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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE THREE CITIES TRILOGY: PARIS,
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THE THREE CITIES

PARIS

BY

EMILE ZOLA

TRANSLATED BY ERNEST A. VIZETELLY

BOOK V

I

THE GUILLOTINE

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

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

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

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

This wounded him so keenly in the state of mind in which he found himself, that he could not help exclaiming: "Ah! they chose a good site for it, and how stupid it was to let them do so! I know of nothing more nonsensical; Paris crowned and dominated by that temple of idolatry! How impudent it is, what a buffet for the cause of reason after so many centuries of science, labour, and battle! And to think of it being reared over Paris, the one city in the world which ought never to have been soiled in this fashion! One can understand it at Lourdes and Rome; but not in Paris, in the very field of intelligence which has been so deeply ploughed, and whence the future is sprouting. It is a declaration of war, an insolent proclamation that they hope to conquer Paris also!"

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

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

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

They did not meet a living soul until they reached the outer boulevard. Here, however, no matter what the hour may be, life continues with scarcely a pause. No sooner are the wine shops, music and dancing halls closed, than vice and want, cast into the street, there resume their nocturnal existence. Thus the brothers came upon all the homeless ones: low prostitutes seeking a pallet, vagabonds stretched on the benches under the trees, rogues who prowled hither and thither on the lookout for a good stroke. Encouraged by their accomplice—night, all the mire and woe of Paris had returned to the surface. The empty roadway now belonged to the breadless, homeless starvelings, those for whom there was no place in the sunlight, the vague, swarming, despairing herd which is only espied at night-time. Ah! what spectres of destitution, what apparitions of grief and fright there were! What a sob of agony passed by in Paris that morning, when as soon as the dawn should rise, a man—a pauper, a sufferer like the others—was to be guillotined!

As Guillaume and Pierre were about to descend the Rue des Martyrs, the former perceived an old man lying on a bench with his bare feet protruding from his gaping, filthy shoes. Guillaume pointed to him in silence. Then, a few steps farther on, Pierre in his turn pointed to a ragged girl,

crouching, asleep with open mouth, in the corner of a doorway. There was no need for the brothers to express in words all the compassion and anger which stirred their hearts. At long intervals policemen, walking slowly two by two, shook the poor wretches and compelled them to rise and walk on and on. Occasionally, if they found them suspicious or refractory, they marched them off to the police-station. And then rancour and the contagion of imprisonment often transformed a mere vagabond into a thief or a murderer.

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

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

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

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

Here indeed they found solitude and darkness again.

The huge, massive prison with its great bare walls on which a moonray fell, looked like some pile of cold stones, dead for centuries past. At the end of the street they once more fell in with the crowd, a dim restless mass of beings, whose pale faces alone could be distinguished. The brothers had great difficulty in reaching the house in which Mege resided at the corner of the Rue Merlin. All the shutters of the fourth-floor flat occupied by the Socialist deputy were closed, though every other window was wide open and crowded with surging sightseers. Moreover, the wine shop down below and the first-floor room connected with it flared with gas, and were already crowded with noisy customers, waiting for the performance to begin.

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

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

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

The first-floor room was provided with a very large balcony, which women and gentlemen were already filling. The brothers nevertheless managed to reach it, and for a few minutes remained there, peering into the darkness before them. The sloping street grew broader between the two prisons, the "great" and the "little" Roquette, in such wise as to form a sort of square, which was shaded by four clumps of plane-trees, rising from the footways. The low buildings and scrubby trees, all poor and ugly of aspect, seemed almost to lie on a level with the ground, under a vast sky in which stars were appearing, as the moon gradually declined. And the square was quite empty save that on one spot yonder there seemed to be some little stir. Two rows of guards prevented the crowd from advancing, and even threw it back into the neighbouring streets. On the one hand, the only lofty houses were far away, at the point where the Rue St. Maur intersects the Rue de la Roquette; while, on the other, they stood at the corners of the Rue Merlin and the Rue de la Folie Regnault, so that it was almost impossible to distinguish anything of the execution even from the best placed windows. As for the inquisitive folk on the pavement they only saw the backs of the guards. Still this did not prevent a crush. The human tide flowed on from all sides with increasing clamour.

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

"We shall see nothing," Guillaume remarked.

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

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

Duthil smiled and responded: "I suppose that peace has been signed and ratified now that you have secured your engagement at the Comedie."

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

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

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

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

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

Thereupon they again became merry, and jested about the Duvillard family—father, mother, lover and daughter—with the greatest possible ferocity and crudity of language. Then, all at once

Silviane exclaimed: "Do you know, I'm feeling awfully bored here, my little Duthil. I can't distinguish anything, and I should like to be quite near so as to see it all plainly. You must take me over yonder, close to that machine of theirs."

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was impossible for Pierre and Guillaume to remain up there any longer. All that they heard, all that they beheld filled them with disgust. The boredom of waiting had turned all the inquisitive folks of the balcony and the adjoining room into customers. The waiter could hardly manage to serve the many glasses of beer, bottles of expensive wine, biscuits, and plates of cold meat which were ordered of him. And yet the spectators here were all *bourgeois*, rich gentlemen, people of society! On the other hand, time has to be killed somehow when it hangs heavily on one's hands; and thus there were bursts of laughter and paltry and horrible jests, quite a feverish uproar arising amidst the clouds of smoke from the men's cigars. When Pierre and Guillaume passed through the wine shop on the ground-floor they there found a similar crush and similar tumult, aggravated by the disorderly behaviour of the big fellows in blouses who were drinking draught wine at the pewter bar which shone like silver. There were people, too, at all the little tables, besides an incessant coming and going of folks who entered the place for a "wet," by way of calming their impatience. And what folks they were! All the scum, all the vagabonds who had been dragging themselves about since daybreak on the lookout for whatever chance might offer them, provided it were not work!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A hundred people or so, journalists and other privileged spectators, were scattered about the dark square. Movable wooden barriers—such as are set up at the doors of theatres when there is a press of people waiting for admission—had been placed on either side of the pavement running from the prison gate to the guillotine; and some sightseers were already leaning over these barriers, in order to secure a close view of the condemned man as he passed by. Others were walking slowly to and fro, and conversing in undertones. The brothers, for their part, approached the guillotine.

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

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

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

But daylight had come at last, for it was nearly half-past four. The distant noisy crowd could

feel that the expected moment was drawing nigh. A shudder suddenly sped through the atmosphere.

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

Then he related how the prisoner had been awakened; how the governor of the prison, magistrate Amadiou, the chaplain, and a few other persons had entered the cell where Salvat lay fast asleep; and then how the condemned man had understood the truth immediately upon opening his eyes. He had risen, looking pale but quite composed. And he had dressed himself without assistance, and had declined the nip of brandy and the cigarette proffered by the good-hearted chaplain, in the same way as with a gentle but stubborn gesture he had brushed the crucifix aside. Then had come the "toilette" for death. With all rapidity and without a word being exchanged, Salvat's hands had been tied behind his back, his legs had been loosely secured with a cord, and the neckband of his shirt had been cut away. He had smiled when the others exhorted him to be brave. He only feared some nervous weakness, and had but one desire, to die like a hero, to remain the martyr of the ardent faith in truth and justice for which he was about to perish.

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

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

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

"Look out, here he comes!"

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

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

"Long live Anarchy!"

It was Salvat who had raised this cry. But in the deep silence his husky, altered voice seemed

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

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

Ah! that dull, that heavy thud of the knife! It seemed to Guillaume that he had heard it echoing far away all over that district of want and toil, even in the squalid rooms where thousands of workmen were at that moment rising to perform their day's hard task! And there the echo of that thud acquired formidable significance; it spoke of man's exasperation with injustice, of zeal for martyrdom, and of the dolorous hope that the blood then spilt might hasten the victory of the disinherited.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standing there, hand in hand, they smiled at one another. Silviane was very drunk, but her virginal expression had returned to her face; whilst Rosemonde seemed feverish with vicious curiosity. Duthil, whom the scene amused, now had but one thought, that of seeing Silviane

home; so calling to Massot, who was approaching, he asked him where he should find a cab-rank. Rosemonde, however, at once offered her carriage, which was waiting in an adjacent street.

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

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

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

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

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

"Till to-morrow!"

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

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

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

They both turned into the Rue de la Folie Regnault, and reached the outer Boulevards by way of the Rue du Chemin Vert. All the toilers of the district were now at work. In the long streets edged with low buildings, work-shops and factories, one heard engines snorting and machinery rumbling, while up above, the smoke from the lofty chimneys was assuming a rosy hue in the sunrise. Afterwards, when the brothers reached the Boulevard de Menilmontant and the Boulevard de Belleville, which they followed in turn at a leisurely pace, they witnessed the great rush of the working classes into central Paris. The stream poured forth from every side; from all the wretched streets of the faubourgs there was an endless exodus of toilers, who, having risen at dawn, were now hurrying, in the sharp morning air, to their daily labour. Some wore short jackets and others blouses; some were in velveteen trousers, others in linen overalls. Their thick shoes made their tramp a heavy one; their hanging hands were often deformed by work. And they seemed half asleep, not a smile was to be seen on any of those wan, weary faces turned yonder towards the everlasting task—the task which was begun afresh each day, and which—'twas their only chance—they hoped to be able to take up for ever and ever. There was no end to that drove of toilers, that army of various callings, that human flesh fated to manual labour, upon which Paris preys in order that she may live in luxury and enjoyment.

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

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

Never before had it been so plainly manifest to Pierre that work was a necessity, that it

healed and saved. On the occasion of his visit to the Grandidier works, and later still, when he himself had felt the need of occupation, there had come to him the thought that work was really the world's law. And after that hateful night, after that spilling of blood, after the slaughter of that toiler maddened by his dreams, there was consolation and hope in seeing the sun rise once more, and everlasting labour take up its wonted task. However hard it might prove, however unjustly it might be lotted out, was it not work which would some day bring both justice and happiness to the world?

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

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

II

IN VANITY FAIR

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

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

"Who were those three?" the journalist inquired.

"The Duchess de Boisemont and her two daughters."

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

As a matter of fact all the spheres of "society" were gathered together there, and some at first seemed rather embarrassed at finding themselves beside others. Whilst Duvillard's name attracted all the princes of finance and politicians in power, Madame de Quinsac and her son were supported by the highest of the French aristocracy. The mere names of the witnesses sufficed to indicate what an extraordinary medley there was. On Gerard's side these witnesses were his uncle, General de Bozonnet, and the Marquis de Morigny; whilst on Camille's they were the great banker Louvard, and Monferrand, the President of the Council and Minister of Finances. The quiet bravado which the latter displayed in thus supporting the bride after being compromised in her father's financial intrigues imparted a piquant touch of impudence to his triumph. And public curiosity was further stimulated by the circumstance that the nuptial blessing was to be given by Monseigneur Martha, Bishop of Persepolis, the Pope's political agent in France, and the apostle of the endeavours to win the Republic over to the Church by pretending to "rally" to it.

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

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

Duthil found this very funny. Then in a confidential way he remarked: "You know that the marriage wasn't settled without a good deal of difficulty. . . . Have you read Sagnier's ignoble article this morning?"

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

Then in an undertone, understanding one another's slightest allusion, they went on chatting. It was only amidst a flood of tears and after a despairing struggle that Baroness Duvillard had consented to let her lover marry her daughter. And in doing so she had yielded to the sole desire of seeing Gerard rich and happy. She still regarded Camille with all the hatred of a defeated

rival. Then, an equally painful contest had taken place at Madame de Quinsac's. The Countess had only overcome her revolt and consented to the marriage in order to save her son from the dangers which had threatened him since childhood; and the Marquis de Morigny had been so affected by her maternal abnegation, that in spite of all his anger he had resignedly agreed to be a witness, thus making a supreme sacrifice, that of his conscience, to the woman whom he had ever loved. And it was this frightful story that Sagnier—using transparent nicknames—had related in the "Voix du Peuple" that morning. He had even contrived to make it more horrid than it really was; for, as usual, he was badly informed, and he was naturally inclined to falsehood and invention, as by sending an ever thicker and more poisonous torrent from his sewer, he might, day by day, increase his paper's sales. Since Monferrand's victory had compelled him to leave the African Railways scandal on one side, he had fallen back on scandals in private life, stripping whole families bare and pelting them with mud.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rosemonde, whom Hyacinthe had so greatly bored that she had given him his dismissal, felt the irony of Duthil's suggestion. Nevertheless, she exclaimed with an air of delight: "Ah, yes! Hyacinthe can't refuse me that. Thanks for your information, my dear Duthil. You are very nice, you are; for you settle things gaily even when they are rather sad. . . . And don't forget, mind,

that you have promised to teach me politics. Ah! politics, my dear fellow, I feel that nothing will ever impassion me as politics do!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

At this moment the organs suddenly burst into a glorious hymn of greeting. The marriage procession was entering the church. A loud clamour had gone up from the crowd, which spread over the roadway of the Rue Royale and impeded the traffic there, while the *cortege* pompously ascended the steps in the bright sunshine. And it was now entering the edifice and advancing beneath the lofty, re-echoing vaults towards the high altar which flared with candles, whilst on either hand crowded the congregation, the men on the right and the women on the left. They had all risen and stood there smiling, with necks outstretched and eyes glowing with curiosity.

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

Next came Gerard, giving his arm to his mother, the Countess de Quinsac,—he looking very handsome and courtly, as was proper, and she displaying impassive dignity in her gown of peacock-blue silk embroidered with gold and steel beads. But it was particularly Eve whom people wished to see, and every neck was craned forward when she appeared on the arm of General Bozonnet, the bridegroom's first witness and nearest male relative. She was gowned in "old rose" taffetas trimmed with Valenciennes of priceless value, and never had she looked younger, more deliciously fair. Yet her eyes betrayed her emotion, though she strove to smile; and her languid grace bespoke her widowhood, her compassionate surrender of the man she loved. Monferrand, the Marquis de Morigny, and banker Louvard, the three other witnesses, followed the Baroness and General Bozonnet, each giving his arm to some lady of the family. A considerable sensation was caused by the appearance of Monferrand, who seemed on first-rate terms with himself, and jested familiarly with the lady he accompanied, a little brunette with a giddy air. Another who was noticed in the solemn, interminable procession was the bride's eccentric brother Hyacinthe, whose dress coat was of a cut never previously seen, with its tails broadly and symmetrically pleated.

When the affianced pair had taken their places before the prayer-stools awaiting them, and the members of both families and the witnesses had installed themselves in the rear in large armchairs, all gilding and red velvet, the ceremony was performed with extraordinary pomp. The cure of the Madeleine officiated in person; and vocalists from the Grand Opera reinforced the choir, which chanted the high mass to the accompaniment of the organs, whence came a continuous hymn of glory. All possible luxury and magnificence were displayed, as if to turn this wedding into some public festivity, a great victory, an event marking the apogee of a class. Even the impudent bravado attaching to the loathsome private drama which lay behind it all, and which was known to everybody, added a touch of abominable grandeur to the ceremony. But the truculent spirit of superiority and domination which characterised the proceedings became most manifest when Monseigneur Martha appeared in surplice and stole to pronounce the blessing. Tall of stature, fresh of face, and faintly smiling, he had his wonted air of amiable sovereignty, and it was with august unction that he pronounced the sacramental words, like some pontiff well pleased at reconciling the two great empires whose heirs he united. His address to the newly married couple was awaited with curiosity. It proved really marvellous, he himself triumphed in it. Was it not in that same church that he had baptised the bride's mother, that blond Eve, who was still so beautiful, that Jewess whom he himself had converted to the Catholic faith amidst the

tears of emotion shed by all Paris society? Was it not there also that he had delivered his three famous addresses on the New Spirit, whence dated, to his thinking, the rout of science, the awakening of Christian spirituality, and that policy of rallying to the Republic which was to lead to its conquest?

So it was assuredly allowable for him to indulge in some delicate allusions, by way of congratulating himself on his work, now that he was marrying a poor scion of the old aristocracy to the five millions of that *bourgeoise* heiress, in whose person triumphed the class which had won the victory in 1789, and was now master of the land. The fourth estate, the duped, robbed people, alone had no place in those festivities. But by uniting the affianced pair before him in the bonds of wedlock, Monseigneur Martha sealed the new alliance, gave effect to the Pope's own policy, that stealthy effort of Jesuitical Opportunism which would take democracy, power and wealth to wife, in order to subdue and control them. When the prelate reached his peroration he turned towards Monferrand, who sat there smiling; and it was he, the Minister, whom he seemed to be addressing while he expressed the hope that the newly married pair would ever lead a truly Christian life of humility and obedience in all fear of God, of whose iron hand he spoke as if it were that of some gendarme charged with maintaining the peace of the world. Everybody was aware that there was some diplomatic understanding between the Bishop and the Minister, some secret pact or other whereby both satisfied their passion for authority, their craving to insinuate themselves into everything and reign supreme; and thus when the spectators saw Monferrand smiling in his somewhat sly, jovial way, they also exchanged smiles.

"Ah!" muttered Massot, who had remained near Duthil, "how amused old Justus Steinberger would be, if he were here to see his granddaughter marrying the last of the Quinsacs!"

"But these marriages are quite the thing, quite the fashion, my dear fellow," the deputy replied. "The Jews and the Christians, the *bourgeois* and the nobles, do quite right to come to an understanding, so as to found a new aristocracy. An aristocracy is needed, you know, for otherwise we should be swept away by the masses."

None the less Massot continued sneering at the idea of what a grimace Justus Steinberger would have made if he had heard Monseigneur Martha. It was rumoured in Paris that although the old Jew banker had ceased all intercourse with his daughter Eve since her conversion, he took a keen interest in everything she was reported to do or say, as if he were more than ever convinced that she would prove an avenging and dissolving agent among those Christians, whose destruction was asserted to be the dream of his race. If he had failed in his hope of overcoming Duvillard by giving her to him as a wife, he doubtless now consoled himself with thinking of the extraordinary fortune to which his blood had attained, by mingling with that of the harsh, old-time masters of his race, to whose corruption it gave a finishing touch. Therein perhaps lay that final Jewish conquest of the world of which people sometimes talked.

A last triumphal strain from the organ brought the ceremony to an end; whereupon the two families and the witnesses passed into the sacristy, where the acts were signed. And forthwith the great congratulatory procession commenced.

The bride and bridegroom at last stood side by side in the lofty but rather dim room, panelled with oak. How radiant with delight was Camille at the thought that it was all over, that she had triumphed and married that handsome man of high lineage, after wresting him with so much difficulty from one and all, her mother especially! She seemed to have grown taller. Deformed, swarthy, and ugly though she was, she drew herself up exultingly, whilst scores and scores of women, friends or acquaintances, scrambled and rushed upon her, pressing her hands or kissing her, and addressing her in words of ecstasy. Gerard, who rose both head and shoulders above his bride, and looked all the nobler and stronger beside one of such puny figure, shook hands and smiled like some Prince Charming, who good-naturedly allowed himself to be loved. Meanwhile, the relatives of the newly wedded pair, though they were drawn up in one line, formed two distinct groups past which the crowd pushed and surged with arms outstretched. Duvillard received the congratulations offered him as if he were some king well pleased with his people; whilst Eve, with a supreme effort, put on an enchanting mien, and answered one and all with scarcely a sign of the sobs which she was forcing back. Then, on the other side of the bridal pair, Madame de Quinsac stood between General de Bozonnet and the Marquis de Morigny. Very dignified, in fact almost haughty, she acknowledged most of the salutations addressed to her with a mere nod, giving her little withered hand only to those people with whom she was well acquainted. A sea of strange countenances encompassed her, and now and again when some particularly murky wave rolled by, a wave of men whose faces bespoke all the crimes of money-mongering, she and the Marquis exchanged glances of deep sadness. This tide continued sweeping by for nearly half an hour; and such was the number of those who wanted to shake hands with the bridal pair and their relatives, that the latter soon felt their arms ache.

Meantime, some folks lingered in the sacristy; little groups collected, and gay chatter rang out. Monferrand was immediately surrounded. Massot pointed out to Duthil how eagerly Public Prosecutor Lehmann rushed upon the Minister to pay him court. They were immediately joined by investigating magistrate Amadiou. And even M. de Larombiere, the judge, approached Monferrand, although he hated the Republic, and was an intimate friend of the Quinsacs. But then obedience and obsequiousness were necessary on the part of the magistracy, for it was dependent on those in power, who alone could give advancement, and appoint even as they dismissed. As for Lehmann, it was alleged that he had rendered assistance to Monferrand by

spiriting away certain documents connected with the African Railways affair, whilst with regard to the smiling and extremely Parisian Amadiou, was it not to him that the government was indebted for Salvat's head?

"You know," muttered Massot, "they've all come to be thanked for guillotining that man yesterday. Monferrand owes that wretched fellow a fine taper; for in the first place his bomb prolonged the life of the Barroux ministry, and later on it made Monferrand prime minister, as a strong-handed man was particularly needed to strangle Anarchism. What a contest, eh? Monferrand on one side and Salvat on the other. It was all bound to end in a head being cut off; one was wanted. . . . Ah! just listen, they are talking of it."

This was true. As the three functionaries of the law drew near to pay their respects to the all-powerful Minister, they were questioned by lady friends whose curiosity had been roused by what they had read in the newspapers. Thereupon Amadiou, whom duty had taken to the execution, and who was proud of his own importance, and determined to destroy what he called "the legend of Salvat's heroic death," declared that the scoundrel had shown no true courage at all. His pride alone had kept him on his feet. Fright had so shaken and choked him that he had virtually been dead before the fall of the knife.

"Ah! that's true!" cried Duthil. "I was there myself."

Massot, however, pulled him by the arm, quite indignant at such an assertion, although as a rule he cared a rap for nothing. "You couldn't see anything, my dear fellow," said he; "Salvat died very bravely. It's really stupid to continue throwing mud at that poor devil even when he's dead."

However, the idea that Salvat had died like a coward was too pleasing a one to be rejected. It was, so to say, a last sacrifice deposited at Monferrand's feet with the object of propitiating him. He still smiled in his peaceful way, like a good-natured man who is stern only when necessity requires it. And he showed great amiability towards the three judicial functionaries, and thanked them for the bravery with which they had accomplished their painful duty to the very end. On the previous day, after the execution, he had obtained a formidable majority in the Chamber on a somewhat delicate matter of policy. Order reigned, said he, and all was for the very best in France. Then, on seeing Vignon—who like a cool gamester had made a point of attending the wedding in order to show people that he was superior to fortune—the Minister detained him, and made much of him, partly as a matter of tactics, for in spite of everything he could not help fearing that the future might belong to that young fellow, who showed himself so intelligent and cautious. When a mutual friend informed them that Barroux' health was now so bad that the doctors had given him up as lost, they both began to express their compassion. Poor Barroux! He had never recovered from that vote of the Chamber which had overthrown him. He had been sinking from day to day, stricken to the heart by his country's ingratitude, dying of that abominable charge of money-mongering and thieving; he who was so upright and so loyal, who had devoted his whole life to the Republic! But then, as Monferrand repeated, one should never confess. The public can't understand such a thing.

At this moment Duvillard, in some degree relinquishing his paternal duties, came to join the others, and the Minister then had to share the honours of triumph with him. For was not this banker the master? Was he not money personified—money, which is the only stable, everlasting force, far above all ephemeral tenure of power, such as attaches to those ministerial portfolios which pass so rapidly from hand to hand? Monferrand reigned, but he would pass away, and a like fate would some day fall on Vignon, who had already had a warning that one could not govern unless the millions of the financial world were on one's side. So was not the only real triumph himself, the Baron—he who laid out five millions of francs on buying a scion of the aristocracy for his daughter, he who was the personification of the sovereign *bourgeoisie*, who controlled public fortune, and was determined to part with nothing, even were he attacked with bombs? All these festivities really centred in himself, he alone sat down to the banquet, leaving merely the crumbs from his table to the lowly, those wretched toilers who had been so cleverly duped at the time of the Revolution.

That African Railways affair was already but so much ancient history, buried, spirited away by a parliamentary commission. All who had been compromised in it, the Duthils, the Chaigneux, the Fongesues and others, could now laugh merrily. They had been delivered from their nightmare by Monferrand's strong fist, and raised by Duvillard's triumph. Even Sagnier's ignoble article and miry revelations in the "Voix du Peuple" were of no real account, and could be treated with a shrug of the shoulders, for the public had been so saturated with denunciation and slander that it was now utterly weary of all noisy scandal. The only thing which aroused interest was the rumour that Duvillard's big affair of the Trans-Saharan Railway was soon to be launched, that millions of money would be handled, and that some of them would rain down upon faithful friends.

Whilst Duvillard was conversing in a friendly way with Monferrand and Dauvergne, the Minister of Public Instruction, who had joined them, Massot encountered Fongesue, his editor, and said to him in an undertone: "Duthil has just assured me that the Trans-Saharan business is ready, and that they mean to chance it with the Chamber. They declare that they are certain of success."

Fongesue, however, was sceptical on the point. "It's impossible," said he; "they won't dare to

begin again so soon."

Although he spoke in this fashion, the news had made him grave. He had lately had such a terrible fright through his imprudence in the African Railways affair, that he had vowed he would take every precaution in future. Still, this did not mean that he would refuse to participate in matters of business. The best course was to wait and study them, and then secure a share in all that seemed profitable. In the present instance he felt somewhat worried. However, whilst he stood there watching the group around Duvillard and the two ministers, he suddenly perceived Chaigneux, who, flitting hither and thither, was still beating up applauders for that evening's performance. He sang Silviane's praises in every key, predicted a most tremendous success, and did his very best to stimulate curiosity. At last he approached Dauvergne, and with his long figure bent double exclaimed: "My dear Minister, I have a particular request to make to you on the part of a very charming person, whose victory will not be complete this evening if you do not condescend to favour her with your vote."

Dauvergne, a tall, fair, good-looking man, whose blue eyes smiled behind his glasses, listened to Chaigneux with an affable air. He was proving a great success at the Ministry of Public Instruction, although he knew nothing of University matters. However, like a real Parisian of Dijon, as people called him, he was possessed of some tact and skill, gave entertainments at which his young and charming wife outshone all others, and passed as being quite an enlightened friend of writers and artists. Silviane's engagement at the Comedie, which so far was his most notable achievement, and which would have shaken the position of any other minister, had by a curious chance rendered him popular. It was regarded as something original and amusing.

On understanding that Chaigneux simply wished to make sure of his presence at the Comedie that evening, he became yet more affable. "Why, certainly, I shall be there, my dear deputy," he replied. "When one has such a charming god-daughter one mustn't forsake her in a moment of danger."

At this Monferrand, who had been lending ear, turned round. "And tell her," said he, "that I shall be there, too. She may therefore rely on having two more friends in the house."

Thereupon Duvillard, quite enraptured, his eyes glistening with emotion and gratitude, bowed to the two ministers as if they had granted him some never-to-be-forgotten favour.

When Chaigneux, on his side also, had returned thanks with a low bow, he happened to perceive Fongue, and forthwith he darted towards him and led him aside. "Ah! my dear colleague," he declared, "it is absolutely necessary that this matter should be settled. I regard it as of supreme importance."

"What are you speaking of?" inquired Fongue, much surprised.

"Why, of Massot's article, which you won't insert."

Thereupon, the director of the "Globe" plumply declared that he could not insert the article. He talked of his paper's dignity and gravity; and declared that the lavishing of such fulsome praise upon a hussy—yes, a mere hussy, in a journal whose exemplary morality and austerity had cost him so much labour, would seem monstrous and degrading. Personally, he did not care a fig about it if Silviane chose to make an exhibition of herself, well, he would be there to see; but the "Globe" was sacred.

Disconcerted and almost tearful, Chaigneux nevertheless renewed his attempt. "Come, my dear colleague," said he, "pray make a little effort for my sake. If the article isn't inserted, Duvillard will think that it is my fault. And you know that I really need his help. My eldest daughter's marriage has again been postponed, and I hardly know where to turn." Then perceiving that his own misfortunes in no wise touched Fongue, he added: "And do it for your own sake, my dear colleague, your own sake. For when all is said Duvillard knows what is in the article, and it is precisely because it is so favourable a one that he wishes to see it in the 'Globe.' Think it over; if the article isn't published, he will certainly turn his back on you."

For a moment Fongue remained silent. Was he thinking of the colossal Trans-Saharan enterprise? Was he reflecting that it would be hard to quarrel at such a moment and miss his own share in the coming distribution of millions among faithful friends? Perhaps so; however, the idea that it would be more prudent to await developments gained the day with him. "No, no," he said, "I can't, it's a matter of conscience."

In the mean time congratulations were still being tendered to the newly wedded couple. It seemed as if all Paris were passing through the sacristy; there were ever the same smiles and the same hand shakes. Gerard, Camille and their relatives, however weary they might feel, were forced to retain an air of delight while they stood there against the wall, pent up by the crowd. The heat was now becoming unbearable, and a cloud of dust arose as when some big flock goes by.

All at once little Princess de Harn, who had hitherto lingered nobody knew where, sprang out of the throng, flung her arms around Camille, kissed even Eve, and then kept Gerard's hand in her own while paying him extraordinary compliments. Then, on perceiving Hyacinthe, she took possession of him and carried him off into a corner. "I say," she exclaimed, "I have a favour to ask

you."

The young man was wonderfully silent that day. His sister's wedding seemed to him a contemptible ceremony, the most vulgar that one could imagine. So here, thought he, was another pair accepting the horrid sexual law by which the absurdity of the world was perpetuated! For his part, he had decided that he would witness the proceedings in rigid silence, with a haughty air of disapproval. When Rosemonde spoke to him, he looked at her rather nervously, for he was glad that she had forsaken him for Duthil, and feared some fresh caprice on her part. At last, opening his mouth for the first time that day, he replied: "Oh, as a friend, you know, I will grant you whatever favour you like."

Forthwith the Princess explained that she would surely die if she did not witness the *debut* of her dear friend Silviane, of whom she had become such a passionate admirer. So she begged the young man to prevail on his father to give her a seat in his box, as she knew that one was left there.

Hyacinthe smiled. "Oh, willingly, my dear," said he; "I'll warn papa, there will be a seat for you."

Then, as the procession of guests at last drew to an end and the vestry began to empty, the bridal pair and their relatives were able to go off through the chattering throng, which still lingered about to bow to them and scrutinise them once more.

Gerard and Camille were to leave for an estate which Duvillard possessed in Normandy, directly after lunch. This repast, served at the princely mansion of the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, provided an opportunity for fresh display. The dining-room on the first floor had been transformed into a buffet, where reigned the greatest abundance and the most wonderful sumptuousness. Quite a reception too was held in the drawing-rooms, the large red *salon*, the little blue and silver *salon* and all the others, whose doors stood wide open. Although it had been arranged that only family friends should be invited, there were quite three hundred people present. The ministers had excused themselves, alleging that the weighty cares of public business required their presence elsewhere. But the magistrates, the deputies and the leading journalists who had attended the wedding were again assembled together. And in that throng of hungry folks, longing for some of the spoils of Duvillard's new venture, the people who felt most out of their element were Madame de Quinsac's few guests, whom General de Bozonnet and the Marquis de Morigny had seated on a sofa in the large red *salon*, which they did not quit.

Eve, who for her part felt quite overcome, both her moral and physical strength being exhausted, had seated herself in the little blue and silver drawing-room, which, with her passion for flowers, she had transformed into an arbour of roses. She would have fallen had she remained standing, the very floor had seemed to sink beneath her feet. Nevertheless, whenever a guest approached her she managed to force a smile, and appear beautiful and charming. Unlooked-for help at last came to her in the person of Monseigneur Martha, who had graciously honoured the lunch with his presence. He took an armchair near her, and began to talk to her in his amiable, caressing way. He was doubtless well aware of the frightful anguish which wrung the poor woman's heart, for he showed himself quite fatherly, eager to comfort her. She, however, talked on like some inconsolable widow bent on renouncing the world for God, who alone could bring her peace. Then, as the conversation turned on the Asylum for the Invalids of Labour, she declared that she was resolved to take her presidency very seriously, and, in fact, would exclusively devote herself to it, in the future.

"And as we are speaking of this, Monseigneur," said she, "I would even ask you to give me some advice. . . . I shall need somebody to help me, and I thought of securing the services of a priest whom I much admire, Monsieur l'Abbe Pierre Froment."

At this the Bishop became grave and embarrassed; but Princess Rosemonde, who was passing by with Duthil, had overheard the Baroness, and drawing near with her wonted impetuosity, she exclaimed: "Abbe Pierre Froment! Oh! I forgot to tell you, my dear, that I met him going about in jacket and trousers! And I've been told too that he cycles in the Bois with some creature or other. Isn't it true, Duthil, that we met him?"

The deputy bowed and smiled, whilst Eve clasped her hands in amazement. "Is it possible! A priest who was all charitable fervour, who had the faith and passion of an apostle!"

Thereupon Monseigneur intervened: "Yes, yes, great sorrows occasionally fall upon the Church. I heard of the madness of the unhappy man you speak of. I even thought it my duty to write to him, but he left my letter unanswered. I should so much have liked to stifle such a scandal! But there are abominable forces which we cannot always overcome; and so a day or two ago the archbishop was obliged to put him under interdict. . . . You must choose somebody else, madame."

It was quite a disaster. Eve gazed at Rosemonde and Duthil, without daring to ask them for particulars, but wondering what creature could have been so audacious as to turn a priest from the path of duty. She must assuredly be some shameless demented woman! And it seemed to Eve as if this crime gave a finishing touch to her own misfortune. With a wave of the arm, which took in all the luxury around her, the roses steeping her in perfume, and the crush of guests around

the buffet, she murmured: "Ah! decidedly there's nothing but corruption left; one can no longer rely on anybody!"

Whilst this was going on, Camille happened to be alone in her own room getting ready to leave the house with Gerard. And all at once her brother Hyacinthe joined her there. "Ah! it's you, youngster!" she exclaimed. "Well, make haste if you want to kiss me, for I'm off now, thank goodness!"

He kissed her as she suggested, and then in a doctoral way replied: "I thought you had more self-command. The delight you have been showing all this morning quite disgusts me."

A quiet glance of contempt was her only answer. However, he continued: "You know very well that she'll take your Gerard from you again, directly you come back to Paris."

At this Camille's cheeks turned white and her eyes flared. She stepped towards her brother with clenched fists: "She! you say that she will take him from me!"

The "she" they referred to was their own mother.

"Listen, my boy! I'll kill her first!" continued Camille. "Ah, no! she needn't hope for that. I shall know how to keep the man that belongs to me. . . . And as for you, keep your spite to yourself, for I know you, remember; you are a mere child and a fool!"

He recoiled as if a viper were rearing its sharp, slender black head before him; and having always feared her, he thought it best to beat a retreat.

While the last guests were rushing upon the buffet and finishing the pillage there, the bridal pair took their leave, before driving off to the railway station. General de Bozonnet had joined a group in order to vent his usual complaints about compulsory military service, and the Marquis de Morigny was obliged to fetch him at the moment when the Countess de Quinsac was kissing her son and daughter-in-law. The old lady trembled with so much emotion that the Marquis respectfully ventured to sustain her. Meantime, Hyacinthe had started in search of his father, and at last found him near a window with the tottering Chaigneux, whom he was violently upbraiding, for Fongue's conscientious scruples had put him in a fury. Indeed, if Massot's article should not be inserted in the "Globe," Silviane might lay all the blame upon him, the Baron, and wreak further punishment upon him. However, upon being summoned by his son he had to don his triumphal air once more, kiss his daughter on the forehead, shake hands with his son-in-law, jest and wish them both a pleasant journey. Then Eve, near whom Monseigneur Martha had remained, smiling, in her turn had to say farewell. In this she evinced touching bravery; her determination to remain beautiful and charming until the very end lent her sufficient strength to show herself both gay and motherly.

She took hold of the slightly quivering hand which Gerard proffered with some embarrassment, and ventured to retain it for a moment in her own, in a good-hearted, affectionate way, instinct with all the heroism of renunciation. "Good by, Gerard," she said, "keep in good health, be happy." Then turning to Camille she kissed her on both cheeks, while Monseigneur Martha sat looking at them with an air of indulgent sympathy. They wished each other "Au revoir," but their voices trembled, and their eyes in meeting gleamed like swords; in the same way as beneath the kisses they had exchanged they had felt each other's teeth. Ah! how it enraged Camille to see her mother still so beautiful and fascinating in spite of age and grief! And for Eve how great the torture of beholding her daughter's youth, that youth which had overcome her, and was for ever wresting love from within her reach! No forgiveness was possible between them; they would still hate one another even in the family tomb, where some day they would sleep side by side.

All the same, that evening Baroness Duvillard excused herself from attending the performance of "Polyeucte" at the Comedie Francaise. She felt very tired and wished to go to bed early, said she. As a matter of fact she wept on her pillow all night long. Thus the Baron's stage-box on the first balcony tier contained only himself, Hyacinthe, Duthil, and little Princess de Harn.

At nine o'clock there was a full house, one of the brilliant chattering houses peculiar to great dramatic solemnities. All the society people who had marched through the sacristy of the Madeleine that morning were now assembled at the theatre, again feverish with curiosity, and on the lookout for the unexpected. One recognised the same faces and the sane smiles; the women acknowledged one another's presence with little signs of intelligence, the men understood each other at a word, a gesture. One and all had kept the appointment, the ladies with bared shoulders, the gentlemen with flowers in their button-holes. Fongue occupied the "Globe's" box, with two friendly families. Little Massot had his customary seat in the stalls. Amadieu, who was a faithful patron of the Comedie, was also to be seen there, as well as General de Bozonnet and Public Prosecutor Lehmann. The man who was most looked at, however, on account of his scandalous article that morning, was Sagnier, the terrible Sagnier, looking bloated and apoplectical. Then there was Chaigneux, who had kept merely a modest bracket-seat for himself, and who scoured the passages, and climbed to every tier, for the last time preaching enthusiasm. Finally, the two ministers Monferrand and Dauvergne appeared in the box facing Duvillard's; whereupon many knowing smiles were exchanged, for everybody was aware that these

personages had come to help on the success of the *debutante*.

On the latter point there had still been unfavourable rumours only the previous day. Sagnier had declared that the *debut* of such a notorious harlot as Silviane at the Comedie Francaise, in such a part too as that of "Pauline," which was one of so much moral loftiness, could only be regarded as an impudent insult to public decency. The whole press, moreover, had long been up in arms against the young woman's extraordinary caprice. But then the affair had been talked of for six months past, so that Paris had grown used to the idea of seeing Silviane at the Comedie. And now it flocked thither with the one idea of being entertained. Before the curtain rose one could tell by the very atmosphere of the house that the audience was a jovial, good-humoured one, bent on enjoying itself, and ready to applaud should it find itself at all pleased.

The performance really proved extraordinary. When Silviane, chastely robed, made her appearance in the first act, the house was quite astonished by her virginal face, her innocent-looking mouth, and her eyes beaming with immaculate candour. Then, although the manner in which she had understood her part at first amazed people, it ended by charming them. From the moment of confiding in "Stratonice," from the moment of relating her dream, she turned "Pauline" into a soaring mystical creature, some saint, as it were, such as one sees in stained-glass windows, carried along by a Wagnerian Brunhilda riding the clouds. It was a thoroughly ridiculous conception of the part, contrary to reason and truth alike. Still, it only seemed to interest people the more, partly on account of mysticism being the fashion, and partly on account of the contrast between Silviane's assumed candour and real depravity. Her success increased from act to act, and some slight hissing which was attributed to Sagnier only helped to make the victory more complete. Monferrand and Dauvergne, as the newspapers afterwards related, gave the signal for applause; and the whole house joined in it, partly from amusement and partly perhaps in a spirit of irony.

During the interval between the fourth and fifth acts there was quite a procession of visitors to Duvillard's box, where the greatest excitement prevailed. Duthil, however, after absenting himself for a moment, came back to say: "You remember our influential critic, the one whom I brought to dinner at the Cafe Anglais? Well, he's repeating to everybody that 'Pauline' is merely a little *bourgeoise*, and is not transformed by the heavenly grace until the very finish of the piece. To turn her into a holy virgin from the outset simply kills the part, says he."

"Pooh!" repeated Duvillard, "let him argue if he likes, it will be all the more advertisement. . . . The important point is to get Massot's article inserted in the 'Globe' to-morrow morning."

On this point, unfortunately, the news was by no means good. Chaigneux, who had gone in search of Fonseca, declared that the latter still hesitated in the matter in spite of Silviane's success, which he declared to be ridiculous. Thereupon, the Baron became quite angry. "Go and tell Fonseca," he exclaimed, "that I insist on it, and that I shall remember what he does."

Meantime Princess Rosemonde was becoming quite delirious with enthusiasm. "My dear Hyacinthe," she pleaded, "please take me to Silviane's dressing-room; I can't wait, I really must go and kiss her."

"But we'll all go!" cried Duvillard, who heard her entreaty.

The passages were crowded, and there were people even on the stage. Moreover, when the party reached the door of Silviane's dressing-room, they found it shut. When the Baron knocked at it, a dresser replied that madame begged the gentlemen to wait a moment.

"Oh! a woman may surely go in," replied Rosemonde, hastily slipping through the doorway. "And you may come, Hyacinthe," she added; "there can be no objection to you."

Silviane was very hot, and a dresser was wiping her perspiring shoulders when Rosemonde darted forward and kissed her. Then they chatted together amidst the heat and glare from the gas and the intoxicating perfumes of all the flowers which were heaped up in the little room. Finally, Hyacinthe heard them promise to see one another after the performance, Silviane even inviting Rosemonde to drink a cup of tea with her at her house. At this the young man smiled complacently, and said to the actress: "Your carriage is waiting for you at the corner of the Rue Montpensier, is it not? Well, I'll take the Princess to it. That will be the simpler plan, you can both go off together!"

"Oh! how good of you," cried Rosemonde; "it's agreed."

Just then the door was opened, and the men, being admitted, began to pour forth their congratulations. However, they had to regain their seats in all haste so as to witness the fifth act. This proved quite a triumph, the whole house bursting into applause when Silviane spoke the famous line, "I see, I know, I believe, I am undeceived," with the rapturous enthusiasm of a holy martyr ascending to heaven. Nothing could have been more soul-like, it was said. And so when the performers were called before the curtain, Paris bestowed an ovation on that virgin of the stage, who, as Sagnier put it, knew so well how to act depravity at home.

Accompanied by Duthil, Duvillard at once went behind the scenes in order to fetch Silviane, while Hyacinthe escorted Rosemonde to the brougham waiting at the corner of the Rue Montpensier. Having helped her into it, the young man stood by, waiting. And he seemed to grow

quite merry when his father came up with Silviane, and was stopped by her, just as, in his turn, he wished to get into the carriage.

"There's no room for you, my dear fellow," said she. "I've a friend with me."

Rosemonde's little smiling face then peered forth from the depths of the brougham. And the Baron remained there open-mouthed while the vehicle swiftly carried the two women away!

"Well, what would you have, my dear fellow?" said Hyacinthe, by way of explanation to Duthil, who also seemed somewhat amazed by what had happened. "Rosemonde was worrying my life out, and so I got rid of her by packing her off with Silviane."

Duvillard was still standing on the pavement and still looking dazed when Chaigneux, who was going home quite tired out, recognised him, and came up to say that Fongue had thought the matter over, and that Massot's article would be duly inserted. In the passages, too, there had been a deal of talk about the famous Trans-Saharan project.

Then Hyacinthe led his father away, trying to comfort him like a sensible friend, who regarded woman as a base and impure creature. "Let's go home to bed," said he. "As that article is to appear, you can take it to her to-morrow. She will see you, sure enough."

Thereupon they lighted cigars, and now and again exchanging a few words, took their way up the Avenue de l'Opera, which at that hour was deserted and dismal. Meantime, above the slumbering houses of Paris the breeze wafted a prolonged sigh, the plaint, as it were, of an expiring world.

III

THE GOAL OF LABOUR

EVER since the execution of Salvat, Guillaume had become extremely taciturn. He seemed worried and absent-minded. He would work for hours at the manufacture of that dangerous powder of which he alone knew the formula, and the preparation of which was such a delicate matter that he would allow none to assist him. Then, at other times he would go off, and return tired out by some long solitary ramble. He remained very gentle at home, and strove to smile there. But whenever anybody spoke to him he started as if suddenly called back from dreamland.

Pierre imagined his brother had relied too much upon his powers of renunciation, and found the loss of Marie unbearable. Was it not some thought of her that haunted him now that the date fixed for the marriage drew nearer and nearer? One evening, therefore, Pierre ventured to speak out, again offering to leave the house and disappear.

But at the first words he uttered Guillaume stopped him, and affectionately replied: "Marie? Oh! I love her, I love her too well to regret what I have done. No, no! you only bring me happiness, I derive all my strength and courage from you now that I know you are both happy. . . . And I assure you that you are mistaken, there is nothing at all the matter with me; my work absorbs me, perhaps, but that is all."

That same evening he managed to cast his gloom aside, and displayed delightful gaiety. During dinner he inquired if the upholsterer would soon call to arrange the two little rooms which Marie was to occupy with her husband over the workroom. The young woman, who since her marriage with Pierre had been decided had remained waiting with smiling patience, thereupon told Guillaume what it was she desired—first some hangings of red cotton stuff, then some polished pine furniture which would enable her to imagine she was in the country, and finally a carpet on the floor, because a carpet seemed to her the height of luxury. She laughed as she spoke, and Guillaume laughed with her in a gay and fatherly way. His good spirits brought much relief to Pierre, who concluded that he must have been mistaken in his surmises.

On the very morrow, however, Guillaume relapsed into a dreamy state. And so disquietude again came upon Pierre, particularly when he noticed that Mere-Grand also seemed to be unusually grave and silent. Not daring to address her, he tried to extract some information from his nephews, but neither Thomas nor Francois nor Antoine knew anything. Each of them quietly devoted his time to his work, respecting and worshipping his father, but never questioning him about his plans or enterprises. Whatever he might choose to do could only be right and good; and they, his sons, were ready to do the same and help him at the very first call, without pausing to inquire into his purpose. It was plain, however, that he kept them apart from anything at all perilous, that he retained all responsibility for himself, and that Mere-Grand alone was his *confidante*, the one whom he consulted and to whom he perhaps listened. Pierre therefore renounced his hope of learning anything from the sons, and directed his attention to the old lady, whose rigid gravity worried him the more as she and Guillaume frequently had private chats in the room she occupied upstairs. They shut themselves up there all alone, and remained together for hours without the faintest sound coming from the seemingly lifeless chamber.

One day, however, Pierre caught sight of Guillaume as he came out of it, carrying a little valise which appeared to be very heavy. And Pierre thereupon remembered both his brother's powder, one pound weight of which would have sufficed to destroy a cathedral, and the destructive engine which he had purposed bestowing upon France in order that she might be victorious over all other nations, and become the one great initiatory and liberative power. Pierre remembered too that the only person besides himself who knew his brother's secret was Mere-Grand, who, at the time when Guillaume was fearing some perquisition on the part of the police, had long slept upon the cartridges of the terrible explosive. But now why was Guillaume removing all the powder which he had been preparing for some time past? As this question occurred to Pierre, a sudden suspicion, a vague dread, came upon him, and gave him strength to ask his brother: "Have you reason to fear anything, since you won't keep things here? If they embarrass you, they can all be deposited at my house, nobody will make a search there."

Guillaume, whom these words astonished, gazed at Pierre fixedly, and then replied: "Yes, I have learnt that the arrests and perquisitions have begun afresh since that poor devil was guillotined; for they are in terror at the thought that some despairing fellow may avenge him. Moreover, it is hardly prudent to keep destructive agents of such great power here. I prefer to deposit them in a safe place. But not at Neuilly—oh! no indeed! they are not a present for you, brother." Guillaume spoke with outward calmness; and if he had started with surprise at the first moment, it had been scarcely perceptible.

"So everything is ready?" Pierre resumed. "You will soon be handing your engine of destruction over to the Minister of War, I presume?"

A gleam of hesitation appeared in the depths of Guillaume's eyes, and he was for a moment about to tell a falsehood. However, he ended by replying "No, I have renounced that intention. I have another idea."

He spoke these last words with so much energy and decision that Pierre did not dare to question him further, to ask him, for instance, what that other idea might be. From that moment, however, he quivered with anxious expectancy. From hour to hour Mere-Grand's lofty silence and Guillaume's rapt, energetic face seemed to tell him that some huge and terrifying scheme had come into being, and was growing and threatening the whole of Paris.

One afternoon, just as Thomas was about to repair to the Grandidier works, some one came to Guillaume's with the news that old Toussaint, the workman, had been stricken with a fresh attack of paralysis. Thomas thereupon decided that he would call upon the poor fellow on his way, for he held him in esteem and wished to ascertain if he could render him any help. Pierre expressed a desire to accompany his nephew, and they started off together about four o'clock.

On entering the one room which the Toussaints occupied, the room where they ate and slept, the visitors found the mechanic seated on a low chair near the table. He looked half dead, as if struck by lightning. It was a case of hemiplegia, which had paralysed the whole of his right side, his right leg and right arm, and had also spread to his face in such wise that he could no longer speak. The only sound he could raise was an incomprehensible guttural grunt. His mouth was drawn to the right, and his once round, good-natured-looking face, with tanned skin and bright eyes, had been twisted into a frightful mask of anguish. At fifty years of age, the unhappy man was utterly done for. His unkempt beard was as white as that of an octogenarian, and his knotty limbs, preyed upon by toil, were henceforth dead. Only his eyes remained alive, and they travelled around the room, going from one to another. By his side, eager to do what she could for him, was his wife, who remained stout even when she had little to eat, and still showed herself active and clear-headed, however great her misfortunes.

"It's a friendly visit, Toussaint," said she. "It's Monsieur Thomas who has come to see you with Monsieur l'Abbe." Then quietly correcting herself she added: "With Monsieur Pierre, his uncle. You see that you are not yet forsaken."

Toussaint wished to speak, but his fruitless efforts only brought two big tears to his eyes. Then he gazed at his visitors with an expression of indescribable woe, his jaws trembling convulsively.

"Don't put yourself out," repeated his wife. "The doctor told you that it would do you no good."

At the moment of entering the room, Pierre had already noticed two persons who had risen from their chairs and drawn somewhat on one side. And now to his great surprise he recognised that they were Madame Theodore and Celine, who were both decently clad, and looked as if they led a life of comfort. On hearing of Toussaint's misfortune they had come to see him, like good-hearted creatures, who, on their own side, had experienced the most cruel suffering. Pierre, on noticing that they now seemed to be beyond dire want, remembered what he had heard of the wonderful sympathy lavished on the child after her father's execution, the many presents and donations offered her, and the generous proposals that had been made to adopt her. These last had ended in her being adopted by a former friend of Salvat, who had sent her to school again, pending the time when she might be apprenticed to some trade, while, on the other hand, Madame Theodore had been placed as a nurse in a convalescent home. In such wise both had been saved.

When Pierre drew near to little Celine in order to kiss her, Madame Theodore told her to thank Monsieur l'Abbe—for so she still respectfully called him—for all that he had previously done for her. "It was you who brought us happiness, Monsieur l'Abbe," said she. "And that's a thing one can never forget. I'm always telling Celine to remember you in her prayers."

"And so, my child, you are now going to school again," said Pierre.

"Oh yes, Monsieur l'Abbe, and I'm well pleased at it. Besides, we no longer lack anything." Then, however, sudden emotion came over the girl, and she stammered with a sob: "Ah! if poor papa could only see us!"

Madame Theodore, meanwhile, had begun to take leave of Madame Toussaint. "Well, good by, we must go," said she. "What has happened to you is very sad, and we wanted to tell you how much it grieved us. The worry is that when misfortune falls on one, courage isn't enough to set things right. . . . Celine, come and kiss your uncle. . . . My poor brother, I hope you'll get back the use of your legs as soon as possible."

They kissed the paralysed man on the cheeks, and then went off. Toussaint had looked at them with his keen and still intelligent eyes, as if he longed to participate in the life and activity into which they were returning. And a jealous thought came to his wife, who usually was so placid and good-natured. "Ah! my poor old man!" said she, after propping him up with a pillow, "those two are luckier than we are. Everything succeeds with them since that madman, Salvat, had his head cut off. They're provided for. They've plenty of bread on the shelf."

Then, turning towards Pierre and Thomas, she continued: "We others are done for, you know, we're down in the mud, with no hope of getting out of it. But what would you have? My poor husband hasn't been guillotined, he's done nothing but work his whole life long; and now, you see, that's the end of him, he's like some old animal, no longer good for anything."

Having made her visitors sit down she next answered their compassionate questions. The doctor had called twice already, and had promised to restore the unhappy man's power of speech, and perhaps enable him to crawl round the room with the help of a stick. But as for ever being able to resume real work that must not be expected. And so what was the use of living on? Toussaint's eyes plainly declared that he would much rather die at once. When a workman can no longer work and no longer provide for his wife he is ripe for the grave.

"Savings indeed!" Madame Toussaint resumed. "There are folks who ask if we have any savings. . . . Well, we had nearly a thousand francs in the Savings Bank when Toussaint had his first attack. And some people don't know what a lot of prudence one needs to put by such a sum; for, after all, we're not savages, we have to allow ourselves a little enjoyment now and then, a good dish and a good bottle of wine. . . . Well, what with five months of enforced idleness, and the medicines, and the underdone meat that was ordered, we got to the end of our thousand francs; and now that it's all begun again we're not likely to taste any more bottled wine or roast mutton."

Fond of good cheer as she had always been, this cry, far more than the tears she was forcing back, revealed how much the future terrified her. She was there erect and brave in spite of everything; but what a downfall if she were no longer able to keep her room tidy, stew a piece of veal on Sundays, and gossip with the neighbours while awaiting her husband's return from work! Why, they might just as well be thrown into the gutter and carried off in the scavenger's cart.

However, Thomas intervened: "Isn't there an Asylum for the Invalids of Labour, and couldn't your husband get admitted to it?" he asked. "It seems to me that is just the place for him."

"Oh dear, no," the woman answered. "People spoke to me of that place before, and I got particulars of it. They don't take sick people there. When you call they tell you that there are hospitals for those who are ill."

With a wave of his hand Pierre confirmed her statement: it was useless to apply in that direction. He could again see himself scouring Paris, hurrying from the Lady President, Baroness Duvillard, to Fongue, the General Manager, and only securing a bed for Laveuve when the unhappy man was dead.

However, at that moment an infant was heard wailing, and to the amazement of both visitors Madame Toussaint entered the little closet where her son Charles had so long slept, and came out of it carrying a child, who looked scarcely twenty months old. "Well, yes," she explained, "this is Charles's boy. He was sleeping there in his father's old bed, and now you hear him, he's woke up. . . . You see, only last Wednesday, the day before Toussaint had his stroke, I went to fetch the little one at the nurse's at St. Denis, because she had threatened to cast him adrift since Charles had got into bad habits, and no longer paid her. I said to myself at the time that work was looking up, and that my husband and I would always be able to provide for a little mouth like that. . . . But just afterwards everything collapsed! At the same time, as the child's here now I can't go and leave him in the street."

While speaking in this fashion she walked to and fro, rocking the baby in her arms. And naturally enough she reverted to Charles's folly with the girl, who had run away, leaving that infant behind her. Things might not have been so very bad if Charles had still worked as steadily as he had done before he went soldiering. In those days he had never lost an hour, and had

always brought all his pay home! But he had come back from the army with much less taste for work. He argued, and had ideas of his own. He certainly hadn't yet come to bomb-throwing like that madman Salvat, but he spent half his time with Socialists and Anarchists, who put his brain in a muddle. It was a real pity to see such a strong, good-hearted young fellow turning out badly like that. But it was said in the neighbourhood that many another was inclined the same way; that the best and most intelligent of the younger men felt tired of want and unremunerative labour, and would end by knocking everything to pieces rather than go on toiling with no certainty of food in their old age.

"Ah! yes," continued Madame Toussaint, "the sons are not like the fathers were. These fine fellows won't be as patient as my poor husband has been, letting hard work wear him away till he's become the sorry thing you see there. . . . Do you know what Charles said the other evening when he found his father on that chair, crippled like that, and unable to speak? Why, he shouted to him that he'd been a stupid jackass all his life, working himself to death for those *bourgeois*, who now wouldn't bring him so much as a glass of water. Then, as he none the less has a good heart, he began to cry his eyes out."

The baby was no longer wailing, still the good woman continued walking to and fro, rocking it in her arms and pressing it to her affectionate heart. Her son Charles could do no more for them, she said; perhaps he might be able to give them a five-franc piece now and again, but even that wasn't certain. It was of no use for her to go back to her old calling as a seamstress, she had lost all practice of it. And it would even be difficult for her to earn anything as charwoman, for she had that infant on her hands as well as her infirm husband—a big child, whom she would have to wash and feed. And so what would become of the three of them? She couldn't tell; but it made her shudder, however brave and motherly she tried to be.

For their part, Pierre and Thomas quivered with compassion, particularly when they saw big tears coursing down the cheeks of the wretched, stricken Toussaint, as he sat quite motionless in that little and still cleanly home of toil and want. The poor man had listened to his wife, and he looked at her and at the infant now sleeping in her arms. Voiceless, unable to cry his woe aloud, he experienced the most awful anguish. What dupery his long life of labour had been! how frightfully unjust it was that all his efforts should end in such sufferings! how exasperating it was to feel himself powerless, and to see those whom he loved and who were as innocent as himself suffer and die by reason of his own suffering and death! Ah! poor old man, cripple that he was, ending like some beast of burden that has foundered by the roadside—that goal of labour! And it was all so revolting and so monstrous that he tried to put it into words, and his desperate grief ended in a frightful, raucous grunt.

"Be quiet, don't do yourself harm!" concluded Madame Toussaint. "Things are like that, and there's no mending them."

Then she went to put the child to bed again, and on her return, just as Thomas and Pierre were about to speak to her of Toussaint's employer, M. Grandidier, a fresh visitor arrived. Thereupon the others decided to wait.

The new comer was Madame Chretiennot, Toussaint's other sister, eighteen years younger than himself. Her husband, the little clerk, had compelled her to break off almost all intercourse with her relatives, as he felt ashamed of them; nevertheless, having heard of her brother's misfortune, she had very properly come to condole with him. She wore a gown of cheap flimsy silk, and a hat trimmed with red poppies, which she had freshened up three times already; but in spite of this display her appearance bespoke penury, and she did her best to hide her feet on account of the shabbiness of her boots. Moreover, she was no longer the beautiful Hortense. Since a recent miscarriage, all trace of her good looks had disappeared.

The lamentable appearance of her brother and the bareness of that home of suffering chilled her directly she crossed the threshold. And as soon as she had kissed Toussaint, and said how sorry she was to find him in such a condition, she began to lament her own fate, and recount her troubles, for fear lest she should be asked for any help.

"Ah! my dear," she said to her sister-in-law, "you are certainly much to be pitied! But if you only knew! We all have our troubles. Thus in my case, obliged as I am to dress fairly well on account of my husband's position, I have more trouble than you can imagine in making both ends meet. One can't go far on a salary of three thousand francs a year, when one has to pay seven hundred francs' rent out of it. You will perhaps say that we might lodge ourselves in a more modest way; but we can't, my dear, I must have a *salon* on account of the visits I receive. So just count! . . . Then there are my two girls. I've had to send them to school; Lucienne has begun to learn the piano and Marcelle has some taste for drawing. . . . By the way, I would have brought them with me, but I feared it would upset them too much. You will excuse me, won't you?"

Then she spoke of all the worries which she had had with her husband on account of Salvat's ignominious death. Chretiennot, vain, quarrelsome little fellow that he was, felt exasperated at now having a *guillotine* in his wife's family. And he had lately begun to treat the unfortunate woman most harshly, charging her with having brought about all their troubles, and even rendering her responsible for his own mediocrity, embittered as he was more and more each day by a confined life of office work. On some evenings they had downright quarrels; she stood up for herself, and related that when she was at the confectionery shop in the Rue des Martyrs she

could have married a doctor had she only chosen, for the doctor found her quite pretty enough. Now, however, she was becoming plainer and plainer, and her husband felt that he was condemned to everlasting penury; so that their life was becoming more and more dismal and quarrelsome, and as unbearable—despite the pride of being "gentleman" and "lady"—as was the destitution of the working classes.

"All the same, my dear," at last said Madame Toussaint, weary of her sister-in-law's endless narrative of worries, "you have had one piece of luck. You won't have the trouble of bringing up a third child, now."

"That's true," replied Hortense, with a sigh of relief. "How we should have managed, I don't know. . . . Still, I was very ill, and I'm far from being in good health now. The doctor says that I don't eat enough, and that I ought to have good food."

Then she rose for the purpose of giving her brother another kiss and taking her departure; for she feared a scene on her husband's part should he happen to come home and find her absent. Once on her feet, however, she lingered there a moment longer, saying that she also had just seen her sister, Madame Theodore, and little Celine, both of them comfortably clad and looking happy. And with a touch of jealousy she added: "Well, my husband contents himself with slaving away at his office every day. He'll never do anything to get his head cut off; and it's quite certain that nobody will think of leaving an income to Marcelle and Lucienne. . . . Well, good by, my dear, you must be brave, one must always hope that things will turn out for the best."

When she had gone off, Pierre and Thomas inquired if M. Grandidier had heard of Toussaint's misfortune and agreed to do anything for him. Madame Toussaint answered that he had so far made only a vague promise; and on learning this they resolved to speak to him as warmly as they could on behalf of the old mechanic, who had spent as many as five and twenty years at the works. The misfortune was that a scheme for establishing a friendly society, and even a pension fund, which had been launched before the crisis from which the works were now recovering, had collapsed through a number of obstacles and complications. Had things turned out otherwise, Thomas might have had a pittance assured him, even though he was unable to work. But under the circumstances the only hope for the poor stricken fellow lay in his employer's compassion, if not his sense of justice.

As the baby again began to cry, Madame Toussaint went to fetch it, and she was once more carrying it to and fro, when Thomas pressed her husband's sound hand between both his own. "We will come back," said the young man; "we won't forsake you, Toussaint. You know very well that people like you, for you've always been a good and steady workman. So rely on us, we will do all we can."

Then they left him tearful and overpowered, in that dismal room, while, up and down beside him, his wife rocked the squealing infant—that other luckless creature, who was now so heavy on the old folks' hands, and like them was fated to die of want and unjust toil.

Toil, manual toil, panting at every effort, this was what Pierre and Thomas once more found at the works. From the slender pipes above the roofs spurted rhythmical puffs of steam, which seemed like the very breath of all that labour. And in the work-shops one found a continuous rumbling, a whole army of men in motion, forging, filing, and piercing, amidst the spinning of leather gearing and the trembling of machinery. The day was ending with a final feverish effort to complete some task or other before the bell should ring for departure.

On inquiring for the master Thomas learnt that he had not been seen since *dejeuner*, which was such an unusual occurrence that the young man at once feared some terrible scene in the silent pavilion, whose shutters were ever closed upon Grandidier's unhappy wife—that mad but beautiful creature, whom he loved so passionately that he had never been willing to part from her. The pavilion could be seen from the little glazed work-shop which Thomas usually occupied, and as he and Pierre stood waiting there, it looked very peaceful and pleasant amidst the big lilac-bushes planted round about it. Surely, they thought, it ought to have been brightened by the gay gown of a young woman and the laughter of playful children. But all at once a loud, piercing shriek reached their ears, followed by howls and moans, like those of an animal that is being beaten or possibly slaughtered. Ah! those howls ringing out amidst all the stir of the toiling works, punctuated it seemed by the rhythmical puffing of the steam, accompanied too by the dull rumbling of the machinery! The receipts of the business had been doubling and doubling since the last stock-taking; there was increase of prosperity every month, the bad times were over, far behind. Grandidier was realising a large fortune with his famous bicycle for the million, the "Lisette"; and the approaching vogue of motor-cars also promised huge gains, should he again start making little motor-engines, as he meant to do, as soon as Thomas's long-projected motor should be perfected. But what was wealth when in that dismal pavilion, whose shutters were ever closed, those frightful shrieks continued, proclaiming some terrible drama, which all the stir and bustle of the prosperous works were unable to stifle?

Pierre and Thomas looked at one another, pale and quivering. And all at once, as the cries ceased and the pavilion sank into death-like silence once more, the latter said in an undertone: "She is usually very gentle, she will sometimes spend whole days sitting on a carpet like a little child. He is fond of her when she is like that; he lays her down and picks her up, caresses her and makes her laugh as if she were a baby. Ah! how dreadfully sad it is! When an attack comes upon

her she gets frantic, tries to bite herself, and kill herself by throwing herself against the walls. And then he has to struggle with her, for no one else is allowed to touch her. He tries to restrain her, and holds her in his arms to calm her. . . . But how terrible it was just now! Did you hear? I do not think she has ever had such a frightful attack before."

For a quarter of an hour longer profound silence prevailed. Then Grandidier came out of the pavilion, bareheaded and still ghastly pale. Passing the little glazed work-shop on his way, he perceived Thomas and Pierre there, and at once came in. But he was obliged to lean against a bench like a man who is dazed, haunted by a nightmare. His good-natured, energetic face retained an expression of acute anguish; and his left ear was scratched and bleeding. However, he at once wished to talk, overcome his feelings, and return to his life of activity. "I am very pleased to see you, my dear Thomas," said he, "I have been thinking over what you told me about our little motor. We must go into the matter again."

Seeing how distracted he was, it occurred to the young man that some sudden diversion, such as the story of another's misfortunes, might perhaps draw him from his haunting thoughts. "Of course I am at your disposal," he replied; "but before talking of that matter I should like to tell you that we have just seen Toussaint, that poor old fellow who has been stricken with paralysis. His awful fate has quite distressed us. He is in the greatest destitution, forsaken as it were by the roadside, after all his years of labour."

Thomas dwelt upon the quarter of a century which the old workman had spent at the factory, and suggested that it would be only just to take some account of his long efforts, the years of his life which he had devoted to the establishment. And he asked that he might be assisted in the name both of equity and compassion.

"Ah! monsieur," Pierre in his turn ventured to say. "I should like to take you for an instant into that bare room, and show you that poor, aged, worn-out, stricken man, who no longer has even the power of speech left him to tell people his sufferings. There can be no greater wretchedness than to die in this fashion, despairing of all kindness and justice."

Grandidier had listened to them in silence. But big tears had irresistibly filled his eyes, and when he spoke it was in a very low and tremulous voice: "The greatest wretchedness, who can tell what it is? Who can speak of it if he has not known the wretchedness of others? Yes, yes, it's sad undoubtedly that poor Toussaint should be reduced to that state at his age, not knowing even if he will have food to eat on the morrow. But I know sorrows that are just as crushing, abominations which poison one's life in a still greater degree. . . . Ah! yes, food indeed! To think that happiness will reign in the world when everybody has food to eat! What an idiotic hope!"

The whole grievous tragedy of his life was in the shudder which had come over him. To be the employer, the master, the man who is making money, who disposes of capital and is envied by his workmen, to own an establishment to which prosperity has returned, whose machinery coins gold, apparently leaving one no other trouble than that of pocketing one's profits; and yet at the same time to be the most wretched of men, to know no day exempt from anguish, to find each evening at one's hearth no other reward or prop than the most atrocious torture of the heart! Everything, even success, has to be paid for. And thus that triumpher, that money-maker, whose pile was growing larger at each successive inventory, was sobbing with bitter grief.

However, he showed himself kindly disposed towards Toussaint, and promised to assist him. As for a pension that was an idea which he could not entertain, as it was the negation of the wage-system such as it existed. He energetically defended his rights as an employer, repeating that the strain of competition would compel him to avail himself of them so long as the present system should endure. His part in it was to do good business in an honest way. However, he regretted that his men had never carried out the scheme of establishing a relief fund, and he said that he would do his best to induce them to take it in hand again.

Some colour had now come back to his cheeks; for on returning to the interests of his life of battle he felt his energy restored. He again reverted to the question of the little motor, and spoke of it for some time with Thomas, while Pierre waited, feeling quite upset. Ah! he thought, how universal was the thirst for happiness! Then, in spite of the many technical terms that were used he caught a little of what the others were saying. Small steam motors had been made at the works in former times; but they had not proved successes. In point of fact a new propelling force was needed. Electricity, though everyone foresaw its future triumph, was so far out of the question on account of the weight of the apparatus which its employment necessitated. So only petroleum remained, and the inconvenience attaching to its use was so great that victory and fortune would certainly rest with the manufacturer who should be able to replace it by some other hitherto unknown agent. In the discovery and adaptation of the latter lay the whole problem.

"Yes, I am eager about it now," at last exclaimed Grandidier in an animated way. "I allowed you to prosecute your experiments without troubling you with any inquisitive questions. But a solution is becoming imperative."

Thomas smiled: "Well, you must remain patient just a little longer," said he; "I believe that I am on the right road."

Then Grandidier shook hands with him and Pierre, and went off to make his usual round through his busy, bustling works, whilst near at hand, awaiting his return, stood the closed pavilion, where every evening he was fated to relapse into endless, incurable anguish.

The daylight was already waning when Pierre and Thomas, after re-ascending the height of Montmartre, walked towards the large work-shop which Jahan, the sculptor, had set up among the many sheds whose erection had been necessitated by the building of the Sacred Heart. There was here a stretch of ground littered with materials, an extraordinary chaos of building stone, beams and machinery; and pending the time when an army of navvies would come to set the whole place in order, one could see gaping trenches, rough flights of descending steps and fences, imperfectly closing doorways which conducted to the substructures of the basilica.

Halting in front of Jahan's work-shop, Thomas pointed to one of these doorways by which one could reach the foundation works. "Have you never had an idea of visiting the foundations?" he inquired of Pierre. "There's quite a city down there on which millions of money have been spent. They could only find firm soil at the very base of the height, and they had to excavate more than eighty shafts, fill them with concrete, and then rear their church on all those subterranean columns. . . . Yes, that is so. Of course the columns cannot be seen, but it is they who hold that insulting edifice aloft, right over Paris!"

Having drawn near to the fence, Pierre was looking at an open doorway beyond it, a sort of dark landing whence steps descended as if into the bowels of the earth. And he thought of those invisible columns of concrete, and of all the stubborn energy and desire for domination which had set and kept the edifice erect.

Thomas was at last obliged to call him. "Let us make haste," said he, "the twilight will soon be here. We shan't be able to see much."

They had arranged to meet Antoine at Jahan's, as the sculptor wished to show them a new model he had prepared. When they entered the work-shop they found the two assistants still working at the colossal angel which had been ordered for the basilica. Standing on a scaffolding they were rough-hewing its symmetrical wings, whilst Jahan, seated on a low chair, with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and his hands soiled with clay, was contemplating a figure some three feet high on which he had just been working.

"Ah! it's you," he exclaimed. "Antoine has been waiting more than half an hour for you. He's gone outside with Lise to see the sun set over Paris, I think. But they will soon be back."

Then he relapsed into silence, with his eyes fixed on his work.

This was a bare, erect, lofty female figure, of such august majesty, so simple were its lines, that it suggested something gigantic. The figure's abundant, outspread hair suggested rays around its face, which beamed with sovereign beauty like the sun. And its only gesture was one of offer and of greeting; its arms were thrown slightly forward, and its hands were open for the grasp of all mankind.

Still lingering in his dream Jahan began to speak slowly: "You remember that I wanted a pendant for my figure of Fecundity. I had modelled a Charity, but it pleased me so little and seemed so commonplace that I let the clay dry and spoil. . . . And then the idea of a figure of Justice came to me. But not a gowned figure with the sword and the scales! That wasn't the Justice that inspired me. What haunted my mind was the other Justice, the one that the lowly and the sufferers await, the one who alone can some day set a little order and happiness among us. And I pictured her like that, quite bare, quite simple, and very lofty. She is the sun as it were, a sun all beauty, harmony and strength; for justice is only to be found in the sun which shines in the heavens for one and all, and bestows on poor and rich alike its magnificence and light and warmth, which are the source of all life. And so my figure, you see, has her hands outstretched as if she were offering herself to all mankind, greeting it and granting it the gift of eternal life in eternal beauty. Ah! to be beautiful and strong and just, one's whole dream lies in that."

Jahan relighted his pipe and burst into a merry laugh. "Well, I think the good woman carries herself upright. . . . What do you fellows say?"

His visitors highly praised his work. Pierre for his part was much affected at finding in this artistic conception the very idea that he had so long been revolving in his mind—the idea of an era of Justice rising from the ruins of the world, which Charity after centuries of trial had failed to save.

Then the sculptor gaily explained that he had prepared his model there instead of at home, in order to console himself a little for his big dummy of an angel, the prescribed triteness of which disgusted him. Some fresh objections had been raised with respect to the folds of the robe, which gave some prominence to the thighs, and in the end he had been compelled to modify all of the drapery.

"Oh! it's just as they like!" he cried; "it's no work of mine, you know; it's simply an order which I'm executing just as a mason builds a wall. There's no religious art left, it has been killed by stupidity and disbelief. Ah! if social or human art could only revive, how glorious to be one of the first to bear the tidings!"

Then he paused. Where could the youngsters, Antoine and Lise, have got to, he wondered. He threw the door wide open, and, a little distance away, among the materials littering the waste ground, one could see Antoine's tall figure and Lise's short slender form standing out against the immensity of Paris, which was all golden amidst the sun's farewell. The young man's strong arm supported Lise, who with this help walked beside him without feeling any fatigue. Slender and graceful, like a girl blossoming into womanhood, she raised her eyes to his with a smile of infinite gratitude, which proclaimed that she belonged to him for evermore.

"Ah! they are coming back," said Jahan. "The miracle is now complete, you know. I'm delighted at it. I did not know what to do with her; I had even renounced all attempts to teach her to read; I left her for days together in a corner, infirm and tongue-tied like a lack-wit. . . . But your brother came and took her in hand somehow or other. She listened to him and understood him, and began to read and write with him, and grow intelligent and gay. Then, as her limbs still gained no suppleness, and she remained infirm, ailing and puny, he began by carrying her here, and then helped her to walk in such wise that she can now do so by herself. In a few weeks' time she has positively grown and become quite charming. Yes, I assure you, it is second birth, real creation. Just look at them!"

Antoine and Lise were still slowly approaching. The evening breeze which rose from the great city, where all was yet heat and sunshine, brought them a bath of life. If the young man had chosen that spot, with its splendid horizon, open to the full air which wafted all the germs of life, it was doubtless because he felt that nowhere else could he instil more vitality, more soul, more strength into her. And love had been created by love. He had found her asleep, benumbed, without power of motion or intellect, and he had awakened her, kindled life in her, loved her, that he might be loved by her in return. She was his work, she was part of himself.

"So you no longer feel tired, little one?" said Jahan.

She smiled divinely. "Oh! no, it's so pleasant, so beautiful, to walk straight on like this. . . . All I desire is to go on for ever and ever with Antoine."

The others laughed, and Jahan exclaimed in his good-natured way: "Let us hope that he won't take you so far. You've reached your destination now, and I shan't be the one to prevent you from being happy."

Antoine was already standing before the figure of Justice, to which the falling twilight seemed to impart a quiver of life. "Oh! how divinely simple, how divinely beautiful!" said he.

For his own part he had lately finished a new wood engraving, which depicted Lise holding a book in her hand, an engraving instinct with truth and emotion, showing her awakened to intelligence and love. And this time he had achieved his desire, making no preliminary drawing, but tackling the block with his graver, straight away, in presence of his model. And infinite hopefulness had come upon him, he was dreaming of great original works in which the whole period that he belonged to would live anew and for ever.

Thomas now wished to return home. So they shook hands with Jahan, who, as his day's work was over, put on his coat to take his sister back to the Rue du Calvaire.

"Till to-morrow, Lise," said Antoine, inclining his head to kiss her.

She raised herself on tip-toes, and offered him her eyes, which he had opened to life. "Till to-morrow, Antoine," said she.

Outside, the twilight was falling. Pierre was the first to cross the threshold, and as he did so, he saw so extraordinary a sight that for an instant he felt stupefied. But it was certain enough: he could plainly distinguish his brother Guillaume emerging from the gaping doorway which conducted to the foundations of the basilica. And he saw him hastily climb over the palings, and then pretend to be there by pure chance, as though he had come up from the Rue Lamarck. When he accosted his two sons, as if he were delighted to meet them, and began to say that he had just come from Paris, Pierre asked himself if he had been dreaming. However, an anxious glance which his brother cast at him convinced him that he had been right. And then he not only felt ill at ease in presence of that man whom he had never previously known to lie, but it seemed to him that he was at last on the track of all he had feared, the formidable mystery that he had for some time past felt brewing around him in the little peaceful house.

When Guillaume, his sons and his brother reached home and entered the large workroom overlooking Paris, it was so dark that they fancied nobody was there.

"What! nobody in?" said Guillaume.

But in a somewhat low, quiet voice Francois answered out of the gloom: "Why, yes, I'm here."

He had remained at his table, where he had worked the whole afternoon, and as he could no longer read, he now sat in a dreamy mood with his head resting on his hands, his eyes wandering over Paris, where night was gradually falling. As his examination was now near at hand, he was living in a state of severe mental strain.

"What, you are still working there!" said his father. "Why didn't you ask for a lamp?"

"No, I wasn't working, I was looking at Paris," Francois slowly answered. "It's singular how the night falls over it by degrees. The last district that remained visible was the Montague Ste. Genevieve, the plateau of the Pantheon, where all our knowledge and science have grown up. A sun-ray still gilds the schools and libraries and laboratories, when the low-lying districts of trade are already steeped in darkness. I won't say that the planet has a particular partiality for us at the Ecole Normale, but it's certain that its beams still linger on our roofs, when they are to be seen nowhere else."

He began to laugh at his jest. Still one could see how ardent was his faith in mental effort, how entirely he gave himself to mental labour, which, in his opinion, could alone bring truth, establish justice and create happiness.

Then came a short spell of silence. Paris sank more and more deeply into the night, growing black and mysterious, till all at once sparks of light began to appear.

"The lamps are being lighted," resumed Francois; "work is being resumed on all sides."

Then Guillaume, who likewise had been dreaming, immersed in his fixed idea, exclaimed: "Work, yes, no doubt! But for work to give a full harvest it must be fertilised by will. There is something which is superior to work."

Thomas and Antoine had drawn near. And Francois, as much for them as for himself, inquired: "What is that, father?"

"Action."

For a moment the three young men remained silent, impressed by the solemnity of the hour, quivering too beneath the great waves of darkness which rose from the vague ocean of the city. Then a young voice remarked, though whose it was one could not tell: "Action is but work."

And Pierre, who lacked the respectful quietude, the silent faith, of his nephews, now felt his nervousness increasing. That huge and terrifying mystery of which he was dimly conscious rose before him, while a great quiver sped by in the darkness, over that black city where the lamps were now being lighted for a whole passionate night of work.

IV

THE CRISIS

A GREAT ceremony was to take place that day at the basilica of the Sacred Heart. Ten thousand pilgrims were to be present there, at a solemn consecration of the Holy Sacrament; and pending the arrival of four o'clock, the hour fixed for the service, Montmartre would be invaded by people. Its slopes would be black with swarming devotees, the shops where religious emblems and pictures were sold would be besieged, the cafes and taverns would be crowded to overflowing. It would all be like some huge fair, and meantime the big bell of the basilica, "La Savoyarde," would be ringing peal on peal over the holiday-making multitude.

When Pierre entered the workroom in the morning he perceived Guillaume and Mere-Grand alone there; and a remark which he heard the former make caused him to stop short and listen from behind a tall-revolving bookstand. Mere-Grand sat sewing in her usual place near the big window, while Guillaume stood before her, speaking in a low voice.

"Mother," said he, "everything is ready, it is for to-day."

She let her work fall, and raised her eyes, looking very pale. "Ah!" she said, "so you have made up your mind."

"Yes, irrevocably. At four o'clock I shall be yonder, and it will all be over."

"'Tis well—you are the master."

Silence fell, terrible silence. Guillaume's voice seemed to come from far away, from somewhere beyond the world. It was evident that his resolution was unshakable, that his tragic dream, his fixed idea of martyrdom, wholly absorbed him. Mere-Grand looked at him with her pale eyes, like an heroic woman who had grown old in relieving the sufferings of others, and had ever shown all the abnegation and devotion of an intrepid heart, which nothing but the idea of duty could influence. She knew Guillaume's terrible scheme, and had helped him to regulate the pettiest details of it; but if on the one hand, after all the iniquity she had seen and endured, she admitted that fierce and exemplary punishment might seem necessary, and that even the idea of purifying the world by the fire of a volcano might be entertained, on the other hand, she believed too strongly in the necessity of living one's life bravely to the very end, to be able, under any circumstances, to regard death as either good or profitable.

"My son," she gently resumed, "I witnessed the growth of your scheme, and it neither surprised nor angered me. I accepted it as one accepts lightning, the very fire of the skies, something of sovereign purity and power. And I have helped you through it all, and have taken upon myself to act as the mouthpiece of your conscience. . . . But let me tell you once more, one ought never to desert the cause of life."

"It is useless to speak, mother," Guillaume replied: "I have resolved to give my life and cannot take it back. . . . Are you now unwilling to carry out my desires, remain here, and act as we have decided, when all is over?"

She did not answer this inquiry, but in her turn, speaking slowly and gravely, put a question to him: "So it is useless for me to speak to you of the children, myself and the house?" said she. "You have thought it all over, you are quite determined?" And as he simply answered "Yes," she added: "'Tis well, you are the master. . . . I will be the one who is to remain behind and act. And you may be without fear, your bequest is in good hands. All that we have decided together shall be done."

Once more they became silent. Then she again inquired: "At four o'clock, you say, at the moment of that consecration?"

"Yes, at four o'clock."

She was still looking at him with her pale eyes, and there seemed to be something superhuman in her simplicity and grandeur as she sat there in her thin black gown. Her glance, in which the greatest bravery and the deepest sadness mingled, filled Guillaume with acute emotion. His hands began to tremble, and he asked: "Will you let me kiss you, mother?"

"Oh! right willingly, my son," she responded. "Your path of duty may not be mine, but you see I respect your views and love you."

They kissed one another, and when Pierre, whom the scene had chilled to his heart, presented himself as if he were just arriving, Mere-Grand had quietly taken up her needlework once more, while Guillaume was going to and fro, setting one of his laboratory shelves in order with all his wonted activity.

At noon when lunch was ready, they found it necessary to wait for Thomas, who had not yet come home. His brothers Francois and Antoine complained in a jesting way, saying that they were dying of hunger, while for her part Marie, who had made a *creme*, and was very proud of it, declared that they would eat it all, and that those who came late would have to go without tasting it. When Thomas eventually put in an appearance he was greeted with jeers.

"But it wasn't my fault," said he; "I stupidly came up the hill by way of the Rue de la Barre, and you can have no notion what a crowd I fell upon. Quite ten thousand pilgrims must have camped there last night. I am told that as many as possible were huddled together in the St. Joseph Refuge. The others no doubt had to sleep in the open air. And now they are busy eating, here, there and everywhere, all over the patches of waste ground and even on the pavements. One can scarcely set one foot before the other without risk of treading on somebody."

The meal proved a very gay one, though Pierre found the gaiety forced and excessive. Yet the young people could surely know nothing of the frightful, invisible thing which to Pierre ever seemed to be hovering around in the bright sunlight of that splendid June day. Was it that the dim presentiment which comes to loving hearts when mourning threatens them, swept by during the short intervals of silence that followed the joyous outbursts? Although Guillaume looked somewhat pale, and spoke with unusual caressing softness, he retained his customary bright smile. But, on the other hand, never had Mere-Grand been more silent or more grave.

Marie's *creme* proved a great success, and the others congratulated her on it so fulsomely that they made her blush. Then, all at once, heavy silence fell once more, a deathly chill seemed to sweep by, making every face turn pale—even while they were still cleaning their plates with their little spoons.

"Ah! that bell," exclaimed Francois; "it is really intolerable. I can feel my head splitting."

He referred to "La Savoyarde," the big bell of the basilica, which had now begun to toll, sending forth deep sonorous volumes of sound, which ever and ever winged their flight over the immensity of Paris. In the workroom they were all listening to the clang.

"Will it keep on like that till four o'clock?" asked Marie.

"Oh! at four o'clock," replied Thomas, "at the moment of the consecration you will hear something much louder than that. The great peals of joy, the song of triumph will then ring out."

Guillaume was still smiling. "Yes, yes," said he, "those who don't want to be deafened for life had better keep their windows closed. The worst is, that Paris has to hear it whether it will or no, and even as far away as the Pantheon, so I'm told."

Meantime Mere-Grand remained silent and impassive. Antoine for his part expressed his

disgust with the horrible religious pictures for which the pilgrims fought—pictures which in some respects suggested those on the lids of sweetmeat boxes, although they depicted the Christ with His breast ripped open and displaying His bleeding heart. There could be no more repulsive materialism, no grosser or baser art, said Antoine. Then they rose from table, talking at the top of their voices so as to make themselves heard above the incessant din which came from the big bell.

Immediately afterwards they all set to work again. Mere-Grand took her everlasting needlework in hand once more, while Marie, sitting near her, continued some embroidery. The young men also attended to their respective tasks, and now and again raised their heads and exchanged a few words. Guillaume, for his part, likewise seemed very busy; Pierre alone coming and going in a state of anguish, beholding them all as in a nightmare, and attributing some terrible meaning to the most innocent remarks. During *dejeuner*, in order to explain the frightful discomfort into which he was thrown by the gaiety of the meal, he had been obliged to say that he felt poorly. And now he was looking and listening and waiting with ever-growing anxiety.

Shortly before three o'clock, Guillaume glanced at his watch and then quietly took up his hat. "Well," said he, "I'm going out."

His sons, Mere-Grand and Marie raised their heads.

"I'm going out," he repeated, "*au revoir*."

Still he did not go off. Pierre could divine that he was struggling, stiffening himself against the frightful tempest which was raging within him, striving to prevent either shudder or pallor from betraying his awful secret. Ah! he must have suffered keenly; he dared not give his sons a last kiss, for fear lest he might rouse some suspicion in their minds, which would impel them to oppose him and prevent his death! At last with supreme heroism he managed to overcome himself.

"*Au revoir*, boys."

"*Au revoir*, father. Will you be home early?"

"Yes, yes. . . . Don't worry about me, do plenty of work."

Mere-Grand, still majestically silent, kept her eyes fixed upon him. Her he had ventured to kiss, and their glances met and mingled, instinct with all that he had decided and that she had promised: their common dream of truth and justice.

"I say, Guillaume," exclaimed Marie gaily, "will you undertake a commission for me if you are going down by way of the Rue des Martyrs?"

"Why, certainly," he replied.

"Well, then, please look in at my dressmaker's, and tell her that I shan't go to try my gown on till to-morrow morning."

It was a question of her wedding dress, a gown of light grey silk, the stylishness of which she considered very amusing. Whenever she spoke of it, both she and the others began to laugh.

"It's understood, my dear," said Guillaume, likewise making merry over it. "We know it's Cinderella's court robe, eh? The fairy brocade and lace that are to make you very beautiful and for ever happy."

However, the laughter ceased, and in the sudden silence which fell, it again seemed as if death were passing by with a great flapping of wings and an icy gust which chilled the hearts of everyone remaining there.

"It's understood; so now I'm really off," resumed Guillaume. "*Au revoir*, children."

Then he sallied forth, without even turning round, and for a moment they could hear the firm tread of his feet over the garden gravel.

Pierre having invented a pretext was able to follow him a couple of minutes afterwards. As a matter of fact there was no need for him to dog Guillaume's heels, for he knew where his brother was going. He was thoroughly convinced that he would find him at that doorway, conducting to the foundations of the basilica, whence he had seen him emerge two days before. And so he wasted no time in looking for him among the crowd of pilgrims going to the church. His only thought was to hurry on and reach Jahan's workshop. And in accordance with his expectation, just as he arrived there, he perceived Guillaume slipping between the broken palings. The crush and the confusion prevailing among the concourse of believers favored Pierre as it had his brother, in such wise that he was able to follow the latter and enter the doorway without being noticed. Once there he had to pause and draw breath for a moment, so greatly did the beating of his heart oppress him.

A precipitous flight of steps, where all was steeped in darkness, descended from the narrow entry. It was with infinite precaution that Pierre ventured into the gloom, which ever grew denser

and denser. He lowered his feet gently so as to make no noise, and feeling the walls with his hands, turned round and round as he went lower and lower into a kind of well. However, the descent was not a very long one. As soon as he found beaten ground beneath his feet he paused, no longer daring to stir for fear of betraying his presence. The darkness was like ink, and there was not a sound, a breath; the silence was complete.

How should he find his way? he wondered. Which direction ought he to take? He was still hesitating when some twenty paces away he suddenly saw a bright spark, the gleam of a lucifer. Guillaume was lighting a candle. Pierre recognised his broad shoulders, and from that moment he simply had to follow the flickering light along a walled and vaulted subterranean gallery. It seemed to be interminable and to run in a northerly direction, towards the nave of the basilica.

All at once the little light at last stopped, while Pierre, anxious to see what would happen, continued to advance, treading as softly as he could and remaining in the gloom. He found that Guillaume had stood his candle upon the ground in the middle of a kind of low rotunda under the crypt, and that he had knelt down and moved aside a long flagstone which seemed to cover a cavity. They were here among the foundations of the basilica; and one of the columns or piles of concrete poured into shafts in order to support the building could be seen. The gap, which the stone slab removed by Guillaume had covered, was by the very side of the pillar; it was either some natural surface flaw, or a deep fissure caused by some subsidence or settling of the soil. The heads of other pillars could be descried around, and these the cleft seemed to be reaching, for little slits branched out in all directions. Then, on seeing his brother leaning forward, like one who is for the last time examining a mine he has laid before applying a match to the fuse, Pierre suddenly understood the whole terrifying business. Considerable quantities of the new explosive had been brought to that spot. Guillaume had made the journey a score of times at carefully selected hours, and all his powder had been poured into the gap beside the pillar, spreading to the slightest rifts below, saturating the soil at a great depth, and in this wise forming a natural mine of incalculable force. And now the powder was flush with the flagstone which Guillaume has just moved aside. It was only necessary to throw a match there, and everything would be blown into the air!

For a moment an acute chill of horror rooted Pierre to the spot. He could neither have taken a step nor raised a cry. He pictured the swarming throng above him, the ten thousand pilgrims crowding the lofty naves of the basilica to witness the solemn consecration of the Host. Peal upon peal flew from "La Savoyarde," incense smoked, and ten thousand voices raised a hymn of magnificence and praise. And all at once came thunder and earthquake, and a volcano opening and belching forth fire and smoke, and swallowing up the whole church and its multitude of worshippers. Breaking the concrete piles and rending the unsound soil, the explosion, which was certain to be one of extraordinary violence, would doubtless split the edifice atwain, and hurl one-half down the slopes descending towards Paris, whilst the other on the side of the apse would crumble and collapse upon the spot where it stood. And how fearful would be the avalanche; a broken forest of scaffoldings, a hail of stonework, rushing and bounding through the dust and smoke on to the roofs below; whilst the violence of the shock would threaten the whole of Montmartre, which, it seemed likely, must stagger and sink in one huge mass of ruins!

However, Guillaume had again risen. The candle standing on the ground, its flame shooting up, erect and slender, threw his huge shadow all over the subterranean vault. Amidst the dense blackness the light looked like some dismal stationary star. Guillaume drew near to it in order to see what time it was by his watch. It proved to be five minutes past three. So he had nearly another hour to wait. He was in no hurry, he wished to carry out his design punctually, at the precise moment he had selected; and he therefore sat down on a block of stone, and remained there without moving, quiet and patient. The candle now cast its light upon his pale face, upon his towering brow crowned with white hair, upon the whole of his energetic countenance, which still looked handsome and young, thanks to his bright eyes and dark moustaches. And not a muscle of his face stirred; he simply gazed into the void. What thoughts could be passing through his mind at that supreme moment? Who could tell? There was not a quiver; heavy night, the deep eternal silence of the earth reigned all around.

Then Pierre, having quieted his palpitating heart, drew near. At the sound of his footsteps Guillaume rose menacingly, but he immediately recognised his brother, and did not seem astonished to see him.

"Ah! it's you," he said, "you followed me. . . . I felt that you possessed my secret. And it grieves me that you should have abused your knowledge to join me here. You might have spared me this last sorrow."

Pierre clasped his trembling hands, and at once tried to entreat him. "Brother, brother," he began.

"No, don't speak yet," said Guillaume, "if you absolutely wish it I will listen to you by-and-by. We have nearly an hour before us, so we can chat. But I want you to understand the futility of all you may think needful to tell me. My resolution is unshakable; I was a long time coming to it, and in carrying it out I shall simply be acting in accordance with my reason and my conscience."

Then he quietly related that having decided upon a great deed he had long hesitated as to which edifice he should destroy. The opera-house had momentarily tempted him, but he had

reflected that there would be no great significance in the whirlwind of anger and justice destroying a little set of enjoyers. In fact, such a deed might savour of jealousy and covetousness. Next he had thought of the Bourse, where he might strike a blow at money, the great agent of corruption, and the capitalist society in whose clutches the wage-earners groaned. Only, here again the blow would fall upon a restricted circle. Then an idea of destroying the Palace of Justice, particularly the assize court, had occurred to him. It was a very tempting thought—to wreak justice upon human justice, to sweep away the witnesses, the culprit, the public prosecutor who charges the latter, the counsel who defends him, the judges who sentence him, and the lounging public which comes to the spot as to the unfolding of some sensational serial. And then too what fierce irony there would be in the summary superior justice of the volcano swallowing up everything indiscriminately without pausing to enter into details. However, the plan over which he had most lingered was that of blowing up the Arc de Triomphe. This he regarded as an odious monument which perpetuated warfare, hatred among nations, and the false, dearly purchased, sanguineous glory of conquerors. That colossus raised to the memory of so much frightful slaughter which had uselessly put an end to so many human lives, ought, he considered, to be slaughtered in its turn. Could he so have arranged things that the earth should swallow it up, he might have achieved the glory of causing no other death than his own, of dying alone, struck down, crushed to pieces beneath that giant of stone. What a tomb, and what a memory might he thus have left to the world!

"But there was no means of approaching it," he continued, "no basement, no cellar, so I had to give up the idea. . . . And then, although I'm perfectly willing to die alone, I thought what a loftier and more terrible lesson there would be in the unjust death of an innocent multitude, of thousands of unknown people, of all those that might happen to be passing. In the same way as human society by dint of injustice, want and harsh regulations causes so many innocent victims, so must punishment fall as the lightning falls, indiscriminately killing and destroying whatever it may encounter in its course. When a man sets his foot on an ant-hill, he gives no heed to all the lives which he stamps out."

Pierre, whom this theory rendered quite indignant, raised a cry of protest: "Oh! brother, brother, is it you who are saying such things?"

Yet, Guillaume did not pause: "If I have ended by choosing this basilica of the Sacred Heart," he continued, "it is because I found it near at hand and easy to destroy. But it is also because it haunts and exasperates me, because I have long since condemned it. . . . As I have often said to you, one cannot imagine anything more preposterous than Paris, our great Paris, crowned and dominated by this temple raised to the glorification of the absurd. Is it not outrageous that common sense should receive such a smack after so many centuries of science, that Rome should claim the right of triumphing in this insolent fashion, on our loftiest height in the full sunlight? The priests want Paris to repent and do penitence for its liberative work of truth and justice. But its only right course is to sweep away all that hampers and insults it in its march towards deliverance. And so may the temple fall with its deity of falsehood and servitude! And may its ruins crush its worshippers, so that like one of the old geological revolutions of the world, the catastrophe may resound through the very entrails of mankind, and renew and change it!"

"Brother, brother!" again cried Pierre, quite beside himself, "is it you who are talking? What! you, a great scientist, a man of great heart, you have come to this! What madness is stirring you that you should think and say such abominable things? On the evening when we confessed our secrets one to the other, you told me of your proud and lofty dream of ideal Anarchy. There would be free harmony in life, which left to its natural forces would of itself create happiness. But you still rebelled against the idea of theft and murder. You would not accept them as right or necessary; you merely explained and excused them. What has happened then that you, all brain and thought, should now have become the hateful hand that acts?"

"Salvat has been guillotined," said Guillaume simply, "and I read his will and testament in his last glance. I am merely an executor. . . . And what has happened, you ask? Why, all that has made me suffer for four months past, the whole social evil which surrounds us, and which must be brought to an end."

Silence fell. The brothers looked at one another in the darkness. And Pierre now understood things. He saw that Guillaume was changed, that the terrible gust of revolutionary contagion sweeping over Paris had transformed him. It had all come from the duality of his nature, the presence of contradictory elements within him. On one side one found a scientist whose whole creed lay in observation and experiment, who, in dealing with nature, evinced the most cautious logic; while on the other side was a social dreamer, haunted by ideas of fraternity, equality and justice, and eager for universal happiness. Thence had first come the theoretical anarchist that he had been, one in whom science and chimeras were mingled, who dreamt of human society returning to the harmonious law of the spheres, each man free, in a free association, regulated by love alone. Neither Theophile Morin with the doctrines of Proudhon and Comte, nor Bache with those of St. Simon and Fourier, had been able to satisfy his desire for the absolute. All those systems had seemed to him imperfect and chaotic, destructive of one another, and tending to the same wretchedness of life. Janzen alone had occasionally satisfied him with some of his curt phrases which shot over the horizon, like arrows conquering the whole earth for the human family. And then in Guillaume's big heart, which the idea of want, the unjust sufferings of the lowly and the poor exasperated, Salvat's tragic adventure had suddenly found place, fomenting supreme rebellion. For long weeks he had lived on with trembling hands, with growing anguish

clutching at his throat. First had come that bomb and the explosion which still made him quiver, then the vile cupidity of the newspapers howling for the poor wretch's head, then the search for him and the hunt through the Bois de Boulogne, till he fell into the hands of the police, covered with mud and dying of starvation. And afterwards there had been the assize court, the judges, the gendarmes, the witnesses, the whole of France arrayed against one man and bent on making him pay for the universal crime. And finally, there had come the guillotine, the monstrous, the filthy beast consummating irreparable injustice in human justice's name. One sole idea now remained to Guillaume, that idea of justice which maddened him, leaving naught in his mind save the thought of the just, avenging flare by which he would repair the evil and ensure that which was right for all time forward. Salvat had looked at him, and contagion had done its work; he glowed with a desire for death, a desire to give his own blood and set the blood of others flowing, in order that mankind, amidst its fright and horror, should decree the return of the golden age.

Pierre understood the stubborn blindness of such insanity; and he felt utterly upset by the fear that he should be unable to overcome it. "You are mad, brother!" he exclaimed, "they have driven you mad! It is a gust of violence passing; they were treated in a wrong way and too relentlessly at the outset, and now that they are avenging one another, it may be that blood will never cease to flow. . . . But, listen, brother, throw off that nightmare. You can't be a Salvat who murders or a Bergaz who steals! Remember the pillage of the Princess's house and remember the fair-haired, pretty child whom we saw lying yonder, ripped open. . . . You do not, you cannot belong to that set, brother—"

With a wave of his hand, Guillaume brushed these vain reasons aside. Of what consequence were a few lives, his own included? No change had ever taken place in the world without millions and millions of existences being stamped out.

"But you had a great scheme in hand," cried Pierre, hoping to save him by reviving his sense of duty. "It isn't allowable for you to go off like this."

Then he fervently strove to awaken his brother's scientific pride. He spoke to him of his secret, of that great engine of warfare, which could destroy armies and reduce cities to dust, and which he had intended to offer to France, so that on emerging victorious from the approaching war, she might afterwards become the deliverer of the world. And it was this grand scheme that he had abandoned, preferring to employ his explosive in killing innocent people and overthrowing a church, which would be built afresh, whatever the cost, and become a sanctuary of martyrs!

Guillaume smiled. "I have not relinquished my scheme," said he, "I have simply modified it. Did I not tell you of my doubts, my anxious perplexity? Ah! to believe that one holds the destiny of the world in one's grasp, and to tremble and hesitate and wonder if the intelligence and wisdom, that are needful for things to take the one wise course, will be forthcoming! At sight of all the stains upon our great Paris, all the errors and transgressions which we lately witnessed, I shuddered. I asked myself if Paris were sufficiently calm and pure for one to entrust her with omnipotence. How terrible would be the disaster if such an invention as mine should fall into the hands of a demented nation, possibly a dictator, some man of conquest, who would simply employ it to terrorize other nations and reduce them to slavery. . . . Ah! no, I do not wish to perpetuate warfare, I wish to kill it."

Then in a clear firm voice he explained his new plan, in which Pierre was surprised to find some of the ideas which General de Bozonnet had one day laid before him in a very different spirit. Warfare was on the road to extinction, threatened by its very excesses. In the old days of mercenaries, and afterwards with conscripts, the percentage of soldiers designated by chance, war had been a profession and a passion. But nowadays, when everybody is called upon to fight, none care to do so. By the logical force of things, the system of the whole nation in arms means the coming end of armies. How much longer will the nations remain on a footing of deadly peace, bowed down by ever increasing "estimates," spending millions and millions on holding one another in respect? Ah! how great the deliverance, what a cry of relief would go up on the day when some formidable engine, capable of destroying armies and sweeping cities away, should render war an impossibility and constrain every people to disarm! Warfare would be dead, killed in her own turn, she who has killed so many. This was Guillaume's dream, and he grew quite enthusiastic, so strong was his conviction that he would presently bring it to pass.

"Everything is settled," said he; "if I am about to die and disappear, it is in order that my idea may triumph. . . . You have lately seen me spend whole afternoons alone with Mere-Grand. Well, we were completing the classification of the documents and making our final arrangements. She has my orders, and will execute them even at the risk of her life, for none has a braver, loftier soul. . . . As soon as I am dead, buried beneath these stones, as soon as she has heard the explosion shake Paris and proclaim the advent of the new era, she will forward a set of all the documents I have confided to her—the formula of my explosive, the drawings of the bomb and gun—to each of the great powers of the world. In this wise I shall bestow on all the nations the terrible gift of destruction and omnipotence which, at first, I wished to bestow on France alone; and I do this in order that the nations, being one and all armed with the thunderbolt, may at once disarm, for fear of being annihilated, when seeking to annihilate others."

Pierre listened to him, gaping, amazed at this extraordinary idea, in which childishness was blended with genius. "Well," said he, "if you give your secret to all the nations, why should you blow up this church, and die yourself?"

"Why! In order that I may be believed!" cried Guillaume with extraordinary force of utterance. Then he added, "The edifice must lie on the ground, and I must be under it. If the experiment is not made, if universal horror does not attest and proclaim the amazing destructive power of my explosive, people will consider me a mere schemer, a visionary! . . . A lot of dead, a lot of blood, that is what is needed in order that blood may for ever cease to flow!" Then, with a broad sweep of his arm, he again declared that his action was necessary. "Besides," he said, "Salvat left me the legacy of carrying out this deed of justice. If I have given it greater scope and significance, utilising it as a means of hastening the end of war, this is because I happen to be a man of intellect. It would have been better possibly if my mind had been a simple one, and if I had merely acted like some volcano which changes the soil, leaving life the task of renewing humanity."

Much of the candle had now burnt away, and Guillaume at last rose from the block of stone. He had again consulted his watch, and found that he had ten minutes left him. The little current of air created by his gestures made the light flicker, while all around him the darkness seemed to grow denser. And near at hand ever lay the threatening open mine which a spark might at any moment fire.

"It is nearly time," said Guillaume. "Come, brother, kiss me and go away. You know how much I love you, what ardent affection for you has been awakened in my old heart. So love me in like fashion, and find love enough to let me die as I want to die, in carrying out my duty. Kiss me, kiss me, and go away without turning your head."

His deep affection for Pierre made his voice tremble, but he struggled on, forced back his tears, and ended by conquering himself. It was as if he were no longer of the world, no longer one of mankind.

"No, brother, you have not convinced me," said Pierre, who on his side did not seek to hide his tears, "and it is precisely because I love you as you love me, with my whole being, my whole soul, that I cannot go away. It is impossible! You cannot be the madman, the murderer you would try to be."

"Why not? Am I not free. I have rid my life of all responsibilities, all ties. . . . I have brought up my sons, they have no further need of me. But one heart-link remained—Marie, and I have given her to you."

At this a disturbing argument occurred to Pierre, and he passionately availed himself of it. "So you want to die because you have given me Marie," said he. "You still love her, confess it!"

"No!" cried Guillaume, "I no longer love her, I swear it. I gave her to you. I love her no more."

"So you fancied; but you can see now that you still love her, for here you are, quite upset; whereas none of the terrifying things of which we spoke just now could even move you. . . . Yes, if you wish to die it is because you have lost Marie!"

Guillaume quivered, shaken by what his brother said, and in low, broken words he tried to question himself. "No, no, that any love pain should have urged me to this terrible deed would be unworthy—unworthy of my great design. No, no, I decided on it in the free exercise of my reason, and I am accomplishing it from no personal motive, but in the name of justice and for the benefit of humanity, in order that war and want may cease."

Then, in sudden anguish, he went on: "Ah! it is cruel of you, brother, cruel of you to poison my delight at dying. I have created all the happiness I could, I was going off well pleased at leaving you all happy, and now you poison my death. No, no! question it how I may, my heart does not ache; if I love Marie, it is simply in the same way as I love you."

Nevertheless, he remained perturbed, as if fearing lest he might be lying to himself; and by degrees gloomy anger came over him: "Listen, that is enough, Pierre," he exclaimed, "time is flying. . . . For the last time, go away! I order you to do so; I will have it!"

"I will not obey you, Guillaume. . . . I will stay, and as all my reasoning cannot save you from your insanity, fire your mine, and I will die with you."

"You? Die? But you have no right to do so, you are not free!"

"Free, or not, I swear that I will die with you. And if it merely be a question of flinging this candle into that hole, tell me so, and I will take it and fling it there myself."

He made a gesture at which his brother thought that he was about to carry out his threat. So he caught him by the arm, crying: "Why should you die? It would be absurd. That others should die may be necessary, but you, no! Of what use could be this additional monstrosity? You are endeavouring to soften me, you are torturing my heart!" Then all at once, imagining that Pierre's offer had concealed another design, Guillaume thundered in a fury: "You don't want to take the candle in order to throw it there. What you want to do is to blow it out! And you think I shan't be able then—ah! you bad brother!"

In his turn Pierre exclaimed: "Oh! certainly, I'll use every means to prevent you from

accomplishing such a frightful and foolish deed!"

"You'll prevent me!"

"Yes, I'll cling to you, I'll fasten my arms to your shoulders, I'll hold your hands if necessary."

"Ah! you'll prevent me, you bad brother! You think you'll prevent me!"

Choking and trembling with rage, Guillaume had already caught hold of Pierre, pressing his ribs with his powerful muscular arms. They were closely linked together, their eyes fixed upon one another, and their breath mingling in that kind of subterranean dungeon, where their big dancing shadows looked like ghosts. They seemed to be vanishing into the night, the candle now showed merely like a little yellow tear in the midst of the darkness; and at that moment, in those far depths, a quiver sped through the silence of the earth which weighed so heavily upon them. Distant but sonorous peals rang out, as if death itself were somewhere ringing its invisible bell.

"You hear," stammered Guillaume, "it's their bell up there. The time has come. I have vowed to act, and you want to prevent me!"

"Yes, I'll prevent you as long as I'm here alive."

"As long as you are alive, you'll prevent me!"

Guillaume could hear "La Savoyarde" pealing joyfully up yonder; he could see the triumphant basilica, overflowing with its ten thousand pilgrims, and blazing with the splendour of the Host amidst the smoke of incense; and blind frenzy came over him at finding himself unable to act, at finding an obstacle suddenly barring the road to his fixed idea.

"As long as you are alive, as long as you are alive!" he repeated, beside himself. "Well, then, die, you wretched brother!"

A fratricidal gleam had darted from his blurred eyes. He hastily stooped, picked up a large brick forgotten there, and raised it with both hands as if it were a club.

"Ah! I'm willing," cried Pierre. "Kill me, then; kill your own brother before you kill the others!"

The brick was already descending, but Guillaume's arms must have deviated, for the weapon only grazed one of Pierre's shoulders. Nevertheless, he sank upon his knees in the gloom. When Guillaume saw him there he fancied he had dealt him a mortal blow. What was it that had happened between them, what had he done? For a moment he remained standing, haggard, his mouth open, his eyes dilating with terror. He looked at his hands, fancying that blood was streaming from them. Then he pressed them to his brow, which seemed to be bursting with pain, as if his fixed idea had been torn from him, leaving his skull open. And he himself suddenly sank upon the ground with a great sob.

"Oh! brother, little brother, what have I done?" he called. "I am a monster!"

But Pierre had passionately caught him in his arms again. "It is nothing, nothing, brother, I assure you," he replied. "Ah! you are weeping now. How pleased I am! You are saved, I can feel it, since you are weeping. And what a good thing it is that you flew into such a passion, for your anger with me has dispelled your evil dream of violence."

"I am horrified with myself," gasped Guillaume, "to think that I wanted to kill you! Yes, I'm a brute beast that would kill his brother! And the others, too, all the others up yonder. . . . Oh! I'm cold, I feel so cold."

His teeth were chattering, and he shivered. It was as if he had awakened, half stupefied, from some evil dream. And in the new light which his fratricidal deed cast upon things, the scheme which had haunted him and goaded him to madness appeared like some act of criminal folly, projected by another.

"To kill you!" he repeated almost in a whisper. "I shall never forgive myself. My life is ended, I shall never find courage enough to live."

But Pierre clasped him yet more tightly. "What do you say?" he answered. "Will there not rather be a fresh and stronger tie of affection between us? Ah! yes, brother, let me save you as you saved me, and we shall be yet more closely united! Don't you remember that evening at Neuilly, when you consoled me and held me to your heart as I am holding you to mine? I had confessed my torments to you, and you told me that I must live and love! . . . And you did far more afterwards: you plucked your own love from your breast and gave it to me. You wished to ensure my happiness at the price of your own! And how delightful it is that, in my turn, I now have an opportunity to console you, save you, and bring you back to life!"

"No, no, the bloodstain is there and it is ineffaceable. I can hope no more!"

"Yes, yes, you can. Hope in life as you bade me do! Hope in love and hope in labour!"

Still weeping and clasping one another, the brothers continued speaking in low voices. The expiring candle suddenly went out unknown to them, and in the inky night and deep silence their tears of redeeming affection flowed freely. On the one hand, there was joy at being able to repay a debt of brotherliness, and on the other, acute emotion at having been led by a fanatical love of justice and mankind to the very verge of crime. And there were yet other things in the depths of those tears which cleansed and purified them; there were protests against suffering in every form, and ardent wishes that the world might some day be relieved of all its dreadful woe.

At last, after pushing the flagstone over the cavity near the pillar, Pierre groped his way out of the vault, leading Guillaume like a child.

Meantime Mere-Grand, still seated near the window of the workroom, had impassively continued sewing. Now and again, pending the arrival of four o'clock, she had looked up at the timepiece hanging on the wall on her left hand, or else had glanced out of the window towards the unfinished pile of the basilica, which a gigantic framework of scaffoldings encompassed. Slowly and steadily plying her needle, the old lady remained very pale and silent, but full of heroic serenity. On the other hand, Marie, who sat near her, embroidering, shifted her position a score of times, broke her thread, and grew impatient, feeling strangely nervous, a prey to unaccountable anxiety, which oppressed her heart. For their part, the three young men could not keep in place at all; it was as if some contagious fever disturbed them. Each had gone to his work: Thomas was filing something at his bench; Francois and Antoine were on either side of their table, the first trying to solve a mathematical problem, and the other copying a bunch of poppies in a vase before him. It was in vain, however, that they strove to be attentive. They quivered at the slightest sound, raised their heads, and darted questioning glances at one another. What could be the matter? What could possess them? What did they fear? Now and again one or the other would rise, stretch himself, and then, resume his place. However, they did not speak; it was as if they dared not say anything, and thus the heavy silence grew more and more terrible.

When it was a few minutes to four o'clock Mere-Grand felt weary, or else desired to collect her thoughts. After another glance at the timepiece, she let her needlework fall on her lap and turned towards the basilica. It seemed to her that she had only enough strength left to wait; and she remained with her eyes fixed on the huge walls and the forest of scaffolding which rose over yonder with such triumphant pride under the blue sky. Then all at once, however brave and firm she might be, she could not restrain a start, for "La Savoyarde" had raised a joyful clang. The consecration of the Host was now at hand, the ten thousand pilgrims filled the church, four o'clock was about to strike. And thereupon an irresistible impulse forced the old lady to her feet; she drew herself up, quivering, her hands clasped, her eyes ever turned yonder, waiting in mute dread.

"What is the matter?" cried Thomas, who noticed her. "Why are you trembling, Mere-Grand?"

Francois and Antoine raised their heads, and in turn sprang forward.

"Are you ill? Why are you turning so pale, you who are so courageous?"

But she did not answer. Ah! might the force of the explosion rend the earth asunder, reach the house and sweep it into the flaming crater of the volcano! Might she and the three young men, might they all die with the father, this was her one ardent wish in order that grief might be spared them. And she remained waiting and waiting, quivering despite herself, but with her brave, clear eyes ever gazing yonder.

"Mere-Grand, Mere-Grand!" cried Marie in dismay; "you frighten us by refusing to answer us, by looking over there as if some misfortune were coming up at a gallop!"

Then, prompted by the same anguish, the same cry suddenly came from Thomas, Francois and Antoine: "Father is in peril—father is going to die!"

What did they know? Nothing precise, certainly. Thomas no doubt had been astonished to see what a large quantity of the explosive his father had recently prepared, and both Francois and Antoine were aware of the ideas of revolt which he harboured in his mind. But, full of filial deference, they never sought to know anything beyond what he might choose to confide to them. They never questioned him; they bowed to whatever he might do. And yet now a foreboding came to them, a conviction that their father was going to die, that some most frightful catastrophe was impending. It must have been that which had already sent such a quiver through the atmosphere ever since the morning, making them shiver with fever, feel ill at ease, and unable to work.

"Father is going to die, father is going to die!"

The three big fellows had drawn close together, distracted by one and the same anguish, and furiously longing to know what the danger was, in order that they might rush upon it and die with their father if they could not save him. And amidst Mere-Grand's stubborn silence death once more flitted through the room: there came a cold gust such as they had already felt brushing past them during *dejeuner*.

At last four o'clock began to strike, and Mere-Grand raised her white hands with a gesture of supreme entreaty. It was then that she at last spoke: "Father is going to die. Nothing but the duty

of living can save him."

At this the three young men again wished to rush yonder, whither they knew not; but they felt that they must throw down all obstacles and conquer. Their powerlessness rent their hearts, they were both so frantic and so woeful that their grandmother strove to calm them. "Father's own wish was to die," said she, "and he is resolved to die alone."

They shuddered as they heard her, and then, on their side, strove to be heroic. But the minutes crept by, and it seemed as if the cold gust had slowly passed away. Sometimes, at the twilight hour, a night-bird will come in by the window like some messenger of misfortune, flit round the darkened room, and then fly off again, carrying its sadness with it. And it was much like that; the gust passed, the basilica remained standing, the earth did not open to swallow it. Little by little the atrocious anguish which wrung their hearts gave place to hope. And when at last Guillaume appeared, followed by Pierre, a great cry of resurrection came from one and all: "Father!"

Their kisses, their tears, deprived him of his little remaining strength. He was obliged to sit down. He had glanced round him as if he were returning to life perforce. Mere-Grand, who understood what bitter feelings must have followed the subjugation of his will, approached him smiling, and took hold of both his hands as if to tell him that she was well pleased at seeing him again, and at finding that he accepted his task and was unwilling to desert the cause of life. For his part he suffered dreadfully, the shock had been so great. The others spared him any narrative of their feelings; and he, himself, related nothing. With a gesture, a loving word, he simply indicated that it was Pierre who had saved him.

Thereupon, in a corner of the room, Marie flung her arms round the young man's neck. "Ah! my good Pierre, I have never yet kissed you," said she; "I want it to be for something serious the first time. . . . I love you, my good Pierre, I love you with all my heart."

Later that same evening, after night had fallen, Guillaume and Pierre remained for a moment alone in the big workroom. The young men had gone out, and Mere-Grand and Marie were upstairs sorting some house linen, while Madame Mathis, who had brought some work back, sat patiently in a dim corner waiting for another bundle of things which might require mending. The brothers, steeped in the soft melancholy of the twilight hour, and chatting in low tones, had quite forgotten her.

But all at once the arrival of a visitor upset them. It was Janzen with the fair, Christ-like face. He called very seldom nowadays; and one never knew from what gloomy spot he had come or into what darkness he would return when he took his departure. He disappeared, indeed, for months together, and was then suddenly to be seen like some momentary passer-by whose past and present life were alike unknown.

"I am leaving to-night," he said in a voice sharp like a knife.

"Are you going back to your home in Russia?" asked Guillaume.

A faint, disdainful smile appeared on the Anarchist's lips. "Home!" said he, "I am at home everywhere. To begin with, I am not a Russian, and then I recognise no other country than the world."

With a sweeping gesture he gave them to understand what manner of man he was, one who had no fatherland of his own, but carried his gory dream of fraternity hither and thither regardless of frontiers. From some words he spoke the brothers fancied he was returning to Spain, where some fellow-Anarchists awaited him. There was a deal of work to be done there, it appeared. He had quietly seated himself, chatting on in his cold way, when all at once he serenely added: "By the by, a bomb had just been thrown into the Cafe de l'Univers on the Boulevard. Three *bourgeois* were killed."

Pierre and Guillaume shuddered, and asked for particulars. Thereupon Janzen related that he had happened to be there, had heard the explosion, and seen the windows of the cafe shivered to atoms. Three customers were lying on the floor blown to pieces. Two of them were gentlemen, who had entered the place by chance and whose names were not known, while the third was a regular customer, a petty cit of the neighbourhood, who came every day to play a game at dominoes. And the whole place was wrecked; the marble tables were broken, the chandeliers twisted out of shape, the mirrors studded with projectiles. And how great the terror and the indignation, and how frantic the rush of the crowd! The perpetrator of the deed had been arrested immediately—in fact, just as he was turning the corner of the Rue Caumartin.

"I thought I would come and tell you of it," concluded Janzen; "it is well you should know it."

Then as Pierre, shuddering and already suspecting the truth, asked him if he knew who the man was that had been arrested, he slowly replied: "The worry is that you happen to know him—it was little Victor Mathis."

Pierre tried to silence Janzen too late. He had suddenly remembered that Victor's mother had been sitting in a dark corner behind them a short time previously. Was she still there? Then he again pictured Victor, slight and almost beardless, with a straight, stubborn brow, grey eyes

glittering with intelligence, a pointed nose and thin lips expressive of stern will and unforgiving hatred. He was no simple and lowly one from the ranks of the disinherited. He was an educated scion of the *bourgeoisie*, and but for circumstances would have entered the Ecole Normale. There was no excuse for his abominable deed, there was no political passion, no humanitarian insanity, in it. He was the destroyer pure and simple, the theoretician of destruction, the cold energetic man of intellect who gave his cultivated mind to arguing the cause of murder, in his desire to make murder an instrument of the social evolution. True, he was also a poet, a visionary, but the most frightful of all visionaries: a monster whose nature could only be explained by mad pride, and who craved for the most awful immortality, dreaming that the coming dawn would rise from the arms of the guillotine. Only one thing could surpass him: the scythe of death which blindly mows the world.

For a few seconds, amidst the growing darkness, cold horror reigned in the workroom. "Ah!" muttered Guillaume, "he had the daring to do it, he had."

Pierre, however, lovingly pressed his arm. And he felt that he was as distracted, as upset, as himself. Perhaps this last abomination had been needed to ravage and cure him.

Janzen no doubt had been an accomplice in the deed. He was relating that Victor's purpose had been to avenge Salvat, when all at once a great sigh of pain was heard in the darkness, followed by a heavy thud upon the floor. It was Madame Mathis falling like a bundle, overwhelmed by the news which chance had brought her. At that moment it so happened that Mere-Grand came down with a lamp, which lighted up the room, and thereupon they hurried to the help of the wretched woman, who lay there as pale as a corpse in her flimsy black gown.

And this again brought Pierre an indescribable heart-pang. Ah! the poor, sad, suffering creature! He remembered her at Abbe Rose's, so discreet, so shamefaced, in her poverty, scarce able to live upon the slender resources which persistent misfortunes had left her. Hers had indeed been a cruel lot: first, a home with wealthy parents in the provinces, a love story and elopement with the man of her choice; next, ill-luck steadily pursuing her, all sorts of home troubles, and at last her husband's death. Then, in the retirement of her widowhood, after losing the best part of the little income which had enabled her to bring up her son, naught but this son had been left to her. He had been her Victor, her sole affection, the only one in whom she had faith. She had ever striven to believe that he was very busy, absorbed in work, and on the eve of attaining to some superb position worthy of his merits. And now, all at once, she had learnt that this fondly loved son was simply the most odious of assassins, that he had flung a bomb into a cafe, and had there killed three men.

When Madame Mathis had recovered her senses, thanks to the careful tending of Mere-Grand, she sobbed on without cessation, raising such a continuous doleful wail, that Pierre's hand again sought Guillaume's, and grasped it, whilst their hearts, distracted but healed, mingled lovingly one with the other.

V

LIFE'S WORK AND PROMISE

FIFTEEN months later, one fine golden day in September, Bache and Theophile Morin were taking *dejeuner* at Guillaume's, in the big workroom overlooking the immensity of Paris.

Near the table was a cradle with its little curtains drawn. Behind them slept Jean, a fine boy four months old, the son of Pierre and Marie. The latter, simply in order to protect the child's social rights, had been married civilly at the town-hall of Montmartre. Then, by way of pleasing Guillaume, who wished to keep them with him, and thus enlarge the family circle, they had continued living in the little lodging over the work-shop, leaving the sleepy house at Neuilly in the charge of Sophie, Pierre's old servant. And life had been flowing on happily for the fourteen months or so that they had now belonged to one another.

There was simply peace, affection and work around the young couple. Francois, who had left the Ecole Normale provided with every degree, every diploma, was now about to start for a college in the west of France, so as to serve his term of probation as a professor, intending to resign his post afterwards and devote himself, if he pleased, to science pure and simple. Then Antoine had lately achieved great success with a series of engravings he had executed—some views and scenes of Paris life; and it was settled that he was to marry Lise Jahan in the ensuing spring, when she would have completed her seventeenth year. Of the three sons, however, Thomas was the most triumphant, for he had at last devised and constructed his little motor, thanks to a happy idea of his father's. One morning, after the downfall of all his huge chimerical schemes, Guillaume, remembering the terrible explosive which he had discovered and hitherto failed to utilise, had suddenly thought of employing it as a motive force, in the place of petroleum, in the motor which his eldest son had so long been trying to construct for the Grandidier works. So he had set to work with Thomas, devising a new mechanism, encountering endless difficulties, and labouring for a whole year before reaching success. But now the father

and son had accomplished their task; the marvel was created, and stood there riveted to an oak stand, and ready to work as soon as its final toilet should have been performed.

Amidst all the changes which had occurred, Mere-Grand, in spite of her great age, continued exercising her active, silent sway over the household, which was now again so gay and peaceful. Though she seldom seemed to leave her chair in front of her work-table, she was really here, there and everywhere. Since the birth of Jean, she had talked of rearing the child in the same way as she had formerly reared Thomas, Francois and Antoine. She was indeed full of the bravery of devotion, and seemed to think that she was not at all likely to die so long as she might have others to guide, love and save. Marie marvelled at it all. She herself, though she was always gay and in good health, felt tired at times now that she was suckling her infant. Little Jean indeed had two vigilant mothers near his cradle; whilst his father, Pierre, who had become Thomas's assistant, pulled the bellows, roughened out pieces of metal, and generally completed his apprenticeship as a working mechanician.

On the particular day when Bache and Theophile Morin came to Montmartre, the *dejeuner* proved even gayer than usual, thanks perhaps to their presence. The meal was over, the table had been cleared, and the coffee was being served, when a little boy, the son of a doorkeeper in the Rue Cortot, came to ask for Monsieur Pierre Froment. When they inquired his business, he answered in a hesitating way that Monsieur l'Abbe Rose was very ill, indeed dying, and that he had sent him to fetch Monsieur Pierre Froment at once.

Pierre followed the lad, feeling much affected; and on reaching the Rue Cortot he there found Abbe Rose in a little damp ground-floor room overlooking a strip of garden. The old priest was in bed, dying as the boy had said, but he still retained the use of his faculties, and could speak in his wonted slow and gentle voice. A Sister of Charity was watching beside him, and she seemed so surprised and anxious at the arrival of a visitor whom she did not know, that Pierre understood she was there to guard the dying man and prevent him from having intercourse with others. The old priest must have employed some stratagem in order to send the doorkeeper's boy to fetch him. However, when Abbe Rose in his grave and kindly way begged the Sister to leave them alone for a moment, she dared not refuse this supreme request, but immediately left the room.

"Ah! my dear child," said the old man, "how much I wanted to speak to you! Sit down there, close to the bed, so that you may be able to hear me, for this is the end; I shall no longer be here to-night. And I have such a great service to ask of you."

Quite upset at finding his friend so wasted, with his face white like a sheet, and scarce a sign of life save the sparkle of his innocent, loving eyes, Pierre responded: "But I would have come sooner if I had known you were in need of me! Why did you not send for me before? Are people being kept away from you?"

A faint smile of shame and confession appeared on the old priest's embarrassed face. "Well, my dear child," said he, "you must know that I have again done some foolish things. Yes, I gave money to some people who, it seems, were not deserving of it. In fact, there was quite a scandal; they scolded me at the Archbishop's palace, and accused me of compromising the interests of religion. And when they heard that I was ill, they put that good Sister beside me, because they said that I should die on the floor, and give the very sheets off my bed if I were not prevented."

He paused to draw breath, and then continued: "So you understand, that good Sister—oh! she is a very saintly woman—is here to nurse me and prevent me from still doing foolish things. To overcome her vigilance I had to use a little deceit, for which God, I trust, will forgive me. As it happens, it's precisely my poor who are in question; it was to speak to you about them that I so particularly wished to see you."

Tears had come to Pierre's eyes. "Tell me what you want me to do," he answered; "I am yours, both heart and soul."

"Yes, yes, I know it, my dear child. It was for that reason that I thought of you—you alone. In spite of all that has happened, you are the only one in whom I have any confidence, who can understand me, and give me a promise which will enable me to die in peace."

This was the only allusion he would venture to make to the cruel rupture which had occurred after the young man had thrown off his cassock and rebelled against the Church. He had since heard of Pierre's marriage, and was aware that he had for ever severed all religious ties. But at that supreme moment nothing of this seemed of any account to the old priest. His knowledge of Pierre's loving heart sufficed him, for all that he now desired was simply the help of that heart which he had seen glowing with such passionate charity.

"Well," he resumed, again finding sufficient strength to smile, "it is a very simple matter. I want to make you my heir. Oh! it isn't a fine legacy I am leaving you; it is the legacy of my poor, for I have nothing else to bestow on you; I shall leave nothing behind me but my poor."

Of these unhappy creatures, three in particular quite upset his heart. He recoiled from the prospect of leaving them without chance of succour, without even the crumbs which he had hitherto distributed among them, and which had enabled them to live. One was the big Old'un, the aged carpenter whom he and Pierre had vainly sought one night with the object of sending

him to the Asylum for the Invalids of Labour. He had been sent there a little later, but he had fled three days afterwards, unwilling as he was to submit to the regulations. Wild and violent, he had the most detestable disposition. Nevertheless, he could not be left to starve. He came to Abbe Rose's every Saturday, it seemed, and received a franc, which sufficed him for the whole week. Then, too, there was a bedridden old woman in a hotel in the Rue du Mont-Cenis. The baker, who every morning took her the bread she needed, must be paid. And in particular there was a poor young woman residing on the Place du Tertre, one who was unmarried but a mother. She was dying of consumption, unable to work, and tortured by the idea that when she should have gone, her daughter must sink to the pavement like herself. And in this instance the legacy was twofold: there was the mother to relieve until her death, which was near at hand, and then the daughter to provide for until she could be placed in some good household.

"You must forgive me, my dear child, for leaving you all these worries," added Abbe Rose. "I tried to get the good Sister, who is nursing me, to take an interest in these poor people, but when I spoke to her of the big Old'un, she was so alarmed that she made the sign of the cross. And it's the same with my worthy friend Abbe Tavernier. I know nobody of more upright mind. Still I shouldn't be at ease with him, he has ideas of his own. . . . And so, my dear child, there is only you whom I can rely upon, and you must accept my legacy if you wish me to depart in peace."

Pierre was weeping. "Ah! certainly, with my whole soul," he answered. "I shall regard your desires as sacred."

"Good! I knew you would accept. . . . So it is agreed: a franc for the big Old'un every Saturday, the bread for the bedridden woman, some help for the poor young mother, and then a home for her little girl. Ah! if you only knew what a weight it is off my heart! The end may come now, it will be welcome to me."

His kind white face had brightened as if with supreme joy. Holding Pierre's hand within his own he detained him beside the bed, exchanging a farewell full of serene affection. And his voice weakening, he expressed his whole mind in faint, impressive accents: "Yes, I shall be pleased to go off. I could do no more, I could do no more! Though I gave and gave, I felt that it was ever necessary to give more and more. And how sad to find charity powerless, to give without hope of ever being able to stamp out want and suffering! I rebelled against that idea of yours, as you will remember. I told you that we should always love one another in our poor, and that was true, since you are here, so good and affectionate to me and those whom I am leaving behind. But, all the same, I can do no more, I can do no more; and I would rather go off, since the woes of others rise higher and higher around me, and I have ended by doing the most foolish things, scandalising the faithful and making my superiors indignant with me, without even saving one single poor person from the ever-growing torrent of want. Farewell, my dear child. My poor old heart goes off aching, my old hands are weary and conquered."

Pierre embraced him with his whole soul, and then departed. His eyes were full of tears and indescribable emotion wrung his heart. Never had he heard a more woeful cry than that confession of the impotence of charity, on the part of that old candid child, whose heart was all simplicity and sublime benevolence. Ah! what a disaster, that human kindness should be futile, that the world should always display so much distress and suffering in spite of all the compassionate tears that had been shed, in spite of all the alms that had fallen from millions and millions of hands for centuries and centuries! No wonder that it should bring desire for death, no wonder that a Christian should feel pleased at escaping from the abominations of this earth!

When Pierre again reached the workroom he found that the table had long since been cleared, and that Bache and Morin were chatting with Guillaume, whilst the latter's sons had returned to their customary occupations. Marie, also, had resumed her usual place at the work-table in front of Mere-Grand; but from time to time she rose and went to look at Jean, so as to make sure that he was sleeping peacefully, with his little clenched fists pressed to his heart. And when Pierre, who kept his emotion to himself, had likewise leant over the cradle beside the young woman, whose hair he discreetly kissed, he went to put on an apron in order that he might assist Thomas, who was now, for the last time, regulating his motor.

Then, as Pierre stood there awaiting an opportunity to help, the room vanished from before his eyes; he ceased to see or hear the persons who were there. The scent of Marie's hair alone lingered on his lips amidst the acute emotion into which he had been thrown by his visit to Abbe Rose. A recollection had come to him, that of the bitterly cold morning when the old priest had stopped him outside the basilica of the Sacred Heart, and had timidly asked him to take some alms to that old man Laveuve, who soon afterwards had died of want, like a dog by the wayside. How sad a morning it had been; what battle and torture had Pierre not felt within him, and what a resurrection had come afterwards! He had that day said one of his last masses, and he recalled with a shudder his abominable anguish, his despairing doubts at the thought of nothingness. Two experiments which he had previously made had failed most miserably. First had come one at Lourdes, where the glorification of the absurd had simply filled him with pity for any such attempt to revert to the primitive faith of young nations, who bend beneath the terror born of ignorance; and, secondly, there had been an experiment at Rome, which he had found incapable of any renewal, and which he had seen staggering to its death amidst its ruins, a mere great shadow, which would soon be of no account, fast sinking, as it was, to the dust of dead religions. And, in his own mind, Charity itself had become bankrupt; he no longer believed that alms could cure the sufferings of mankind, he awaited naught but a frightful catastrophe, fire and massacre,

which would sweep away the guilty, condemned world. His cassock, too, stifled him, a lie alone kept it on his shoulders, the idea, unbelieving priest though he was, that he could honestly and chastely watch over the belief of others. The problem of a new religion, a new hope, such as was needful to ensure the peace of the coming democracies tortured him, but between the certainties of science and the need of the Divine, which seemed to consume humanity, he could find no solution. If Christianity crumbled with the principle of Charity, there could remain nothing else but Justice, that cry which came from every breast, that battle of Justice against Charity in which his heart must contend in that great city of Paris. It was there that began his third and decisive experiment, the experiment which was to make truth as plain to him as the sun itself, and give him back health and strength and delight in life.

At this point of his reverie Pierre was roused by Thomas, who asked him to fetch a tool. As he did so he heard Bache remarking: "The ministry resigned this morning. Vignon has had enough of it, he wants to reserve his remaining strength."

"Well, he has lasted more than a twelvemonth," replied Morin. "That's already an achievement."

After the crime of Victor Mathis, who had been tried and executed within three weeks, Monferrand had suddenly fallen from power. What was the use of having a strong-handed man at the head of the Government if bombs still continued to terrify the country? Moreover, he had displeased the Chamber by his voracious appetite, which had prevented him from allowing others more than an infinitesimal share of all the good things. And this time he had been succeeded by Vignon, although the latter's programme of reforms had long made people tremble. He, Vignon, was honest certainly, but of all these reforms he had only been able to carry out a few insignificant ones, for he had found himself hampered by a thousand obstacles. And thus he had resigned himself to ruling the country as others had done; and people had discovered that after all there were but faint shades of difference between him and Monferrand.

"You know that Monferrand is being spoken of again?" said Guillaume.

"Yes, and he has some chance of success. His creatures are bestirring themselves tremendously," replied Bache, adding, in a bitter, jesting way, that Mege, the Collectivist leader, played the part of a dupe in overthrowing ministry after ministry. He simply gratified the ambition of each coterie in turn, without any possible chance of attaining to power himself.

Thereupon Guillaume pronounced judgment. "Oh! well, let them devour one another," said he. "Eager as they all are to reign and dispose of power and wealth, they only fight over questions of persons. And nothing they do can prevent the evolution from continuing. Ideas expand, and events occur, and, over and above everything else, mankind is marching on."

Pierre was greatly struck by these words, and he again recalled the past. His dolorous Parisian experiment had begun, and he was once more roaming through the city. Paris seemed to him to be a huge vat, in which a world fermented, something of the best and something of the worst, a frightful mixture such as sorceresses might have used; precious powders mingled with filth, from all of which was to come the philter of love and eternal youth. And in that vat Pierre first marked the scum of the political world: Monferrand who strangled Barroux, who purchased the support of hungry ones such as Fongueue, Duthil and Chaigneux, who made use of those who attained to mediocrity, such as Taboureau and Dauvergne; and who employed even the sectarian passions of Mege and the intelligent ambition of Vignon as his weapons. Next came money the poisoner, with that affair of the African Railways, which had rotted the Parliament and turned Duvillard, the triumphant *bourgeois*, into a public perverter, the very cancer as it were of the financial world. Then as a just consequence of all this there was Duvillard's own home infected by himself, that frightful drama of Eve contending with her daughter Camille for the possession of Gerard, then Camille stealing him from her mother, and Hyacinthe, the son, passing his crazy mistress Rosemonde on to that notorious harlot Silviane, with whom his father publicly exhibited himself. Then there was the old expiring aristocracy, with the pale, sad faces of Madame de Quinsac and the Marquis de Morigny; the old military spirit whose funeral was conducted by General de Bozonnet; the magistracy which slavishly served the powers of the day, Amadiou thrusting himself into notoriety by means of sensational cases, Lehmann, the public prosecutor, preparing his speeches in the private room of the Minister whose policy he defended; and, finally, the mendacious and cupid Press which lived upon scandal, the everlasting flood of denunciation and filth which poured from Sagnier, and the gay impudence shown by the unscrupulous and conscienceless Massot, who attacked all and defended all, by profession and to order! And in the same way as insects, on discovering one of their own kind dying, will often finish it off and fatten upon it, so the whole swarm of appetites, interests and passions had fallen upon a wretched madman, that unhappy Salvat, whose idiotic crime had brought them all scrambling together, gluttonously eager to derive some benefit from that starveling's emaciated carcass. And all boiled in the huge vat of Paris; the desires, the deeds of violence, the strivings of one and another man's will, the whole nameless medley of the bitterest ferments, whence, in all purity, the wine of the future would at last flow.

Then Pierre became conscious of the prodigious work which went on in the depths of the vat, beneath all the impurity and waste. As his brother had just said, what mattered the stains, the egotism and greed of politicians, if humanity were still on the march, ever slowly and stubbornly stepping forward! What mattered, too, that corrupt and emasculate *bourgeoisie*, nowadays as

moribund as the aristocracy, whose place it took, if behind it there ever came the inexhaustible reserve of men who surged up from the masses of the country-sides and the towns! What mattered the debauchery, the perversion arising from excess of wealth and power, the luxuriousness and dissoluteness of life, since it seemed a proven fact that the capitals that had been queens of the world had never reigned without extreme civilisation, a cult of beauty and of pleasure! And what mattered even the venality, the transgressions and the folly of the press, if at the same time it remained an admirable instrument for the diffusion of knowledge, the open conscience, so to say, of the nation, a river which, though there might be horrors on its surface, none the less flowed on, carrying all nations to the brotherly ocean of the future centuries! The human lees ended by sinking to the bottom of the vat, and it was not possible to expect that what was right would triumph visibly every day; for it was often necessary that years should elapse before the realisation of some hope could emerge from the fermentation. Eternal matter is ever being cast afresh into the crucible and ever coming from it improved. And if in the depths of pestilential workshops and factories the slavery of ancient times subsists in the wage-earning system, if such men as Toussaint still die of want on their pallets like broken-down beasts of burden, it is nevertheless a fact that once already, on a memorable day of tempest, Liberty sprang forth from the vat to wing her flight throughout the world. And why in her turn should not Justice spring from it, proceeding from those troubled elements, freeing herself from all dross, flowing forth with dazzling limpidity and regenerating the nations?

However, the voices of Bache and Morin, rising in the course of their chat with Guillaume, once more drew Pierre from his reverie. They were now speaking of Janzen, who after being compromised in a fresh outrage at Barcelona had fled from Spain. Bache fancied that he had recognised him in the street only the previous day. To think that a man with so clear a mind and such keen energy should waste his natural gifts in such a hateful cause!

"When I remember," said Morin slowly, "that Barthes lives in exile in a shabby little room at Brussels, ever quivering with the hope that the reign of liberty is at hand—he who has never had a drop of blood on his hands and who has spent two-thirds of his life in prison in order that the nations may be freed!"

Bache gently shrugged his shoulders: "Liberty, liberty, of course," said he; "only it is worth nothing if it is not organised."

Thereupon their everlasting discussion began afresh, with Saint-Simon and Fourier on one side and Proudhon and Auguste Comte on the other. Bache gave a long account of the last commemoration which had taken place in honour of Fourier's memory, how faithful disciples had brought wreaths and made speeches, forming quite a meeting of apostles, who all stubbornly clung to their faith, as confident in the future as if they were the messengers of some new gospel. Afterwards Morin emptied his pockets, which were always full of Positivist tracts and pamphlets, manifestos, answers and so forth, in which Comte's doctrines were extolled as furnishing the only possible basis for the new, awaited religion. Pierre, who listened, thereupon remembered the disputes in his little house at Neuilly when he himself, searching for certainty, had endeavoured to draw up the century's balance-sheet. He had lost his depth, in the end, amidst the contradictions and incoherency of the various precursors. Although Fourier had sprung from Saint-Simon, he denied him in part, and if Saint-Simon's doctrine ended in a kind of mystical sensuality, the other's conducted to an unacceptable regimenting of society. Proudhon, for his part, demolished without rebuilding anything. Comte, who created method and declared science to be the one and only sovereign, had not even suspected the advent of the social crisis which now threatened to sweep all away, and had finished personally as a mere worshipper of love, overpowered by woman. Nevertheless, these two, Comte and Proudhon, entered the lists and fought against the others, Fourier and Saint-Simon; the combat between them or their disciples becoming so bitter and so blind that the truths common to them all at first seemed obscured and disfigured beyond recognition. Now, however, that evolution had slowly transformed Pierre, those common truths seemed to him as irrefutable, as clear as the sunlight itself. Amidst the chaos of conflicting assertions which was to be found in the gospels of those social messiahs, there were certain similar phrases and principles which recurred again and again, the defence of the poor, the idea of a new and just division of the riches of the world in accordance with individual labour and merit, and particularly the search for a new law of labour which would enable this fresh distribution to be made equitably. Since all the precursory men of genius agreed so closely upon those points, must they not be the very foundations of to-morrow's new religion, the necessary faith which this century must bequeath to the coming century, in order that the latter may make of it a human religion of peace, solidarity and love?

Then, all at once, there came a leap in Pierre's thoughts. He fancied himself at the Madeleine once more, listening to the address on the New Spirit delivered by Monseigneur Martha, who had predicted that Paris, now reconverted to Christianity, would, thanks to the Sacred Heart, become the ruler of the world. But no, but no! If Paris reigned, it was because it was able to exercise its intelligence freely. To set the cross and the mystic and repulsive symbolism of a bleeding heart above it was simply so much falsehood. Although they might rear edifices of pride and domination as if to crush Paris with their very weight, although they might try to stop science in the name of a dead ideal and in the hope of setting their clutches upon the coming century, these attempts would be of no avail. Science will end by sweeping away all remnants of their ancient sovereignty, their basilica will crumble beneath the breeze of Truth without any necessity of raising a finger against it. The trial has been made, the Gospel as a social code has fallen to

pieces, and human wisdom can only retain account of its moral maxims. Ancient Catholicism is on all sides crumbling into dust, Catholic Rome is a mere field of ruins from which the nations turn aside, anxious as they are for a religion that shall not be a religion of death. In olden times the overburdened slave, glowing with a new hope and seeking to escape from his gaol, dreamt of a heaven where in return for his earthly misery he would be rewarded with eternal enjoyment. But now that science has destroyed that false idea of a heaven, and shown what dupery lies in reliance on the morrow of death, the slave, the workman, weary of dying for happiness' sake, demands that justice and happiness shall find place upon this earth. Therein lies the new hope—Justice, after eighteen hundred years of impotent Charity. Ah! in a thousand years from now, when Catholicism will be naught but a very ancient superstition of the past, how amazed men will be to think that their ancestors were able to endure that religion of torture and nihility! How astonished they will feel on finding that God was regarded as an executioner, that manhood was threatened, maimed and chastised, that nature was accounted an enemy, that life was looked upon as something accursed, and that death alone was pronounced sweet and liberating! For well-nigh two thousand years the onward march of mankind has been hampered by the odious idea of tearing all that is human away from man: his desires, his passions, his free intelligence, his will and right of action, his whole strength. And how glorious will be the awakening when such virginity as is now honoured by the Church is held in derision, when fruitfulness is again recognised as a virtue, amidst the hosanna of all the freed forces of nature—man's desires which will be honoured, his passions which will be utilised, his labour which will be exalted, whilst life is loved and ever and ever creates love afresh!

A new religion! a new religion! Pierre remembered the cry which had escaped him at Lourdes, and which he had repeated at Rome in presence of the collapse of old Catholicism. But he no longer displayed the same feverish eagerness as then—a puerile, sickly desire that a new Divinity should at once reveal himself, an ideal come into being, complete in all respects, with dogmas and form of worship. The Divine certainly seemed to be as necessary to man as were bread and water; he had ever fallen back upon it, hungering for the mysterious, seemingly having no other means of consolation than that of annihilating himself in the unknown. But who can say that science will not some day quench the thirst for what lies beyond us? If the domain of science embraces the acquired truths, it also embraces, and will ever do so, the truths that remain to be acquired. And in front of it will there not ever remain a margin for the thirst of knowledge, for the hypotheses which are but so much ideality? Besides, is not the yearning for the divine simply a desire to behold the Divinity? And if science should more and more content the yearning to know all and be able to do all, will not that yearning be quieted and end by mingling with the love of acquired truth? A religion grafted on science is the indicated, certain, inevitable finish of man's long march towards knowledge. He will come to it at last as to a natural haven, as to peace in the midst of certainty, after passing every form of ignorance and terror on his road. And is there not already some indication of such a religion? Has not the idea of the duality of God and the Universe been brushed aside, and is not the principle of unity, *monisme*, becoming more and more evident—unity leading to solidarity, and the sole law of life proceeding by evolution from the first point of the ether that condensed to create the world? But if precursors, scientists and philosophers—Darwin, Fourier and all the others—have sown the seed of to-morrow's religion by casting the good word to the passing breeze, how many centuries will doubtless be required to raise the crop! People always forget that before Catholicism grew up and reigned in the sunlight, it spent four centuries in germinating and sprouting from the soil. Well, then, grant some centuries to this religion of science of whose sprouting there are signs upon all sides, and by-and-by the admirable ideas of some Fourier will be seen expanding and forming a new gospel, with desire serving as the lever to raise the world, work accepted by one and all, honoured and regulated as the very mechanism of natural and social life, and the passions of man excited, contented and utilised for human happiness! The universal cry of Justice, which rises louder and louder, in a growing clamour from the once silent multitude, the people that have so long been duped and preyed upon, is but a cry for this happiness towards which human beings are tending, the happiness that embodies the complete satisfaction of man's needs, and the principle of life loved for its own sake, in the midst of peace and the expansion of every force and every joy. The time will come when this Kingdom of God will be set upon the earth; so why not close that other deceptive paradise, even if the weak-minded must momentarily suffer from the destruction of their illusions; for it is necessary to operate even with cruelty on the blind if they are to be extricated from their misery, from their long and frightful night of ignorance!

All at once a feeling of deep joy came over Pierre. A child's faint cry, the wakening cry of his son Jean had drawn him from his reverie. And he had suddenly remembered that he himself was now saved, freed from falsehood and fright, restored to good and healthy nature. How he quivered as he recalled that he had once fancied himself lost, blotted out of life, and that a prodigy of love had extricated him from his nothingness, still strong and sound, since that dear child of his was there, sturdy and smiling. Life had brought forth life; and truth had burst forth, as dazzling as the sun. He had made his third experiment with Paris, and this had been conclusive; it had been no wretched miscarriage with increase of darkness and grief, like his other experiments at Lourdes and Rome. In the first place, the law of labour had been revealed to him, and he had imposed upon himself a task, as humble a one as it was, that manual calling which he was learning so late in life, but which was, nevertheless, a form of labour, and one in which he would never fail, one too that would lend him the serenity which comes from the accomplishment of duty, for life itself was but labour: it was only by effort that the world existed. And then, moreover, he had loved; and salvation had come to him from woman and from his child. Ah! what a long and circuitous journey he had made to reach this finish at once so natural

and so simple! How he had suffered, how much error and anger he had known before doing what all men ought to do! That eager, glowing love which had contended against his reason, which had bled at sight of the arrant absurdities of the miraculous grotto of Lourdes, which had bled again too in presence of the haughty decline of the Vatican, had at last found contentment now that he was husband and father, now that he had confidence in work and believed in the just laws of life. And thence had come the indisputable truth, the one solution—happiness in certainty.

Whilst Pierre was thus plunged in thought, Bache and Morin had already gone off with their customary handshakes and promises to come and chat again some evening. And as Jean was now crying more loudly, Marie took him in her arms and unhooked her dress-body to give him her breast.

"Oh! the darling, it's his time, you know, and he doesn't forget it!" she said. "Just look, Pierre, I believe he has got bigger since yesterday."

She laughed; and Pierre, likewise laughing, drew near to kiss the child. And afterwards he kissed his wife, mastered as he was by emotion at the sight of that pink, gluttonous little creature imbibing life from that lovely breast so full of milk.

"Why! he'll eat you," he gaily said to Marie. "How he's pulling!"

"Oh! he does bite me a little," she replied; "but I like that the better, it shows that he profits by it."

Then Mere-Grand, she who as a rule was so serious and silent, began to talk with a smile lighting up her face: "I weighed him this morning," said she, "he weighs nearly a quarter of a pound more than he did the last time. And if you had only seen how good he was, the darling! He will be a very intelligent and well-behaved little gentleman, such as I like. When he's five years old, I shall teach him his alphabet, and when he's fifteen, if he likes, I'll tell him how to be a man. . . . Don't you agree with me, Thomas? And you, Antoine, and you, too, Francois?"

Raising their heads, the three sons gaily nodded their approval, grateful as they felt for the lessons in heroism which she had given them, and apparently finding no reason why she might not live another twenty years in order to give similar lessons to Jean.

Pierre still remained in front of Marie, basking in all the rapture of love, when he felt Guillaume lay his hands upon his shoulders from behind. And on turning round he saw that his brother was also radiant, like one who felt well pleased at seeing them so happy. "Ah! brother," said Guillaume softly, "do you remember my telling you that you suffered solely from the battle between your mind and your heart, and that you would find quietude again when you loved what you could understand? It was necessary that our father and mother, whose painful quarrel had continued beyond the grave, should be reconciled in you. And now it's done, they sleep in peace within you, since you yourself are pacified."

These words filled Pierre with emotion. Joy beamed upon his face, which was now so open and energetic. He still had the towering brow, that impregnable fortress of reason, which he had derived from his father, and he still had the gentle chin and affectionate eyes and mouth which his mother had given him, but all was now blended together, instinct with happy harmony and serene strength. Those two experiments of his which had miscarried, were like crises of his maternal heredity, the tearful tenderness which had come to him from his mother, and which for lack of satisfaction had made him desperate; and his third experiment had only ended in happiness because he had contented his ardent thirst for love in accordance with sovereign reason, that paternal heredity which pleaded so loudly within him. Reason remained the queen. And if his sufferings had thus always come from the warfare which his reason had waged against his heart, it was because he was man personified, ever struggling between his intelligence and his passions. And how peaceful all seemed, now that he had reconciled and satisfied them both, now that he felt healthy, perfect and strong, like some lofty oak, which grows in all freedom, and whose branches spread far away over the forest.

"You have done good work in that respect," Guillaume affectionately continued, "for yourself and for all of us, and even for our dear parents whose shades, pacified and reconciled, now abide so peacefully in the little home of our childhood. I often think of our dear house at Neuilly, which old Sophie is taking care of for us; and although, out of egotism, a desire to set happiness around me, I wished to keep you here, your Jean must some day go and live there, so as to bring it fresh youth."

Pierre had taken hold of his brother's hands, and looking into his eyes he asked: "And you—are you happy?"

"Yes, very happy, happier than I have ever been; happy at loving you as I do, and happy at being loved by you as no one else will ever love me."

Their hearts mingled in ardent brotherly affection, the most perfect and heroic affection that can blend men together. And they embraced one another whilst, with her babe on her breast, Marie, so gay, healthful and loyal, looked at them and smiled, with big tears gathering in her eyes.

Thomas, however, having finished his motor's last toilet, had just set it in motion. It was a prodigy of lightness and strength, of no weight whatever in comparison with the power it displayed. And it worked with perfect smoothness, without noise or smell. The whole family was gathered round it in delight, when there came a timely visit, one from the learned and friendly Bertheroy, whom indeed Guillaume had asked to call, in order that he might see the motor working.

The great chemist at once expressed his admiration; and when he had examined the mechanism and understood how the explosive was employed as motive power—an idea which he had long recommended,—he tendered enthusiastic congratulations to Guillaume and Thomas. "You have created a little marvel," said he, "one which may have far-reaching effects both socially and humanly. Yes, yes, pending the invention of the electrical motor which we have not yet arrived at, here is an ideal one, a system of mechanical traction for all sorts of vehicles. Even aerial navigation may now become a possibility, and the problem of force at home is finally solved. And what a grand step! What sudden progress! Distance again diminished, all roads thrown open, and men able to fraternise! This is a great boon, a splendid gift, my good friends, that you are bestowing on the world."

Then he began to jest about the new explosive, whose prodigious power he had divined, and which he now found put to such a beneficent purpose. "And to think, Guillaume," he said, "that I fancied you acted with so much mysteriousness and hid the formula of your powder from me because you had an idea of blowing up Paris!"

At this Guillaume became grave and somewhat pale. And he confessed the truth. "Well, I did for a moment think of it."

However, Bertheroy went on laughing, as if he regarded this answer as mere repartee, though truth to tell he had felt a slight chill sweep through his hair. "Well, my friend," he said, "you have done far better in offering the world this marvel, which by the way must have been both a difficult and dangerous matter. So here is a powder which was intended to exterminate people, and which in lieu thereof will now increase their comfort and welfare. In the long run things always end well, as I'm quite tired of saying."

On beholding such lofty and tolerant good nature, Guillaume felt moved. Bertheroy's words were true. What had been intended for purposes of destruction served the cause of progress; the subjugated, domesticated volcano became labour, peace and civilisation. Guillaume had even relinquished all idea of his engine of battle and victory; he had found sufficient satisfaction in this last invention of his, which would relieve men of some measure of weariness, and help to reduce their labour to just so much effort as there must always be. In this he detected some little advance towards Justice; at all events it was all that he himself could contribute to the cause. And when on turning towards the window he caught sight of the basilica of the Sacred Heart, he could not explain what insanity had at one moment come over him, and set him dreaming of idiotic and useless destruction. Some miasmal gust must have swept by, something born of want that scattered germs of anger and vengeance. But how blind it was to think that destruction and murder could ever bear good fruit, ever sow the soil with plenty and happiness! Violence cannot last, and all it does is to rouse man's feeling of solidarity even among those on whose behalf one kills. The people, the great multitude, rebel against the isolated individual who seeks to wreak justice. No one man can take upon himself the part of the volcano; this is the whole terrestrial crust, the whole multitude which internal fire impels to rise and throw up either an Alpine chain or a better and freer society. And whatever heroism there may be in their madness, however great and contagious may be their thirst for martyrdom, murderers are never anything but murderers, whose deeds simply sow the seeds of horror. And if on the one hand Victor Mathis had avenged Salvat, he had also slain him, so universal had been the cry of reprobation roused by the second crime, which was yet more monstrous and more useless than the first.

Guillaume, laughing in his turn, replied to Bertheroy in words which showed how completely he was cured: "You are right," he said, "all ends well since all contributes to truth and justice. Unfortunately, thousands of years are sometimes needed for any progress to be accomplished. . . . However, for my part, I am simply going to put my new explosive on the market, so that those who secure the necessary authorisation may manufacture it and grow rich. Henceforth it belongs to one and all. . . . And I've renounced all idea of revolutionising the world."

But Bertheroy protested. This great official scientist, this member of the Institute laden with offices and honours, pointed to the little motor, and replied with all the vigour of his seventy years: "But that is revolution, the true, the only revolution. It is with things like that and not with stupid bombs that one revolutionises the world! It is not by destroying, but by creating, that you have just done the work of a revolutionist. And how many times already have I not told you that science alone is the world's revolutionary force, the only force which, far above all paltry political incidents, the vain agitation of despots, priests, sectarians and ambitious people of all kinds, works for the benefit of those who will come after us, and prepares the triumph of truth, justice and peace. . . . Ah, my dear child, if you wish to overturn the world by striving to set a little more happiness in it, you have only to remain in your laboratory here, for human happiness can spring only from the furnace of the scientist."

He spoke perhaps in a somewhat jesting way, but one could feel that he was convinced of it all, that he held everything excepting science in utter contempt. He had not even shown any

surprise when Pierre had cast his cassock aside; and on finding him there with his wife and child he had not scrupled to show him as much affection as in the past.

Meantime, however, the motor was travelling hither and thither, making no more noise than a bluebottle buzzing in the sunshine. The whole happy family was gathered about it, still laughing with delight at such a victorious achievement. And all at once little Jean, Monsieur Jean, having finished sucking, turned round, displaying his milk-smearred lips, and perceived the machine, the pretty plaything which walked about by itself. At sight of it, his eyes sparkled, dimples appeared on his plump cheeks, and, stretching out his quivering chubby hands, he raised a cry of delight.

Marie, who was quietly fastening her dress, smiled at his glee and brought him nearer, in order that he might have a better view of the toy. "Ah! my darling, it's pretty, isn't it? It moves and it turns, and it's strong; it's quite alive, you see."

The others, standing around, were much amused by the amazed, enraptured expression of the child, who would have liked to touch the machine, perhaps in the hope of understanding it.

"Yes," resumed Bertheroy, "it's alive and it's powerful like the sun, like that great sun shining yonder over Paris, and ripening men and things. And Paris too is a motor, a boiler in which the future is boiling, while we scientists keep the eternal flame burning underneath. Guillaume, my good fellow, you are one of the stokers, one of the artisans of the future, with that little marvel of yours, which will still further extend the influence of our great Paris over the whole world."

These words impressed Pierre, and he again thought of a gigantic vat stretching yonder from one horizon to the other, a vat in which the coming century would emerge from an extraordinary mixture of the excellent and the vile. But now, over and above all passions, ambitions, stains and waste, he was conscious of the colossal expenditure of labour which marked the life of Paris, of the heroic manual efforts in work-shops and factories, and the splendid striving of the young men of intellect whom he knew to be hard at work, studying in silence, relinquishing none of the conquests of their elders, but glowing with desire to enlarge their domain. And in all this Paris was exalted, together with the future that was being prepared within it, and which would wing its flight over the world bright like the dawn of day. If Rome, now so near its death, had ruled the ancient world, it was Paris that reigned with sovereign sway over the modern era, and had for the time become the great centre of the nations as they were carried on from civilisation to civilisation, in a sunward course from east to west. Paris was the world's brain. Its past so full of grandeur had prepared it for the part of initiator, civiliser and liberator. Only yesterday it had cast the cry of Liberty among the nations, and to-morrow it would bring them the religion of Science, the new faith awaited by the democracies. And Paris was also gaiety, kindness and gentleness, passion for knowledge and generosity without limit. Among the workmen of its faubourgs and the peasants of its country-sides there were endless reserves of men on whom the future might freely draw. And the century ended with Paris, and the new century would begin and spread with it. All the clamour of its prodigious labour, all the light that came from it as from a beacon overlooking the earth, all the thunder and tempest and triumphant brightness that sprang from its entrails, were pregnant with that final splendour, of which human happiness would be compounded.

Marie raised a light cry of admiration as she pointed towards the city. "Look! just look!" she exclaimed; "Paris is all golden, covered with a harvest of gold!"

They all re-echoed her admiration, for the effect was really one of extraordinary magnificence. The declining sun was once more veiling the immensity of Paris with golden dust. But this was no longer the city of the sower, a chaos of roofs and edifices suggesting brown land turned up by some huge plough, whilst the sun-rays streamed over it like golden seed, falling upon every side. Nor was it the city whose divisions had one day seemed so plain to Pierre: eastward, the districts of toil, misty with the grey smoke of factories; southward, the districts of study, serene and quiet; westward, the districts of wealth, bright and open; and in the centre the districts of trade, with dark and busy streets. It now seemed as if one and the same crop had sprung up on every side, imparting harmony to everything, and making the entire expanse one sole, boundless field, rich with the same fruitfulness. There was corn, corn everywhere, an infinity of corn, whose golden wave rolled from one end of the horizon to the other. Yes, the declining sun steeped all Paris in equal splendour, and it was truly the crop, the harvest, after the sowing!

"Look! just look," repeated Marie, "there is not a nook without its sheaf; the humblest roofs are fruitful, and every blade is full-eared wherever one may look. It is as if there were now but one and the same soil, reconciled and fraternal. Ah! Jean, my little Jean, look! see how beautiful it is!"

Pierre, who was quivering, had drawn close beside her. And Mere-Grand and Bertheroy smiled upon that promise of a future which they would not see, whilst beside Guillaume, whom the sight filled with emotion, were his three big sons, the three young giants, looking quite grave, they who ever laboured and were ever hopeful. Then Marie, with a fine gesture of enthusiasm, stretched out her arms and raised her child aloft, as if offering it in gift to the huge city.

"See, Jean! see, little one," she cried, "it's you who'll reap it all, who'll store the whole crop in the barn!"

And Paris flared—Paris, which the divine sun had sown with light, and where in glory waved the great future harvest of Truth and of Justice.

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE THREE CITIES TRILOGY: PARIS,
VOLUME 5 ***

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