

ÉMILE ZOLA

THE THREE CITIES
TRILOGY: ROME,
VOLUME 3

Эмиль Золя

**The Three Cities
Trilogy: Rome, Volume 3**

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Émile Zola

The Three Cities Trilogy: Rome, Volume 3

PART III

VII

On the following day as Pierre, after a long ramble, once more found himself in front of the Vatican, whither a harassing attraction ever led him, he again encountered Monsignor Nani. It was a Wednesday evening, and the Assessor of the Holy Office had just come from his weekly audience with the Pope, whom he had acquainted with the proceedings of the Congregation at its meeting that morning. "What a fortunate chance, my dear sir," said he; "I was thinking of you. Would you like to see his Holiness in public while you are waiting for a private audience?"

Nani had put on his pleasant expression of smiling civility, beneath which one would barely detect the faint irony of a superior man who knew everything, prepared everything, and could do everything.

"Why, yes, Monsignor," Pierre replied, somewhat astonished by the abruptness of the offer. "Anything of a nature to divert one's mind is welcome when one loses one's time in waiting."

"No, no, you are not losing your time," replied the prelate. "You are looking round you, reflecting, and enlightening yourself. Well, this is the point. You are doubtless aware that the great international pilgrimage of the Peter's Pence Fund will arrive in Rome on Friday, and be received on Saturday by his Holiness. On Sunday, moreover, the Holy Father will celebrate mass at the Basilica. Well, I have a few cards left, and here are some very good places for both ceremonies." So saying he produced an elegant little pocketbook bearing a gilt monogram and handed Pierre two cards, one green and the other pink. "If you only knew how people fight for them," he resumed. "You remember that I told you of two French ladies who are consumed by a desire to see his Holiness. Well, I did not like to support their request for an audience in too pressing a way, and they have had to content themselves with cards like these. The fact is, the Holy Father is somewhat fatigued at the present time. I found him looking yellow and feverish just now. But he has so much courage; he nowadays only lives by force of soul." Then Nani's smile came back with its almost imperceptible touch of derision as he resumed: "Impatient ones ought to find a great example in him, my dear son. I heard that Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo had been unable to help you. But you must not be too much distressed on that account. This long delay is assuredly a grace of Providence in order that you may instruct yourself and come to understand certain things which you French priests do not, unfortunately, realise when you arrive in Rome. And perhaps it will prevent you from making certain mistakes. Come, calm yourself, and remember that the course of events is in the hands of God, who, in His sovereign wisdom, fixes the hour for all things."

Thereupon Nani offered Pierre his plump, supple, shapely hand, a hand soft like a woman's but with the grasp of a vice. And afterwards he climbed into his carriage, which was waiting for him.

It so happened that the letter which Pierre had received from Viscount Philibert de la Choue was a long cry of spite and despair in connection with the great international pilgrimage of the Peter's Pence Fund. The Viscount wrote from his bed, to which he was confined by a very severe attack of gout, and his grief at being unable to come to Rome was the greater as the President of the Committee, who would naturally present the pilgrims to the Pope, happened to be Baron de Fouras, one of his most bitter adversaries of the old conservative, Catholic party. M. de la Choue felt certain that the Baron would profit by his opportunity to win the Pope over to the theory of free corporations; whereas

he, the Viscount, believed that the salvation of Catholicism and the world could only be worked by a system in which the corporations should be closed and obligatory. And so he urged Pierre to exert himself with such cardinals as were favourable, to secure an audience with the Holy Father whatever the obstacles, and to remain in Rome until he should have secured the Pontiff's approbation, which alone could decide the victory. The letter further mentioned that the pilgrimage would be made up of a number of groups headed by bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries, and would comprise three thousand people from France, Belgium, Spain, Austria, and even Germany. Two thousand of these would come from France alone. An international committee had assembled in Paris to organise everything and select the pilgrims, which last had proved a delicate task, as a representative gathering had been desired, a commingling of members of the aristocracy, sisterhood of middle-class ladies, and associations of the working classes, among whom all social differences would be forgotten in the union of a common faith. And the Viscount added that the pilgrimage would bring the Pope a large sum of money, and had settled the date of its arrival in the Eternal City in such wise that it would figure as a solemn protest of the Catholic world against the festivities of September 20, by which the Quirinal had just celebrated the anniversary of the occupation of Rome.

The reception of the pilgrimage being fixed for noon, Pierre in all simplicity thought that he would be sufficiently early if he reached St. Peter's at eleven. The function was to take place in the Hall of Beatifications, which is a large and handsome apartment over the portico, and has been arranged as a chapel since 1890. One of its windows opens on to the central balcony, whence the popes formerly blessed the people, the city, and the world. To reach the apartment you pass through two other halls of audience, the Sala Regia and Sala Ducale, and when Pierre wished to gain the place to which his green card entitled him he found both those rooms so extremely crowded that he could only elbow his way forward with the greatest difficulty. For an hour already the three or four thousand people assembled there had been stifling, full of growing emotion and feverishness. At last the young priest managed to reach the threshold of the third hall, but was so discouraged at sight of the extraordinary multitude of heads before him that he did not attempt to go any further.

The apartment, which he could survey at a glance by rising on tip-toe, appeared to him to be very rich of aspect, with walls gilded and painted under a severe and lofty ceiling. On a low platform, where the altar usually stood, facing the entry, the pontifical throne had now been set: a large arm-chair upholstered in red velvet with glittering golden back and arms; whilst the hangings of the / baldacchino/, also of red velvet, fell behind and spread out on either side like a pair of huge purple wings. However, what more particularly interested Pierre was the wildly passionate concourse of people whose hearts he could almost hear beating and whose eyes sought to beguile their feverish impatience by contemplating and adoring the empty throne. As if it had been some golden monstrosity which the Divinity in person would soon deign to occupy, that throne dazzled them, disturbed them, filled them all with devout rapture. Among the throng were workmen rigged out in their Sunday best, with clear childish eyes and rough ecstatic faces; ladies of the upper classes wearing black, as the regulations required, and looking intensely pale from the sacred awe which mingled with their excessive desire; and gentlemen in evening dress, who appeared quite glorious, inflated with the conviction that they were saving both the Church and the nations. One cluster of dress-coats assembled near the throne, was particularly noticeable; it comprised the members of the International Committee, headed by Baron de Fouras, a very tall, stout, fair man of fifty, who bestirred and exerted himself and issued orders like some commander on the morning of a decisive victory. Then, amidst the general mass of grey, neutral hue, there gleamed the violet silk of some bishop's cassock, for each pastor had desired to remain with his flock; whilst members of various religious orders, superiors in brown, black, and white habits, rose up above all others with lofty bearded or shaven heads. Right and left drooped banners which associations and congregations had brought to present to the Pope. And the sea of pilgrims ever waved and surged with a growing clamour: so much impatient love being

exhaled by those perspiring faces, burning eyes, and hungry mouths that the atmosphere, reeking with the odour of the throng, seemed thickened and darkened.

All at once, however, Pierre perceived Monsignor Nani standing near the throne and beckoning him to approach; and although the young priest replied by a modest gesture, implying that he preferred to remain where he was, the prelate insisted and even sent an usher to make way for him. Directly the usher had led him forward, Nani inquired: "Why did you not come to take your place? Your card entitled you to be here, on the left of the throne."

"The truth is," answered the priest, "I did not like to disturb so many people. Besides, this is an undue honour for me."

"No, no; I gave you that place in order that you should occupy it. I want you to be in the first rank, so that you may see everything of the ceremony."

Pierre could not do otherwise than thank him. Then, on looking round, he saw that several cardinals and many other prelates were likewise waiting on either side of the throne. But it was in vain that he sought Cardinal Boccanera, who only came to St. Peter's and the Vatican on the days when his functions required his presence there. However, he recognised Cardinal Sanguinetti, who, broad and sturdy and red of face, was talking in a loud voice to Baron de Fouras. And Nani, with his obliging air, stepped up again to point out two other Eminences who were high and mighty personages – the Cardinal Vicar, a short, fat man, with a feverish countenance scorched by ambition, and the Cardinal Secretary, who was robust and bony, fashioned as with a hatchet, suggesting a romantic type of Sicilian bandit, who, to other courses, had preferred the discreet, smiling diplomacy of the Church. A few steps further on, and quite alone, the Grand Penitentiary, silent and seemingly suffering, showed his grey, lean, ascetic profile.

Noon had struck. There was a false alert, a burst of emotion, which swept in like a wave from the other halls. But it was merely the ushers opening a passage for the /cortege/. Then, all at once, acclamations arose in the first hall, gathered volume, and drew nearer. This time it was the /cortege/ itself. First came a detachment of the Swiss Guard in undress, headed by a sergeant; then a party of chair-bearers in red; and next the domestic prelates, including the four /Camerieri segreti partecipanti/. And finally, between two rows of Noble Guards, in semi-gala uniforms, walked the Holy Father, alone, smiling a pale smile, and slowly blessing the pilgrims on either hand. In his wake the clamour which had risen in the other apartments swept into the Hall of Beatifications with the violence of delirious love; and, under his slender, white, benedictive hand, all those distracted creatures fell upon both knees, nought remaining but the prostration of a devout multitude, overwhelmed, as it were, by the apparition of its god.

Quivering, carried away, Pierre had knelt like the others. Ah! that omnipotence, that irresistible contagion of faith, of the redoubtable current from the spheres beyond, increased tenfold by a /scenario/ and a pomp of sovereign grandeur! Profound silence fell when Leo XIII was seated on the throne surrounded by the cardinals and his court; and then the ceremony proceeded according to rite and usage. First a bishop spoke, kneeling and laying the homage of the faithful of all Christendom at his Holiness's feet. The President of the Committee, Baron de Fouras, followed, remaining erect whilst he read a long address in which he introduced the pilgrimage and explained its motive, investing it with all the gravity of a political and religious protest. This stout man had a shrill and piercing voice, and his words jarred like the grating of a gimlet as he proclaimed the grief of the Catholic world at the spoliation which the Holy See had endured for a quarter of a century, and the desire of all the nations there represented by the pilgrims to console the supreme and venerated Head of the Church by bringing him the offerings of rich and poor, even to the mites of the humblest, in order that the Papacy might retain the pride of independence and be able to treat its enemies with contempt. And he also spoke of France, deplored her errors, predicted her return to healthy traditions, and gave it to be understood that she remained in spite of everything the most opulent and generous of the Christian nations, the donor whose gold and presents flowed into Rome in a never ending stream.

At last Leo XIII arose to reply to the bishop and the baron. His voice was full, with a strong nasal twang, and surprised one coming from a man so slight of build. In a few sentences he expressed his gratitude, saying how touched he was by the devotion of the nations to the Holy See. Although the times might be bad, the final triumph could not be delayed much longer. There were evident signs that mankind was returning to faith, and that iniquity would soon cease under the universal dominion of the Christ. As for France, was she not the eldest daughter of the Church, and had she not given too many proofs of her affection for the Holy See for the latter ever to cease loving her? Then, raising his arm, he bestowed on all the pilgrims present, on the societies and enterprises they represented, on their families and friends, on France, on all the nations of the Catholic world, his apostolic benediction, in gratitude for the precious help which they sent him. And whilst he was again seating himself applause burst forth, frantic salvoes of applause lasting for ten minutes and mingling with vivats and inarticulate cries – a passionate, tempestuous outburst, which made the very building shake.

Amidst this blast of frantic adoration Pierre gazed at Leo XIII, now again motionless on his throne. With the papal cap on his head and the red cape edged with ermine about his shoulders, he retained in his long white cassock the rigid, sacerdotal attitude of an idol venerated by two hundred and fifty millions of Christians. Against the purple background of the hangings of the /baldacchino/, between the wing-like drapery on either side, enclosing, as it were, a brasier of glory, he assumed real majesty of aspect. He was no longer the feeble old man with the slow, jerky walk and the slender, scraggy neck of a poor ailing bird. The simious ugliness of his face, the largeness of his nose, the long slit of his mouth, the hugeness of his ears, the conflicting jumble of his withered features disappeared. In that waxen countenance you only distinguished the admirable, dark, deep eyes, beaming with eternal youth, with extraordinary intelligence and penetration. And then there was a resolute bracing of his entire person, a consciousness of the eternity which he represented, a regal nobility, born of the very circumstance that he was now but a mere breath, a soul set in so pellucid a body of ivory that it became visible as though it were already freed from the bonds of earth. And Pierre realised what such a man – the Sovereign Pontiff, the king obeyed by two hundred and fifty millions of subjects – must be for the devout and dolent creatures who came to adore him from so far, and who fell at his feet awestruck by the splendour of the powers incarnate in him. Behind him, amidst the purple of the hangings, what a gleam was suddenly afforded of the spheres beyond, what an Infinite of ideality and blinding glory! So many centuries of history from the Apostle Peter downward, so much strength and genius, so many struggles and triumphs to be summed up in one being, the Elect, the Unique, the Superhuman! And what a miracle, incessantly renewed, was that of Heaven deigning to descend into human flesh, of the Deity fixing His abode in His chosen servant, whom He consecrated above and beyond all others, endowing him with all power and all science! What sacred perturbation, what emotion fraught with distracted love might one not feel at the thought of the Deity being ever there in the depths of that man's eyes, speaking with his voice and emanating from his hand each time that he raised it to bless! Could one imagine the exorbitant absoluteness of that sovereign who was infallible, who disposed of the totality of authority in this world and of salvation in the next! At all events, how well one understood that souls consumed by a craving for faith should fly towards him, that those who at last found the certainty they had so ardently sought should seek annihilation in him, the consolation of self-bestowal and disappearance within the Deity Himself.

Meantime, the ceremony was drawing to an end; Baron de Fouras was now presenting the members of the committee and a few other persons of importance. There was a slow procession with trembling genuflections and much greedy kissing of the papal ring and slipper. Then the banners were offered, and Pierre felt a pang on seeing that the finest and richest of them was one of Lourdes, an offering no doubt from the Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. On one side of the white, gold-bordered silk Our Lady of Lourdes was painted, while on the other appeared a portrait of Leo XIII. Pierre saw the Pope smile at the presentment of himself, and was greatly grieved thereat, as though,

indeed, his whole dream of an intellectual, evangelical Pope, disentangled from all low superstition, were crumbling away. And just then his eyes met those of Nani, who from the outset had been watching him with the inquisitive air of a man who is making an experiment.

"That banner is superb, isn't it?" said Nani, drawing near. "How it must please his Holiness to be so nicely painted in company with so pretty a virgin." And as the young priest, turning pale, did not reply, the prelate added, with an air of devout enjoyment: "We are very fond of Lourdes in Rome; that story of Bernadette is so delightful."

However, the scene which followed was so extraordinary that for a long time Pierre remained overcome by it. He had beheld never-to-be-forgotten idolatry at Lourdes, incidents of naive faith and frantic religious passion which yet made him quiver with alarm and grief. But the crowds rushing on the grotto, the sick dying of divine love before the Virgin's statue, the multitudes delirious with the contagion of the miraculous – nothing of all that gave an idea of the blast of madness which suddenly inflamed the pilgrims at the feet of the Pope. Some bishops, superiors of religious orders, and other delegates of various kinds had stepped forward to deposit near the throne the offerings which they brought from the whole Catholic world, the universal "collection" of St. Peter's Pence. It was the voluntary tribute of the nations to their sovereign: silver, gold, and bank notes in purses, bags, and cases. Ladies came and fell on their knees to offer silk and velvet alms-bags which they themselves had embroidered. Others had caused the note cases which they tendered to be adorned with the monogram of Leo XIII in diamonds. And at one moment the enthusiasm became so intense that several women stripped themselves of their adornments, flung their own purses on to the platform, and emptied their pockets even to the very coppers they had about them. One lady, tall and slender, very beautiful and very dark, wrenched her watch from about her neck, pulled off her rings, and threw everything upon the carpet. Had it been possible, they would have torn away their flesh to pluck out their love-burnt hearts and fling them likewise to the demi-god. They would even have flung themselves, have given themselves without reserve. It was a rain of presents, an explosion of the passion which impels one to strip oneself for the object of one's cult, happy at having nothing of one's own that shall not belong to him. And meantime the clamour grew, vivats and shrill cries of adoration arose amidst pushing and jostling of increased violence, one and all yielding to the irresistible desire to kiss the idol!

But a signal was given, and Leo XIII made haste to quit the throne and take his place in the / cortege/ in order to return to his apartments. The Swiss Guards energetically thrust back the throng, seeking to open a way through the three halls. But at sight of his Holiness's departure a lamentation of despair arose and spread, as if heaven had suddenly closed again and shut out those who had not yet been able to approach. What a frightful disappointment – to have beheld the living manifestation of the Deity and to see it disappear before gaining salvation by just touching it! So terrible became the scramble, so extraordinary the confusion, that the Swiss Guards were swept away. And ladies were seen to dart after the Pope, to drag themselves on all fours over the marble slabs and kiss his footprints and lap up the dust of his steps! The tall dark lady suddenly fell at the edge of the platform, raised a loud shriek, and fainted; and two gentlemen of the committee had to hold her so that she might not do herself an injury in the convulsions of the hysterical fit which had come upon her. Another, a plump blonde, was wildly, desperately kissing one of the golden arms of the throne-chair, on which the old man's poor, bony elbow had just rested. And others, on seeing her, came to dispute possession, seized both arms, gilding and velvet, and pressed their mouths to wood-work or upholstery, their bodies meanwhile shaking with their sobs. Force had to be employed in order to drag them away.

When it was all over Pierre went off, emerging as it were from a painful dream, sick at heart, and with his mind revolting. And again he encountered Nani's glance, which never left him. "It was a superb ceremony, was it not?" said the prelate. "It consoles one for many iniquities."

"Yes, no doubt; but what idolatry!" the young priest murmured despite himself.

Nani, however, merely smiled, as if he had not heard the last word. At that same moment the two French ladies whom he had provided with tickets came up to thank him, and, Pierre was surprised

to recognise the mother and daughter whom he had met at the Catacombs. Charming, bright, and healthy as they were, their enthusiasm was only for the spectacle: they declared that they were well pleased at having seen it – that it was really astonishing, unique.

As the crowd slowly withdrew Pierre all at once felt a tap on his shoulder, and, on turning his head, perceived Narcisse Habert, who also was very enthusiastic. "I made signs to you, my dear Abbe," said he, "but you didn't see me. Ah! how superb was the expression of that dark woman who fell rigid beside the platform with her arms outstretched. She reminded me of a masterpiece of one of the primitives, Cimabue, Giotto, or Fra Angelico. And the others, those who devoured the chair arms with their kisses, what suavity, beauty, and love! I never miss these ceremonies: there are always some fine scenes, perfect pictures, in which souls reveal themselves."

The long stream of pilgrims slowly descended the stairs, and Pierre, followed by Nani and Narcisse, who had begun to chat, tried to bring the ideas which were tumultuously throbbing in his brain into something like order. There was certainly grandeur and beauty in that Pope who had shut himself up in his Vatican, and who, the more he became a purely moral, spiritual authority, freed from all terrestrial cares, had grown in the adoration and awe of mankind. Such a flight into the ideal deeply stirred Pierre, whose dream of rejuvenated Christianity rested on the idea of the supreme Head of the Church exercising only a purified, spiritual authority. He had just seen what an increase of majesty and power was in that way gained by the Supreme Pontiff of the spheres beyond, at whose feet the women fainted, and behind whom they beheld a vision of the Deity. But at the same moment the pecuniary side of the question had risen before him and spoilt his joy. If the enforced relinquishment of the temporal power had exalted the Pope by freeing him from the worries of a petty sovereignty which was ever threatened, the need of money still remained like a chain about his feet tying him to earth. As he could not accept the proffered subvention of the Italian Government,¹ there was certainly in the Peter's Pence a means of placing the Holy See above all material cares, provided, however, that this Peter's Pence were really the Catholic /sou/, the mite of each believer, levied on his daily income and sent direct to Rome. Such a voluntary tribute paid by the flock to its pastor would, moreover, suffice for the wants of the Church if each of the 250,000,000 of Catholics gave his or her /sou/ every week. In this wise the Pope, indebted to each and all of his children, would be indebted to none in particular. A /sou/ was so little and so easy to give, and there was also something so touching about the idea. But, unhappily, things were not worked in that way; the great majority of Catholics gave nothing whatever, while the rich ones sent large sums from motives of political passion; and a particular objection was that the gifts were centralised in the hands of certain bishops and religious orders, so that these became ostensibly the benefactors of the papacy, the indispensable cashiers from whom it drew the sinews of life. The lowly and humble whose mites filled the collection boxes were, so to say, suppressed, and the Pope became dependent on the intermediaries, and was compelled to act cautiously with them, listen to their remonstrances, and even at times obey their passions, lest the stream of gifts should suddenly dry up. And so, although he was disburdened of the dead weight of the temporal power, he was not free; but remained the tributary of his clergy, with interests and appetites around him which he must needs satisfy. And Pierre remembered the "Grotto of Lourdes" in the Vatican gardens, and the banner which he had just seen, and he knew that the Lourdes fathers levied 200,000 francs a year on their receipts to send them as a present to the Holy Father. Was not that the chief reason of their great power? He quivered, and suddenly became conscious that, do what he might, he would be defeated, and his book would be condemned.

At last, as he was coming out on to the Piazza of St. Peter's, he heard Narcisse asking Monsignor Nani: "Indeed! Do you really think that to-day's gifts exceeded that figure?"

¹ 110,000 pounds per annum. It has never been accepted, and the accumulations lapse to the Government every five years, and cannot afterwards be recovered. – Trans.

"Yes, more than three millions,² I'm convinced of it," the prelate replied.

For a moment the three men halted under the right-hand colonnade and gazed at the vast, sunlit piazza where the pilgrims were spreading out like little black specks hurrying hither and thither – an ant-hill, as it were, in revolution.

Three millions! The words had rung in Pierre's ears. And, raising his head, he gazed at the Vatican, all golden in the sunlight against the expanse of blue sky, as if he wished to penetrate its walls and follow the steps of Leo XIII returning to his apartments. He pictured him laden with those millions, with his weak, slender arms pressed to his breast, carrying the silver, the gold, the bank notes, and even the jewels which the women had flung him. And almost unconsciously the young priest spoke aloud: "What will he do with those millions? Where is he taking them?"

Narcisse and even Nani could not help being amused by this strangely expressed curiosity. It was the young /attache/ who replied. "Why, his Holiness is taking them to his room; or, at least, is having them carried there before him. Didn't you see two persons of his suite picking up everything and filling their pockets? And now his Holiness has shut himself up quite alone; and if you could see him you would find him counting and recounting his treasure with cheerful care, ranging the rolls of gold in good order, slipping the bank notes into envelopes in equal quantities, and then putting everything away in hiding-places which are only known to himself."

While his companion was speaking Pierre again raised his eyes to the windows of the Pope's apartments, as if to follow the scene. Moreover, Narcisse gave further explanations, asserting that the money was put away in a certain article of furniture, standing against the right-hand wall in the Holy Father's bedroom. Some people, he added, also spoke of a writing table or secretaire with deep drawers; and others declared that the money slumbered in some big padlocked trunks stored away in the depths of the alcove, which was very roomy. Of course, on the left side of the passage leading to the Archives there was a large room occupied by a general cashier and a monumental safe; but the funds kept there were simply those of the Patrimony of St. Peter, the administrative receipts of Rome; whereas the Peter's Pence money, the voluntary donations of Christendom, remained in the hands of Leo XIII: he alone knew the exact amount of that fund, and lived alone with its millions, which he disposed of like an absolute master, rendering account to none. And such was his prudence that he never left his room when the servants cleaned and set it in order. At the utmost he would consent to remain on the threshold of the adjoining apartment in order to escape the dust. And whenever he meant to absent himself for a few hours, to go down into the gardens, for instance, he double-locked the doors and carried the keys away with him, never confiding them to another.

At this point Narcisse paused and, turning to Nani, inquired: "Is not that so, Monsignor? These are things known to all Rome."

The prelate, ever smiling and wagging his head without expressing either approval or disapproval, had begun to study on Pierre's face the effect of these curious stories. "No doubt, no doubt," he responded; "so many things are said! I know nothing myself, but you seem to be certain of it all, Monsieur Habert."

"Oh!" resumed the other, "I don't accuse his Holiness of sordid avarice, such as is rumoured. Some fabulous stories are current, stories of coffers full of gold in which the Holy Father is said to plunge his hands for hours at a time; treasures which he has heaped up in corners for the sole pleasure of counting them over and over again. Nevertheless, one may well admit that his Holiness is somewhat fond of money for its own sake, for the pleasure of handling it and setting it in order when he happens to be alone – and after all that is a very excusable mania in an old man who has no other pastime. But I must add that he is yet fonder of money for the social power which it brings, the decisive help which it will give to the Holy See in the future, if the latter desires to triumph."

² All the amounts given on this and the following pages are calculated in francs. The reader will bear in mind that a million francs is equivalent to 40,000 pounds. – Trans.

These words evoked the lofty figure of a wise and prudent Pope, conscious of modern requirements, inclined to utilise the powers of the century in order to conquer it, and for this reason venturing on business and speculation. As it happened, the treasure bequeathed by Pius IX had nearly been lost in a financial disaster, but ever since that time Leo XIII had sought to repair the breach and make the treasure whole again, in order that he might leave it to his successor intact and even enlarged. Economical he certainly was, but he saved for the needs of the Church, which, as he knew, increased day by day; and money was absolutely necessary if Atheism was to be met and fought in the sphere of the schools, institutions, and associations of all sorts. Without money, indeed, the Church would become a vassal at the mercy of the civil powers, the Kingdom of Italy and other Catholic states; and so, although he liberally helped every enterprise which might contribute to the triumph of the Faith, Leo XIII had a contempt for all expenditure without an object, and treated himself and others with stern closeness. Personally, he had no needs. At the outset of his pontificate he had set his small private patrimony apart from the rich patrimony of St. Peter, refusing to take aught from the latter for the purpose of assisting his relatives. Never had pontiff displayed less nepotism: his three nephews and his two nieces had remained poor – in fact, in great pecuniary embarrassment. Still he listened neither to complaints nor accusations, but remained inflexible, proudly resolved to bequeath the sinews of life, the invincible weapon money, to the popes of future times, and therefore vigorously defending the millions of the Holy See against the desperate covetousness of one and all.

"But, after all, what are the receipts and expenses of the Holy See?" inquired Pierre.

In all haste Nani again made his amiable, evasive gesture. "Oh! I am altogether ignorant in such matters," he replied. "Ask Monsieur Habert, who is so well informed."

"For my part," responded the */attache/*, "I simply know what is known to all the embassies here, the matters which are the subject of common report. With respect to the receipts there is, first of all, the treasure left by Pius IX, some twenty millions, invested in various ways and formerly yielding about a million a year in interest. But, as I said before, a disaster happened, and there must then have been a falling off in the income. Still, nowadays it is reported that nearly all deficiencies have been made good. Well, besides the regular income from the invested money, a few hundred thousand francs are derived every year from chancellery dues, patents of nobility, and all sorts of little fees paid to the Congregations. However, as the annual expenses exceed seven millions, it has been necessary to find quite six millions every year; and certainly it is the Peter's Pence Fund that has supplied, not the six millions, perhaps, but three or four of them, and with these the Holy See has speculated in the hope of doubling them and making both ends meet. It would take me too long just now to relate the whole story of these speculations, the first huge gains, then the catastrophe which almost swept everything away, and finally the stubborn perseverance which is gradually supplying all deficiencies. However, if you are anxious on the subject, I will one day tell you all about it."

Pierre had listened with deep interest. "Six millions – even four!" he exclaimed, "what does the Peter's Pence Fund bring in, then?"

"Oh! I can only repeat that nobody has ever known the exact figures. In former times the Catholic Press published lists giving the amounts of different offerings, and in this way one could frame an approximate estimate. But the practice must have been considered inadvisable, for no documents nowadays appear, and it is absolutely impossible for people to form any real idea of what the Pope receives. He alone knows the correct amount, keeps the money, and disposes of it with absolute authority. Still I believe that in good years the offerings have amounted to between four and five millions. Originally France contributed one-half of the sum; but nowadays it certainly gives much less. Then come Belgium and Austria, England and Germany. As for Spain and Italy – oh! Italy –"

Narcisse paused and smiled at Monsignor Nani, who was wagging his head with the air of a man delighted at learning some extremely curious things of which he had previously had no idea.

"Oh, you may proceed, you may proceed, my dear son," said he.

"Well, then, Italy scarcely distinguishes itself. If the Pope had to provide for his living out of the gifts of the Italian Catholics there would soon be a famine at the Vatican. Far from helping him, indeed, the Roman nobility has cost him dear; for one of the chief causes of his pecuniary losses was his folly in lending money to the princes who speculated. It is really only from France and England that rich people, noblemen and so forth, have sent royal gifts to the imprisoned and martyred Pontiff. Among others there was an English nobleman who came to Rome every year with a large offering, the outcome of a vow which he had made in the hope that Heaven would cure his unhappy idiot son. And, of course, I don't refer to the extraordinary harvest garnered during the sacerdotal and the episcopal jubilees – the forty millions which then fell at his Holiness's feet."

"And the expenses?" asked Pierre.

"Well, as I told you, they amount to about seven millions. We may reckon two of them for the pensions paid to former officials of the pontifical government who were unwilling to take service under Italy; but I must add that this source of expense is diminishing every year as people die off and their pensions become extinguished. Then, broadly speaking, we may put down one million for the Italian sees, another for the Secretariate and the Nunciatures, and another for the Vatican. In this last sum I include the expenses of the pontifical Court, the military establishment, the museums, and the repair of the palace and the Basilica. Well, we have reached five millions, and the two others may be set down for the various subsidised enterprises, the Propaganda, and particularly the schools, which Leo XIII, with great practical good sense, subsidises very handsomely, for he is well aware that the battle and the triumph be in that direction – among the children who will be men to-morrow, and who will then defend their mother the Church, provided that they have been inspired with horror for the abominable doctrines of the age."

A spell of silence ensued, and the three men slowly paced the majestic colonnade. The swarming crowd had gradually disappeared, leaving the piazza empty, so that only the obelisk and the twin fountains now arose from the burning desert of symmetrical paving; whilst on the entablature of the porticus across the square a noble line of motionless statues stood out in the bright sunlight. And Pierre, with his eyes still raised to the Pope's windows, again fancied that he could see Leo XIII amidst all the streaming gold that had been spoken of, his whole, white, pure figure, his poor, waxen, transparent form steeped amidst those millions which he hid and counted and expended for the glory of God alone. "And so," murmured the young priest, "he has no anxiety, he is not in any pecuniary embarrassment."

"Pecuniary embarrassment!" exclaimed Monsignor Nani, his patience so sorely tried by the remark that he could no longer retain his diplomatic reserve. "Oh! my dear son! Why, when Cardinal Mocenni, the treasurer, goes to his Holiness every month, his Holiness always gives him the sum he asks for; he would give it, and be able to give it, however large it might be! His Holiness has certainly had the wisdom to effect great economies; the Treasure of St. Peter is larger than ever. Pecuniary embarrassment, indeed! Why, if a misfortune should occur, and the Sovereign Pontiff were to make a direct appeal to all his children, the Catholics of the entire world, do you know that in that case a thousand millions would fall at his feet just like the gold and the jewels which you saw raining on the steps of his throne just now?" Then suddenly calming himself and recovering his pleasant smile, Nani added: "At least, that is what I sometimes hear said; for, personally, I know nothing, absolutely nothing; and it is fortunate that Monsieur Habert should have been here to give you information. Ah! Monsieur Habert, Monsieur Habert! Why, I fancied that you were always in the skies absorbed in your passion for art, and far removed from all base mundane interests! But you really understand these things like a banker or a notary. Nothing escapes you, nothing. It is wonderful."

Narcisse must have felt the sting of the prelate's delicate sarcasm. At bottom, beneath this make-believe Florentine all-angelicalness, with long curly hair and mauve eyes which grew dim with rapture at sight of a Botticelli, there was a thoroughly practical, business-like young man, who took admirable

care of his fortune and was even somewhat miserly. However, he contented himself with lowering his eyelids and assuming a languorous air. "Oh!" said he, "I'm all reverie; my soul is elsewhere."

"At all events," resumed Nani, turning towards Pierre, "I am very glad that you were able to see such a beautiful spectacle. A few more such opportunities and you will understand things far better than you would from all the explanations in the world. Don't miss the grand ceremony at St. Peter's to-morrow. It will be magnificent, and will give you food for useful reflection; I'm sure of it. And now allow me to leave you, delighted at seeing you in such a fit frame of mind."

Darting a last glance at Pierre, Nani seemed to have observed with pleasure the weariness and uncertainty which were paling his face. And when the prelate had gone off, and Narcisse also had taken leave with a gentle hand-shake, the young priest felt the ire of protest rising within him. What fit frame of mind did Nani mean? Did that man hope to weary him and drive him to despair by throwing him into collision with obstacles, so that he might afterwards overcome him with perfect ease? For the second time Pierre became suddenly and briefly conscious of the stealthy efforts which were being made to invest and crush him. But, believing as he did in his own strength of resistance, pride filled him with disdain. Again he swore that he would never yield, never withdraw his book, no matter what might happen. And then, before crossing the piazza, he once more raised his eyes to the windows of the Vatican, all his impressions crystallising in the thought of that much-needed money which like a last bond still attached the Pope to earth. Its chief evil doubtless lay in the manner in which it was provided; and if indeed the only question were to devise an improved method of collection, his dream of a pope who should be all soul, the bond of love, the spiritual leader of the world, would not be seriously affected. At this thought, Pierre felt comforted and was unwilling to look on things otherwise than hopefully, moved as he was by the extraordinary scene which he had just beheld, that feeble old man shining forth like the symbol of human deliverance, obeyed and venerated by the multitudes, and alone among all men endowed with the moral omnipotence that might at last set the reign of charity and peace on earth.

For the ceremony on the following day, it was fortunate that Pierre held a private ticket which admitted him to a reserved gallery, for the scramble at the entrances to the Basilica proved terrible. The mass, which the Pope was to celebrate in person, was fixed for ten o'clock, but people began to pour into St. Peter's four hours earlier, as soon, indeed, as the gates had been thrown open. The three thousand members of the International Pilgrimage were increased tenfold by the arrival of all the tourists in Italy, who had hastened to Rome eager to witness one of those great pontifical functions which nowadays are so rare. Moreover, the devotees and partisans whom the Holy See numbered in Rome itself and in other great cities of the kingdom, helped to swell the throng, all alacrity at the prospect of a demonstration. Judging by the tickets distributed, there would be a concourse of 40,000 people. And, indeed, at nine o'clock, when Pierre crossed the piazza on his way to the Canons' Entrance in the Via Santa Marta, where the holders of pink tickets were admitted, he saw the portico of the facade still thronged with people who were but slowly gaining admittance, while several gentlemen in evening dress, members of some Catholic association, bestirred themselves to maintain order with the help of a detachment of Pontifical Guards. Nevertheless, violent quarrels broke out in the crowd, and blows were exchanged amidst the involuntary scramble. Some people were almost stifled, and two women were carried off half crushed to death.

A disagreeable surprise met Pierre on his entry into the Basilica. The huge edifice was draped; coverings of old red damask with bands of gold swathed the columns and pilasters, seventy-five feet high; even the aisles were hung with the same old and faded silk; and the shrouding of those pompous marbles, of all the superb dazzling ornamentation of the church bespoke a very singular taste, a tawdry affectation of pomposity, extremely wretched in its effect. However, he was yet more amazed on seeing that even the statue of St. Peter was clad, costumed like a living pope in sumptuous pontifical vestments, with a tiara on its metal head. He had never imagined that people could garment statues either for their glory or for the pleasure of the eyes, and the result seemed to him disastrous.

The Pope was to say mass at the papal altar of the Confession, the high altar which stands under the dome. On a platform at the entrance of the left-hand transept was the throne on which he would afterwards take his place. Then, on either side of the nave, tribunes had been erected for the choristers of the Sistine Chapel, the Corps Diplomatique, the Knights of Malta, the Roman nobility, and other guests of various kinds. And, finally, in the centre, before the altar, there were three rows of benches covered with red rugs, the first for the cardinals and the other two for the bishops and the prelates of the pontifical court. All the rest of the congregation was to remain standing.

Ah! that huge concert-audience, those thirty, forty thousand believers from here, there, and everywhere, inflamed with curiosity, passion, or faith, bestirring themselves, jostling one another, rising on tip-toe to see the better! The clamour of a human sea arose, the crowd was as gay and familiar as if it had found itself in some heavenly theatre where it was allowable for one to chat aloud and recreate oneself with the spectacle of religious pomp! At first Pierre was thunderstruck, he who only knew of nervous, silent kneeling in the depths of dim cathedrals, who was not accustomed to that religion of light, whose brilliancy transformed a religious celebration into a morning festivity. Around him, in the same tribune as himself, were gentlemen in dress-coats and ladies gowned in black, carrying glasses as in an opera-house. There were German and English women, and numerous Americans, all more or less charming, displaying the grace of thoughtless, chirruping birds. In the tribune of the Roman nobility on the left he recognised Benedetta and Donna Serafina, and there the simplicity of the regulation attire for ladies was relieved by large lace veils rivalling one another in richness and elegance. Then on the right was the tribune of the Knights of Malta, where the Grand Master stood amidst a group of commanders: while across the nave rose the diplomatic tribune where Pierre perceived the ambassadors of all the Catholic nations, resplendent in gala uniforms covered with gold lace. However, the young priest's eyes were ever returning to the crowd, the great surging throng in which the three thousand pilgrims were lost amidst the multitude of other spectators. And yet as the Basilica was so vast that it could easily contain eighty thousand people, it did not seem to be more than half full. People came and went along the aisles and took up favourable positions without impediment. Some could be seen gesticulating, and calls rang out above the ceaseless rumble of voices. From the lofty windows of plain white glass fell broad sheets of sunlight, which set a gory glow upon the faded damask hangings, and these cast a reflection as of fire upon all the tumultuous, feverish, impatient faces. The multitude of candles, and the seven-and-eighty lamps of the Confession paled to such a degree that they seemed but glimmering night-lights in the blinding radiance; and everything proclaimed the worldly gala of the imperial Deity of Roman pomp.

All at once there came a premature shock of delight, a false alert. Cries burst forth and circulated through the crowd: "Eccolo! eccolo! Here he comes!" And then there was pushing and jostling, eddying which made the human sea whirl and surge, all craning their necks, raising themselves to their full height, darting forward in a frenzied desire to see the Holy Father and the /cortege/. But only a detachment of Noble Guards marched by and took up position right and left of the altar. A flattering murmur accompanied them, their fine impassive bearing with its exaggerated military stiffness, provoking the admiration of the throng. An American woman declared that they were superb-looking fellows; and a Roman lady gave an English friend some particulars about the select corps to which they belonged. Formerly, said she, young men of the aristocracy had greatly sought the honour of forming part of it, for the sake of wearing its rich uniform and caracoling in front of the ladies. But recruiting was now such a difficult matter that one had to content oneself with good-looking young men of doubtful or ruined nobility, whose only care was for the meagre "pay" which just enabled them to live.

When another quarter of an hour of chatting and scrutinising had elapsed, the papal /cortege/ at last made its appearance, and no sooner was it seen than applause burst forth as in a theatre – furious applause it was which rose and rolled along under the vaulted ceilings, suggesting the acclamations which ring out when some popular, idolised actor makes his entry on the stage. As in a theatre,

too, everything had been very skilfully contrived so as to produce all possible effect amidst the magnificent scenery of the Basilica. The /cortege/ was formed in the wings, that is in the Cappella della Pietà, the first chapel of the right aisle, and in order to reach it, the Holy Father, coming from his apartments by the way of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, had been stealthily carried behind the hangings of the aisle which served the purpose of a drop-scene. Awaiting him in all readiness in the Cappella della Pietà were the cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, the whole pontifical prelacy, hierarchically classified and grouped. And then, as at a signal from a ballet master, the /cortege/ made its entry, reaching the nave and ascending it in triumph from the closed Porta Santa to the altar of the Confession. On either hand were the rows of spectators whose applause at the sight of so much magnificence grew louder and louder as their delirious enthusiasm increased.

It was the /cortege/ of the olden solemnities, the cross and sword, the Swiss Guard in full uniform, the valets in scarlet simars, the Knights of the Cape and the Sword in Renaissance costumes, the Canons in rochets of lace, the superiors of the religious communities, the apostolic prothonotaries, the archbishops, and bishops, all the pontifical prelates in violet silk, the cardinals, each wearing the /cappa magna/ and draped in purple, walking solemnly two by two with long intervals between each pair. Finally, around his Holiness were grouped the officers of the military household, the chamber prelates, Monsignor the Majordomo, Monsignor the Grand Chamberlain, and all the other high dignitaries of the Vatican, with the Roman prince assistant of the throne, the traditional, symbolical defender of the Church. And on the /sedia gestatoria/, screened by the /flabelli/ with their lofty triumphal fans of feathers and carried on high by the bearers in red tunics brodered with silk, sat the Pope, clad in the sacred vestments which he had assumed in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, the amict, the alb, the stole, and the white chasuble and white mitre enriched with gold, two gifts of extraordinary sumptuousness that had come from France. And, as his Holiness drew near, all hands were raised and clapped yet more loudly amidst the waves of living sunlight which streamed from the lofty windows.

Then a new and different impression of Leo XIII came to Pierre. The Pope, as he now beheld him, was no longer the familiar, tired, inquisitive old man, leaning on the arm of a talkative prelate as he strolled through the loveliest gardens in the world. He no longer recalled the Holy Father, in red cape and papal cap, giving a paternal welcome to a pilgrimage which brought him a fortune. He was here the Sovereign Pontiff, the all-powerful Master whom Christendom adored. His slim waxen form seemed to have stiffened within his white vestments, heavy with golden broider, as in a reliquary of precious metal; and he retained a rigid, haughty, hieratic attitude, like that of some idol, gilded, withered for centuries past by the smoke of sacrifices. Amidst the mournful stiffness of his face only his eyes lived – eyes like black sparkling diamonds gazing afar, beyond earth, into the infinite. He gave not a glance to the crowd, he lowered his eyes neither to right nor to left, but remained soaring in the heavens, ignoring all that took place at his feet.

And as that seemingly embalmed idol, deaf and blind, in spite of the brilliancy of his eyes, was carried through the frantic multitude which it appeared neither to hear nor to see, it assumed fearsome majesty, disquieting grandeur, all the rigidity of dogma, all the immobility of tradition exhumed with its /fascioe/ which alone kept it erect. Still Pierre fancied he could detect that the Pope was ill and weary, suffering from the attack of fever which Nani had spoken of when glorifying the courage of that old man of eighty-four, whom strength of soul alone now kept alive.

The service began. Alighting from the /sedia gestatoria/ before the altar of the Confession, his Holiness slowly celebrated a low mass, assisted by four prelates and the pro-prefect of the ceremonies. When the time came for washing his fingers, Monsignor the Majordomo and Monsignor the Grand Chamberlain, accompanied by two cardinals, poured the water on his august hands; and shortly before the elevation of the host all the prelates of the pontifical court, each holding a lighted taper, came and knelt around the altar. There was a solemn moment, the forty thousand believers there assembled shuddered as if they could feel the terrible yet delicious blast of the invisible sweeping over them

when during the elevation the silver clarions sounded the famous chorus of angels which invariably makes some women swoon. Almost immediately an aerial chant descended from the cupola, from a lofty gallery where one hundred and twenty choristers were concealed, and the enraptured multitude marvelled as though the angels had indeed responded to the clarion call. The voices descended, taking their flight under the vaulted ceilings with the airy sweetness of celestial harps; then in suave harmony they died away, reascended to the heavens as with a faint flapping of wings. And, after the mass, his Holiness, still standing at the altar, in person started the */Te Deum/*, which the singers of the Sixtine Chapel and the other choristers took up, each party chanting a verse alternately. But soon the whole congregation joined them, forty thousand voices were raised, and a hymn of joy and glory spread through the vast nave with incomparable splendour of effect. And then the scene became one of extraordinary magnificence: there was Bernini's triumphal, flowery, gilded */baldacchino/*, surrounded by the whole pontifical court with the lighted tapers showing like starry constellations, there was the Sovereign Pontiff in the centre, radiant like a planet in his gold-broidered chasuble, there were the benches crowded with cardinals in purple and archbishops and bishops in violet silk, there were the tribunes glittering with official finery, the gold lace of the diplomatists, the variegated uniforms of foreign officers, and then there was the throng flowing and eddying on all sides, rolling billows after billows of heads from the most distant depths of the Basilica. And the hugeness of the temple increased one's amazement; and even the glorious hymn which the multitude repeated became colossal, ascended like a tempest blast amidst the great marble tombs, the superhuman statues and gigantic pillars, till it reached the vast vaulted heavens of stone, and penetrated into the firmament of the cupola where the Infinite seemed to open resplendent with the gold-work of the mosaics.

A long murmur of voices followed the */Te Deum/*, whilst Leo XIII, after donning the tiara in lieu of the mitre, and exchanging the chasuble for the pontifical cope, went to occupy his throne on the platform at the entry of the left transept. He thence dominated the whole assembly, through which a quiver sped when after the prayers of the ritual, he once more rose erect. Beneath the symbolic, triple crown, in the golden sheathing of his cope, he seemed to have grown taller. Amidst sudden and profound silence, which only feverish heart-beats interrupted, he raised his arm with a very noble gesture and pronounced the papal benediction in a slow, loud, full voice, which seemed, as it were, the very voice of the Deity, so greatly did its power astonish one, coming from such waxen lips, from such a bloodless, lifeless frame. And the effect was prodigious: as soon as the */cortege/* reformed to return whence it had come, applause again burst forth, a frenzy of enthusiasm which the clapping of hands could no longer content. Acclamations resounded and gradually gained upon the whole multitude. They began among a group of ardent partisans stationed near the statue of St. Peter: *"Evviva il Papa-Re! evviva il Papa-Re!/ Long live the Pope-King!"* as the */cortege/* went by the shout rushed along like leaping fire, inflaming heart after heart, and at last springing from every mouth in a thunderous protest against the theft of the states of the Church. All the faith, all the love of those believers, overexcited by the regal spectacle they had just beheld, returned once more to the dream, to the rageful desire that the Pope should be both King and Pontiff, master of men's bodies as he was of their souls – in one word, the absolute sovereign of the earth. Therein lay the only truth, the only happiness, the only salvation! Let all be given to him, both mankind and the world! *"Evviva il Papa-Re! evviva il Papa-Re!/ Long live the Pope-King!"*

Ah! that cry, that cry of war which had caused so many errors and so much bloodshed, that cry of self-abandonment and blindness which, realised, would have brought back the old ages of suffering, it shocked Pierre, and impelled him in all haste to quit the tribune where he was in order that he might escape the contagion of idolatry. And while the */cortege/* still went its way and the deafening clamour of the crowd continued, he for a moment followed the left aisle amidst the general scramble. This, however, made him despair of reaching the street, and anxious to escape the crush of the general departure, it occurred to him to profit by a door which he saw open and which led him into a vestibule, whence ascended the steps conducting to the dome. A sacristan standing in the

doorway, both bewildered and delighted at the demonstration, looked at him for a moment, hesitating whether he should stop him or not. However, the sight of the young priest's cassock combined with his own emotion rendered the man tolerant. Pierre was allowed to pass, and at once began to climb the staircase as rapidly as he could, in order that he might flee farther and farther away, ascend higher and yet higher into peace and silence.

And the silence suddenly became profound, the walls stifled the cry of the multitude. The staircase was easy and light, with broad paved steps turning within a sort of tower. When Pierre came out upon the roofs of nave and aisles, he was delighted to find himself in the bright sunlight and the pure keen air which blew there as in the open country. And it was with astonishment that he gazed upon the huge expanse of lead, zinc, and stone-work, a perfect aerial city living a life of its own under the blue sky. He saw cupolas, spires, terraces, even houses and gardens, houses bright with flowers, the residences of the workmen who live atop of the Basilica, which is ever and ever requiring repair. A little population here bestirs itself, labours, loves, eats, and sleeps. However, Pierre desired to approach the balustrade so as to get a near view of the colossal statues of the Saviour and the Apostles which surmount the facade on the side of the piazza. These giants, some nineteen feet in height, are constantly being mended; their arms, legs, and heads, into which the atmosphere is ever eating, nowadays only hold together by the help of cement, bars, and hooks. And having examined them, Pierre was leaning forward to glance at the Vatican's jumble of ruddy roofs, when it seemed to him that the shout from which he had fled was rising from the piazza, and thereupon, in all haste, he resumed his ascent within the pillar conducting to the dome. There was first a staircase, and then came some narrow, oblique passages, inclines intersected by a few steps, between the inner and outer walls of the cupola. Yielding to curiosity, Pierre pushed a door open, and suddenly found himself inside the Basilica again, at nearly 200 feet from the ground. A narrow gallery there ran round the dome just above the frieze, on which, in letters five feet high, appeared the famous inscription: / Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram oedificabo ecclesiam meam et tibi dabo claves regni coelorum.³ And then, as Pierre leant over to gaze into the fearful cavity beneath him and the wide openings of nave, and aisles, and transepts, the cry, the delirious cry of the multitude, yet clamorously swarming below, struck him full in the face. He fled once more; but, higher up, yet a second time he pushed another door open and found another gallery, one perched above the windows, just where the splendid mosaics begin, and whence the crowd seemed to him lost in the depths of a dizzy abyss, altar and / baldacchino/ alike looking no larger than toys. And yet the cry of idolatry and warfare arose again, and smote him like the buffet of a tempest which gathers increase of strength the farther it rushes. So to escape it he had to climb higher still, even to the outer gallery which encircles the lantern, hovering in the very heavens.

How delightful was the relief which that bath of air and sunlight at first brought him! Above him now there only remained the ball of gilt copper into which emperors and queens have ascended, as is testified by the pompous inscriptions in the passages; a hollow ball it is, where the voice crashes like thunder, where all the sounds of space reverberate. As he emerged on the side of the apse, his eyes at first plunged into the papal gardens, whose clumps of trees seemed mere bushes almost level with the soil; and he could retrace his recent stroll among them, the broad /parterre/ looking like a faded Smyrna rug, the large wood showing the deep glaucous greenery of a stagnant pool. Then there were the kitchen garden and the vineyard easily identified and tended with care. The fountains, the observatory, the casino, where the Pope spent the hot days of summer, showed merely like little white spots in those undulating grounds, walled in like any other estate, but with the fearsome rampart of the fourth Leo, which yet retained its fortress-like aspect. However, Pierre took his way round the narrow gallery and abruptly found himself in front of Rome, a sudden and immense expanse, with the distant sea on the west, the uninterrupted mountain chains on the east and the south, the Roman

³ Thou art Peter (Petrus) and on that rock (Petram) will I build my church, and to thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Campagna stretching to the horizon like a bare and greenish desert, while the city, the Eternal City, was spread out at his feet. Never before had space impressed him so majestically. Rome was there, as a bird might see it, within the glance, as distinct as some geographical plan executed in relief. To think of it, such a past, such a history, so much grandeur, and Rome so dwarfed and contracted by distance! Houses as lilliputian and as pretty as toys; and the whole a mere mouldy speck upon the earth's face! What impassioned Pierre was that he could at a glance understand the divisions of Rome: the antique city yonder with the Capitol, the Forum, and the Palatine; the papal city in that Borgo which he overlooked, with St. Peter's and the Vatican gazing across the city of the middle ages – which was huddled together in the right angle described by the yellow Tiber – towards the modern city, the Quirinal of the Italian monarchy. And particularly did he remark the chalky girdle with which the new districts encompassed the ancient, central, sun-tanned quarters, thus symbolising an effort at rejuvenescence, the old heart but slowly mended, whereas the outlying limbs were renewed as if by miracle.

In that ardent noontide glow, however, Pierre no longer beheld the pure ethereal Rome which had met his eyes on the morning of his arrival in the delightfully soft radiance of the rising sun. That smiling, unobtrusive city, half veiled by golden mist, immersed as it were in some dream of childhood, now appeared to him flooded with a crude light, motionless, hard of outline and silent like death. The distance was as if devoured by too keen a flame, steeped in a luminous dust in which it crumbled. And against that blurred background the whole city showed with violent distinctness in great patches of light and shade, their tracery harshly conspicuous. One might have fancied oneself above some very ancient, abandoned stone quarry, which a few clumps of trees spotted with dark green. Of the ancient city one could see the sunburnt tower of the Capitol, the black cypresses of the Palatine, and the ruins of the palace of Septimius Severus, suggesting the white osseous carcass of some fossil monster, left there by a flood. In front, was enthroned the modern city with the long, renovated buildings of the Quirinal, whose yellow walls stood forth with wondrous crudity amidst the vigorous crests of the garden trees. And to right and left on the Viminal, beyond the palace, the new districts appeared like a city of chalk and plaster mottled by innumerable windows as with a thousand touches of black ink. Then here and there were the Pincio showing like a stagnant mere, the Villa Medici uprearing its campanili, the castle of Sant' Angelo brown like rust, the spire of Santa Maria Maggiore aglow like a burning taper, the three churches of the Aventine drowsy amidst verdure, the Palazzo Farnese with its summer-baked tiles showing like old gold, the domes of the Gesu, of Sant' Andrea della Valle, of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, and yet other domes and other domes, all in fusion, incandescent in the brazier of the heavens. And Pierre again felt a heart-pang in presence of that harsh, stern Rome, so different from the Rome of his dream, the Rome of rejuvenescence and hope, which he had fancied he had found on his first morning, but which had now faded away to give place to the immutable city of pride and domination, stubborn under the sun even unto death.

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