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THE THREE CITIES

ROME

BY

EMILE ZOLA

TRANSLATED BY ERNEST A. VIZETELLY

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 salvos 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,* 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.

* 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.

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?"

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

* 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.

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."

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 unadvisable, 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 Pieta, 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 Pieta were the cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, the whole pontifical prelate, 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 protonotaries, 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 broidery, 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 Sistine 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.* 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.

* 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.

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 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.

And there on high, all alone with his thoughts, Pierre suddenly understood. It was as if a dart of flaming light fell on him in that free, unbounded expanse where he hovered. Had it come from the ceremony which he had just beheld, from the frantic cry of servitude still ringing in his ears? Had it come from the spectacle of that city beneath him, that city which suggested an embalmed queen still reigning amidst the dust of her tomb? He knew not; but doubtless both had acted as factors, and at all events the light which fell upon his mind was complete: he felt that Catholicism could not exist without the temporal power, that it must fatally disappear whenever it should no longer be king over this earth. A first reason of this lay in heredity, in the forces of history, the long line of the heirs of the Caesars, the popes, the great pontiffs, in whose veins the blood of Augustus, demanding the empire of the world, had never ceased to flow. Though they might reside in the Vatican they had come from the imperial abodes on the Palatine, from the palace of Septimius Severus, and throughout the centuries their policy had ever pursued the dream of Roman mastery, of all the nations vanquished, submissive, and obedient to Rome. If its sovereignty were not universal, extending alike over bodies and over souls, Catholicism would lose its *raison d'être*; for the Church cannot recognise any empire or kingdom otherwise than politically—the emperors and the kings being purely and simply so many temporary delegates placed in charge of the nations pending the time when they shall be called upon to relinquish their trust. All the nations, all humanity, and the whole world belong to the Church to whom they have been given by God. And if real and effective possession is not hers to-day, this is only because she yields to force, compelled to face accomplished facts, but with the formal reserve that she is in presence of guilty usurpation, that her possessions are unjustly withheld from her, and that she awaits the realisation of the promises of the Christ, who, when the time shall be accomplished, will for ever restore to her both the earth and mankind. Such is the real future city which time is to bring: Catholic Rome, sovereign of the world once more. And Rome the city forms a substantial part of the dream, Rome whose eternity has been predicted, Rome whose soil has imparted to Catholicism the inextinguishable thirst of absolute power. And thus the destiny of the papacy is linked to that of Rome, to such a point indeed that a pope elsewhere than at Rome would no longer be a Catholic pope. The thought of all this frightened Pierre; a great shudder passed through him as he leant on the light iron balustrade, gazing down into the abyss where the stern mournful city was even now crumbling away under the fierce sun.

There was, however, evidence of the facts which had dawned on him. If Pius IX and Leo XIII had resolved to imprison themselves in the Vatican, it was because necessity bound them to Rome. A pope is not free to leave the city, to be the head of the Church elsewhere; and in the same way a pope, however well he may understand the modern world, has not the right to relinquish the temporal power. This is an inalienable inheritance which he must defend, and it is moreover a question of life,

peremptory, above discussion. And thus Leo XIII has retained the title of Master of the temporal dominions of the Church, and this he has done the more readily since as a cardinal—like all the members of the Sacred College when elected—he swore that he would maintain those dominions intact. Italy may hold Rome as her capital for another century or more, but the coming popes will never cease to protest and claim their kingdom. If ever an understanding should be arrived at, it must be based on the gift of a strip of territory. Formerly, when rumours of reconciliation were current, was it not said that the papacy exacted, as a formal condition, the possession of at least the Leonine City with the neutralisation of a road leading to the sea? Nothing is not enough, one cannot start from nothing to attain to everything, whereas that Civitas Leonina, that bit of a city, would already be a little royal ground, and it would then only be necessary to conquer the rest, first Rome, next Italy, then the neighbouring states, and at last the whole world. Never has the Church despaired, even when, beaten and despoiled, she seemed to be at the last gasp. Never will she abdicate, never will she renounce the promises of the Christ, for she believes in a boundless future and declares herself to be both indestructible and eternal. Grant her but a pebble on which to rest her head, and she will hope to possess, first the field in which that pebble lies, and then the empire in which the field is situated. If one pope cannot achieve the recovery of the inheritance, another pope, ten, twenty other popes will continue the work. The centuries do not count. And this explains why an old man of eighty-four has undertaken colossal enterprises whose achievement requires several lives, certain as he is that his successors will take his place, and that the work will ever and ever be carried forward and completed.

As these thoughts coursed through his mind, Pierre, overlooking that ancient city of glory and domination, so stubbornly clinging to its purple, realised that he was an imbecile with his dream of a purely spiritual pope. The notion seemed to him so different from the reality, so out of place, that he experienced a sort of shame-fraught despair. The new pope, consonant to the teachings of the Gospel, such as a purely spiritual pope reigning over souls alone, would be, was virtually beyond the ken of a Roman prelate. At thought of that papal court congealed in ritual, pride, and authority, Pierre suddenly understood what horror and repugnance such a pastor would inspire. How great must be the astonishment and contempt of the papal prelates for that singular notion of the northern mind, a pope without dominions or subjects, military household or royal honours, a pope who would be, as it were, a spirit, exercising purely moral authority, dwelling in the depths of God's temple, and governing the world solely with gestures of benediction and deeds of kindness and love! All that was but a misty Gothic invention for this Latin clergy, these priests of light and magnificence, who were certainly pious and even superstitious, but who left the Deity well sheltered within the tabernacle in order to govern in His name, according to what they considered the interests of Heaven. Thence it arose that they employed craft and artifice like mere politicians, and lived by dint of expedients amidst the great battle of human appetites, marching with the prudent, stealthy steps of diplomatists towards the final terrestrial victory of the Christ, who, in the person of the Pope, was one day to reign over all the nations. And how stupefied must a French prelate have been—a prelate like Monseigneur Bergerot, that apostle of renunciation and charity—when he lighted amidst that world of the Vatican! How difficult must it have been for him to understand and focus things, and afterwards how great his grief at finding himself unable to come to any agreement with those men without country, without fatherland, those "internationals," who were ever poring over the maps of both hemispheres, ever absorbed in schemes which were to bring them empire. Days and days were necessary, one needed to live in Rome, and he, Pierre himself, had only seen things clearly after a month's sojourn, whilst labouring under the violent shock of the royal pomp of St. Peter's, and standing face to face with the ancient city as it slumbered heavily in the sunlight and dreamt its dream of eternity.

But on lowering his eyes to the piazza in front of the Basilica he perceived the multitude, the 40,000 believers streaming over the pavement like insects. And then he thought that he could hear the cry again rising: "/Evviva il Papa-Re! evviva il Papa-Re! Long live the Pope-King!" Whilst ascending those endless staircases a moment previously it had seemed to him as if the colossus of stone were quivering with the frantic shout raised beneath its ceilings. And now that he had climbed even into cloudland that shout apparently was traversing space. If the colossal pile beneath him still vibrated with it, was it not as with a last rise of sap within its ancient walls, a reinvigoration of that Catholic blood which formerly had demanded that the pile should be a stupendous one, the veritable king of temples, and which now was striving to reanimate it with the powerful breath of life, and this at the very hour when death was beginning to fall upon its over-vast, deserted nave and aisles? The crowd was still streaming forth, filling the piazza, and Pierre's heart was wrung by frightful anguish, for that throng with its shout had just swept his last hope away. On the previous afternoon, after the reception of the pilgrimage, he had yet been able to deceive himself by overlooking the necessity for money which bound the Pope to earth in order that he might see nought but the feeble old man, all spirituality, resplendent like the symbol of moral authority. But his faith in such a pastor of the Gospel, free from all considerations of earthly wealth, and king of none other than a heavenly kingdom, had fled. Not only did the Peter's Pence impose hard servitude upon Leo XIII but he was also the prisoner of papal tradition—the eternal King of Rome, riveted to the soil of Rome, unable either to quit the city or to renounce the temporal power. The

fatal end would be collapse on the spot, the dome of St. Peter's falling even as the temple of Olympian Jupiter had fallen, Catholicism strewing the grass with its ruins whilst elsewhere schism burst forth: a new faith for the new nations. Of this Pierre had a grandiose and tragical vision: he beheld his dream destroyed, his book swept away amidst that cry which spread around him as if flying to the four corners of the Catholic world "/>Evviva il Papa-Re! evviva il Papa-Re! Long live the Pope-King!" But even in that hour of the papacy's passing triumph he already felt that the giant of gold and marble on which he stood was oscillating, even as totter all old and rotten societies.

At last he took his way down again, and a fresh shock of emotion came to him as he reached the roofs, that sunlit expanse of lead and zinc, large enough for the site of a town. Monsignor Nani was there, in company with the two French ladies, the mother and the daughter, both looking very happy and highly amused. No doubt the prelate had good-naturedly offered to conduct them to the dome. However, as soon as he recognised the young priest he went towards him: "Well, my dear son," he inquired, "are you pleased? Have you been impressed, edified?" As he spoke, his searching eyes dived into Pierre's soul, as if to ascertain the present result of his experiments. Then, satisfied with what he detected, he began to laugh softly: "Yes, yes, I see—come, you are a sensible fellow after all. I begin to think that the unfortunate affair which brought you here will have a happy ending."

VIII

WHEN Pierre remained in the morning at the Boccanera mansion he often spent some hours in the little neglected garden which had formerly ended with a sort of colonnaded /loggia/, whence two flights of steps descended to the Tiber. This garden was a delightful, solitary nook, perfumed by the ripe fruit of the centenarian orange-trees, whose symmetrical lines were the only indication of the former pathways, now hidden beneath rank weeds. And Pierre also found there the acrid scent of the large box-shrubs growing in the old central fountain basin, which had been filled up with loose earth and rubbish.

On those luminous October mornings, full of such tender and penetrating charm, the spot was one where all the joy of living might well be savoured, but Pierre brought thither his northern dreaminess, his concern for suffering, his steadfast feeling of compassion, which rendered yet sweeter the caress of the sunlight pervading that atmosphere of love. He seated himself against the right-hand wall on a fragment of a fallen column over which a huge laurel cast a deep-black shadow, fresh and aromatic. In the antique greenish sarcophagus beside him, on which fauns offered violence to nymphs, the streamlet of water trickling from the mask incrustated in the wall, set the unchanging music of its crystal note, whilst he read the newspapers and the letters which he received, all the communications of good Abbe Rose, who kept him informed of his mission among the wretched ones of gloomy Paris, now already steeped in fog and mud.

One morning however, Pierre unexpectedly found Benedetta seated on the fallen column which he usually made his chair. She raised a light cry of surprise on seeing him, and for a moment remained embarrassed, for she had with her his book "New Rome," which she had read once already, but had then imperfectly understood. And overcoming her embarrassment she now hastened to detain him, making him sit down beside her, and frankly owning that she had come to the garden in order to be alone and apply herself to an attentive study of the book, in the same way as some ignorant school-girl. Then they began to chat like a pair of friends, and the young priest spent a delightful hour. Although Benedetta did not speak of herself, he realised that it was her grief alone which brought her nearer to him, as if indeed her own sufferings enlarged her heart and made her think of all who suffered in the world. Patrician as she was, regarding social hierarchy as a divine law, she had never previously thought of such things, and some pages of Pierre's book greatly astonished her. What! one ought to take interest in the lowly, realise that they had the same souls and the same griefs as oneself, and seek in brotherly or sisterly fashion to make them happy? She certainly sought to acquire such an interest, but with no great success, for she secretly feared that it might lead her into sin, as it could not be right to alter aught of the social system which had been established by God and consecrated by the Church. Charitable she undoubtedly was, wont to bestow small sums in alms, but she did not give her heart, she felt no true sympathy for the humble, belonging as she did to such a different race, which looked to a throne in heaven high above the seats of all the plebeian elect.

She and Pierre, however, found themselves on other mornings side by side in the shade of the laurels near the trickling, singing water; and he, lacking occupation, weary of waiting for a solution which seemed to recede day by day, fervently strove to animate this young and beautiful woman with some of his own fraternal feelings. He was impassioned by the idea that he was catechising Italy herself, the queen of beauty, who was still slumbering in ignorance, but who would recover all her past glory if she were to awake to the new times with soul enlarged, swelling with pity for men and things. Reading

good Abbe Rose's letters to Benedetta, he made her shudder at the frightful wail of wretchedness which ascends from all great cities. With such deep tenderness in her eyes, with the happiness of love reciprocated emanating from her whole being, why should she not recognise, even as he did, that the law of love was the sole means of saving suffering humanity, which, through hatred, incurred the danger of death? And to please him she did try to believe in democracy, in the fraternal remodelling of society, but among other nations only—not at Rome, for an involuntary, gentle laugh came to her lips whenever his words evoked the idea of the poor still remaining in the Trastevere district fraternising with those who yet dwelt in the old princely palaces. No, no, things had been as they were so long; they could not, must not, be altered! And so, after all, Pierre's pupil made little progress: she was, in reality, simply touched by the wealth of ardent love which the young priest had chastely transferred from one alone to the whole of human kind. And between him and her, as those sunlit October mornings went by, a tie of exquisite sweetness was formed; they came to love one another with deep, pure, fraternal affection, amidst the great glowing passion which consumed them both.

Then, one day, Benedetta, her elbow resting on the sarcophagus, spoke of Dario, whose name she had hitherto refrained from mentioning. Ah! poor /amico/, how circumspect and repentant he had shown himself since that fit of brutal insanity! At first, to conceal his embarrassment, he had gone to spend three days at Naples, and it was said that La Tonietta, the sentimental /demi-mondaine/, had hastened to join him there, wildly in love with him. Since his return to the mansion he had avoided all private meetings with his cousin, and scarcely saw her except at the Monday receptions, when he wore a submissive air, and with his eyes silently entreated forgiveness.

"Yesterday, however," continued Benedetta, "I met him on the staircase and gave him my hand. He understood that I was no longer angry with him and was very happy. What else could I have done? One must not be severe for ever. Besides, I do not want things to go too far between him and that woman. I want him to remember that I still love him, and am still waiting for him. Oh! he is mine, mine alone. But alas! I cannot say the word: our affairs are in such sorry plight."

She paused, and two big tears welled into her eyes. The divorce proceedings to which she alluded had now come to a standstill, fresh obstacles ever arising to stay their course.

Pierre was much moved by her tears, for she seldom wept. She herself sometimes confessed, with her calm smile, that she did not know how to weep. But now her heart was melting, and for a moment she remained overcome, leaning on the mossy, crumbling sarcophagus, whilst the clear water falling from the gaping mouth of the tragic mask still sounded its flutelike note. And a sudden thought of death came to the priest as he saw her, so young and so radiant with beauty, half fainting beside that marble resting-place where fauns were rushing upon nymphs in a frantic bacchanal which proclaimed the omnipotence of love—that omnipotence which the ancients were fond of symbolising on their tombs as a token of life's eternity. And meantime a faint, warm breeze passed through the sunlit, silent garden, wafting hither and thither the penetrating scent of box and orange.

"One has so much strength when one loves," Pierre at last murmured.

"Yes, yes, you are right," she replied, already smiling again. "I am childish. But it is the fault of your book. It is only when I suffer that I properly understand it. But all the same I am making progress, am I not? Since you desire it, let all the poor, all those who suffer, as I do, be my brothers and sisters."

Then for a while they resumed their chat.

On these occasions Benedetta was usually the first to return to the house, and Pierre would linger alone under the laurels, vaguely dreaming of sweet, sad things. Often did he think how hard life proved for poor creatures whose only thirst was for happiness!

One Monday evening, at a quarter-past ten, only the young folks remained in Donna Serafina's reception-room. Monsignor Nani had merely put in an appearance that night, and Cardinal Sarno had just gone off.

Even Donna Serafina, in her usual seat by the fireplace, seemed to have withdrawn from the others, absorbed as she was in contemplation of the chair which the absent Morano still stubbornly left unoccupied. Chatting and laughing in front of the sofa on which sat Benedetta and Celia were Dario, Pierre, and Narcisse Habert, the last of whom had begun to twit the young Prince, having met him, so he asserted, a few days previously, in the company of a very pretty girl.

"Oh! don't deny it, my dear fellow," continued Narcisse, "for she was really superb. She was walking beside you, and you turned into a lane together—the Borgo Angelico, I think."

Dario listened smiling, quite at his ease and incapable of denying his passionate predilection for beauty. "No doubt, no doubt; it was I, I don't deny it," he responded. "Only the inferences you draw are

not correct." And turning towards Benedetta, who, without a thought of jealous anxiety, wore as gay a look as himself, as though delighted that he should have enjoyed that passing pleasure of the eyes, he went on: "It was the girl, you know, whom I found in tears six weeks ago. Yes, that bead-worker who was sobbing because the workshop was shut up, and who rushed along, all blushing, to conduct me to her parents when I offered her a bit of silver. Pierina her name is, as you, perhaps, remember."

"Oh! yes, Pierina."

"Well, since then I've met her in the street on four or five occasions. And, to tell the truth, she is so very beautiful that I've stopped and spoken to her. The other day, for instance, I walked with her as far as a manufacturer's. But she hasn't yet found any work, and she began to cry, and so, to console her a little, I kissed her. She was quite taken aback at it, but she seemed very well pleased."

At this all the others began to laugh. But suddenly Celia desisted and said very gravely, "You know, Dario, she loves you; you must not be hard on her."

Dario, no doubt, was of Celia's opinion, for he again looked at Benedetta, but with a gay toss of the head, as if to say that, although the girl might love him, he did not love her. A bead-worker indeed, a girl of the lowest classes, pooh! She might be a Venus, but she could be nothing to him. And he himself made merry over his romantic adventure, which Narcisse sought to arrange in a kind of antique sonnet: A beautiful bead-worker falling madly in love with a young prince, as fair as sunlight, who, touched by her misfortune, hands her a silver crown; then the beautiful bead-worker, quite overcome at finding him as charitable as handsome, dreaming of him incessantly, and following him everywhere, chained to his steps by a link of flame; and finally the beautiful bead-worker, who has refused the silver crown, so entreating the handsome prince with her soft, submissive eyes, that he at last deigns to grant her the alms of his heart. This pastime greatly amused Benedetta; but Celia, with her angelic face and the air of a little girl who ought to have been ignorant of everything, remained very grave and repeated sadly, "Dario, Dario, she loves you; you must not make her suffer."

Then the Contessina, in her turn, was moved to pity. "And those poor folks are not happy!" said she.

"Oh!" exclaimed the Prince, "it's misery beyond belief. On the day she took me to the Quartiere dei Prati* I was quite overcome; it was awful, astonishingly awful!"

* The district of the castle meadows—see /ante/ note.—Trans.

"But I remember that we promised to go to see the poor people," resumed Benedetta, "and we have done wrong in delaying our visit so long. For your studies, Monsieur l'Abbe Froment, you greatly desired to accompany us and see the poor of Rome—was that not so?"

As she spoke she raised her eyes to Pierre, who for a moment had been silent. He was much moved by her charitable thought, for he realised, by the faint quiver of her voice, that she desired to appear a docile pupil, progressing in affection for the lowly and the wretched. Moreover, his passion for his apostolate had at once returned to him. "Oh!" said he, "I shall not quit Rome without having seen those who suffer, those who lack work and bread. Therein lies the malady which affects every nation; salvation can only be attained by the healing of misery. When the roots of the tree cannot find sustenance the tree dies."

"Well," resumed the Contessina, "we will fix an appointment at once; you shall come with us to the Quartiere dei Prati—Dario will take us there."

At this the Prince, who had listened to the priest with an air of stupefaction, unable to understand the simile of the tree and its roots, began to protest distressfully, "No, no, cousin, take Monsieur l'Abbe for a stroll there if it amuses you. But I've been, and don't want to go back. Why, when I got home the last time I was so upset that I almost took to my bed. No, no; such abominations are too awful—it isn't possible."

At this moment a voice, bitter with displeasure, arose from the chimney corner. Donna Serafina was emerging from her long silence. "Dario is quite right! Send your alms, my dear, and I will gladly add mine. There are other places where you might take Monsieur l'Abbe, and which it would be far more useful for him to see. With that idea of yours you would send him away with a nice recollection of our city."

Roman pride rang out amidst the old lady's bad temper. Why, indeed, show one's sores to foreigners, whose visit is possibly prompted by hostile curiosity? One always ought to look beautiful; Rome should not be shown otherwise than in the garb of glory.

Narcisse, however, had taken possession of Pierre. "It's true, my dear Abbe," said he; "I forgot to

recommend that stroll to you. You really must visit the new district built over the castle meadows. It's typical, and sums up all the others. And you won't lose your time there, I'll warrant you, for nowhere can you learn more about the Rome of the present day. It's extraordinary, extraordinary!" Then, addressing Benedetta, he added, "Is it decided? Shall we say to-morrow morning? You'll find the Abbe and me over there, for I want to explain matters to him beforehand, in order that he may understand them. What do you say to ten o'clock?"

Before answering him the Contessina turned towards her aunt and respectfully opposed her views. "But Monsieur l'Abbe, aunt, has met enough beggars in our streets already, so he may well see everything. Besides, judging by his book, he won't see worse things than he has seen in Paris. As he says in one passage, hunger is the same all the world over." Then, with her sensible air, she gently laid siege to Dario. "You know, Dario," said she, "you would please me very much by taking me there. We can go in the carriage and join these gentlemen. It will be a very pleasant outing for us. It is such a long time since we went out together."

It was certainly that idea of going out with Dario, of having a pretext for a complete reconciliation with him, that enchanted her; he himself realised it, and, unable to escape, he tried to treat the matter as a joke. "Ah! cousin," he said, "it will be your fault; I shall have the nightmare for a week. An excursion like that spoils all the enjoyment of life for days and days."

The mere thought made him quiver with revolt. However, laughter again rang out around him, and, in spite of Donna Serafina's mute disapproval, the appointment was finally fixed for the following morning at ten o'clock. Celia as she went off expressed deep regret that she could not form one of the party; but, with the closed candour of a budding lily, she really took interest in Pierina alone. As she reached the ante-room she whispered in her friend's ear: "Take a good look at that beauty, my dear, so as to tell me whether she is so very beautiful—beautiful beyond compare."

When Pierre met Narcisse near the Castle of Sant' Angelo on the morrow, at nine o'clock, he was surprised to find him again languid and enraptured, plunged anew in artistic enthusiasm. At first not a word was said of the excursion. Narcisse related that he had risen at sunrise in order that he might spend an hour before Bernini's "Santa Teresa." It seemed that when he did not see that statue for a week he suffered as acutely as if he were parted from some cherished mistress. And his adoration varied with the time of day, according to the light in which he beheld the figure: in the morning, when the pale glow of dawn steeped it in whiteness, he worshipped it with quite a mystical transport of the soul, whilst in the afternoon, when the glow of the declining sun's oblique rays seemed to permeate the marble, his passion became as fiery red as the blood of martyrs. "Ah! my friend," said he with a weary air whilst his dreamy eyes faded to mauve, "you have no idea how delightful and perturbing her awakening was this morning—how languorously she opened her eyes, like a pure, candid virgin, emerging from the embrace of the Divinity. One could die of rapture at the sight!"

Then, growing calm again when he had taken a few steps, he resumed in the voice of a practical man who does not lose his balance in the affairs of life: "We'll walk slowly towards the castle-fields district—the buildings yonder; and on our way I'll tell you what I know of the things we shall see there. It was the maddest affair imaginable, one of those delirious frenzies of speculation which have a splendour of their own, just like the superb, monstrous masterpiece of a man of genius whose mind is unhinged. I was told of it all by some relatives of mine, who took part in the gambling, and, in point of fact, made a good deal of money by it."

Thereupon, with the clearness and precision of a financier, employing technical terms with perfect ease, he recounted the extraordinary adventure. That all Italy, on the morrow of the occupation of Rome, should have been delirious with enthusiasm at the thought of at last possessing the ancient and glorious city, the eternal capital to which the empire of the world had been promised, was but natural. It was, so to say, a legitimate explosion of the delight and the hopes of a young nation anxious to show its power. The question was to make Rome a modern capital worthy of a great kingdom, and before aught else there were sanitary requirements to be dealt with: the city needed to be cleansed of all the filth which disgraced it. One cannot nowadays imagine in what abominable putrescence the city of the popes, the *Roma sporca* which artists regret, was then steeped: the vast majority of the houses lacked even the most primitive arrangements, the public thoroughfares were used for all purposes, noble ruins served as store-places for sewage, the princely palaces were surrounded by filth, and the streets were perfect manure beds which fostered frequent epidemics. Thus vast municipal works were absolutely necessary, the question was one of health and life itself. And in much the same way it was only right to think of building houses for the newcomers, who would assuredly flock into the city. There had been a precedent at Berlin, whose population, after the establishment of the German empire, had suddenly increased by some hundreds of thousands. In the same way the population of Rome would certainly be doubled, tripled, quadrupled, for as the new centre of national life the city would necessarily attract all the *vis viva* of the provinces. And at this thought pride stepped in: the fallen government of the

Vatican must be shown what Italy was capable of achieving, what splendour she would bestow on the new and third Rome, which, by the magnificence of its thoroughfares and the multitude of its people, would far excel either the imperial or the papal city.

True, during the early years some prudence was observed; wisely enough, houses were only built in proportion as they were required. The population had doubled at one bound, rising from two to four hundred thousand souls, thanks to the arrival of the little world of employees and officials of the public services—all those who live on the State or hope to live on it, without mentioning the idlers and enjoyers of life whom a Court always carries in its train. However, this influx of newcomers was a first cause of intoxication, for every one imagined that the increase would continue, and, in fact, become more and more rapid. And so the city of the day before no longer seemed large enough; it was necessary to make immediate preparations for the morrow's need by enlarging Rome on all sides. Folks talked, too, of the Paris of the second empire, which had been so extended and transformed into a city of light and health. But unfortunately on the banks of the Tiber there was neither any preconcerted general plan nor any clear-seeing man, master of the situation, supported by powerful financial organisations. And the work, begun by pride, prompted by the ambition of surpassing the Rome of the Caesars and the Popes, the determination to make the eternal, predestined city the queen and centre of the world once more, was completed by speculation, one of those extraordinary gambling frenzies, those tempests which arise, rage, destroy, and carry everything away without premonitory warning or possibility of arresting their course. All at once it was rumoured that land bought at five francs the metre had been sold again for a hundred francs the metre; and thereupon the fever arose—the fever of a nation which is passionately fond of gambling. A flight of speculators descending from North Italy swooped down upon Rome, the noblest and easiest of preys. Those needy, famished mountaineers found spoils for every appetite in that voluptuous South where life is so benign, and the very delights of the climate helped to corrupt and hasten moral gangrene. At first, too; it was merely necessary to stoop; money was to be found by the shovelful among the rubbish of the first districts which were opened up. People who were clever enough to scent the course which the new thoroughfares would take and purchase buildings threatened with demolition increased their capital tenfold in a couple of years. And after that the contagion spread, infecting all classes—the princes, burgesses, petty proprietors, even the shop-keepers, bakers, grocers, and boot-makers; the delirium rising to such a pitch that a mere baker subsequently failed for forty-five millions.* Nothing, indeed, was left but rageful gambling, in which the stakes were millions, whilst the lands and the houses became mere fictions, mere pretexts for stock-exchange operations. And thus the old hereditary pride, which had dreamt of transforming Rome into the capital of the world, was heated to madness by the high fever of speculation—folks buying, and building, and selling without limit, without a pause, even as one might throw shares upon the market as fast and as long as presses can be found to print them.

* 1,800,000 pounds. See /ante/ note.—Trans.

No other city in course of evolution has ever furnished such a spectacle. Nowadays, when one strives to penetrate things one is confounded. The population had increased to five hundred thousand, and then seemingly remained stationary; nevertheless, new districts continued to sprout up more thickly than ever. Yet what folly it was not to wait for a further influx of inhabitants! Why continue piling up accommodation for thousands of families whose advent was uncertain? The only excuse lay in having beforehand propounded the proposition that the third Rome, the triumphant capital of Italy, could not count less than a million souls, and in regarding that proposition as indisputable fact. The people had not come, but they surely would come: no patriot could doubt it without being guilty of treason. And so houses were built and built without a pause, for the half-million citizens who were coming. There was no anxiety as to the date of their arrival; it was sufficient that they should be expected. Inside Rome the companies which had been formed in connection with the new thoroughfares passing through the old, demolished, pestiferous districts, certainly sold or let their house property, and thereby realised large profits. But, as the craze increased, other companies were established for the purpose of erecting yet more and more districts outside Rome—veritable little towns, of which there was no need whatever. Beyond the Porta San Giovanni and the Porta San Lorenzo, suburbs sprang up as by miracle. A town was sketched out over the vast estate of the Villa Ludovisi, from the Porta Pia to the Porta Salaria and even as far as Sant' Agnese. And then came an attempt to make quite a little city, with church, school, and market, arise all at once on the fields of the Castle of Sant' Angelo. And it was no question of small dwellings for labourers, modest flats for employees, and others of limited means; no, it was a question of colossal mansions three and four storeys high, displaying uniform and endless facades which made these new excentral quarters quite Babylonian, such districts, indeed, as only capitals endowed with intense life, like Paris and London, could contrive to populate. However, such were the monstrous products of pride and gambling; and what a page of history, what a bitter lesson now that Rome, financially ruined, is further disgraced by that hideous girdle of empty, and, for the most part, uncompleted carcasses, whose ruins already strew the grassy streets!

The fatal collapse, the disaster proved a frightful one. Narcisse explained its causes and recounted its phases so clearly that Pierre fully understood. Naturally enough, numerous financial companies had sprouted up: the Immobiliere, the Society d'Edilizia e Construzione, the Fondaria, the Tiberiana, and the Esquilino. Nearly all of them built, erected huge houses, entire streets of them, for purposes of sale; but they also gambled in land, selling plots at large profit to petty speculators, who also dreamt of making large profits amidst the continuous, fictitious rise brought about by the growing fever of agiotage. And the worst was that the petty speculators, the middle-class people, the inexperienced shop-keepers without capital, were crazy enough to build in their turn by borrowing of the banks or applying to the companies which had sold them the land for sufficient cash to enable them to complete their structures. As a general rule, to avoid the loss of everything, the companies were one day compelled to take back both land and buildings, incomplete though the latter might be, and from the congestion which resulted they were bound to perish. If the expected million of people had arrived to occupy the dwellings prepared for them the gains would have been fabulous, and in ten years Rome might have become one of the most flourishing capitals of the world. But the people did not come, and the dwellings remained empty. Moreover, the buildings erected by the companies were too large and costly for the average investor inclined to put his money into house property. Heredity had acted, the builders had planned things on too huge a scale, raising a series of magnificent piles whose purpose was to dwarf those of all other ages; but, as it happened, they were fated to remain lifeless and deserted, testifying with wondrous eloquence to the impotence of pride.

So there was no private capital that dared or could take the place of that of the companies. Elsewhere, in Paris for instance, new districts have been erected and embellishments have been carried out with the capital of the country—the money saved by dint of thrift. But in Rome all was built on the credit system, either by means of bills of exchange at ninety days, or—and this was chiefly the case—by borrowing money abroad. The huge sum sunk in these enterprises is estimated at a milliard, four-fifths of which was French money. The bankers did everything; the French ones lent to the Italian bankers at 3 1/2 or 4 per cent.; and the Italian bankers accommodated the speculators, the Roman builders, at 6, 7, and even 8 per cent. And thus the disaster was great indeed when France, learning of Italy's alliance with Germany, withdrew her 800,000,000 francs in less than two years. The Italian banks were drained of their specie, and the land and building companies, being likewise compelled to reimburse their loans, were compelled to apply to the banks of issue, those privileged to issue notes. At the same time they intimidated the Government, threatening to stop all work and throw 40,000 artisans and labourers starving on the pavement of Rome if it did not compel the banks of issue to lend them the five or six millions of paper which they needed. And this the Government at last did, appalled by the possibility of universal bankruptcy. Naturally, however, the five or six millions could not be paid back at maturity, as the newly built houses found neither purchasers nor tenants; and so the great fall began, and continued with a rush, heaping ruin upon ruin. The petty speculators fell on the builders, the builders on the land companies, the land companies on the banks of issue, and the latter on the public credit, ruining the nation. And that was how a mere municipal crisis became a frightful disaster: a whole milliard sunk to no purpose, Rome disfigured, littered with the ruins of the gaping and empty dwellings which had been prepared for the five or six hundred thousand inhabitants for whom the city yet waits in vain!

Moreover, in the breeze of glory which swept by, the state itself took a colossal view of things. It was a question of at once making Italy triumphant and perfect, of accomplishing in five and twenty years what other nations have required centuries to effect. So there was feverish activity and a prodigious outlay on canals, ports, roads, railway lines, and improvements in all the great cities. Directly after the alliance with Germany, moreover, the military and naval estimates began to devour millions to no purpose. And the ever growing financial requirements were simply met by the issue of paper, by a fresh loan each succeeding year. In Rome alone, too, the building of the Ministry of War cost ten millions, that of the Ministry of Finances fifteen, whilst a hundred was spent on the yet unfinished quays, and two hundred and fifty were sunk on works of defence around the city. And all this was a flare of the old hereditary pride, springing from that soil whose sap can only blossom in extravagant projects; the determination to dazzle and conquer the world which comes as soon as one has climbed to the Capitol, even though one's feet rest amidst the accumulated dust of all the forms of human power which have there crumbled one above the other.

"And, my dear friend," continued Narcisse, "if I could go into all the stories that are current, that are whispered here and there, you would be stupefied at the insanity which overcame the whole city amidst the terrible fever to which the gambling passion gave rise. Folks of small account, and fools and ignorant people were not the only ones to be ruined; nearly all the Roman nobles lost their ancient fortunes, their gold and their palaces and their galleries of masterpieces, which they owed to the munificence of the popes. The colossal wealth which it had taken centuries of nepotism to pile up in the hands of a few melted away like wax, in less than ten years, in the levelling fire of modern speculation." Then, forgetting that he was speaking to a priest, he went on to relate one of the whispered stories to

which he had alluded: "There's our good friend Dario, Prince Boccanera, the last of the name, reduced to live on the crumbs which fall to him from his uncle the Cardinal, who has little beyond his stipend left him. Well, Dario would be a rich man had it not been for that extraordinary affair of the Villa Montefiori. You have heard of it, no doubt; how Prince Onofrio, Dario's father, speculated, sold the villa grounds for ten millions, then bought them back and built on them, and how, at last, not only the ten millions were lost, but also all that remained of the once colossal fortune of the Boccaneras. What you haven't been told, however, is the secret part which Count Prada—our Contessina's husband—played in the affair. He was the lover of Princess Boccanera, the beautiful Flavia Montefiori, who had brought the villa as dowry to the old Prince. She was a very fine woman, much younger than her husband, and it is positively said that it was through her that Prada mastered the Prince—for she held her old dotting husband at arm's length whenever he hesitated to give a signature or go farther into the affair of which he scented the danger. And in all this Prada gained the millions which he now spends, while as for the beautiful Flavia, you are aware, no doubt, that she saved a little fortune from the wreck and bought herself a second and much younger husband, whom she turned into a Marquis Montefiori. In the whole affair the only victim is our good friend Dario, who is absolutely ruined, and wishes to marry his cousin, who is as poor as himself. It's true that she's determined to have him, and that it's impossible for him not to reciprocate her love. But for that he would have already married some American girl with a dowry of millions, like so many of the ruined princes, on the verge of starvation, have done; that is, unless the Cardinal and Donna Serafina had opposed such a match, which would not have been surprising, proud and stubborn as they are, anxious to preserve the purity of their old Roman blood. However, let us hope that Dario and the exquisite Benedetta will some day be happy together."

Narcisse paused; but, after taking a few steps in silence, he added in a lower tone: "I've a relative who picked up nearly three millions in that Villa Montefiori affair. Ah! I regret that I wasn't here in those heroic days of speculation. It must have been very amusing; and what strokes there were for a man of self-possession to make!"

However, all at once, as he raised his head, he saw before him the Quartiere dei Prati—the new district of the castle fields; and his face thereupon changed: he again became an artist, indignant with the modern abominations with which old Rome had been disfigured. His eyes paled, and a curl of his lips expressed the bitter disdain of a dreamer whose passion for the vanished centuries was sorely hurt: "Look, look at it all!" he exclaimed. "To think of it, in the city of Augustus, the city of Leo X, the city of eternal power and eternal beauty!"

Pierre himself was thunderstruck. The meadows of the Castle of Sant' Angelo, dotted with a few poplar trees, had here formerly stretched alongside the Tiber as far as the first slopes of Monte Mario, thus supplying, to the satisfaction of artists, a foreground or greenery to the Borgo and the dome of St. Peter's. But now, amidst the white, leprous, overturned plain, there stood a town of huge, massive houses, cubes of stone-work, invariably the same, with broad streets intersecting one another at right angles. From end to end similar facades appeared, suggesting series of convents, barracks, or hospitals. Extraordinary and painful was the impression produced by this town so suddenly immobilised whilst in course of erection. It was as if on some accursed morning a wicked magician had with one touch of his wand stopped the works and emptied the noisy stone-yards, leaving the buildings in mournful abandonment. Here on one side the soil had been banked up; there deep pits dug for foundations had remained gaping, overrun with weeds. There were houses whose halls scarcely rose above the level of the soil; others which had been raised to a second or third floor; others, again, which had been carried as high as was intended, and even roofed in, suggesting skeletons or empty cages. Then there were houses finished excepting that their walls had not been plastered, others which had been left without window frames, shutters, or doors; others, again, which had their doors and shutters, but were nailed up like coffins with not a soul inside them; and yet others which were partly, and in a few cases fully, inhabited—animated by the most unexpected of populations. And no words could describe the fearful mournfulness of that City of the Sleeping Beauty, hushed into mortal slumber before it had even lived, lying annihilated beneath the heavy sun pending an awakening which, likely enough, would never come.

Following his companion, Pierre walked along the broad, deserted streets, where all was still as in a cemetery. Not a vehicle nor a pedestrian passed by. Some streets had no foot ways; weeds were covering the unpaved roads, turning them once more into fields; and yet there were temporary gas lamps, mere leaden pipes bound to poles, which had been there for years. To avoid payment of the door and window tax, the house owners had generally closed all apertures with planks; while some houses, of which little had been built, were surrounded by high palings for fear lest their cellars should become the dens of all the bandits of the district. But the most painful sight of all was that of the young ruins, the proud, lofty structures, which, although unfinished, were already cracking on all sides, and required the support of an intricate arrangement of timbers to prevent them from falling in dust upon the ground. A pang came to one's heart as though one was in a city which some scourge had

depopulated—pestilence, war, or bombardment, of which these gaping carcasses seem to retain the mark. Then at the thought that this was abortment, not death—that destruction would complete its work before the dreamt-of, vainly awaited denizens would bring life to the still-born houses, one's melancholy deepened to hopeless discouragement. And at each corner, moreover, there was the frightful irony of the magnificent marble slabs which bore the names of the streets, illustrious historical names, Gracchus, Scipio, Pliny, Pompey, Julius Caesar, blazing forth on those unfinished, crumbling walls like a buffet dealt by the Past to modern incompetency.

Then Pierre was once more struck by this truth—that whosoever possesses Rome is consumed by the building frenzy, the passion for marble, the boastful desire to build and leave his monument of glory to future generations. After the Caesars and the Popes had come the Italian Government, which was no sooner master of the city than it wished to reconstruct it, make it more splendid, more huge than it had ever been before. It was the fatal suggestion of the soil itself—the blood of Augustus rushing to the brain of these last-comers and urging them to a mad desire to make the third Rome the queen of the earth. Thence had come all the vast schemes such as the cyclopean quays and the mere ministries struggling to outvie the Colosseum; and thence had come all the new districts of gigantic houses which had sprouted like towns around the ancient city. It was not only on the castle fields, but at the Porta San Giovanni, the Porta San Lorenzo, the Villa Ludovisi, and on the heights of the Viminal and the Esquiline that unfinished, empty districts were already crumbling amidst the weeds of their deserted streets. After two thousand years of prodigious fertility the soil really seemed to be exhausted. Even as in very old fruit gardens newly planted plum and cherry trees wither and die, so the new walls, no doubt, found no life in that old dust of Rome, impoverished by the immemorial growth of so many temples, circuses, arches, basilicas, and churches. And thus the modern houses, which men had sought to render fruitful, the useless, over-huge houses, swollen with hereditary ambition, had been unable to attain maturity, and remained there sterile like dry bushes on a plot of land exhausted by over-cultivation. And the frightful sadness that one felt arose from the fact that so creative and great a past had culminated in such present-day impotency—Rome, who had covered the world with indestructible monuments, now so reduced that she could only generate ruins.

"Oh, they'll be finished some day!" said Pierre.

Narcisse gazed at him in astonishment: "For whom?"

That was the cruel question! Only by dint of patriotic enthusiasm on the morrow of the conquest had one been able to indulge in the hope of a mighty influx of population, and now singular blindness was needed for the belief that such an influx would ever take place. The past experiments seemed decisive; moreover, there was no reason why the population should double: Rome offered neither the attraction of pleasure nor that of gain to be amassed in commerce and industry for those she had not, nor of intensity of social and intellectual life, since of this she seemed no longer capable. In any case, years and years would be requisite. And, meantime, how could one people those houses which were finished; and for whom was one to finish those which had remained mere skeletons, falling to pieces under sun and rain? Must they all remain there indefinitely, some gaunt and open to every blast and others closed and silent like tombs, in the wretched hideousness of their inutility and abandonment? What a terrible proof of error they offered under the radiant sky! The new masters of Rome had made a bad start, and even if they now knew what they ought to have done would they have the courage to undo what they had done? Since the milliard sunk there seemed to be definitely lost and wasted, one actually hoped for the advent of a Nero, endowed with mighty, sovereign will, who would take torch and pick and burn and raze everything in the avenging name of reason and beauty.

"Ah!" resumed Narcisse, "here are the Contessina and the Prince."

Benedetta had told the coachman to pull up in one of the open spaces intersecting the deserted streets, and now along the broad, quiet, grassy road—well fitted for a lovers' stroll—she was approaching on Dario's arm, both of them delighted with their outing, and no longer thinking of the sad things which they had come to see. "What a nice day it is!" the Contessina gaily exclaimed as she reached Pierre and Narcisse. "How pleasant the sunshine is! It's quite a treat to be able to walk about a little as if one were in the country!"

Dario was the first to cease smiling at the blue sky, all the delight of his stroll with his cousin on his arm suddenly departing. "My dear," said he, "we must go to see those people, since you are bent on it, though it will certainly spoil our day. But first I must take my bearings. I'm not particularly clever, you know, in finding my way in places where I don't care to go. Besides, this district is idiotic with all its dead streets and dead houses, and never a face or a shop to serve as a reminder. Still I think the place is over yonder. Follow me; at all events, we shall see."

The four friends then wended their way towards the central part of the district, the part facing the Tiber, where a small nucleus of a population had collected. The landlords turned the few completed

houses to the best advantage they could, letting the rooms at very low rentals, and waiting patiently enough for payment. Some needy employees, some poverty-stricken families—had thus installed themselves there, and in the long run contrived to pay a trifle for their accommodation. In consequence, however, of the demolition of the ancient Ghetto and the opening of the new streets by which air had been let into the Trastevere district, perfect hordes of tatterdemalions, famished and homeless, and almost without garments, had swooped upon the unfinished houses, filling them with wretchedness and vermin; and it had been necessary to tolerate this lawless occupation lest all the frightful misery should remain displayed in the public thoroughfares. And so it was to those frightful tenants that had fallen the huge four and five storeyed palaces, entered by monumental doorways flanked by lofty statues and having carved balconies upheld by caryatides all along their fronts. Each family had made its choice, often closing the frameless windows with boards and the gaping doorways with rags, and occupying now an entire princely flat and now a few small rooms, according to its taste. Horrid-looking linen hung drying from the carved balconies, foul stains already degraded the white walls, and from the magnificent porches, intended for sumptuous equipages, there poured a stream of filth which rotted in stagnant pools in the roads, where there was neither pavement nor footpath.

On two occasions already Dario had caused his companions to retrace their steps. He was losing his way and becoming more and more gloomy. "I ought to have taken to the left," said he, "but how is one to know amidst such a set as that!"

Parties of verminous children were now to be seen rolling in the dust; they were wondrously dirty, almost naked, with black skins and tangled locks as coarse as horsehair. There were also women in sordid skirts and with their loose jackets unhooked. Many stood talking together in yelping voices, whilst others, seated on old chairs with their hands on their knees, remained like that idle for hours. Not many men were met; but a few lay on the scorched grass, sleeping heavily in the sunlight. However, the stench was becoming unbearable—a stench of misery as when the human animal eschews all cleanliness to wallow in filth. And matters were made worse by the smell from a small, improvised market—the emanations of the rotting fruit, cooked and sour vegetables, and stale fried fish which a few poor women had set out on the ground amidst a throng of famished, covetous children.

"Ah! well, my dear, I really don't know where it is," all at once exclaimed the Prince, addressing his cousin. "Be reasonable; we've surely seen enough; let's go back to the carriage."

He was really suffering, and, as Benedetta had said, he did not know how to suffer. It seemed to him monstrous that one should sadden one's life by such an excursion as this. Life ought to be buoyant and benign under the clear sky, brightened by pleasant sights, by dance and song. And he, with his naive egotism, had a positive horror of ugliness, poverty, and suffering, the sight of which caused him both mental and physical pain.

Benedetta shuddered even as he did, but in presence of Pierre she desired to be brave. Glancing at him, and seeing how deeply interested and compassionate he looked, she desired to persevere in her effort to sympathise with the humble and the wretched. "No, no, Dario, we must stay. These gentlemen wish to see everything—is it not so?"

"Oh, the Rome of to-day is here," exclaimed Pierre; "this tells one more about it than all the promenades among the ruins and the monuments."

"You exaggerate, my dear Abbe," declared Narcisse. "Still, I will admit that it is very interesting. Some of the old women are particularly expressive."

At this moment Benedetta, seeing a superbly beautiful girl in front of her, could not restrain a cry of enraptured admiration: "/O che bellezza!"

And then Dario, having recognised the girl, exclaimed with the same delight: "Why, it's La Pierina; she'll show us the way."

The girl had been following the party for a moment already without daring to approach. Her eyes, glittering with the joy of a loving slave, had at first darted towards the Prince, and then had hastily scrutinised the Contessina—not, however, with any show of jealous anger, but with an expression of affectionate submission and resigned happiness at seeing that she also was very beautiful. And the girl fully answered to the Prince's description of her—tall, sturdy, with the bust of a goddess, a real antique, a Juno of twenty, her chin somewhat prominent, her mouth and nose perfect in contour, her eyes large and full like a heifer's, and her whole face quite dazzling—gilded, so to say, by a sunflash—beneath her casque of heavy jet-black hair.

"So you will show us the way?" said Benedetta, familiar and smiling, already consoled for all the surrounding ugliness by the thought that there should be such beautiful creatures in the world.

"Oh yes, signora, yes, at once!" And thereupon Pierina ran off before them, her feet in shoes which at any rate had no holes, whilst the old brown woollen dress which she wore appeared to have been recently washed and mended. One seemed to divine in her a certain coquettish care, a desire for cleanliness, which none of the others displayed; unless, indeed, it were simply that her great beauty lent radiance to her humble garments and made her appear a goddess.

"/Che bellezza! the bellezza!/" the Contessina repeated without wearying.
"That girl, Dario /mio/, is a real feast for the eyes!"

"I knew she would please you," he quietly replied, flattered at having discovered such a beauty, and no longer talking of departure, since he could at last rest his eyes on something pleasant.

Behind them came Pierre, likewise full of admiration, whilst Narcisse spoke to him of the scrupulosity of his own tastes, which were for the rare and the subtle. "She's beautiful, no doubt," said he; "but at bottom nothing can be more gross than the Roman style of beauty; there's no soul, none of the infinite in it. These girls simply have blood under their skins without ever a glimpse of heaven."

Meantime Pierina had stopped, and with a wave of the hand directed attention to her mother, who sat on a broken box beside the lofty doorway of an unfinished mansion. She also must have once been very beautiful, but at forty she was already a wreck, with dim eyes, drawn mouth, black teeth, broadly wrinkled countenance, and huge fallen bosom. And she was also fearfully dirty, her grey wavy hair dishevelled and her skirt and jacket soiled and slit, revealing glimpses of grimy flesh. On her knees she held a sleeping infant, her last-born, at whom she gazed like one overwhelmed and courageless, like a beast of burden resigned to her fate.

"/Bene, bene,/" said she, raising her head, "it's the gentleman who came to give me a crown because he saw you crying. And he's come back to see us with some friends. Well, well, there are some good hearts in the world after all."

Then she related their story, but in a spiritless way, without seeking to move her visitors. She was called Giacinta, it appeared, and had married a mason, one Tomaso Gozzo, by whom she had had seven children, Pierina, then Tito, a big fellow of eighteen, then four more girls, each at an interval of two years, and finally the infant, a boy, whom she now had on her lap. They had long lived in the Trastevere district, in an old house which had lately been pulled down; and their existence seemed to have then been shattered, for since they had taken refuge in the Quartiere dei Prati the crisis in the building trade had reduced Tomaso and Tito to absolute idleness, and the bead factory where Pierina had earned as much as tenpence a day—just enough to prevent them from dying of hunger—had closed its doors. At present not one of them had any work; they lived purely by chance.

"If you like to go up," the woman added, "you'll find Tomaso there with his brother Ambrogio, whom we've taken to live with us. They'll know better than I what to say to you. Tomaso is resting; but what else can he do? It's like Tito—he's dozing over there."

So saying she pointed towards the dry grass amidst which lay a tall young fellow with a pronounced nose, hard mouth, and eyes as admirable as Pierina's. He had raised his head to glance suspiciously at the visitors, a fierce frown gathering on his forehead when he remarked how rapturously his sister contemplated the Prince. Then he let his head fall again, but kept his eyes open, watching the pair stealthily.

"Take the lady and gentlemen upstairs, Pierina, since they would like to see the place," said the mother.

Other women had now drawn near, shuffling along with bare feet in old shoes; bands of children, too, were swarming around; little girls but half clad, amongst whom, no doubt, were Giacinta's four. However, with their black eyes under their tangled mops they were all so much alike that only their mothers could identify them. And the whole resembled a teeming camp of misery pitched on that spot of majestic disaster, that street of palaces, unfinished yet already in ruins.

With a soft, loving smile, Benedetta turned to her cousin. "Don't you come up," she gently said; "I don't desire your death, Dario /mio/. It was very good of you to come so far. Wait for me here in the pleasant sunshine: Monsieur l'Abbe and Monsieur Habert will go up with me."

Dario began to laugh, and willingly acquiesced. Then lighting a cigarette, he walked slowly up and down, well pleased with the mildness of the atmosphere.

La Pierina had already darted into the spacious porch whose lofty, vaulted ceiling was adorned with coffered displaying a rosaceous pattern. However, a veritable manure heap covered such marble slabs as had already been laid in the vestibule, whilst the steps of the monumental stone staircase with

sculptured balustrade were already cracked and so grimy that they seemed almost black. On all sides appeared the greasy stains of hands; the walls, whilst awaiting the painter and gilder, had been smeared with repulsive filth.

On reaching the spacious first-floor landing Pierina paused, and contented herself with calling through a gaping portal which lacked both door and framework: "Father, here's a lady and two gentlemen to see you." Then to the Contessina she added: "It's the third room at the end." And forthwith she herself rapidly descended the stairs, hastening back to her passion.

Benedetta and her companions passed through two large rooms, bossy with plaster under foot and having frameless windows wide open upon space; and at last they reached a third room, where the whole Gozzo family had installed itself with the remnants it used as furniture. On the floor, where the bare iron girders showed, no boards having been laid down, were five or six leprous-looking palliasses. A long table, which was still strong, occupied the centre of the room, and here and there were a few old, damaged, straw-seated chairs mended with bits of rope. The great business had been to close two of the three windows with boards, whilst the third one and the door were screened with some old mattress ticking studded with stains and holes.

Tomaso's face expressed the surprise of a man who is unaccustomed to visits of charity. Seated at the table, with his elbows resting on it and his chin supported by his hands, he was taking repose, as his wife Giacinta had said. He was a sturdy fellow of five and forty, bearded and long-haired; and, in spite of all his misery and idleness, his large face had remained as serene as that of a Roman senator. However, the sight of the two foreigners—for such he at once judged Pierre and Narcisse to be, made him rise to his feet with sudden distrust. But he smiled on recognising Benedetta, and as she began to speak of Dario, and to explain the charitable purpose of their visit, he interrupted her: "Yes, yes, I know, Contessina. Oh! I well know who you are, for in my father's time I once walled up a window at the Palazzo Boccanera."

Then he complaisantly allowed himself to be questioned, telling Pierre, who was surprised, that although they were certainly not happy they would have found life tolerable had they been able to work two days a week. And one could divine that he was, at heart, fairly well content to go on short commons, provided that he could live as he listed without fatigue. His narrative and his manner suggested the familiar locksmith who, on being summoned by a traveller to open his trunk, the key of which was lost, sent word that he could not possibly disturb himself during the hour of the siesta. In short, there was no rent to pay, as there were plenty of empty mansions open to the poor, and a few coppers would have sufficed for food, easily contented and sober as one was.

"But oh, sir," Tomaso continued, "things were ever so much better under the Pope. My father, a mason like myself, worked at the Vatican all his life, and even now, when I myself get a job or two, it's always there. We were spoilt, you see, by those ten years of busy work, when we never left our ladders and earned as much as we pleased. Of course, we fed ourselves better, and bought ourselves clothes, and took such pleasure as we cared for; so that it's all the harder nowadays to have to stint ourselves. But if you'd only come to see us in the Pope's time! No taxes, everything to be had for nothing, so to say—why, one merely had to let oneself live."

At this moment a growl arose from one of the palliasses lying in the shade of the boarded windows, and the mason, in his slow, quiet way, resumed: "It's my brother Ambrogio, who isn't of my opinion."

"He was with the Republicans in '49, when he was fourteen. But it doesn't matter; we took him with us when we heard that he was dying of hunger and sickness in a cellar."

The visitors could not help quivering with pity. Ambrogio was the elder by some fifteen years; and now, though scarcely sixty, he was already a ruin, consumed by fever, his legs so wasted that he spent his days on his palliasse without ever going out. Shorter and slighter, but more turbulent than his brother, he had been a carpenter by trade. And, despite his physical decay, he retained an extraordinary head—the head of an apostle and martyr, at once noble and tragic in its expression, and encompassed by bristling snowy hair and beard.

"The Pope," he growled; "I've never spoken badly of the Pope. Yet it's his fault if tyranny continues. He alone in '49 could have given us the Republic, and then we shouldn't have been as we are now."

Ambrogio had known Mazzini, whose vague religiosity remained in him—the dream of a Republican pope at last establishing the reign of liberty and fraternity. But later on his passion for Garibaldi had disturbed these views, and led him to regard the papacy as worthless, incapable of achieving human freedom. And so, between the dream of his youth and the stern experience of his life, he now hardly knew in which direction the truth lay. Moreover, he had never acted save under the impulse of violent emotion, but contented himself with fine words—vague, indeterminate wishes.

"Brother Ambrogio," replied Tomaso, all tranquillity, "the Pope is the Pope, and wisdom lies in putting oneself on his side, because he will always be the Pope—that is to say, the stronger. For my part, if we had to vote to-morrow I'd vote for him."

Calmed by the shrewd prudence characteristic of his race, the old carpenter made no haste to reply. At last he said, "Well, as for me, brother Tomaso, I should vote against him—always against him. And you know very well that we should have the majority. The Pope-king indeed! That's all over. The very Borgo would revolt. Still, I won't say that we oughtn't to come to an understanding with him, so that everybody's religion may be respected."

Pierre listened, deeply interested, and at last ventured to ask: "Are there many socialists among the Roman working classes?"

This time the answer came after a yet longer pause. "Socialists? Yes, there are some, no doubt, but much fewer than in other places. All those things are novelties which impatient fellows go in for without understanding much about them. We old men, we were for liberty; we don't believe in fire and massacre."

Then, fearing to say too much in presence of that lady and those gentlemen, Ambrogio began to moan on his pallet, whilst the Contessina, somewhat upset by the smell of the place, took her departure, after telling the young priest that it would be best for them to leave their alms with the wife downstairs. Meantime Tomaso resumed his seat at the table, again letting his chin rest on his hands as he nodded to his visitors, no more impressed by their departure than he had been by their arrival: "To the pleasure of seeing you again, and am happy to have been able to oblige you."

On the threshold, however, Narcisse's enthusiasm burst forth; he turned to cast a final admiring glance at old Ambrogio's head, "a perfect masterpiece," which he continued praising whilst he descended the stairs.

Down below Giacinta was still sitting on the broken box with her infant across her lap, and a few steps away Pierina stood in front of Dario, watching him with an enchanted air whilst he finished his cigarette. Tito, lying low in the grass like an animal on the watch for prey, did not for a moment cease to gaze at them.

"Ah, signora!" resumed the woman, in her resigned, doleful voice, "the place is hardly inhabitable, as you must have seen. The only good thing is that one gets plenty of room. But there are draughts enough to kill me, and I'm always so afraid of the children falling down some of the holes."

Thereupon she related a story of a woman who had lost her life through mistaking a window for a door one evening and falling headlong into the street. Then, too, a little girl had broken both arms by tumbling from a staircase which had no banisters. And you could die there without anybody knowing how bad you were and coming to help you. Only the previous day the corpse of an old man had been found lying on the plaster in a lonely room. Starvation must have killed him quite a week previously, yet he would still have been stretched there if the odour of his remains had not attracted the attention of neighbours.

"If one only had something to eat things wouldn't be so bad!" continued Giacinta. "But it's dreadful when there's a baby to suckle and one gets no food, for after a while one has no milk. This little fellow wants his titty and gets angry with me because I can't give him any. But it isn't my fault. He has sucked me till the blood came, and all I can do is to cry."

As she spoke tears welled into her poor dim eyes. But all at once she flew into a tantrum with Tito, who was still wallowing in the grass like an animal instead of rising by way of civility towards those fine people, who would surely leave her some alms. "Eh! Tito, you lazy fellow, can't you get up when people come to see you?" she called.

After some pretence of not hearing, the young fellow at last rose with an air of great ill-humour; and Pierre, feeling interested in him, tried to draw him out as he had done with the father and uncle upstairs. But Tito only returned curt answers, as if both bored and suspicious. Since there was no work to be had, said he, the only thing was to sleep. It was of no use to get angry; that wouldn't alter matters. So the best was to live as one could without increasing one's worry. As for socialists—well, yes, perhaps there were a few, but he didn't know any. And his weary, indifferent manner made it quite clear that, if his father was for the Pope and his uncle for the Republic, he himself was for nothing at all. In this Pierre divined the end of a nation, or rather the slumber of a nation in which democracy has not yet awakened. However, as the priest continued, asking Tito his age, what school he had attended, and in what district he had been born, the young man suddenly cut the questions short by pointing with one finger to his breast and saying gravely, "Io son' Romano di Roma/."

And, indeed, did not that answer everything? "I am a Roman of Rome." Pierre smiled sadly and spoke no further. Never had he more fully realised the pride of that race, the long-descending inheritance of glory which was so heavy to bear. The sovereign vanity of the Caesars lived anew in that degenerate young fellow who was scarcely able to read and write. Starveling though he was, he knew his city, and could instinctively have recounted the grand pages of its history. The names of the great emperors and great popes were familiar to him. And why should men toil and moil when they had been the masters of the world? Why not live nobly and idly in the most beautiful of cities, under the most beautiful of skies? "/Io son' Romano di Roma/!"

Benedetta had slipped her alms into the mother's hand, and Pierre and Narcisse were following her example when Dario, who had already done so, thought of Pierina. He did not like to offer her money, but a pretty, fanciful idea occurred to him. Lightly touching his lips with his finger-tips, he said, with a faint laugh, "For beauty!"

There was something really pretty and pleasing in the kiss thus wafted with a slightly mocking laugh by that familiar, good-natured young Prince who, as in some love story of the olden time, was touched by the beautiful bead-worker's mute adoration. Pierina flushed with pleasure, and, losing her head, darted upon Dario's hand and pressed her warm lips to it with unthinking impulsiveness, in which there was as much divine gratitude as tender passion. But Tito's eyes flashed with anger at the sight, and, brutally seizing his sister by the skirt, he threw her back, growling between his teeth, "None of that, you know, or I'll kill you, and him too!"

It was high time for the visitors to depart, for other women, scenting the presence of money, were now coming forward with outstretched hands, or despatching tearful children in their stead. The whole wretched, abandoned district was in a flutter, a distressful wail ascended from those lifeless streets with high resounding names. But what was to be done? One could not give to all. So the only course lay in flight—amidst deep sadness as one realised how powerless was charity in presence of such appalling want.

When Benedetta and Dario had reached their carriage they hastened to take their seats and nestle side by side, glad to escape from all such horrors. Still the Contessina was well pleased with her bravery in the presence of Pierre, whose hand she pressed with the emotion of a pupil touched by the master's lesson, after Narcisse had told her that he meant to take the young priest to lunch at the little restaurant on the Piazza of St. Peter's whence one obtained such an interesting view of the Vatican.

"Try some of the light white wine of Genzano," said Dario, who had become quite gay again. "There's nothing better to drive away the blues."

However, Pierre's curiosity was insatiable, and on the way he again questioned Narcisse about the people of modern Rome, their life, habits, and manners. There was little or no education, he learnt; no large manufactures and no export trade existed. The men carried on the few trades that were current, all consumption being virtually limited to the city itself. Among the women there were bead-workers and embroiderers; and the manufacture of religious articles, such as medals and chaplets, and of certain popular jewellery had always occupied a fair number of hands. But after marriage the women, invariably burdened with numerous offspring, attempted little beyond household work. Briefly, the population took life as it came, working just sufficiently to secure food, contenting itself with vegetables, pastes, and scraggy mutton, without thought of rebellion or ambition. The only vices were gambling and a partiality for the red and white wines of the Roman province—wines which excited to quarrel and murder, and on the evenings of feast days, when the taverns emptied, strewed the streets with groaning men, slashed and stabbed with knives. The girls, however, but seldom went wrong; one could count those who allowed themselves to be seduced; and this arose from the great union prevailing in each family, every member of which bowed submissively to the father's absolute authority. Moreover, the brothers watched over their sisters even as Tito did over Pierina, guarding them fiercely for the sake of the family honour. And amidst all this there was no real religion, but simply a childish idolatry, all hearts going forth to Madonna and the Saints, who alone were entreated and regarded as having being: for it never occurred to anybody to think of God.

Thus the stagnation of the lower orders could easily be understood. Behind them were the many centuries during which idleness had been encouraged, vanity flattered, and nerveless life willingly accepted. When they were neither masons, nor carpenters, nor bakers, they were servants serving the priests, and more or less directly in the pay of the Vatican. Thence sprang the two antagonistic parties, on the one hand the more numerous party composed of the old Carbonari, Mazzinians, and Garibaldians, the /elite/ of the Trastevere; and on the other the "clients" of the Vatican, all who lived on or by the Church and regretted the Pope-King. But, after all, the antagonism was confined to opinions; there was no thought of making an effort or incurring a risk. For that, some sudden flare of passion, strong enough to overcome the sturdy calmness of the race, would have been needed. But what would

have been the use of it? The wretchedness had lasted for so many centuries, the sky was so blue, the siesta preferable to aught else during the hot hours! And only one thing seemed positive—that the majority was certainly in favour of Rome remaining the capital of Italy. Indeed, rebellion had almost broken out in the Leonine City when the cession of the latter to the Holy See was rumoured. As for the increase of want and poverty, this was largely due to the circumstance that the Roman workman had really gained nothing by the many works carried on in his city during fifteen years. First of all, over 40,000 provincials, mostly from the North, more spirited and resistant than himself, and working at cheaper rates, had invaded Rome; and when he, the Roman, had secured his share of the labour, he had lived in better style, without thought of economy; so that after the crisis, when the 40,000 men from the provinces were sent home again, he had found himself once more in a dead city where trade was always slack. And thus he had relapsed into his antique indolence, at heart well pleased at no longer being hustled by press of work, and again accommodating himself as best he could to his old mistress, Want, empty in pocket yet always a /grand seigneur/.

However, Pierre was struck by the great difference between the want and wretchedness of Rome and Paris. In Rome the destitution was certainly more complete, the food more loathsome, the dirt more repulsive. Yet at the same time the Roman poor retained more ease of manner and more real gaiety. The young priest thought of the fireless, breadless poor of Paris, shivering in their hovels at winter time; and suddenly he understood. The destitution of Rome did not know cold. What a sweet and eternal consolation; a sun for ever bright, a sky for ever blue and benign out of charity to the wretched! And what mattered the vileness of the dwelling if one could sleep under the sky, fanned by the warm breeze! What mattered even hunger if the family could await the windfall of chance in sunlit streets or on the scorched grass! The climate induced sobriety; there was no need of alcohol or red meat to enable one to face treacherous fogs. Blissful idleness smiled on the golden evenings, poverty became like the enjoyment of liberty in that delightful atmosphere where the happiness of living seemed to be all sufficient. Narcisse told Pierre that at Naples, in the narrow odoriferous streets of the port and Santa Lucia districts, the people spent virtually their whole lives out-of-doors, gay, childish, and ignorant, seeking nothing beyond the few pence that were needed to buy food. And it was certainly the climate which fostered the prolonged infancy of the nation, which explained why such a democracy did not awaken to social ambition and consciousness of itself. No doubt the poor of Naples and Rome suffered from want; but they did not know the rancour which cruel winter implants in men's hearts, the dark rancour which one feels on shivering with cold while rich people are warming themselves before blazing fires. They did not know the infuriated reveries in snow-swept hovels, when the guttering dip burns low, the passionate need which then comes upon one to wreak justice, to revolt, as from a sense of duty, in order that one may save wife and children from consumption, in order that they also may have a warm nest where life shall be a possibility! Ah! the want that shivers with the bitter cold—therein lies the excess of social injustice, the most terrible of schools, where the poor learn to realise their sufferings, where they are roused to indignation, and swear to make those sufferings cease, even if in doing so they annihilate all olden society!

And in that same clemency of the southern heavens Pierre also found an explanation of the life of St. Francis,* that divine mendicant of love who roamed the high roads extolling the charms of poverty. Doubtless he was an unconscious revolutionary, protesting against the overflowing luxury of the Roman court by his return to the love of the humble, the simplicity of the primitive Church. But such a revival of innocence and sobriety would never have been possible in a northern land. The enchantment of Nature, the frugality of a people whom the sunlight nourished, the benignity of mendicancy on roads for ever warm, were needed to effect it. And yet how was it possible that a St. Francis, glowing with brotherly love, could have appeared in a land which nowadays so seldom practises charity, which treats the lowly so harshly and contemptuously, and cannot even bestow alms on its own Pope? Is it because ancient pride ends by hardening all hearts, or because the experience of very old races leads finally to egotism, that one now beholds Italy seemingly benumbed amidst dogmatic and pompous Catholicism, whilst the return to the ideals of the Gospel, the passionate interest in the poor and the suffering comes from the woeful plains of the North, from the nations whose sunlight is so limited? Yes, doubtless all that has much to do with the change, and the success of St. Francis was in particular due to the circumstance that, after so gaily espousing his lady, Poverty, he was able to lead her, bare-footed and scarcely clad, during endless and delightful spring-tides, among communities whom an ardent need of love and compassion then consumed.

* St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the famous order of mendicant friars.—Trans.

While conversing, Pierre and Narcisse had reached the Piazza of St. Peter's, and they sat down at one of the little tables skirting the pavement outside the restaurant where they had lunched once before. The linen was none too clean, but the view was splendid. The Basilica rose up in front of them, and the Vatican on the right, above the majestic curve of the colonnade. Just as the waiter was bringing the /hors-d'oeuvre/, some /finocchio/* and anchovies, the young priest, who had fixed his eyes on the

Vatican, raised an exclamation to attract Narcisse's attention: "Look, my friend, at that window, which I am told is the Holy Father's. Can't you distinguish a pale figure standing there, quite motionless?"

* Fennel-root, eaten raw, a favourite "appetiser" in Rome during the spring and autumn.—Trans.

The young man began to laugh. "Oh! well," said he, "it must be the Holy Father in person. You are so anxious to see him that your very anxiety conjures him into your presence."

"But I assure you," repeated Pierre, "that he is over there behind the window-pane. There is a white figure looking this way."

Narcisse, who was very hungry, began to eat whilst still indulging in banter. All at once, however, he exclaimed: "Well, my dear Abbe, as the Pope is looking at us, this is the moment to speak of him. I promised to tell you how he sunk several millions of St. Peter's Patrimony in the frightful financial crisis of which you have just seen the ruins; and, indeed, your visit to the new district of the castle fields would not be complete without this story by way of appendix."

Thereupon, without losing a mouthful, Narcisse spoke at considerable length. At the death of Pius IX the Patrimony of St. Peter, it seemed, had exceeded twenty millions of francs. Cardinal Antonelli, who speculated, and whose ventures were usually successful, had for a long time left a part of this money with the Rothschilds and a part in the hands of different nuncios, who turned it to profit abroad. After Antonelli's death, however, his successor, Cardinal Simeoni, withdrew the money from the nuncios to invest it at Rome; and Leo XIII on his accession entrusted the administration of the Patrimony to a commission of cardinals, of which Monsignor Folchi was appointed secretary. This prelate, who for twelve years played such an important /role/, was the son of an employee of the Dataria, who, thanks to skilful financial operations, had left a fortune of a million francs. Monsignor Folchi inherited his father's cleverness, and revealed himself to be a financier of the first rank in such wise that the commission gradually relinquished its powers to him, letting him act exactly as he pleased and contenting itself with approving the reports which he laid before it at each meeting. The Patrimony, however, yielded scarcely more than a million francs per annum, and, as the expenditure amounted to seven millions, six had to be found. Accordingly, from that other source of income, the Peter's Pence, the Pope annually gave three million francs to Monsignor Folchi, who, by skilful speculations and investments, was able to double them every year, and thus provide for all disbursements without ever breaking into the capital of the Patrimony. In the earlier times he realised considerable profit by gambling in land in and about Rome. He took shares also in many new enterprises, speculated in mills, omnibuses, and water-services, without mentioning all the gambling in which he participated with the Banca di Roma, a Catholic institution. Wonderstruck by his skill, the Pope, who, on his own side, had hitherto speculated through the medium of a confidential employee named Sterbini, dismissed the latter, and entrusted Monsignor Folchi with the duty of turning his money to profit in the same way as he turned that of the Holy See. This was the climax of the prelate's favour, the apogee of his power. Bad days were dawning, things were tottering already, and the great collapse was soon to come, sudden and swift like lightning. One of Leo XIII's practices was to lend large sums to the Roman princes who, seized with the gambling frenzy, and mixed up in land and building speculations, were at a loss for money. To guarantee the Pope's advances they deposited shares with him, and thus, when the downfall came, he was left with heaps of worthless paper on his hands. Then another disastrous affair was an attempt to found a house of credit in Paris in view of working off the shares which could not be disposed of in Italy among the French aristocracy and religious people. To egg these on it was said that the Pope was interested in the venture; and the worst was that he dropped three millions of francs in it.* The situation then became the more critical as he had gradually risked all the money he disposed of in the terrible agiotage going on in Rome, tempted thereto by the prospect of huge profits and perhaps indulging in the hope that he might win back by money the city which had been torn from him by force. His own responsibility remained complete, for Monsignor Folchi never made an important venture without consulting him; and he must have been therefore the real artisan of the disaster, mastered by his passion for gain, his desire to endow the Church with a huge capital, that great source of power in modern times. As always happens, however, the prelate was the only victim. He had become imperious and difficult to deal with; and was no longer liked by the cardinals of the commission, who were merely called together to approve such transactions as he chose to entrust to them. So, when the crisis came, a plot was laid; the cardinals terrified the Pope by telling him of all the evil rumours which were current, and then forced Monsignor Folchi to render a full account of his speculations. The situation proved to be very bad; it was no longer possible to avoid heavy losses. And so Monsignor Folchi was disgraced, and since then has vainly solicited an audience of Leo XIII, who has always refused to receive him, as if determined to punish him for their common fault—that passion for lucre which blinded them both. Very pious and submissive, however, Monsignor Folchi has never complained, but has kept his secrets and bowed to fate. Nobody can say exactly how many millions the Patrimony of St. Peter lost when Rome was changed into a gambling-hell, but if some prelates only admit ten, others go as far as thirty. The probability is that the loss was about fifteen millions.**

* The allusion is evidently to the famous Union Generale, on which the Pope bestowed his apostolic benediction, and with which M. Zola deals at length in his novel */Money/*. Certainly a very brilliant idea was embodied in the Union Generale, that of establishing a great international Catholic bank which would destroy the Jewish financial autocracy throughout Europe, and provide both the papacy and the Legitimist cause in several countries with the sinews of war. But in the battle which ensued the great Jew financial houses proved the stronger, and the disaster which overtook the Catholic speculators was a terrible one.—Trans.

** That is 600,000 pounds.

Whilst Narcisse was giving this account he and Pierre had despatched their cutlets and tomatoes, and the waiter was now serving them some fried chicken. "At the present time," said Narcisse by way of conclusion, "the gap has been filled up; I told you of the large sums yielded by the Peter's Pence Fund, the amount of which is only known by the Pope, who alone fixes its employment. And, by the way, he isn't cured of speculating; I know from a good source that he still gambles, though with more prudence. Moreover, his confidential assistant is still a prelate. And, when all is said, my dear Abbe, he's in the right: a man must belong to his times—dash it all!"

Pierre had listened with growing surprise, in which terror and sadness mingled. Doubtless such things were natural, even legitimate; yet he, in his dream of a pastor of souls free from all terrestrial cares, had never imagined that they existed. What! the Pope—the spiritual father of the lowly and the suffering—had speculated in land and in stocks and shares! He had gambled, placed funds in the hands of Jew bankers, practised usury, extracted hard interest from money—he, the successor of the Apostle, the Pontiff of Christ, the representative of Jesus, of the Gospel, that divine friend of the poor! And, besides, what a painful contrast: so many millions stored away in those rooms of the Vatican, and so many millions working and fructifying, constantly being diverted from one speculation to another in order that they might yield the more gain; and then down below, near at hand, so much want and misery in those abominable unfinished buildings of the new districts, so many poor folks dying of hunger amidst filth, mothers without milk for their babes, men reduced to idleness by lack of work, old ones at the last gasp like beasts of burden who are pole-axed when they are of no more use! Ah! God of Charity, God of Love, was it possible! The Church doubtless had material wants; she could not live without money; prudence and policy had dictated the thought of gaining for her such a treasure as would enable her to fight her adversaries victoriously. But how grievously this wounded one's feelings, how it soiled the Church, how she descended from her divine throne to become nothing but a party, a vast international association organised for the purpose of conquering and possessing the world!

And the more Pierre thought of the extraordinary adventure the greater was his astonishment. Could a more unexpected, startling drama be imagined? That Pope shutting himself up in his palace—a prison, no doubt, but one whose hundred windows overlooked immensity; that Pope who, at all hours of the day and night, in every season, could from his window see his capital, the city which had been stolen from him, and the restitution of which he never ceased to demand; that Pope who, day by day, beheld the changes effected in the city—the opening of new streets, the demolition of ancient districts, the sale of land, and the gradual erection of new buildings which ended by forming a white girdle around the old ruddy roofs; that Pope who, in presence of this daily spectacle, this building frenzy, which he could follow from morn till eve, was himself finally overcome by the gambling passion, and, secluded in his closed chamber, began to speculate on the embellishments of his old capital, seeking wealth in the spurt of work and trade brought about by that very Italian Government which he reproached with spoliation; and finally that Pope losing millions in a catastrophe which he ought to have desired, but had been unable to foresee! No, never had dethroned monarch yielded to a stranger idea, compromised himself in a more tragical venture, the result of which fell upon him like divine punishment. And it was no mere king who had done this, but the delegate of God, the man who, in the eyes of idolatrous Christendom, was the living manifestation of the Deity!

Dessert had now been served—a goat's cheese and some fruit—and Narcisse was just finishing some grapes when, on raising his eyes, he in turn exclaimed: "Well, you are quite right, my dear Abbe, I myself can see a pale figure at the window of the Holy Father's room."

Pierre, who scarcely took his eyes from the window, answered slowly: "Yes, yes, it went away, but has just come back, and stands there white and motionless."

"Well, after all, what would you have the Pope do?" resumed Narcisse with his languid air. "He's like everybody else; he looks out of the window when he wants a little distraction, and certainly there's plenty for him to look at."

The same idea had occurred to Pierre, and was filling him with emotion. People talked of the Vatican being closed, and pictured a dark, gloomy palace, encompassed by high walls, whereas this palace overlooked all Rome, and the Pope from his window could see the world. Pierre himself had viewed the

panorama from the summit of the Janiculum, the /loggie/ of Raffaele, and the dome of St. Peter's, and so he well knew what it was that Leo XIII was able to behold. In the centre of the vast desert of the Campagna, bounded by the Sabine and Alban mountains, the seven illustrious hills appeared to him with their trees and edifices. His eyes ranged also over all the basilicas, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Giovanni in Laterano, the cradle of the papacy, San Paolo-fuori-le-Mura, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Sant' Agnese, and the others; they beheld, too, the domes of the Gesu of Sant' Andrea della Valle, San Carlo and San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, and indeed all those four hundred churches of Rome which make the city like a /campo santo/ studded with crosses. And Leo XIII could moreover see the famous monuments testifying to the pride of successive centuries—the Castle of Sant' Angelo, that imperial mausoleum which was transformed into a papal fortress, the distant white line of the tombs of the Appian Way, the scattered ruins of the baths of Caracalla and the abode of Septimius Severus; and then, after the innumerable columns, porticoes, and triumphal arches, there were the palaces and villas of the sumptuous cardinals of the Renaissance, the Palazzo Farnese, the Palazzo Borghese, the Villa Medici, and others, amidst a swarming of facades and roofs. But, in particular, just under his window, on the left, the Pope was able to see the abominations of the unfinished district of the castle fields. In the afternoon, when he strolled through his gardens, bastioned by the wall of the fourth Leo like the plateau of a citadel, his view stretched over the ravaged valley at the foot of Monte Mario, where so many brick-works were established during the building frenzy. The green slopes are still ripped up, yellow trenches intersect them in all directions, and the closed works and factories have become wretched ruins with lofty, black, and smokeless chimneys. And at any other hour of the day Leo XIII could not approach his window without beholding the abandoned houses for which all those brick-fields had worked, those houses which had died before they even lived, and where there was now nought but the swarming misery of Rome, rotting there like some decomposition of olden society.

However, Pierre more particularly thought of Leo XIII, forgetting the rest of the city to let his thoughts dwell on the Palatine, now bereft of its crown of palaces and rearing only its black cypresses towards the blue heavens. Doubtless in his mind he rebuilt the palaces of the Caesars, whilst before him rose great shadowy forms arrayed in purple, visions of his real ancestors, those emperors and Supreme Pontiffs who alone could tell him how one might reign over every nation and be the absolute master of the world. Then, however, his glances strayed to the Quirinal, and there he could contemplate the new and neighbouring royalty. How strange the meeting of those two palaces, the Quirinal and the Vatican, which rise up and gaze at one another across the Rome of the middle ages and the Renaissance, whose roofs, baked and gilded by the burning sun, are jumbled in confusion alongside the Tiber. When the Pope and the King go to their windows they can with a mere opera-glass see each other quite distinctly. True, they are but specks in the boundless immensity, and what a gulf there is between them—how many centuries of history, how many generations that battled and suffered, how much departed greatness, and how much new seed for the mysterious future! Still, they can see one another, and they are yet waging the eternal fight, the fight as to which of them—the pontiff and shepherd of the soul or the monarch and master of the body—shall possess the people whose stream rolls beneath them, and in the result remain the absolute sovereign. And Pierre wondered also what might be the thoughts and dreams of Leo XIII behind those window-panes where he still fancied he could distinguish his pale, ghostly figure. On surveying new Rome, the ravaged olden districts and the new ones laid waste by the blast of disaster, the Pope must certainly rejoice at the colossal failure of the Italian Government. His city had been stolen from him; the newcomers had virtually declared that they would show him how a great capital was created, and their boast had ended in that catastrophe—a multitude of hideous and useless buildings which they did not even know how to finish! He, the Pope, could moreover only be delighted with the terrible worries into which the usurping /regime/ had fallen, the political crisis, and the financial crisis, the whole growing national unrest amidst which that /regime/ seemed likely to sink some day; and yet did not he himself possess a patriotic soul? was he not a loving son of that Italy whose genius and ancient ambition coursed in the blood of his veins? Ah! no, nothing against Italy; rather everything that would enable her to become once more the mistress of the world. And so, even amidst the joy of hope, he must have been grieved to see her thus ruined, threatened with bankruptcy, displaying like a sore that overturned, unfinished Rome which was a confession of her impotency. But, on the other hand, if the House of Savoy were to be swept away, would he not be there to take its place, and at last resume possession of his capital, which, from his window, for fifteen years past, he had beheld in the grip of masons and demolishers? And then he would again be the master and reign over the world, enthroned in the predestined city to which prophecy has ensured eternity and universal dominion.

But the horizon spread out, and Pierre wondered what Leo XIII beheld beyond Rome, beyond the Campagna and the Sabine and Alban mountains. What had he seen for eighteen years past from that window whence he obtained his only view of the world? What echoes of modern society, its truths and certainties, had reached his ears? From the heights of the Viminal, where the railway terminus stands, the prolonged whistling of engines must have occasionally been carried towards him, suggesting our scientific civilisation, the nations brought nearer together, free humanity marching on towards the

future. Did he himself ever dream of liberty when, on turning to the right, he pictured the sea over yonder, past the tombs of the Appian Way? Had he ever desired to go off, quit Rome and her traditions, and found the Papacy of the new democracies elsewhere? As he was said to possess so clear and penetrating a mind he ought to have understood and trembled at the far-away stir and noise that came from certain lands of battle, from those United States of America, for instance, where revolutionary bishops were conquering, winning over the people. Were they working for him or for themselves? If he could not follow them, if he remained stubborn within his Vatican, bound on every side by dogma and tradition, might not rupture some day become unavoidable? And, indeed, the fear of a blast of schism, coming from afar, must have filled him with growing anguish. It was assuredly on that account that he had practised the diplomacy of conciliation, seeking to unite in his hands all the scattered forces of the Church, overlooking the audacious proceedings of certain bishops as far as possible, and himself striving to gain the support of the people by putting himself on its side against the fallen monarchies. But would he ever go any farther? Shut up in that Vatican, behind that bronze portal, was he not bound to the strict formulas of Catholicism, chained to them by the force of centuries? There obstinacy was fated; it was impossible for him to resign himself to that which was his real and surpassing power, the purely spiritual power, the moral authority which brought mankind to his feet, made thousands of pilgrims kneel and women swoon. Departure from Rome and the renunciation of the temporal power would not displace the centre of the Catholic world, but would transform him, the head of the Catholic Church, into the head of something else. And how anxious must have been his thoughts if the evening breeze ever brought him a vague presentiment of that something else, a fear of the new religion which was yet dimly, confusedly dawning amidst the tramp of the nations on the march, and the sound of which must have reached him at one and the same time from every point of the compass.

At this precise moment, however, Pierre felt that the white and motionless shadow behind those windowpanes was held erect by pride, by the ever present conviction of victory. If man could not achieve it, a miracle would intervene. He, the Pope, was absolutely convinced that he or some successor would recover possession of Rome. Had not the Church all eternity before it? And, moreover, why should not the victor be himself? Could not God accomplish the impossible? Why, if it so pleased God, on the very morrow his city would be restored to him, in spite of all the objections of human reason, all the apparent logic of facts. Ah! how he would welcome the return of that prodigal daughter whose equivocal adventures he had ever watched with tears bedewing his paternal eyes! He would soon forget the excesses which he had beheld during eighteen years at all hours and in all seasons. Perhaps he dreamt of what he would do with those new districts with which the city had been soiled. Should they be razed, or left as evidence of the insanity of the usurpers? At all events, Rome would again become the august and lifeless city, disdainful of such vain matters as material cleanliness and comfort, and shining forth upon the world like a pure soul encompassed by the traditional glory of the centuries. And his dream continued, picturing the course which events would take on the very morrow, no doubt. Anything, even a republic was preferable to that House of Savoy. Why not a federal republic, reviving the old political divisions of Italy, restoring Rome to the Church, and choosing him, the Pope, as the natural protector of the country thus reorganised? But his eyes travelled beyond Rome and Italy, and his dream expanded, embracing republican France, Spain which might become republican again, Austria which would some day be won, and indeed all the Catholic nations welded into the United States of Europe, and fraternising in peace under his high presidency as Sovereign Pontiff. And then would follow the supreme triumph, all the other churches at last vanishing, and all the dissident communities coming to him as to the one and only pastor, who would reign in the name of Jesus over the universal democracy.

However, whilst Pierre was immersed in this dream which he attributed to Leo XIII, he was all at once interrupted by Narcisse, who exclaimed: "Oh! my dear Abbe, just look at those statues on the colonnade." The young fellow had ordered a cup of coffee and was languidly smoking a cigar, deep once more in the subtle aesthetics which were his only preoccupation. "They are rosy, are they not?" he continued; "rosy, with a touch of mauve, as if the blue blood of angels circulated in their stone veins. It is the sun of Rome which gives them that supra-terrestrial life; for they live, my friend; I have seen them smile and hold out their arms to me during certain fine sunsets. Ah! Rome, marvellous, delicious Rome! One could live here as poor as Job, content with the very atmosphere, and in everlasting delight at breathing it!"

This time Pierre could not help feeling surprised at Narcisse's language, for he remembered his incisive voice and clear, precise, financial acumen when speaking of money matters. And, at this recollection, the young priest's mind reverted to the castle fields, and intense sadness filled his heart as for the last time all the want and suffering rose before him. Again he beheld the horrible filth which was tainting so many human beings, that shocking proof of the abominable social injustice which condemns the greater number to lead the joyless, breadless lives of accursed beasts. And as his glance returned yet once more to the window of the Vatican, and he fancied he could see a pale hand uplifted behind the glass panes, he thought of that papal benediction which Leo XIII gave from that height, over

Rome, and over the plain and the hills, to the faithful of all Christendom. And that papal benediction suddenly seemed to him a mockery, destitute of all power, since throughout such a multitude of centuries it had not once been able to stay a single one of the sufferings of mankind, and could not even bring a little justice for those poor wretches who were agonising yonder beneath the very window.

IX

THAT evening at dusk, as Benedetta had sent Pierre word that she desired to see him, he went down to her little /salon/, and there found her chatting with Celia.

"I've seen your Pierina, you know," exclaimed the latter, just as the young priest came in. "And with Dario, too. Or rather, she must have been watching for him; he found her waiting in a path on the Pincio and smiled at her. I understood at once. What a beauty she is!"

Benedetta smiled at her friend's enthusiasm; but her lips twitched somewhat painfully, for, however sensible she might be, this passion, which she realised to be so naive and so strong, was beginning to make her suffer. She certainly made allowances for Dario, but the girl was too much in love with him, and she feared the consequences. Even in turning the conversation she allowed the secret of her heart to escape her. "Pray sit down, Monsieur l'Abbe," she said, "we are talking scandal, you see. My poor Dario is accused of making love to every pretty woman in Rome. People say that it's he who gives La Tonietta those white roses which she has been exhibiting at the Corso every afternoon for a fortnight past."

"That's certain, my dear," retorted Celia impetuously. "At first people were in doubt, and talked of little Pontecorvo and Lieutenant Moretta. But every one now knows that La Tonietta's caprice is Dario. Besides, he joined her in her box at the Costanzi the other evening."

Pierre remembered that the young Prince had pointed out La Tonietta at the Pincio one afternoon. She was one of the few /demi-mondaines/ that the higher-class society of Rome took an interest in. For a month or so the rich Englishman to whom she owed her means had been absent, travelling.

"Ah!" resumed Benedetta, whose budding jealousy was entirely confined to La Pierina, "so my poor Dario is ruining himself in white roses! Well, I shall have to twit him about it. But one or another of these beauties will end by robbing me of him if our affairs are not soon settled. Fortunately, I have had some better news. Yes, my suit is to be taken in hand again, and my aunt has gone out to-day on that very account."

Then, as Victorine came in with a lamp, and Celia rose to depart, Benedetta turned towards Pierre, who also was rising from his chair: "Please stay," said she; "I wish to speak to you."

However, Celia still lingered, interested by the mention of the divorce suit, and eager to know if the cousins would soon be able to marry. And at last throwing her arms round Benedetta, she kissed her passionately. "So you are hopeful, my dear," she exclaimed. "You think that the Holy Father will give you back your liberty? Oh! I am so pleased; it will be so nice for you to marry Dario! And I'm well pleased on my own account, for my father and mother are beginning to yield. Only yesterday I said to them with that quiet little air of mine, 'I want Attilio, and you must give him me.' And then my father flew into a furious passion and upbraided me, and shook his fist at me, saying that if he'd made my head as hard as his own he would know how to break it. My mother was there quite silent and vexed, and all at once he turned to her and said: 'Here, give her that Attilio she wants, and then perhaps we shall have some peace!' Oh yes! I'm well pleased, very well pleased indeed!"

As she spoke her pure virginal face beamed with so much innocent, celestial joy that Pierre and Benedetta could not help laughing. And at last she went off attended by a maid who had waited for her in the first /salon/.

When they were alone Benedetta made the priest sit down again: "I have been asked to give you some important advice, my friend," she said. "It seems that the news of your presence in Rome is spreading, and that bad reports of you are circulated. Your book is said to be a fierce appeal to schism, and you are spoken of as a mere ambitious, turbulent schismatic. After publishing your book in Paris you have come to Rome, it is said, to raise a fearful scandal over it in order to make it sell. Now, if you still desire to see his Holiness, so as to plead your cause before him, you are advised to make people forget you, to disappear altogether for a fortnight or three weeks."

Pierre was stupefied. Why, they would end by maddening him with all the obstacles they raised to exhaust his patience; they would actually implant in him an idea of schism, of an avenging, liberating

scandal! He wished to protest and refuse the advice, but all at once he made a gesture of weariness. What would be the good of it, especially with that young woman, who was certainly sincere and affectionate. "Who asked you to give me this advice?" he inquired. She did not answer, but smiled, and with sudden intuition he resumed: "It was Monsignor Nani, was it not?"

Thereupon, still unwilling to give a direct reply, she began to praise the prelate. He had at last consented to guide her in her divorce affair; and Donna Serafina had gone to the Palace of the Inquisition that very afternoon in order to acquaint him with the result of certain steps she had taken. Father Lorenza, the confessor of both the Boccanera ladies, was to be present at the interview, for the idea of the divorce was in reality his own. He had urged the two women to it in his eagerness to sever the bond which the patriotic priest Pisoni had tied full of such fine illusions. Benedetta became quite animated as she explained the reasons of her hopefulness. "Monsignor Nani can do everything," she said, "and I am very happy that my affair should be in his hands. You must be reasonable also, my friend; do as you are requested. I'm sure you will some day be well pleased at having taken this advice."

Pierre had bowed his head and remained thoughtful. There was nothing unpleasant in the idea of remaining for a few more weeks in Rome, where day by day his curiosity found so much fresh food. Of course, all these delays were calculated to discourage him and bend his will. Yet what did he fear, since he was still determined to relinquish nothing of his book, and to see the Holy Father for the sole purpose of proclaiming his new faith? Once more, in silence, he took that oath, then yielded to Benedetta's entreaties. And as he apologised for being a source of embarrassment in the house she exclaimed: "No, no, I am delighted to have you here. I fancy that your presence will bring us good fortune now that luck seems to be changing in our favour."

It was then agreed that he would no longer prowl around St. Peter's and the Vatican, where his constant presence must have attracted attention. He even promised that he would virtually spend a week indoors, desirous as he was of reperusing certain books, certain pages of Rome's history. Then he went on chatting for a moment, lulled by the peacefulness which reigned around him, since the lamp had illumined the /salon/ with its sleepy radiance. Six o'clock had just struck, and outside all was dark.

"Wasn't his Eminence indisposed to-day?" the young man asked.

"Yes," replied the Contessina. "But we are not anxious: it is only a little fatigue. He sent Don Vigilio to tell me that he intended to shut himself up in his room and dictate some letters. So there can be nothing much the matter, you see."

Silence fell again. For a while not a sound came from the deserted street or the old empty mansion, mute and dreamy like a tomb. But all at once the soft somnolence, instinct with all the sweetness of a dream of hope, was disturbed by a tempestuous entry, a whirl of skirts, a gasp of terror. It was Victorine, who had gone off after bringing the lamp, but now returned, scared and breathless: "Contessina! Contessina!"

Benedetta had risen, suddenly quite white and cold, as at the advent of a blast of misfortune. "What, what is it? Why do you run and tremble?" she asked.

"Dario, Monsieur Dario—down below. I went down to see if the lantern in the porch were alight, as it is so often forgotten. And in the dark, in the porch, I stumbled against Monsieur Dario. He is on the ground; he has a knife-thrust somewhere."

A cry leapt from the /amorosa's/ heart: "Dead!"

"No, no, wounded."

But Benedetta did not hear; in a louder and louder voice she cried: "Dead! dead!"

"No, no, I tell you, he spoke to me. And for Heaven's sake, be quiet. He silenced me because he did not want any one to know; he told me to come and fetch you—only you. However, as Monsieur l'Abbe is here, he had better help us. We shall be none too many."

Pierre listened, also quite aghast. And when Victorine wished to take the lamp her trembling hand, with which she had no doubt felt the prostrate body, was seen to be quite bloody. The sight filled Benedetta with so much horror that she again began to moan wildly.

"Be quiet, be quiet!" repeated Victorine. "We ought not to make any noise in going down. I shall take the lamp, because we must at all events be able to see. Now, quick, quick!"

Across the porch, just at the entrance of the vestibule, Dario lay prone upon the slabs, as if, after

being stabbed in the street, he had only had sufficient strength to take a few steps before falling. And he had just fainted, and lay there with his face very pale, his lips compressed, and his eyes closed. Benedetta, recovering the energy of her race amidst her excessive grief, no longer lamented or cried out, but gazed at him with wild, tearless, dilated eyes, as though unable to understand. The horror of it all was the suddenness and mysteriousness of the catastrophe, the why and wherefore of this murderous attempt amidst the silence of the old deserted palace, black with the shades of night. The wound had as yet bled but little, for only the Prince's clothes were stained.

"Quick, quick!" repeated Victorine in an undertone after lowering the lamp and moving it around. "The porter isn't there—he's always at the carpenter's next door—and you see that he hasn't yet lighted the lantern. Still he may come back at any moment. So the Abbe and I will carry the Prince into his room at once." She alone retained her head, like a woman of well-balanced mind and quiet activity. The two others, whose stupor continued, listened to her and obeyed her with the docility of children. "Contessina," she continued, "you must light us. Here, take the lamp and lower it a little so that we may see the steps. You, Abbe, take the feet; I'll take hold of him under the armpits. And don't be alarmed, the poor dear fellow isn't heavy."

Ah! that ascent of the monumental staircase with its low steps and its landings as spacious as guardrooms. They facilitated the cruel journey, but how lugubrious looked the little /cortege/ under the flickering glimmer of the lamp which Benedetta held with arm outstretched, stiffened by determination! And still not a sound came from the old lifeless dwelling, nothing but the silent crumbling of the walls, the slow decay which was making the ceilings crack. Victorine continued to whisper words of advice whilst Pierre, afraid of slipping on the shiny slabs, put forth an excess of strength which made his breath come short. Huge, wild shadows danced over the big expanse of bare wall up to the very vaults decorated with sunken panels. So endless seemed the ascent that at last a halt became necessary; but the slow march was soon resumed. Fortunately Dario's apartments—bed-chamber, dressing-room, and sitting-room—were on the first floor adjoining those of the Cardinal in the wing facing the Tiber; so, on reaching the landing, they only had to walk softly along the corridor, and at last, to their great relief, laid the wounded man upon his bed.

Victorine vented her satisfaction in a light laugh. "That's done," said she; "put the lamp on that table, Contessina. I'm sure nobody heard us. It's lucky that Donna Serafina should have gone out, and that his Eminence should have shut himself up with Don Vigilio. I wrapped my skirt round Monsieur Dario's shoulders, you know, so I don't think any blood fell on the stairs. By and by, too, I'll go down with a sponge and wipe the slabs in the porch—" She stopped short, looked at Dario, and then quickly added: "He's breathing—now I'll leave you both to watch over him while I go for good Doctor Giordano, who saw you come into the world, Contessina. He's a man to be trusted."

Alone with the unconscious sufferer in that dim chamber, which seemed to quiver with the frightful horror that filled their hearts, Benedetta and Pierre remained on either side of the bed, as yet unable to exchange a word. The young woman first opened her arms and wrung her hands whilst giving vent to a hollow moan, as if to relieve and exhale her grief; and then, leaning forward, she watched for some sign of life on that pale face whose eyes were closed. Dario was certainly breathing, but his respiration was slow and very faint, and some time went by before a touch of colour returned to his cheeks. At last, however, he opened his eyes, and then she at once took hold of his hand and pressed it, instilling into the pressure all the anguish of her heart. Great was her happiness on feeling that he feebly returned the clasp.

"Tell me," she said, "you can see me and hear me, can't you? What has happened, good God?"

He did not at first answer, being worried by the presence of Pierre. On recognising the young priest, however, he seemed content that he should be there, and then glanced apprehensively round the room to see if there were anybody else. And at last he murmured: "No one saw me, no one knows?"

"No, no; be easy. We carried you up with Victorine without meeting a soul. Aunt has just gone out, uncle is shut up in his rooms."

At this Dario seemed relieved, and he even smiled. "I don't want anybody to know, it is so stupid," he murmured.

"But in God's name what has happened?" she again asked him.

"Ah! I don't know, I don't know," was his response, as he lowered his eyelids with a weary air as if to escape the question. But he must have realised that it was best for him to confess some portion of the truth at once, for he resumed: "A man was hidden in the shadow of the porch—he must have been waiting for me. And so, when I came in, he dug his knife into my shoulder, there."

Forthwith she again leant over him, quivering, and gazing into the depths of his eyes: "But who was the man, who was he?" she asked. Then, as he, in a yet more weary way, began to stammer that he didn't know, that the man had fled into the darkness before he could recognise him, she raised a terrible cry: "It was Prada! it was Prada, confess it, I know it already!" And, quite delirious, she went on: "I tell you that I know it! Ah! I would not be his, and he is determined that we shall never belong to one another. Rather than have that he will kill you on the day when I am free to be your wife! Oh! I know him well; I shall never, never be happy. Yes, I know it well, it was Prada, Prada!"

But sudden energy upbuoyed the wounded man, and he loyally protested: "No, no, it was not Prada, nor was it any one working for him. That I swear to you. I did not recognise the man, but it wasn't Prada—no, no!"

There was such a ring of truth in Dario's words that Benedetta must have been convinced by them. But terror once more overpowered her, for the hand she held was suddenly growing soft, moist, and powerless. Exhausted by his effort, Dario had fallen back, again fainting, his face quite white and his eyes closed. And it seemed to her that he was dying. Distracted by her anguish, she felt him with trembling, groping hands: "Look, look, Monsieur l'Abbe!" she exclaimed. "But he is dying, he is dying; he is already quite cold. Ah! God of heaven, he is dying!"

Pierre, terribly upset by her cries, sought to reassure her, saying: "He spoke too much; he has lost consciousness, as he did before. But I assure you that I can feel his heart beating. Here, put your hand here, Contessina. For mercy's sake don't distress yourself like that; the doctor will soon be here, and everything will be all right."

But she did not listen to him, and all at once he was lost in amazement, for she flung herself upon the body of the man she adored, caught it in a frantic embrace, bathed it with tears and covered it with kisses whilst stammering words of fire: "Ah! if I were to lose you, if I were to lose you! And to think that I repulsed you, that I would not accept happiness when it was yet possible! Yes, that idea of mine, that vow I made to the Madonna! Yet how could she be offended by our happiness? And then, and then, if she has deceived me, if she takes you from me, ah! then I can have but one regret—that I did not damn myself with you—yes, yes, damnation rather than that we should never, never be each other's!"

Was this the woman who had shown herself so calm, so sensible, so patient the better to ensure her happiness? Pierre was terrified, and no longer recognised her. He had hitherto seen her so reserved, so modest, with a childish charm that seemed to come from her very nature! But under the threatening blow she feared, the terrible blood of the Boccaneras had awoke within her with a long heredity of violence, pride, frantic and exasperated longings. She wished for her share of life, her share of love! And she moaned and she clamoured, as if death, in taking her lover from her, were tearing away some of her own flesh.

"Calm yourself, I entreat you, madame," repeated the priest. "He is alive, his heart beats. You are doing yourself great harm."

But she wished to die with her lover: "O my darling! if you must go, take me, take me with you. I will lay myself on your heart, I will clasp you so tightly with my arms that they shall be joined to yours, and then we must needs be buried together. Yes, yes, we shall be dead, and we shall be wedded all the same—wedded in death! I promised that I would belong to none but you, and I will be yours in spite of everything, even in the grave. O my darling, open your eyes, open your mouth, kiss me if you don't want me to die as soon as you are dead!"

A blaze of wild passion, full of blood and fire, had passed through that mournful chamber with old, sleepy walls. But tears were now overcoming Benedetta, and big gasping sobs at last threw her, blinded and strengthless, on the edge of the bed. And fortunately an end was put to the terrible scene by the arrival of the doctor whom Victorine had fetched.

Doctor Giordano was a little old man of over sixty, with white curly hair, and fresh-looking, clean-shaven countenance. By long practice among Churchmen he had acquired the paternal appearance and manner of an amiable prelate. And he was said to be a very worthy man, tending the poor for nothing, and displaying ecclesiastical reserve and discretion in all delicate cases. For thirty years past the whole Boccanera family, children, women, and even the most eminent Cardinal himself, had in all cases of sickness been placed in the hands of this prudent practitioner. Lighted by Victorine and helped by Pierre, he undressed Dario, who was roused from his swoon by pain; and after examining the wound he declared with a smile that it was not at all dangerous. The young Prince would at the utmost have to spend three weeks in bed, and no complications were to be feared. Then, like all the doctors of Rome, enamoured of the fine thrusts and cuts which day by day they have to dress among chance patients of the lower classes, he complacently lingered over the wound, doubtless regarding it as a clever piece of work, for he ended by saying to the Prince in an undertone: "That's what we call a warning. The man

didn't want to kill, the blow was dealt downwards so that the knife might slip through the flesh without touching the bone. Ah! a man really needs to be skilful to deal such a stab; it was very neatly done."

"Yes, yes," murmured Dario, "he spared me; had he chosen he could have pierced me through."

Benedetta did not hear. Since the doctor had declared the case to be free from danger, and had explained that the fainting fits were due to nervous shock, she had fallen in a chair, quite prostrated. Gradually, however, some gentle tears coursed from her eyes, bringing relief after her frightful despair, and then, rising to her feet, she came and kissed Dario with mute and passionate delight.

"I say, my dear doctor," resumed the Prince, "it's useless for people to know of this. It's so ridiculous. Nobody has seen anything, it seems, excepting Monsieur l'Abbe, whom I ask to keep the matter secret. And in particular I don't want anybody to alarm the Cardinal or my aunt, or indeed any of our friends."

Doctor Giordano indulged in one of his placid smiles. "/Bene, bene/," said he, "that's natural; don't worry yourself. We will say that you have had a fall on the stairs and have dislocated your shoulder. And now that the wound is dressed you must try to sleep, and don't get feverish. I will come back to-morrow morning."

That evening of excitement was followed by some very tranquil days, and a new life began for Pierre, who at first remained indoors, reading and writing, with no other recreation than that of spending his afternoons in Dario's room, where he was certain to find Benedetta. After a somewhat intense fever lasting for eight and forty hours, cure took its usual course, and the story of the dislocated shoulder was so generally believed, that the Cardinal insisted on Donna Serafina departing from her habits of strict economy, to have a second lantern lighted on the landing in order that no such accident might occur again. And then the monotonous peacefulness was only disturbed by a final incident, a threat of trouble, as it were, with which Pierre found himself mixed up one evening when he was lingering beside the convalescent patient.

Benedetta had absented herself for a few minutes, and as Victorine, who had brought up some broth, was leaning towards the Prince to take the empty cup from him, she said in a low voice: "There's a girl, Monsieur, La Pierina, who comes here every day, crying and asking for news of you. I can't get rid of her, she's always prowling about the place, so I thought it best to tell you of it."

Unintentionally, Pierre heard her and understood everything. Dario, who was looking at him, at once guessed his thoughts, and without answering Victorine exclaimed: "Yes, Abbe, it was that brute Tito! How idiotic, eh?" At the same time, although the young man protested that he had done nothing whatever for the girl's brother to give him such a "warning," he smiled in an embarrassed way, as if vexed and even somewhat ashamed of being mixed up in an affair of the kind. And he was evidently relieved when the priest promised that he would see the girl, should she come back, and make her understand that she ought to remain at home.

"It was such a stupid affair!" the Prince repeated, with an exaggerated show of anger. "Such things are not of our times."

But all at once he ceased speaking, for Benedetta entered the room. She sat down again beside her dear patient, and the sweet, peaceful evening then took its course in the old sleepy chamber, the old, lifeless palace, whence never a sound arose.

When Pierre began to go out again he at first merely took a brief airing in the district. The Via Giulia interested him, for he knew how splendid it had been in the time of Julius II, who had dreamt of lining it with sumptuous palaces. Horse and foot races then took place there during the carnival, the Palazzo Farnese being the starting-point, and the Piazza of St. Peter's the goal. Pierre had also lately read that a French ambassador, D'Estree, Marquis de Coure, had resided at the Palazzo Sacchetti, and in 1638 had given some magnificent entertainments in honour of the birth of the Dauphin,* when on three successive days there had been racing from the Ponte Sisto to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini amidst an extraordinary display of sumptuosity: the street being strewn with flowers, and rich hangings adorning every window. On the second evening there had been fireworks on the Tiber, with a machine representing the ship Argo carrying Jason and his companions to the recovery of the Golden Fleece; and, on another occasion, the Farnese fountain, the Mascherone, had flowed with wine. Nowadays, however, all was changed. The street, bright with sunshine or steeped in shadow according to the hour, was ever silent and deserted. The heavy, ancient palatial houses, their old doors studded with plates and nails, their windows barred with huge iron gratings, always seemed to be asleep, whole storeys showing nothing but closed shutters as if to keep out the daylight for evermore. Now and again, when a door was open, you espied deep vaults, damp, cold courts, green with mildew, and encompassed by colonnades like cloisters. Then, in the outbuildings of the mansions, the low structures which had collected more particularly on the side of the Tiber, various small silent shops had installed themselves.

There was a baker's, a tailor's, and a bookbinder's, some fruiterers' shops with a few tomatoes and salad plants set out on boards, and some wine-shops which claimed to sell the vintages of Frascati and Genzano, but whose customers seemed to be dead. Midway along the street was a modern prison, whose horrid yellow wall in no wise enlivened the scene, whilst, overhead, a flight of telegraph wires stretched from the arcades of the Farnese palace to the distant vista of trees beyond the river. With its infrequent traffic the street, even in the daytime, was like some sepulchral corridor where the past was crumbling into dust, and when night fell its desolation quite appalled Pierre. You did not meet a soul, you did not see a light in any window, and the glimmering gas lamps, few and far between, seemed powerless to pierce the gloom. On either hand the doors were barred and bolted, and not a sound, not a breath came from within. Even when, after a long interval, you passed a lighted wine-shop, behind whose panes of frosted glass a lamp gleamed dim and motionless, not an exclamation, not a suspicion of a laugh ever reached your ear. There was nothing alive save the two sentries placed outside the prison, one before the entrance and the other at the corner of the right-hand lane, and they remained erect and still, coagulated, as it were, in that dead street.

* Afterwards Louis XIV.—Trans.

Pierre's interest, however, was not merely confined to the Via Giulia; it extended to the whole district, once so fine and fashionable, but now fallen into sad decay, far removed from modern life, and exhaling a faint musty odour of monasticism. Towards San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, where the new Corso Vittorio Emanuele has ripped up every olden district, the lofty five-storeyed houses with their dazzling sculptured fronts contrasted violently with the black sunken dwellings of the neighbouring lanes. In the evening the globes of the electric lamps on the Corso shone out with such dazzling whiteness that the gas lamps of the Via Giulia and other streets looked like smoky lanterns. There were several old and famous thoroughfares, the Via Banchi Vecchi, the Via del Pellegrino, the Via di Monserrato, and an infinity of cross-streets which intersected and connected the others, all going towards the Tiber, and for the most part so narrow that vehicles scarcely had room to pass. And each street had its church, a multitude of churches all more or less alike, highly decorated, gilded, and painted, and open only at service time when they were full of sunlight and incense. In the Via Giulia, in addition to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, San Biagio della Pagnotta, San Eligio degli Orefici, and three or four others, there was the so-called Church of the Dead, Santa Maria dell' Orazione; and this church, which is at the lower end behind the Farnese palace, was often visited by Pierre, who liked to dream there of the wild life of Rome, and of the pious brothers of the Confraternita della Morte, who officiate there, and whose mission is to search for and bury such poor outcasts as die in the Campagna. One evening he was present at the funeral of two unknown men, whose bodies, after remaining unburied for quite a fortnight, had been discovered in a field near the Appian Way.

However, Pierre's favourite promenade soon became the new quay of the Tiber beyond the Palazzo Boccanera. He had merely to take the narrow lane skirting the mansion to reach a spot where he found much food for reflection. Although the quay was not yet finished, the work seemed to be quite abandoned. There were heaps of rubbish, blocks of stone, broken fences, and dilapidated tool-sheds all around. To such a height had it been necessary to carry the quay walls—designed to protect the city from floods, for the river bed has been rising for centuries past—that the old terrace of the Boccanera gardens, with its double flight of steps to which pleasure boats had once been moored, now lay in a hollow, threatened with annihilation whenever the works should be finished. But nothing had yet been levelled; the soil, brought thither for making up the bank, lay as it had fallen from the carts, and on all sides were pits and mounds interspersed with the abandoned building materials. Wretched urchins came to play there, workmen without work slept in the sunshine, and women after washing ragged linen spread it out to dry upon the stones. Nevertheless the spot proved a happy, peaceful refuge for Pierre, one fruitful in inexhaustible reveries when for hours at a time he lingered gazing at the river, the quays, and the city, stretching in front of him and on either hand.

At eight in the morning the sun already gilded the vast opening. On turning to the left he perceived the roofs of the Trastevere, of a misty, bluish grey against the dazzling sky. Then, just beyond the apse of San Giovanni, on the right, the river curved, and on its other bank the poplars of the Ospedale di Santo Spirito formed a green curtain, while the castle of Sant' Angelo showed brightly in the distance. But Pierre's eyes dwelt more particularly on the bank just in front of him, for there he found some lingering vestiges of old Rome. On that side indeed between the Ponte Sisto and the Ponte Sant' Angelo, the quays, which were to imprison the river within high, white, fortress-like walls, had not yet been raised, and the bank with its remnants of the old papal city conjured up an extraordinary vision of the middle ages. The houses, descending to the river brink, were cracked, scorched, rusted by innumerable burning summers, like so many antique bronzes. Down below there were black vaults into which the water flowed, piles upholding walls, and fragments of Roman stone-work plunging into the river bed; then, rising from the shore, came steep, broken stairways, green with moisture, tiers of terraces, storeys with tiny windows pierced here and there in hap-hazard fashion, houses perched atop

of other houses, and the whole jumbled together with a fantastic commingling of balconies and wooden galleries, footbridges spanning courtyards, clumps of trees growing apparently on the very roofs, and attics rising from amidst pinky tiles. The contents of a drain fell noisily into the river from a worn and soiled gorge of stone; and wherever the houses stood back and the bank appeared, it was covered with wild vegetation, weeds, shrubs, and mantling ivy, which trailed like a kingly robe of state. And in the glory of the sun the wretchedness and dirt vanished, the crooked, jumbled houses seemed to be of gold, draped with the purple of the red petticoats and the dazzling white of the shifts which hung drying from their windows; while higher still, above the district, the Janiculum rose into all the luminary's dazzlement, uprearing the slender profile of Sant' Onofrio amidst cypresses and pines.

Leaning on the parapet of the quay wall, Pierre sadly gazed at the Tiber for hours at a time. Nothing could convey an idea of the weariness of those old waters, the mournful slowness of their flow along that Babylonian trench where they were confined within huge, bare, livid prison-like walls. In the sunlight their yellowness was gilded, and the faint quiver of the current brought ripples of green and blue; but as soon as the shade spread over it the stream became opaque like mud, so turbid in its venerable old age that it no longer even gave back a reflection of the houses lining it. And how desolate was its abandonment, what a stream of silence and solitude it was! After the winter rains it might roll furiously and threateningly, but during the long months of bright weather it traversed Rome without a sound, and Pierre could remain there all day long without seeing either a skiff or a sail. The two or three little steam-boats which arrived from the coast, the few tartanes which brought wine from Sicily, never came higher than the Aventine, beyond which there was only a watery desert in which here and there, at long intervals, a motionless angler let his line dangle. All that Pierre ever saw in the way of shipping was a sort of ancient, covered pinnacle, a rotting Noah's ark, moored on the right beside the old bank, and he fancied that it might be used as a washhouse, though on no occasion did he see any one in it. And on a neck of mud there also lay a stranded boat with one side broken in, a lamentable symbol of the impossibility and the relinquishment of navigation. Ah! that decay of the river, that decay of father Tiber, as dead as the famous ruins whose dust he is weary of laving! And what an evocation! all the centuries of history, so many things, so many men, that those yellow waters have reflected till, full of lassitude and disgust, they have grown heavy, silent and deserted, longing only for annihilation.

One morning on the river bank Pierre found La Pierina standing behind an abandoned tool-shed. With her neck extended, she was looking fixedly at the window of Dario's room, at the corner of the quay and the lane. Doubtless she had been frightened by Victorine's severe reception, and had not dared to return to the mansion; but some servant, possibly, had told her which was the young Prince's window, and so she now came to this spot, where without wearying she waited for a glimpse of the man she loved, for some sign of life and salvation, the mere hope of which made her heart leap. Deeply touched by the way in which she hid herself, all humility and quivering with adoration, the priest approached her, and instead of scolding her and driving her away as he had been asked to do, spoke to her in a gentle, cheerful manner, asking her for news of her people as though nothing had happened, and at last contriving to mention Dario's name in order that she might understand that he would be up and about again within a fortnight. On perceiving Pierre, La Pierina had started with timidity and distrust as if anxious to flee; but when she understood him, tears of happiness gushed from her eyes, and with a bright smile she kissed her hand to him, calling: "/Grazie, grazie/, thanks, thanks!" And thereupon she darted away, and he never saw her again.

On another morning at an early hour, as Pierre was going to say mass at Santa Brigida on the Piazza Farnese, he was surprised to meet Benedetta coming out of the church and carrying a small phial of oil. She evinced no embarrassment, but frankly told him that every two or three days she went thither to obtain from the beadle a few drops of the oil used for the lamp that burnt before an antique wooden statue of the Madonna, in which she had perfect confidence. She even confessed that she had never had confidence in any other Madonna, having never obtained anything from any other, though she had prayed to several of high repute, Madonnas of marble and even of silver. And so her heart was full of ardent devotion for the holy image which refused her nothing. And she declared in all simplicity, as though the matter were quite natural and above discussion, that the few drops of oil which she applied, morning and evening, to Dario's wound, were alone working his cure, so speedy a cure as to be quite miraculous. Pierre, fairly aghast, distressed indeed to find such childish, superstitious notions in one so full of sense and grace and passion, did not even venture to smile.

In the evenings, when he came back from his strolls and spent an hour or so in Dario's room, he would for a time divert the patient by relating what he had done and seen and thought of during the day. And when he again ventured to stray beyond the district, and became enamoured of the lovely gardens of Rome, which he visited as soon as they opened in the morning in order that he might be virtually alone, he delighted the young prince and Benedetta with his enthusiasm, his rapturous passion for the splendid trees, the splashing water, and the spreading terraces whence the views were so sublime. It was not the most extensive of these gardens which the more deeply impressed his heart. In

the grounds of the Villa Borghese, the little Roman Bois de Boulogne, there were certainly some majestic clumps of greenery, some regal avenues where carriages took a turn in the afternoon before the obligatory drive to the Pincio; but Pierre was more touched by the reserved garden of the villa—that villa dazzling with marble and now containing one of the finest museums in the world. There was a simple lawn of fine grass with a vast central basin surmounted by a figure of Venus, nude and white; and antique fragments, vases, statues, columns, and /sarcophagi/ were ranged symmetrically all around the deserted, sunlit yet melancholy, sward. On returning on one occasion to the Pincio Pierre spent a delightful morning there, penetrated by the charm of this little nook with its scanty evergreens, and its admirable vista of all Rome and St. Peter's rising up afar off in the soft limpid radiance. At the Villa Albani and the Villa Pamphili he again came upon superb parasol pines, tall, stately, and graceful, and powerful elm-trees with twisted limbs and dusky foliage. In the Pamphili grounds, the elm-trees steeped the paths in a delicious half-light, the lake with its weeping willows and tufts of reeds had a dreamy aspect, while down below the /parterre/ displayed a fantastic floral mosaic bright with the various hues of flowers and foliage. That which most particularly struck Pierre, however, in this, the noblest, most spacious, and most carefully tended garden of Rome, was the novel and unexpected view that he suddenly obtained of St. Peter's, whilst skirting a low wall: a view whose symbolism for ever clung to him. Rome had completely vanished, and between the slopes of Monte Mario and another wooded height which hid the city, there only appeared the colossal dome which seemed to be poised on an infinity of scattered blocks, now white, now red. These were the houses of the Borgo, the jumbled piles of the Vatican and the Basilica which the huge dome surmounted and annihilated, showing greyly blue in the light blue of the heavens, whilst far away stretched a delicate, boundless vista of the Campagna, likewise of a bluish tint.

It was, however, more particularly in the less sumptuous gardens, those of a more homely grace, that Pierre realised that even things have souls. Ah! that Villa Mattei on one side of the Coelius with its terraced grounds, its sloping alleys edged with laurel, aloe, and spindle tree, its box-plants forming arbours, its oranges, its roses, and its fountains! Pierre spent some delicious hours there, and only found a similar charm on visiting the Aventine, where three churches are embowered in verdure. The little garden of Santa Sabina, the birthplace of the Dominican order, is closed on all sides and affords no view: it slumbers in quiescence, warm and perfumed by its orange-trees, amongst which that planted by St. Dominic stands huge and gnarled but still laden with ripe fruit. At the adjoining Priorato, however, the garden, perched high above the Tiber, overlooks a vast expanse, with the river and the buildings on either bank as far as the summit of the Janiculum. And in these gardens of Rome Pierre ever found the same clipped box-shrubs, the same eucalypti with white trunks and pale leaves long like hair, the same ilex-trees squat and dusky, the same giant pines, the same black cypresses, the same marbles whitening amidst tufts of roses, and the same fountains gurgling under mantling ivy. Never did he enjoy more gentle, sorrow-tinged delight than at the Villa of Pope Julius, where all the life of a gay and sensual period is suggested by the semi-circular porticus opening on the gardens, a porticus decorated with paintings, golden trellis-work laden with flowers, amidst which flutter flights of smiling Cupids. Then, on the evening when he returned from the Farnesina, he declared that he had brought all the dead soul of ancient Rome away with him, and it was not the paintings executed after Raffaele's designs that had touched him, it was rather the pretty hall on the river side decorated in soft blue and pink and lilac, with an art devoid of genius yet so charming and so Roman; and in particular it was the abandoned garden once stretching down to the Tiber, and now shut off from it by the new quay, and presenting an aspect of woeful desolation, ravaged, bossy and weedy like a cemetery, albeit the golden fruit of orange and citron tree still ripened there.

And for the last time a shock came to Pierre's heart on the lovely evening when he visited the Villa Medici. There he was on French soil.* And again what a marvellous garden he found with box-plants, and pines, and avenues full of magnificence and charm! What a refuge for antique reverie was that wood of ilex-trees, so old and so sombre, where the sun in declining cast fiery gleams of red gold amidst the sheeny bronze of the foliage. You ascend by endless steps, and from the crowning belvedere on high you embrace all Rome at a glance as though by opening your arms you could seize it in its entirety. From the villa's dining-room, decorated with portraits of all the artists who have successfully sojourned there, and from the spacious peaceful library one beholds the same splendid, broad, all-conquering panorama, a panorama of unlimited ambition, whose infinite ought to set in the hearts of the young men dwelling there a determination to subjugate the world. Pierre, who came thither opposed to the principle of the "Prix de Rome," that traditional, uniform education so dangerous for originality, was for a moment charmed by the warm peacefulness, the limpid solitude of the garden, and the sublime horizon where the wings of genius seemed to flutter. Ah! how delightful, to be only twenty and to live for three years amidst such infinite sweetness, encompassed by the finest works of man; to say to oneself that one is as yet too young to produce, and to reflect, and seek, and learn how to enjoy, suffer, and love! But Pierre afterwards reflected that this was not a fit task for youth, and that to appreciate the divine enjoyment of such a retreat, all art and blue sky, ripe age was needed, age with victories already gained and weariness following upon the accomplishment of work. He chatted with

some of the young pensioners, and remarked that if those who were inclined to dreaminess and contemplation, like those who could merely claim mediocrity, accommodated themselves to this life cloistered in the art of the past, on the other hand artists of active bent and personal temperament pined with impatience, their eyes ever turned towards Paris, their souls eager to plunge into the furnace of battle and production.

* Here is the French Academy, where winners of the "Prix de Rome" in painting, sculpture, architecture, engraving, and music are maintained by the French Government for three years. The creation dates from Louis XIV.—Trans.

All those gardens of which Pierre spoke to Dario and Benedetta with so much rapture, awoke within them the memory of the garden of the Villa Montefiori, now a waste, but once so green, planted with the finest orange-trees of Rome, a grove of centenarian orange-trees where they had learnt to love one another. And the memory of their early love brought thoughts of their present situation and their future prospects. To these the conversation always reverted, and evening after evening Pierre witnessed their delight, and heard them talk of coming happiness like lovers transported to the seventh heaven. The suit for the dissolution of Benedetta's marriage was now assuming a more and more favourable aspect. Guided by a powerful hand, Donna Serafina was apparently acting very vigorously, for almost every day she had some further good news to report. She was indeed anxious to finish the affair both for the continuity and for the honour of the name, for on the one hand Dario refused to marry any one but his cousin, and on the other this marriage would explain everything and put an end to an intolerable situation. The scandalous rumours which circulated both in the white and the black world quite incensed her, and a victory was the more necessary as Leo XIII, already so aged, might be snatched away at any moment, and in the Conclave which would follow she desired that her brother's name should shine forth with untarnished, sovereign radiance. Never had the secret ambition of her life, the hope that her race might give a third pope to the Church, filled her with so much passion. It was as if she therein sought a consolation for the harsh abandonment of Advocate Morano. Invariably clad in sombre garb, ever active and slim, so tightly laced that from behind one might have taken her for a young girl, she was so to say the black soul of that old palace; and Pierre, who met her everywhere, prowling and inspecting like a careful house-keeper, and jealously watching over her brother the Cardinal, bowed to her in silence, chilled to the heart by the stern look of her withered wrinkled face in which was set the large, opiniative nose of her family. However she barely returned his bows, for she still disdained that paltry foreign priest, and only tolerated him in order to please Monsignor Nani and Viscount Philibert de la Choue.

A witness every evening of the anxious delight and impatience of Benedetta and Dario, Pierre by degrees became almost as impassioned as themselves, as desirous for an early solution. Benedetta's suit was about to come before the Congregation of the Council once more. Monsignor Palma, the defender of the marriage, had demanded a supplementary inquiry after the favourable decision arrived at in the first instance by a bare majority of one vote—a majority which the Pope would certainly not have thought sufficient had he been asked for his ratification. So the question now was to gain votes among the ten cardinals who formed the Congregation, to persuade and convince them, and if possible ensure an almost unanimous pronouncement. The task was arduous, for, instead of facilitating matters, Benedetta's relationship to Cardinal Boccanera raised many difficulties, owing to the intriguing spirit rife at the Vatican, the spite of rivals who, by perpetuating the scandal, hoped to destroy Boccanera's chance of ever attaining to the papacy. Every afternoon, however, Donna Serafina devoted herself to the task of winning votes under the direction of her confessor, Father Lorenza, whom she saw daily at the Collegio Germanico, now the last refuge of the Jesuits in Rome, for they have ceased to be masters of the Gesu. The chief hope of success lay in Prada's formal declaration that he would not put in an appearance. The whole affair wearied and irritated him; the imputations levelled against him as a man, seemed to him supremely odious and ridiculous; and he no longer even took the trouble to reply to the assignations which were sent to him. He acted indeed as if he had never been married, though deep in his heart the wound dealt to his passion and his pride still lingered, bleeding afresh whenever one or another of the scandalous rumours in circulation reached his ears. However, as their adversary desisted from all action, one can understand that the hopes of Benedetta and Dario increased, the more so as hardly an evening passed without Donna Serafina telling them that she believed she had gained the support of another cardinal.

But the man who terrified them all was Monsignor Palma, whom the Congregation had appointed to defend the sacred ties of matrimony. His rights and privileges were almost unlimited, he could appeal yet again, and in any case would make the affair drag on as long as it pleased him. His first report, in reply to Morano's memoir, had been a terrible blow, and it was now said that a second one which he was preparing would prove yet more pitiless, establishing as a fundamental principle of the Church that it could not annul a marriage whose nonconsummation was purely and simply due to the action of the wife in refusing obedience to her husband. In presence of such energy and logic, it was unlikely that

the cardinals, even if sympathetic, would dare to advise the Holy Father to dissolve the marriage. And so discouragement was once more overcoming Benedetta when Donna Serafina, on returning from a visit to Monsignor Nani, calmed her somewhat by telling her that a mutual friend had undertaken to deal with Monsignor Palma. However, said she, even if they succeeded, it would doubtless cost them a large sum.

Monsignor Palma, a theologian expert in all canonical affairs, and a perfectly honest man in pecuniary matters, had met with a great misfortune in his life. He had a niece, a poor and lovely girl, for whom, unhappily, in his declining years he conceived an insensate passion, with the result that to avoid a scandal he was compelled to marry her to a rascal who now preyed upon her and even beat her. And the prelate was now passing through a fearful crisis, weary of reducing himself to beggary, and indeed no longer having the money necessary to extricate his nephew by marriage from a very nasty predicament, the result of cheating at cards. So the idea was to save the young man by a considerable pecuniary payment, and then to procure him employment without asking aught of his uncle, who, as if offering complicity, came in tears one evening, when night had fallen, to thank Donna Serafina for her exceeding goodness.

Pierre was with Dario that evening when Benedetta entered the room, laughing and joyfully clapping her hands. "It's done, it's done!" she said, "he has just left aunt, and vowed eternal gratitude to her. He will now be obliged to show himself amiable."

However Dario distrustfully inquired: "But was he made to sign anything, did he enter into a formal engagement?"

"Oh! no; how could one do that? It's such a delicate matter," replied Benedetta. "But people say that he is a very honest man." Nevertheless, in spite of these words, she herself became uneasy. What if Monsignor Palma should remain incorruptible in spite of the great service which had been rendered him? Thenceforth this idea haunted them, and their suspense began once more.

Dario, eager to divert his mind, was imprudent enough to get up before he was perfectly cured, and, his wound reopening, he was obliged to take to his bed again for a few days. Every evening, as previously, Pierre strove to enliven him with an account of his strolls. The young priest was now getting bolder, rambling in turn through all the districts of Rome, and discovering the many "classical" curiosities catalogued in the guide-books. One evening he spoke with a kind of affection of the principal squares of the city which he had first thought commonplace, but which now seemed to him very varied, each with original features of its own. There was the noble Piazza del Popolo of such monumental symmetry and so full of sunlight; there was the Piazza di Spagna, the lively meeting-place of foreigners, with its double flight of a hundred and thirty steps gilded by the sun; there was the vast Piazza Colonna, always swarming with people, and the most Italian of all the Roman squares from the presence of the idle, careless crowd which ever lounged round the column of Marcus Aurelius as if waiting for fortune to fall from heaven; there was also the long and regular Piazza Navona, deserted since the market was no longer held there, and retaining a melancholy recollection of its former bustling life; and there was the Campo dei Fiori, which was invaded each morning by the tumultuous fruit and vegetable markets, quite a plantation of huge umbrellas sheltering heaps of tomatoes, pimentos, and grapes amidst a noisy stream of dealers and housewives. Pierre's great surprise, however, was the Piazza del Campidoglio—the "Square of the Capitol"—which to him suggested a summit, an open spot overlooking the city and the world, but which he found to be small and square, and on three sides enclosed by palaces, whilst on the fourth side the view was of little extent.* There are no passers-by there; visitors usually come up by a flight of steps bordered by a few palm-trees, only foreigners making use of the winding carriage-ascent. The vehicles wait, and the tourists loiter for a while with their eyes raised to the admirable equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, in antique bronze, which occupies the centre of the piazza. Towards four o'clock, when the sun gilds the left-hand palace, and the slender statues of its entablature show vividly against the blue sky, you might think yourself in some warm cosy square of a little provincial town, what with the women of the neighbourhood who sit knitting under the arcade, and the bands of ragged urchins who disport themselves on all sides like school-boys in a playground.

* The Piazza del Campidoglio is really a depression between the Capitolium proper and the northern height called the Arx. It is supposed to have been the exact site of Romulus's traditional Asylum.—Trans.

Then, on another evening Pierre told Benedetta and Dario of his admiration for the Roman fountains, for in no other city of the world does water flow so abundantly and magnificently in fountains of bronze and marble, from the boat-shaped Fontana della Barcaccia on the Piazza di Spagna, the Triton on the Piazza Barberini, and the Tortoises which give their name to the Piazza delle Tartarughe, to the three

fountains of the Piazza Navona where Bernini's vast central composition of rock and river-gods rises so triumphantly, and to the colossal and pompous fountain of Trevi, where King Neptune stands on high attended by lofty figures of Health and Fruitfulness. And on yet another evening Pierre came home quite pleased, relating that he had at last discovered why it was that the old streets around the Capitol and along the Tiber seemed to him so strange: it was because they had no footways, and pedestrians, instead of skirting the walls, invariably took the middle of the road, leisurely wending their way among the vehicles. Pierre was very fond of those old districts with their winding lanes, their tiny squares so irregular in shape, and their huge square mansions swamped by a multitudinous jumble of little houses. He found a charm, too, in the district of the Esquiline, where, besides innumerable flights of ascending steps, each of grey pebbles edged with white stone, there were sudden sinuous slopes, tiers of terraces, seminaries and convents, lifeless, with their windows ever closed, and lofty, blank walls above which a superb palm-tree would now and again soar into the spotless blue of the sky. And on yet another evening, having strolled into the Campagna beside the Tiber and above the Ponte Molle, he came back full of enthusiasm for a form of classical art which hitherto he had scarcely appreciated. Along the river bank, however, he had found the very scenery that Poussin so faithfully depicted: the sluggish, yellow stream fringed with reeds; low riven cliffs, whose chalky whiteness showed against the ruddy background of a far-stretching, undulating plain, bounded by blue hills; a few spare trees with a ruined porticus opening on to space atop of the bank, and a line of pale-hued sheep descending to drink, whilst the shepherd, with an elbow resting on the trunk of an ilex-tree, stood looking on. It was a special kind of beauty, broad and ruddy, made up of nothing, sometimes simplified into a series of low, horizontal lines, but ever ennobled by the great memories it evoked: the Roman legions marching along the paved highways across the bare Campagna; the long slumber of the middle ages; and then the awakening of antique nature in the midst of Catholicism, whereby, for the second time, Rome became ruler of the world.

One day when Pierre came back from seeing the great modern cemetery, the Campo Verano, he found Celia, as well as Benedetta, by the side of Dario's bed. "What, Monsieur l'Abbe!" exclaimed the little Princess when she learnt where he had been; "it amuses you to visit the dead?"

"Oh those Frenchmen," remarked Dario, to whom the mere idea of a cemetery was repulsive; "those Frenchmen seem to take a pleasure in making their lives wretched with their partiality for gloomy scenes."

"But there is no escaping the reality of death," gently replied Pierre; "the best course is to look it in the face."

This made the Prince quite angry. "Reality, reality," said he, "when reality isn't pleasant I don't look at it; I try never to think of it even."

In spite of this rejoinder, Pierre, with his smiling, placid air, went on enumerating the things which had struck him: first, the admirable manner in which the cemetery was kept, then the festive appearance which it derived from the bright autumn sun, and the wonderful profusion in which marble was lavished in slabs, statues, and chapels. The ancient atavism had surely been at work, the sumptuous mausoleums of the Appian Way had here sprung up afresh, making death a pretext for the display of pomp and pride. In the upper part of the cemetery the Roman nobility had a district of its own, crowded with veritable temples, colossal statues, groups of several figures; and if at times the taste shown in these monuments was deplorable, it was none the less certain that millions had been expended on them. One charming feature of the place, said Pierre, was that the marbles, standing among yews and cypresses were remarkably well preserved, white and spotless; for, if the summer sun slowly gilded them, there were none of those stains of moss and rain which impart an aspect of melancholy decay to the statues of northern climes.

Touched by the discomfort of Dario, Benedetta, hitherto silent, ended by interrupting Pierre. "And was the hunt interesting?" she asked, turning to Celia.

The little Princess had been taken by her mother to see a fox-hunt, and had been speaking of it when the priest entered the room.

"Yes, it was very interesting, my dear," she replied; "the meet was at noon near the tomb of Caecilia Metella, where a buffet had been arranged under a tent. And there was such a number of people—the foreign colony, the young men of the embassies, and some officers, not to mention ourselves—all the men in scarlet and a great many ladies in habits. The 'throw-off' was at one o'clock, and the gallop lasted more than two hours and a half, so that the fox had a very long run. I wasn't able to follow, but all the same I saw some extraordinary things—a great wall which the whole hunt had to leap, and then ditches and hedges—a mad race indeed in the rear of the hounds. There were two accidents, but nothing serious; one gentleman, who was unseated, sprained his wrist badly, and another broke his

leg."*

* The Roman Hunt, which counts about one hundred subscribers, has flourished since 1840. There is a kennel of English hounds, an English huntsman and whip, and a stable of English hunters.—Trans.

Dario had listened to Celia with passionate interest, for fox-hunting is one of the great pleasures of Rome, and the Campagna, flat and yet bristling with obstacles, is certainly well adapted to the sport. "Ah!" said the young Prince in a despairing tone, "how idiotic it is to be riveted to this room! I shall end by dying of /ennui!"

Benedetta contented herself with smiling; neither reproach nor expression of sadness came from her at this candid display of egotism. Her own happiness at having him all to herself in the room where she nursed him was great indeed; still her love, at once full of youth and good sense, included a maternal element, and she well understood that he hardly amused himself, deprived as he was of his customary pleasures and severed from his friends, few of whom he was willing to receive, for he feared that they might think the story of the dislocated shoulder suspicious. Of course there were no more /fetes/, no more evenings at the theatre, no more flirtations. But above everything else Dario missed the Corso, and suffered despairingly at no longer seeing or learning anything by watching the procession of Roman society from four to five each afternoon. Accordingly, as soon as an intimate called, there were endless questions: Had the visitor seen so and so? Had such a one reappeared? How had a certain friend's love affair ended? Was any new adventure setting the city agog? And so forth; all the petty frivolities, nine days' wonders, and puerile intrigues in which the young Prince had hitherto expended his manly energy.

After a pause Celia, who was fond of coming to him with innocent gossip, fixed her candid eyes on him—the fathomless eyes of an enigmatical virgin, and resumed: "How long it takes to set a shoulder right!"

Had she, child as she was, with love her only business, divined the truth? Dario in his embarrassment glanced at Benedetta, who still smiled. However, the little Princess was already darting to another subject: "Ah! you know, Dario, at the Corso yesterday I saw a lady—" Then she stopped short, surprised and embarrassed that these words should have escaped her. However, in all bravery she resumed like one who had been a friend since childhood, sharing many a little love secret: "Yes, a very pretty person whom you know. Well, she had a bouquet of white roses with her all the same."

At this Benedetta indulged in a burst of frank merriment, and Dario, still looking at her, also laughed. She had twitted him during the early days because no young woman ever sent to make inquiries about him. For his part, he was not displeased with the rupture, for the continuance of the connection might have proved embarrassing; and so, although his vanity may have been slightly hurt, the news that he was already replaced in La Tonietta's affections was welcome rather than otherwise. "Ah!" he contented himself with saying, "the absent are always in the wrong."

"The man one loves is never absent," declared Celia with her grave, candid air.

However, Benedetta had stepped up to the bed to raise the young man's pillows: "Never mind, Dario /mio/," said she, "all those things are over; I mean to keep you, and you will only have me to love."

He gave her a passionate glance and kissed her hair. She spoke the truth: he had never loved any one but her, and she was not mistaken in her anticipation of keeping him always to herself alone, as soon as they should be wedded. To her great delight, since she had been nursing him he had become quite childish again, such as he had been when she had learnt to love him under the orange-trees of the Villa Montefiori. He retained a sort of puerility, doubtless the outcome of impoverished blood, that return to childhood which one remarks amongst very ancient races; and he toyed on his bed with pictures, gazed for hours at photographs, which made him laugh. Moreover, his inability to endure suffering had yet increased; he wished Benedetta to be gay and sing, and amused her with his petty egotism which led him to dream of a life of continual joy with her. Ah! how pleasant it would be to live together and for ever in the sunlight, to do nothing and care for nothing, and even if the world should crumble somewhere to heed it not!

"One thing which greatly pleases me," suddenly said the young Prince, "is that Monsieur l'Abbe has ended by falling in love with Rome."

Pierre admitted it with a good grace.

"We told you so," remarked Benedetta. "A great deal of time is needed for one to understand and love Rome. If you had only stayed here for a fortnight you would have gone off with a deplorable idea of us, but now that you have been here for two full months we are quite at ease, for you will never think of us

without affection."

She looked exceedingly charming as she spoke these words, and Pierre again bowed. However, he had already given thought to the phenomenon, and fancied he could explain it. When a stranger comes to Rome he brings with him a Rome of his own, a Rome such as he dreams of, so ennobled by imagination that the real Rome proves a terrible disenchantment. And so it is necessary to wait for habituation, for the mediocrity of the reality to soften, and for the imagination to have time to kindle again, and only behold things such as they are athwart the prodigious splendour of the past.

However, Celia had risen and was taking leave. "Good-bye, dear," she said; "I hope the wedding will soon take place. You know, Dario, that I mean to be betrothed before the end of the month. Oh yes, I intend to make my father give a grand entertainment. And how nice it would be if the two weddings could take place at the same time!"

Two days later, after a long ramble through the Trastevere district, followed by a visit to the Palazzo Farnese, Pierre felt that he could at last understand the terrible, melancholy truth about Rome. He had several times already strolled through the Trastevere, attracted towards its wretched denizens by his compassion for all who suffered. Ah! that quagmire of wretchedness and ignorance! He knew of abominable nooks in the faubourgs of Paris, frightful "rents" and "courts" where people rotted in heaps, but there was nothing in France to equal the listless, filthy stagnation of the Trastevere. On the brightest days a dank gloom chilled the sinuous, cellar-like lanes, and the smell of rotting vegetables, rank oil, and human animality brought on fits of nausea. Jumbled together in a confusion which artists of romantic turn would admire, the antique, irregular houses had black, gaping entrances diving below ground, outdoor stairways conducting to upper floors, and wooden balconies which only a miracle upheld. There were crumbling fronts, shored up with beams; sordid lodgings whose filth and bareness could be seen through shattered windows; and numerous petty shops, all the open-air cook-stalls of a lazy race which never lighted a fire at home: you saw frying-shops with heaps of polenta, and fish swimming in stinking oil, and dealers in cooked vegetables displaying huge turnips, celery, cauliflowers, and spinach, all cold and sticky. The butcher's meat was black and clumsily cut up; the necks of the animals bristled with bloody clots, as though the heads had simply been torn away. The baker's loaves, piled on planks, looked like little round paving stones; at the beggarly greengrocers' merely a few pimentoes and fir-apples were shown under the strings of dry tomatoes which festooned the doorways; and the only shops which were at all attractive were those of the pork butchers with their salted provisions and their cheese, whose pungent smell slightly attenuated the pestilential reek of the gutters. Lottery offices, displaying lists of winning numbers, alternated with wine-shops, of which latter there was a fresh one every thirty yards with large inscriptions setting forth that the best wines of Genzano, Marino, and Frascati were to be found within. And the whole district teemed with ragged, grimy denizens, children half naked and devoured by vermin, bare-headed, gesticulating and shouting women, whose skirts were stiff with grease, old men who remained motionless on benches amidst swarms of hungry flies; idleness and agitation appearing on all sides, whilst cobblers sat on the sidewalks quietly plying their trade, and little donkeys pulled carts hither and thither, and men drove turkeys along, whip in hand, and hands of beggars rushed upon the few anxious tourists who had timorously ventured into the district. At the door of a little tailor's shop an old house-pail dangled full of earth, in which a succulent plant was flowering. And from every window and balcony, as from the many cords which stretched across the street from house to house, all the household washing hung like bunting, nameless drooping rags, the symbolical banners of abominable misery.

Pierre's fraternal, soul filled with pity at the sight. Ah! yes, it was necessary to demolish all those pestilential districts where the populace had wallowed for centuries as in a poisonous gaol! He was for demolition and sanitary improvement, even if old Rome were killed and artists scandalised. Doubtless the Trastevere was already greatly changed, pierced with several new thoroughfares which let the sun stream in. And amidst the /abattis/ of rubbish and the spacious clearings, where nothing new had yet been erected, the remaining portions of the old district seemed even blacker and more loathsome. Some day, no doubt, it would all be rebuilt, but how interesting was this phase of the city's evolution: old Rome expiring and new Rome just dawning amidst countless difficulties! To appreciate the change it was necessary to have known the filthy Rome of the past, swamped by sewage in every form. The recently levelled Ghetto had, over a course of centuries, so rotted the soil on which it stood that an awful pestilential odour yet arose from its bare site. It was only fitting that it should long remain waste, so that it might dry and become purified in the sun. In all the districts on either side of the Tiber where extensive improvements have been undertaken you find the same scenes. You follow some narrow, damp, evil-smelling street with black house-fronts and overhanging roofs, and suddenly come upon a clearing as in a forest of ancient leprous hovels. There are squares, broad footways; lofty white carved buildings yet in the rough, littered with rubbish and fenced off. On every side you find as it were a huge building yard, which the financial crisis perpetuates; the city of to-morrow arrested in its growth, stranded there in its monstrous, precocious, surprising infancy. Nevertheless, therein lies good and

healthful work, such as was and is absolutely necessary if Rome is to become a great modern city, instead of being left to rot, to dwindle into a mere ancient curiosity, a museum show-piece.

That day, as Pierre went from the Trastevere to the Palazzo Farnese, where he was expected, he chose a roundabout route, following the Via di Pettinari and the Via dei Giubbonari, the former so dark and narrow with a great hospital wall on one side and a row of wretched houses on the other, and the latter animated by a constant stream of people and enlivened by the jewellers' windows, full of big gold chains, and the displays of the drapers' shops, where stuffs hung in bright red, blue, green, and yellow lengths. And the popular district through which he had roamed and the trading district which he was now crossing reminded him of the castle fields with their mass of workpeople reduced to mendicity by lack of employment and forced to camp in the superb, unfinished, abandoned mansions. Ah! the poor, sad people, who were yet so childish, kept in the ignorance and credulity of a savage race by centuries of theocracy, so habituated to mental night and bodily suffering that even to-day they remained apart from the social awakening, simply desirous of enjoying their pride, indolence, and sunlight in peace! They seemed both blind and deaf in their decadence, and whilst Rome was being overturned they continued to lead the stagnant life of former times, realising nought but the worries of the improvements, the demolition of the old favourite districts, the consequent change in habits, and the rise in the cost of food, as if indeed they would rather have gone without light, cleanliness, and health, since these could only be secured by a great financial and labour crisis. And yet, at bottom, it was solely for the people, the populace, that Rome was being cleansed and rebuilt with the idea of making it a great modern capital, for democracy lies at the end of these present day transformations; it is the people who will inherit the cities whence dirt and disease are being expelled, and where the law of labour will end by prevailing and killing want. And so, though one may curse the dusting and repairing of the ruins and the stripping of all the wild flora from the Colosseum, though one may wax indignant at sight of the hideous fortress like ramparts which imprison the Tiber, and bewail the old romantic banks with their greenery and their antique dwellings dipping into the stream, one must at the same time acknowledge that life springs from death, and that to-morrow must perforce blossom in the dust of the past.

While thinking of all these things Pierre had reached the deserted, stern-looking Piazza Farnese, and for a moment he looked up at the bare monumental facade of the heavy square Palazzo, its lofty entrance where hung the tricolour, its rows of windows and its famous cornice sculptured with such marvellous art. Then he went in. A friend of Narcisse Habert, one of the /attaches/ of the embassy to the King of Italy, was waiting for him, having offered to show him over the huge pile, the finest palace in Rome, which France had leased as a lodging for her ambassador.* Ah! that colossal, sumptuous, deadly dwelling, with its vast court whose porticus is so dark and damp, its giant staircase with low steps, its endless corridors, its immense galleries and halls. All was sovereign pomp blended with death. An icy, penetrating chill fell from the walls. With a discreet smile the /attache/ owned that the embassy was frozen in winter and baked in summer. The only part of the building which was at all lively and pleasant was the first storey, overlooking the Tiber, which the ambassador himself occupied. From the gallery there, containing the famous frescoes of Annibale Caracci, one can see the Janiculum, the Corsini gardens, and the Acqua Paola above San Pietro in Montorio. Then, after a vast drawing-room comes the study, peaceful and pleasant, and enlivened by sunshine. But the dining-room, the bed-chambers, and other apartments occupied by the /personnel/ look out on to the mournful gloom of a side street. All these vast rooms, twenty and four-and-twenty feet high, have admirable carved or painted ceilings, bare walls, a few of them decorated with frescoes, and incongruous furniture, superb pier tables mingling with modern /bric-a-brac/. And things become abominable when you enter the gala reception-rooms overlooking the piazza, for there you no longer find an article of furniture, no longer a hanging, nothing but disaster, a series of magnificent deserted halls given over to rats and spiders. The embassy occupies but one of them, where it heaps up its dusty archives. Near by is a huge hall occupying the height of two floors, and thus sixty feet in elevation. Reserved by the owner of the palace, the ex-King of Naples, it has become a mere lumber-room where /maquettes/, unfinished statues, and a very fine sarcophagus are stowed away amidst all kinds of remnants. And this is but a part of the palace. The ground floor is altogether uninhabited; the French "Ecole de Rome" occupies a corner of the second floor; while the embassy huddles in chilly fashion in the most habitable corner of the first floor, compelled to abandon everything else and lock the doors to spare itself the useless trouble of sweeping. No doubt it is grand to live in the Palazzo Farnese, built by Pope Paul III and for more than a century inhabited by cardinals; but how cruel the discomfort and how frightful the melancholy of this huge ruin, three-fourths of whose rooms are dead, useless, impossible, cut off from life. And the evenings, oh! the evenings, when porch, court, stairs, and corridors are invaded by dense gloom, against which a few smoky gas lamps struggle in vain, when a long, long journey lies before one through the lugubrious desert of stone, before one reaches the ambassador's warm and cheerful drawing-room!

* The French have two embassies at Rome: one at the Palazzo

Farnese, to the Italian Court, and the other at the Palazzo Rospigliosi, to the Vatican.—Trans.

Pierre came away quite aghast. And, as he walked along, the many other grand palaces which he had seen during his strolls rose before him, one and all of them stripped of their splendour, shorn of their princely establishments, let out in uncomfortable flats! What could be done with those grandiose galleries and halls now that no fortune could defray the cost of the pompous life for which they had been built, or even feed the retinue needed to keep them up? Few indeed were the nobles who, like Prince Aldobrandini, with his numerous progeny, still occupied their entire mansions. Almost all of them let the antique dwellings of their forefathers to companies or individual tenants, reserving only a storey, and at times a mere lodging in some dark corner, for themselves. The Palazzo Chigi was let: the ground floor to bankers and the first floor to the Austrian ambassador, while the Prince and his family divided the second floor with a cardinal. The Palazzo Sciarra was let: the first floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the second to a senator, while the Prince and his mother merely occupied the ground floor. The Palazzo Barberini was let: its ground floor, first floor, and second floor to various families, whilst the Prince found a refuge on the third floor in the rooms which had been occupied by his ancestors' lackeys. The Palazzo Borghese was let: the ground floor to a dealer in antiquities, the first floor to a Lodge of Freemasons, and the rest to various households, whilst the Prince only retained the use of a small suite of apartments. And the Palazzo Odescalchi, the Palazzo Colonna, the Palazzo Doria were let: their Princes reduced to the position of needy landlords eager to derive as much profit as possible from their property in order to make both ends meet. A blast of ruin was sweeping over the Roman patriziato, the greatest fortunes had crumbled in the financial crisis, very few remained wealthy, and what a wealth it was, stagnant and dead, which neither commerce nor industry could renew. The numerous princes who had tried speculation were stripped of their fortunes. The others, terrified, called upon to pay enormous taxes, amounting to nearly one-third of their incomes, could henceforth only wait and behold their last stagnant millions dwindle away till they were exhausted or distributed according to the succession laws. Such wealth as remained to these nobles must perish, for, like everything else, wealth perishes when it lacks a soil in which it may fructify. In all this there was solely a question of time: eventual ruin was a foregone and irremediable conclusion, of absolute, historical certainty. Those who resigned themselves to the course of letting their deserted mansions still struggled for life, seeking to accommodate themselves to present-day exigencies; whilst death already dwelt among the others, those stubborn, proud ones who immured themselves in the tombs of their race, like that appalling Palazzo Boccanera, which was falling into dust amidst such chilly gloom and silence, the latter only broken at long intervals when the Cardinal's old coach rumbled over the grassy court.

The point which most struck Pierre, however, was that his visits to the Trastevere and the Palazzo Farnese shed light one on the other, and led him to a conclusion which had never previously seemed so manifest. As yet no "people," and soon no aristocracy. He had found the people so wretched, ignorant, and resigned in its long infancy induced by historic and climatic causes that many years of instruction and culture were necessary for it to become a strong, healthy, and laborious democracy, conscious of both its rights and its duties. As for the aristocracy, it was dwindling to death in its crumbling palaces, no longer aught than a finished, degenerate race, with such an admixture also of American, Austrian, Polish, and Spanish blood that pure Roman blood became a rare exception; and, moreover, it had ceased to belong either to sword or gown, unwilling to serve constitutional Italy and forsaking the Sacred College, where only /parvenus/ now donned the purple. And between the lowly and the aristocracy there was as yet no firmly seated middle class, with the vigour of fresh sap and sufficient knowledge, and good sense to act as the transitional educator of the nation. The middle class was made up in part of the old servants and clients of the princes, the farmers who rented their lands, the stewards, notaries, and solicitors who managed their fortunes; in part, too, of all the employees, the functionaries of every rank and class, the deputies and senators, whom the new Government had brought from the provinces; and, in particular, of the voracious hawks who had swooped down upon Rome, the Pradas, the men of prey from all parts of the kingdom, who with beak and talon devoured both people and aristocracy. For whom, then, had one laboured? For whom had those gigantic works of new Rome been undertaken? A shudder of fear sped by, a crack as of doom was heard, arousing pitiful disquietude in every fraternal heart. Yes, a threat of doom and annihilation: as yet no people, soon no aristocracy, and only a ravenous middle class, quarrying, vulture-like, among the ruins.

On the evening of that day, when all was dark, Pierre went to spend an hour on the river quay beyond the Boccanera mansion. He was very fond of meditating on that deserted spot in spite of the warnings of Victorine, who asserted that it was not safe. And, indeed, on such inky nights as that one, no cutthroat place ever presented a more tragic aspect. Not a soul, not a passer-by; a dense gloom, a void in front and on either hand. At a corner of the mansion, now steeped in darkness, there was a gas lamp which stood in a hollow since the river margin had been banked up, and this lamp cast an uncertain glimmer upon the quay, level with the latter's bossy soil. Thus long vague shadows stretched from the

various materials, piles of bricks and piles of stone, which were strewn around. On the right a few lights shone upon the bridge near San Giovanni and in the windows of the hospital of the Santo Spirito. On the left, amidst the dim recession of the river, the distant districts were blotted out. Then yonder, across the stream, was the Trastevere, the houses on the bank looking like vague, pale phantoms, with infrequent window-panes showing a blurred yellow glimmer, whilst on high only a dark band shadowed the Janiculum, near whose summit the lamps of some promenade scintillated like a triangle of stars. But it was the Tiber which impassioned Pierre; such was its melancholy majesty during those nocturnal hours. Leaning over the parapet, he watched it gliding between the new walls, which looked like those of some black and monstrous prison built for a giant. So long as lights gleamed in the windows of the houses opposite he saw the sluggish water flow by, showing slow, moire-like ripples there where the quivering reflections endowed it with a mysterious life. And he often mused on the river's famous past and evoked the legends which assert that fabulous wealth lies buried in its muddy bed. At each fresh invasion of the barbarians, and particularly when Rome was sacked, the treasures of palaces and temples are said to have been cast into the water to prevent them from falling into the hands of the conquerors. Might not those golden bars trembling yonder in the glaucous stream be the branches of the famous candelabrum which Titus brought from Jerusalem? Might not those pale patches whose shape remained uncertain amidst the frequent eddies indicate the white marble of statues and columns? And those deep moires glittering with little flamelets, were they not promiscuous heaps of precious metal, cups, vases, ornaments enriched with gems? What a dream was that of the swarming riches espied athwart the old river's bosom, of the hidden life of the treasures which were said to have slumbered there for centuries; and what a hope for the nation's pride and enrichment centred in the miraculous finds which might be made in the Tiber if one could some day dry it up and search its bed, as had already been suggested! Therein, perchance, lay Rome's new fortune.

However, on that black night, whilst Pierre leant over the parapet, it was stern reality alone which occupied his mind. He was still pursuing the train of thought suggested by his visits to the Trastevere and the Farnese palace, and in presence of that lifeless water was coming to the conclusion that the selection of Rome for transformation into a modern capital was the great misfortune to which the sufferings of young Italy were due. He knew right well that the selection had been inevitable: Rome being the queen of glory, the antique ruler of the world to whom eternity had been promised, and without whom the national unity had always seemed an impossibility. And so the problem was a terrible one, since without Rome Italy could not exist, and with Rome it seemed difficult for it to exist. Ah! that dead river, how it symbolised disaster! Not a boat upon its surface, not a quiver of the commercial and industrial activity of those waters which bear life to the very hearts of great modern cities! There had been fine schemes, no doubt—Rome a seaport, gigantic works, canalisation to enable vessels of heavy tonnage to come up to the Aventine; but these were mere delusions; the authorities would scarcely be able to clear the river mouth, which deposits were continually choking. And there was that other cause of mortal languishment, the Campagna—the desert of death which the dead river crossed and which girdled Rome with sterility. There was talk of draining and planting it; much futile discussion on the question whether it had been fertile in the days of the old Romans; and even a few experiments were made; but, all the same, Rome remained in the midst of a vast cemetery like a city of other times, for ever separated from the modern world by that /lande/ or moor where the dust of centuries had accumulated. The geographical considerations which once gave the city the empire of the world no longer exist. The centre of civilisation has been displaced. The basin of the Mediterranean has been divided among powerful nations. In Italy all roads now lead to Milan, the city of industry and commerce, and Rome is but a town of passage. And so the most valiant efforts have failed to rouse it from its invincible slumber. The capital which the newcomers sought to improvise with such extreme haste has remained unfinished, and has almost ruined the nation. The Government, legislators, and functionaries only camp there, fleeing directly the warm weather sets in so as to escape the pernicious climate. The hotels and shops even put up their shutters, and the streets and promenades become deserts, the city having failed to acquire any life of its own, and relapsing into death as soon as the artificial life instilled into it is withdrawn. So all remains in suspense in this purely decorative capital, where only a fresh growth of men and money can finish and people the huge useless piles of the new districts. If it be true that to-morrow always blooms in the dust of the past, one ought to force oneself to hope; but Pierre asked himself if the soil were not exhausted, and since mere buildings could no longer grow on it, if it were not for ever drained of the sap which makes a race healthy, a nation powerful.

As the night advanced the lights in the houses of the Trastevere went out one by one: yet Pierre for a long time lingered on the quay, leaning over the blackened river and yielding to hopelessness. There was now no distance to the gloom; all had become dense; no longer did any reflections set a moire-like, golden quiver in the water, or reveal beneath its mystery-concealing current a fantastic, dancing vision of fabulous wealth. Gone was the legend, gone the seven-branched golden candelabrum, gone the golden vases, gone the golden jewellery, the whole dream of antique treasure that had vanished into night, even like the antique glory of Rome. Not a glimmer, nothing but slumber, disturbed solely by the heavy fall of sewage from the drain on the right-hand, which could not be seen. The very water had

disappeared, and Pierre no longer espied its leaden flow through the darkness, no longer had any perception of the sluggish senility, the long-dating weariness, the intense sadness of that ancient and glorious Tiber, whose waters now rolled nought but death. Only the vast, opulent sky, the eternal, pompous sky displayed the dazzling life of its milliards of planets above that river of darkness, bearing away the ruins of wellnigh three thousand years.

Before returning to his own chamber that evening Pierre entered Dario's room, and found Victorine there preparing things for the night. And as soon as she heard where he had been she raised her voice in protest: "What! you have again been to the quay at this time of night, Monsieur l'Abbe? You want to get a good knife thrust yourself, it seems. Well, for my part, I certainly wouldn't take the air at such a late hour in this dangerous city." Then, with her wonted familiarity, she turned and spoke to the Prince, who was lying back in an arm-chair and smiling: "That girl, La Pierina," she said, "hasn't been back here, but all the same I've lately seen her prowling about among the building materials."

Dario raised his hand to silence her, and, addressing Pierre, exclaimed: "But you spoke to her, didn't you? It's becoming idiotic! Just fancy that brute Tito coming back to dig his knife into my other shoulder—"

All at once he paused, for he had just perceived Benedetta standing there and listening to him; she had slipped into the room a moment previously in order to wish him good-night. At sight of her his embarrassment was great indeed; he wished to speak, explain his words, and swear that he was wholly innocent in the affair. But she, with a smiling face, contented herself with saying, "I knew all about it, Dario /mio/. I am not so foolish as not to have thought it all over and understood the truth. If I ceased questioning you it was because I knew, and loved you all the same."

The young woman looked very happy as she spoke, and for this she had good cause, for that very evening she had learnt that Monsignor Palma had shown himself grateful for the service rendered to his nephew by laying a fresh and favourable memoir on the marriage affair before the Congregation of the Council. He had been unwilling to recall his previous opinions so far as to range himself completely on the Contessina's side, but the certificates of two doctors whom she had recently seen had enabled him to conclude that her own declarations were accurate. And gliding over the question of wifely obedience, on which he had previously laid stress, he had skilfully set forth the reasons which made a dissolution of the marriage desirable. No hope of reconciliation could be entertained, so it was certain that both parties were constantly exposed to temptation and sin. He discreetly alluded to the fact that the husband had already succumbed to this danger, and praised the wife's lofty morality and piety, all the virtues which she displayed, and which guaranteed her veracity. Then, without formulating any conclusion of his own, he left the decision to the wisdom of the Congregation. And as he virtually repeated Advocate Morano's arguments, and Prada stubbornly refused to enter an appearance, it now seemed certain that the Congregation would by a great majority pronounce itself in favour of dissolution, a result which would enable the Holy Father to act benevolently.

"Ah! Dario /mio!/" said Benedetta, "we are at the end of our worries. But what a lot of money, what a lot of money it all costs! Aunt says that they will scarcely leave us water to drink."

So speaking she laughed with the happy heedlessness of an impassioned /amorosa/. It was not that the jurisdiction of the Congregations was in itself ruinous; indeed, in principle, it was gratuitous. Still there were a multitude of petty expenses, payments to subaltern employees, payments for medical consultations and certificates, copies of documents, and the memoirs and addresses of counsel. And although the votes of the cardinals were certainly not bought direct, some of them ended by costing considerable sums, for it often became necessary to win over dependants, to induce quite a little world to bring influence to bear upon their Eminences; without mentioning that large pecuniary gifts, when made with tact, have a decisive effect in clearing away the greatest difficulties in that sphere of the Vatican. And, briefly, Monsignor Palma's nephew by marriage had cost the Boccaneras a large sum.

"But it doesn't matter, does it, Dario /mio?/" continued Benedetta. "Since you are now cured, they must make haste to give us permission to marry. That's all we ask of them. And if they want more, well, I'll give them my pearls, which will be all I shall have left me."

He also laughed, for money had never held any place in his life. He had never had it at his pleasure, and simply hoped that he would always live with his uncle the cardinal, who would certainly not leave him and his young wife in the streets. Ruined as the family was, one or two hundred thousand francs represented nothing to his mind, and he had heard that certain dissolutions of marriage had cost as much as half a million. So, by way of response, he could only find a jest: "Give them my ring as well," said he; "give them everything, my dear, and we shall still be happy in this old palace even if we have to sell the furniture!"

His words filled her with enthusiasm; she took his head between both hands and kissed him madly on

the eyes in an extraordinary transport of passion. Then, suddenly turning to Pierre, she said: "Oh! excuse me, Monsieur l'Abbe. I was forgetting that I have a commission for you. Yes, Monsignor Nani, who brought us that good news, bade me tell you that you are making people forget you too much, and that you ought to set to work to defend your book."

The priest listened in astonishment; then replied: "But it was he who advised me to disappear."

"No doubt—only it seems that the time has now come for you to see people and plead your cause. And Monsignor Nani has been able to learn that the reporter appointed to examine your book is Monsignor Fornaro, who lives on the Piazza Navona."

Pierre's stupefaction was increasing, for a reporter's name is never divulged, but kept quite secret, in order to ensure a free exercise of judgment. Was a new phase of his sojourn in Rome about to begin then? His mind was all wonderment. However, he simply answered: "Very good, I will set to work and see everybody."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE THREE CITIES TRILOGY: ROME, VOLUME 3

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