinary "false relic" fraud; and he was further aware that Laporte's wife had made a fine-looking Marquis Montefiori of him, the last of the fortunate adventurers of romance, triumphing as in the legendary lands where shepherds are wedded to queens.

At the next turn, as the large landau again went by, Pierre looked at the couple. The Marchioness was really wonderful, blooming with all the classical Roman beauty, tall, opulent, and very dark, with the head of a goddess and regular if somewhat massive features, nothing as yet betraying her age except the down upon her upper lip. And the Marquis, the Romanised Swiss of Geneva, really had a proud bearing, with his solid soldierly

figure and long wavy moustaches. People said that he was in no wise a fool but, on the contrary, very gay and very supple, just the man to please women. His wife so gloried in him that she dragged him about and displayed him everywhere, having begun life afresh with him as if she were still but twenty, spending on him the little fortune which she had saved from the Villa Montefiori disaster, and so completely forgetting her son that she only saw the latter now and again at the promenade and acknowledged his bow like that of some chance acquaintance.

"Let us go to see the sun set behind St. Peter's," all at once said Dario, conscientiously playing his part as a showman of curiosities.

The victoria thereupon returned to the terrace, where a military band was now playing with a terrific blare of brass instruments. In order that their occupants might hear the music, a large number of carriages had already drawn up, and a growing crowd of loungers on foot had assembled there. And from that beautiful terrace, so broad and lofty, one of the most wonderful views of Rome was offered to the gaze. Beyond the Tiber, beyond the pale chaos of the new district of the castle meadows,[30] and between the greenery of Monte Mario and the Janiculum arose St. Peter's. Then on the left came all the olden city, an endless stretch of roofs, a rolling sea of edifices as far as the eye could reach. But one's glances always came back to St. Peter's, towering into the azure with pure and sovereign grandeur. And, seen from

[30] See *ante* note on castle meadows.

the terrace, the slow sunsets in the depths of the vast sky behind the colossus were sublime.

Sometimes there are topplings of sanguineous clouds, battles of giants hurling mountains at one another and succumbing beneath the monstrous ruins of flaming cities. Sometimes only red streaks or fissures appear on the surface of a sombre lake, as if a net of light has been flung to fish the submerged orb from amidst the seaweed. Sometimes, too, there is a rosy mist, a kind of delicate dust which falls, streaked with pearls by a distant shower, whose curtain is drawn across the mystery of the horizon. And sometimes there is a triumph, a *cortege* of gold and purple chariots of cloud rolling along a highway of fire, galleys floating upon an azure sea, fantastic and extravagant pomps slowly sinking into the less and less fathomable abyss of the twilight.

But that night the sublime spectacle presented itself to Pierre with a calm, blinding, desperate grandeur. At first, just above the dome of St. Peter's, the sun, descending in a spotless, deeply limpid sky, proved yet so resplendent that one's eyes could not face its brightness. And in this resplendency the dome seemed to be incandescent, you would have said a dome of liquid silver; whilst the surrounding districts, the house-roofs of the Borgo, were as though changed into a lake of live embers. Then, as the sun was by degrees inclined, it lost some of its blaze, and one could look; and soon afterwards sinking with majestic slowness it disappeared behind the dome, which showed forth darkly blue,

while the orb, now entirely hidden, set an aureola around it, a glory like a crown of flaming rays. And then began the dream, the dazzling symbol, the singular illumination of the row of windows beneath the cupola which were transpierced by the light and looked like the ruddy mouths of furnaces, in such wise that one might have imagined the dome to be poised upon a brazier, isolated, in the air, as though raised and upheld by the violence of the fire. It all lasted barely three minutes. Down below the jumbled roofs of the Borgo became steeped in violet vapour, sank into increasing gloom, whilst from the Janiculum to Monte Mario the horizon showed its firm black line. And it was the sky then which became all purple and gold, displaying the infinite placidity of a supernatural radiance above the earth which faded into nihility. Finally the last window reflections were extinguished, the glow of the heavens departed, and nothing remained but the vague, fading roundness of the dome of St. Peter's amidst the all-invading night.

And, by some subtle connection of ideas, Pierre at that moment once again saw rising before him the lofty, sad, declining figures of Cardinal Boccanera and old Orlando. On the evening of that day when he had learnt to know them, one after the other, both so great in the obstinacy of their hope, they seemed to be there, erect on the horizon above their annihilated city, on the fringe of the heavens which death apparently was about to seize. Was everything then to crumble with them? was everything to fade away and disappear in the falling night following upon

accomplished Time?

V

ON the following day Narcisse Habert came in great worry to tell Pierre that Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo complained of being unwell, and asked for a delay of two or three days before receiving the young priest and considering the matter of his audience. Pierre was thus reduced to inaction, for he dared not make any attempt elsewhere in view of seeing the Pope. He had been so frightened by Nani and others that he feared he might jeopardise everything by inconsiderate endeavours. And so he began to visit Rome in order to occupy his leisure.

His first visit was for the ruins of the Palatine. Going out alone one clear morning at eight o'clock, he presented himself at the entrance in the Via San Teodoro, an iron gateway flanked by the lodges of the keepers. One of the latter at once offered his services, and though Pierre would have preferred to roam at will, following the bent of his dream, he somehow did not like to refuse the offer of this man, who spoke French very distinctly, and smiled in a very good-natured way. He was a squatly built little man, a former soldier, some sixty years of age, and his square-cut, ruddy face was barred by thick white moustaches.

"Then will you please follow me, Monsieur l'Abbe," said he. "I can see that you are French, Monsieur l'Abbe. I'm a Piedmontese myself, but I know the French well enough; I was with them at Solferino. Yes, yes, whatever people may say, one can't forget

old friendships. Here, this way, please, to the right."

Raising his eyes, Pierre had just perceived the line of cypresses edging the plateau of the Palatine on the side of the Tiber; and in the delicate blue atmosphere the intense greenery of these trees showed like a black fringe. They alone attracted the eye; the slope, of a dusty, dirty grey, stretched out bare and devastated, dotted by a few bushes, among which peeped fragments of ancient walls. All was instinct with the ravaged, leprous sadness of a spot handed over to excavation, and where only men of learning could wax enthusiastic.

"The palaces of Tiberius, Caligula, and the Flavians are up above," resumed the guide. "We must keep then for the end and go round." Nevertheless he took a few steps to the left, and pausing before an excavation, a sort of grotto in the hillside, exclaimed: "This is the Lupercal den where the wolf suckled Romulus and Remus. Just here at the entry used to stand the Ruminal fig-tree which sheltered the twins."

Pierre could not restrain a smile, so convinced was the tone in which the old soldier gave these explanations, proud as he was of all the ancient glory, and wont to regard the wildest legends as indisputable facts. However, when the worthy man pointed out some vestiges of Roma Quadrata – remnants of walls which really seemed to date from the foundation of the city – Pierre began to feel interested, and a first touch of emotion made his heart beat. This emotion was certainly not due to any beauty of scene, for he merely beheld a few courses of tufa

blocks, placed one upon the other and uncemented. But a past which had been dead for seven and twenty centuries seemed to rise up before him, and those crumbling, blackened blocks, the foundation of such a mighty eclipse of power and splendour, acquired extraordinary majesty.

Continuing their inspection, they went on, skirting the hillside. The outbuildings of the palaces must have descended to this point; fragments of porticoes, fallen beams, columns and friezes set up afresh, edged the rugged path which wound through wild weeds, suggesting a neglected cemetery; and the guide repeated the words which he had used day by day for ten years past, continuing to enunciate suppositions as facts, and giving a name, a destination, a history, to every one of the fragments.

"The house of Augustus," he said at last, pointing towards some masses of earth and rubbish.

Thereupon Pierre, unable to distinguish anything, ventured to inquire: "Where do you mean?"

"Oh!" said the man, "it seems that the walls were still to be seen at the end of the last century. But it was entered from the other side, from the Sacred Way. On this side there was a huge balcony which overlooked the Circus Maximus so that one could view the sports. However, as you can see, the greater part of the palace is still buried under that big garden up above, the garden of the Villa Mills. When there's money for fresh excavations it will be found again, together with the temple of Apollo and the shrine of Vesta which accompanied it."

Turning to the left, he next entered the Stadium, the arena erected for foot-racing, which stretched beside the palace of Augustus; and the priest's interest was now once more awakened. It was not that he found himself in presence of well-preserved and monumental remains, for not a column had remained erect, and only the right-hand walls were still standing. But the entire plan of the building had been traced, with the goals at either end, the porticus round the course, and the colossal imperial tribune which, after being on the left, annexed to the house of Augustus, had afterwards opened on the right, fitting into the palace of Septimius Severus. And while Pierre looked on all the scattered remnants, his guide went on chattering, furnishing the most copious and precise information, and declaring that the gentlemen who directed the excavations had mentally reconstructed the Stadium in each and every particular, and were even preparing a most exact plan of it, showing all the columns in their proper order and the statues in their niches, and even specifying the divers sorts of marble which had covered the walls.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.