

ÉMILE ZOLA

THE THREE CITIES

TRILOGY: PARIS, VOLUME

3

Émile Zola
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Trilogy: Paris, Volume 3

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BOOK III

I

THE RIVALS

ON the Wednesday preceding the mid-Lent Thursday, a great charity bazaar was held at the Duvillard mansion, for the benefit of the Asylum of the Invalids of Labour. The ground-floor reception rooms, three spacious Louis Seize *salons*, whose windows overlooked the bare and solemn courtyard, were given up to the swarm of purchasers, five thousand admission cards having been distributed among all sections of Parisian society. And the opening of the bombarded mansion in this wise to thousands of visitors was regarded as quite an event, a real manifestation, although some people whispered that the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy and the adjacent streets were guarded by quite an army of police agents.

The idea of the bazaar had come from Duvillard himself, and at his bidding his wife had resigned herself to all this worry for the benefit of the enterprise over which she presided with such distinguished nonchalance. On the previous day the "Globe" newspaper, inspired by its director Fongue, who was also the general manager of the asylum, had published a very fine article, announcing the bazaar, and pointing out how noble, and touching, and generous was the initiative of the Baroness, who still gave her time, her money, and even her home to charity, in spite of the abominable crime which had almost reduced that home to ashes. Was not this the magnanimous answer of the spheres above to the hateful passions of the spheres below? And was it not also a peremptory answer to those who accused the capitalists of doing nothing for the wage-earners, the disabled and broken-down sons of toil?

The drawing-room doors were to be opened at two o'clock, and would only close at seven, so that there would be five full hours for the sales. And at noon, when nothing was as yet ready downstairs, when workmen and women were still decorating the stalls, and sorting the goods amidst a final scramble, there was, as usual, a little friendly *dejeuner*, to which a few guests had been invited, in the private rooms on the first floor. However, a scarcely expected incident had given a finishing touch to the general excitement of the house: that very morning Sagnier had resumed his campaign of denunciation in the matter of the African Railway Lines. In a virulent article in the "Voix du

People," he had inquired if it were the intention of the authorities to beguile the public much longer with the story of that bomb and that Anarchist whom the police did not arrest. And this time, while undertaking to publish the names of the thirty-two corrupt senators and deputies in a very early issue, he had boldly named Minister Barroux as one who had pocketed a sum of 200,000 francs. Mege would therefore certainly revive his interpellation, which might become dangerous, now that Paris had been thrown into such a distracted state by terror of the Anarchists. At the same time it was said that Vignon and his party had resolved to turn circumstances to account, with the object of overthrowing the ministry. Thus a redoubtable crisis was inevitably at hand. Fortunately, the Chamber did not meet that Wednesday; in fact, it had adjourned until the Friday, with the view of making mid-Lent a holiday. And so forty-eight hours were left one to prepare for the onslaught.

Eve, that morning, seemed more gentle and languid than ever, rather pale too, with an expression of sorrowful anxiety in the depths of her beautiful eyes. She set it all down to the very great fatigue which the preparations for the bazaar had entailed on her. But the truth was that Gerard de Quinsac, after shunning any further assignation, had for five days past avoided her in an embarrassed way. Still she was convinced that she would see him that morning, and so she had again ventured to wear the white silk gown which made her look so much younger than she really was. At the same time, beautiful as she had remained, with her delicate

skin, superb figure and noble and charming countenance, her six and forty years were asserting themselves in her blotchy complexion and the little creases which were appearing about her lips, eyelids and temples.

Camille, for her part, though her position as daughter of the house made it certain that she would attract much custom as a saleswoman, had obstinately persisted in wearing one of her usual dresses, a dark "carmelite" gown, an old woman's frock, as she herself called it with a cutting laugh. However, her long and wicked-looking face beamed with some secret delight; such an expression of wit and intelligence wreathing her thin lips and shining in her big eyes that one lost sight of her deformity and thought her almost pretty.

Eve experienced a first deception in the little blue and silver sitting-room, where, accompanied by her daughter, she awaited the arrival of her guests. General de Bozonnet, whom Gerard was to have brought with him, came in alone, explaining that Madame de Quinsac had felt rather poorly that morning, and that Gerard, like a good and dutiful son, had wished to remain with her. Still he would come to the bazaar directly after *dejeuner*. While the Baroness listened to the General, striving to hide her disappointment and her fear that she would now be unable to obtain any explanation from Gerard that day, Camille looked at her with eager, devouring eyes. And a certain covert instinct of the misfortune threatening her must at that moment have come to Eve, for in her turn she glanced at her daughter and turned

pale as if with anxiety.

Then Princess Rosemonde de Harn swept in like a whirlwind. She also was to be one of the saleswomen at the stall chosen by the Baroness, who liked her for her very turbulence, the sudden gaiety which she generally brought with her. Gowned in fire-hued satin (red shot with yellow), looking very eccentric with her curly hair and thin boyish figure, she laughed and talked of an accident by which her carriage had almost been cut in halves. Then, as Baron Duvillard and Hyacinthe came in from their rooms, late as usual, she took possession of the young man and scolded him, for on the previous evening she had vainly waited for him till ten o'clock in the expectation that he would keep his promise to escort her to a tavern at Montmartre, where some horrible things were said to occur. Hyacinthe, looking very bored, quietly replied that he had been detained at a seance given by some adepts in the New Magic, in the course of which the soul of St. Theresa had descended from heaven to recite a love sonnet.

However, Fonseca was now coming in with his wife, a tall, thin, silent and generally insignificant woman, whom he seldom took about with him. On this occasion he had been obliged to bring her, as she was one of the lady-patronesses of the asylum, and he himself was coming to lunch with the Duvillards in his capacity as general manager. To the superficial observer he looked quite as gay as usual; but he blinked nervously, and his first glance was a questioning one in the direction of Duvillard, as if he wished to know how the latter bore the fresh thrust

directed at him by Sagnier. And when he saw the banker looking perfectly composed, as superb, as rubicund as usual, and chatting in a bantering way with Rosemonde, he also put on an easy air, like a gamester who had never lost but had always known how to compel good luck, even in hours of treachery. And by way of showing his unconstraint of mind he at once addressed the Baroness on managerial matters: "Have you now succeeded in seeing M. l'Abbe Froment for the affair of that old man Laveuve, whom he so warmly recommended to us? All the formalities have been gone through, you know, and he can be brought to us at once, as we have had a bed vacant for three days past."

"Yes, I know," replied Eve; "but I can't imagine what has become of Abbe Froment, for he hasn't given us a sign of life for a month past. However, I made up my mind to write to him yesterday, and beg him to come to the bazaar to-day. In this manner I shall be able to acquaint him with the good news myself."

"It was to leave you the pleasure of doing so," said Fongue, "that I refrained from sending him any official communication. He's a charming priest, is he not?"

"Oh! charming, we are very fond of him."

However, Duvillard now intervened to say that they need not wait for Duthil, as he had received a telegram from him stating that he was detained by sudden business. At this Fongue's anxiety returned, and he once more questioned the Baron with his eyes. Duvillard smiled, however, and reassured him in an

undertone: "It's nothing serious. Merely a commission for me, about which he'll only be able to bring me an answer by-and-by." Then, taking Fongseue on one side, he added: "By the way, don't forget to insert the paragraph I told you of."

"What paragraph? Oh! yes, the one about that *soiree* at which Silviane recited a piece of verse. Well, I wanted to speak to you about it. It worries me a little, on account of the excessive praise it contains."

Duvillard, but a moment before so full of serenity, with his lofty, conquering, disdainful mien, now suddenly became pale and agitated. "But I absolutely want it to be inserted, my dear fellow! You would place me in the greatest embarrassment if it were not to appear, for I promised Silviane that it should."

As he spoke his lips trembled, and a scared look came into his eyes, plainly revealing his dismay.

"All right, all right," said Fongseue, secretly amused, and well pleased at this complicity. "As it's so serious the paragraph shall go in, I promise you."

The whole company was now present, since neither Gerard nor Duthil was to be expected. So they went into the dining-room amidst a final noise of hammering in the sale-rooms below. The meal proved somewhat of a scramble, and was on three occasions disturbed by female attendants, who came to explain difficulties and ask for orders. Doors were constantly slamming, and the very walls seemed to shake with the unusual bustle which filled the house. And feverish as they all were in the dining-

room, they talked in desultory, haphazard fashion on all sorts of subjects, passing from a ball given at the Ministry of the Interior on the previous night, to the popular mid-Lent festival which would take place on the morrow, and ever reverting to the bazaar, the prices that had been given for the goods which would be on sale, the prices at which they might be sold, and the probable figure of the full receipts, all this being interspersed with strange anecdotes, witticisms and bursts of laughter. On the General mentioning magistrate Amadiou, Eve declared that she no longer dared to invite him to *dejeuner*, knowing how busy he was at the Palace of Justice. Still, she certainly hoped that he would come to the bazaar and contribute something. Then Fonseca amused himself with teasing Princess Rosemonde about her fire-hued gown, in which, said he, she must already feel roasted by the flames of hell; a suggestion which secretly delighted her, as Satanism had now become her momentary passion. Meantime, Duvillard lavished the most gallant politeness on that silent creature, Madame Fonseca, while Hyacinthe, in order to astonish even the Princess, explained in a few words how the New Magic could transform a chaste young man into a real angel. And Camille, who seemed very happy and very excited, from time to time darted a hot glance at her mother, whose anxiety and sadness increased as she found the other more and more aggressive, and apparently resolved upon open and merciless warfare.

At last, just as the dessert was coming to an end, the Baroness

heard her daughter exclaim in a piercing, defiant voice: "Oh! don't talk to me of the old ladies who still seem to be playing with dolls, and paint themselves, and dress as if they were about to be confirmed! All such ogresses ought to retire from the scene! I hold them in horror!"

At this, Eve nervously rose from her seat, and exclaimed apologetically: "You must forgive me for hurrying you like this. But I'm afraid that we shan't have time to drink our coffee in peace."

The coffee was served in the little blue and silver sitting-room, where bloomed some lovely yellow roses, testifying to the Baroness's keen passion for flowers, which made the house an abode of perpetual spring. Duvillard and Fonsegue, however, carrying their cups of steaming coffee with them, at once went into the former's private room to smoke a cigar there and chat in freedom. As the door remained wide open, one could hear their gruff voices more or less distinctly. Meantime, General de Bozonnet, delighted to find in Madame Fonsegue a serious, submissive person, who listened without interrupting, began to tell her a very long story of an officer's wife who had followed her husband through every battle of the war of 1870. Then Hyacinthe, who took no coffee – contemptuously declaring it to be a beverage only fit for door-keepers – managed to rid himself of Rosemonde, who was sipping some kummel, in order to come and whisper to his sister: "I say, it was very stupid of you to taunt mamma in the way you did just now. I don't care a rap about it

myself. But it ends by being noticed, and, I warn you candidly, it shows ill breeding."

Camille gazed at him fixedly with her black eyes. "Pray don't *you* meddle with my affairs," said she.

At this he felt frightened, scented a storm, and decided to take Rosemonde into the adjoining red drawing-room in order to show her a picture which his father had just purchased. And the General, on being called by him, likewise conducted Madame Fonseca thither.

The mother and daughter then suddenly found themselves alone and face to face. Eve was leaning on a pier-table, as if overcome; and indeed, the least sorrow bore her down, so weak at heart she was, ever ready to weep in her naive and perfect egotism. Why was it that her daughter thus hated her, and did her utmost to disturb that last happy spell of love in which her heart lingered? She looked at Camille, grieved rather than irritated; and the unfortunate idea came to her of making a remark about her dress at the very moment when the girl was on the point of following the others into the larger drawing-room.

"It's quite wrong of you, my dear," said she, "to persist in dressing like an old woman. It doesn't improve you a bit."

As Eve spoke, her soft eyes, those of a courted and worshipped handsome woman, clearly expressed the compassion she felt for that ugly, deformed girl, whom she had never been able to regard as a daughter. Was it possible that she, with her sovereign beauty, that beauty which she herself had ever adored

and nursed, making it her one care, her one religion – was it possible that she had given birth to such a graceless creature, with a dark, goatish profile, one shoulder higher than the other, and a pair of endless arms such as hunchbacks often have? All her grief and all her shame at having had such a child became apparent in the quivering of her voice.

Camille, however, had stopped short, as if struck in the face with a whip. Then she came back to her mother and the horrible explanation began with these simple words spoken in an undertone: "You consider that I dress badly? Well, you ought to have paid some attention to me, have seen that my gowns suited your taste, and have taught me your secret of looking beautiful!"

Eve, with her dislike of all painful feeling, all quarrelling and bitter words, was already regretting her attack. So she sought to make a retreat, particularly as time was flying and they would soon be expected downstairs: "Come, be quiet, and don't show your bad temper when all those people can hear us. I have loved you – "

But with a quiet yet terrible laugh Camille interrupted her. "You've loved me! Oh! my poor mamma, what a comical thing to say! Have you ever loved *anybody*? You want others to love *you*, but that's another matter. As for your child, any child, do you even know how it ought to be loved? You have always neglected me, thrust me on one side, deeming me so ugly, so unworthy of you! And besides, you have not had days and nights enough to love yourself! Oh! don't deny it, my poor mamma; but even now

you're looking at me as if I were some loathsome monster that's in your way."

From that moment the abominable scene was bound to continue to the end. With their teeth set, their faces close together, the two women went on speaking in feverish whispers.

"Be quiet, Camille, I tell you! I will not allow such language!"

"But I won't be quiet when you do all you can to wound me. If it's wrong of me to dress like an old woman, perhaps another is rather ridiculous in dressing like a girl, like a bride."

"Like a bride? I don't understand you."

"Oh! yes, you do. However, I would have you know that everybody doesn't find me so ugly as you try to make them believe."

"If you look amiss, it is because you don't dress properly; that is all I said."

"I dress as I please, and no doubt I do so well enough, since I'm loved as I am."

"What, really! Does someone love you? Well, let him inform us of it and marry you."

"Yes – certainly, certainly! It will be a good riddance, won't it? And you'll have the pleasure of seeing me as a bride!"

Their voices were rising in spite of their efforts to restrain them. However, Camille paused and drew breath before hissing out the words: "Gerard is coming here to ask for my hand in a day or two."

Eve, livid, with wildly staring eyes, did not seem to

understand. "Gerard? why do you tell me that?"

"Why, because it's Gerard who loves me and who is going to marry me! You drive me to extremities; you're for ever repeating that I'm ugly; you treat me like a monster whom nobody will ever care for. So I'm forced to defend myself and tell you the truth in order to prove to you that everybody is not of your opinion."

Silence fell; the frightful thing which had risen between them seemed to have arrested the quarrel. But there was neither mother nor daughter left there. They were simply two suffering, defiant rivals. Eve in her turn drew a long breath and glanced anxiously towards the adjoining room to ascertain if anyone were coming in or listening to them. And then in a tone of resolution she made answer:

"You cannot marry Gerard."

"Pray, why not?"

"Because I won't have it; because it's impossible."

"That isn't a reason; give me a reason."

"The reason is that the marriage is impossible that is all."

"No, no, I'll tell you the reason since you force me to it. The reason is that Gerard is your lover! But what does that matter, since I know it and am willing to take him all the same?"

And to this retort Camille's flaming eyes added the words: "And it is particularly on that account that I want him." All the long torture born of her infirmities, all her rage at having always seen her mother beautiful, courted and adored, was now stirring her and seeking vengeance in cruel triumph. At last then she was

snatching from her rival the lover of whom she had so long been jealous!

"You wretched girl!" stammered Eve, wounded in the heart and almost sinking to the floor. "You don't know what you say or what you make me suffer."

However, she again had to pause, draw herself erect and smile; for Rosemonde hastened in from the adjoining room with the news that she was wanted downstairs. The doors were about to be opened, and it was necessary she should be at her stall. Yes, Eve answered, she would be down in another moment. Still, even as she spoke she leant more heavily on the pier-table behind her in order that she might not fall.

Hyacinthe had drawn near to his sister: "You know," said he, "it's simply idiotic to quarrel like that. You would do much better to come downstairs."

But Camille harshly dismissed him: "Just *you* go off, and take the others with you. It's quite as well that they shouldn't be about our ears."

Hyacinthe glanced at his mother, like one who knew the truth and considered the whole affair ridiculous. And then, vexed at seeing her so deficient in energy in dealing with that little pest, his sister, he shrugged his shoulders, and leaving them to their folly, conducted the others away. One could hear Rosemonde laughing as she went off below, while the General began to tell Madame Fongue another story as they descended the stairs together. However, at the moment when the mother and daughter

at last fancied themselves alone once more, other voices reached their ears, those of Duvillard and Fongue, who were still near at hand. The Baron from his room might well overhear the dispute.

Eve felt that she ought to have gone off. But she had lacked the strength to do so; it had been a sheer impossibility for her after those words which had smote her like a buffet amidst her distress at the thought of losing her lover.

"Gerard cannot marry you," she said; "he does not love you."

"He does."

"You fancy it because he has good-naturedly shown some kindness to you, on seeing others pay you such little attention. But he does not love you."

"He does. He loves me first because I'm not such a fool as many others are, and particularly because I'm young."

This was a fresh wound for the Baroness; one inflicted with mocking cruelty in which rang out all the daughter's triumphant delight at seeing her mother's beauty at last ripening and waning. "Ah! my poor mamma, you no longer know what it is to be young. If I'm not beautiful, at all events I'm young; my eyes are clear and my lips are fresh. And my hair's so long too, and I've so much of it that it would suffice to gown me if I chose. You see, one's never ugly when one's young. Whereas, my poor mamma, everything is ended when one gets old. It's all very well for a woman to have been beautiful, and to strive to keep so, but in reality there's only ruin left, and shame and disgust."

She spoke these words in such a sharp, ferocious voice that

each of them entered her mother's heart like a knife. Tears rose to the eyes of the wretched woman, again stricken in her bleeding wound. Ah! it was true, she remained without weapons against youth. And all her anguish came from the consciousness that she was growing old, from the feeling that love was departing from her now, that like a fruit she had ripened and fallen from the tree.

"But Gerard's mother will never let him marry you," she said.

"He will prevail on her; that's his concern. I've a dowry of two millions, and two millions can settle many things."

"Do you now want to libel him, and say that he's marrying you for your money?"

"No, indeed! Gerard's a very nice and honest fellow. He loves me and he's marrying me for myself. But, after all, he isn't rich; he still has no assured position, although he's thirty-six; and there may well be some advantage in a wife who brings you wealth as well as happiness. For, you hear, mamma, it's happiness I'm bringing him, real happiness, love that's shared and is certain of the future."

Once again their faces drew close together. The hateful scene, interrupted by sounds around them, postponed, and then resumed, was dragging on, becoming a perfect drama full of murderous violence, although they never shouted, but still spoke on in low and gasping voices. Neither gave way to the other, though at every moment they were liable to some surprise; for not only were all the doors open, so that the servants might come in, but the Baron's voice still rang out gaily, close at hand.

"He loves you, he loves you" – continued Eve. "That's what you say. But *he* never told you so."

"He has told me so twenty times; he repeats it every time that we are alone together!"

"Yes, just as one says it to a little girl by way of amusing her. But he has never told you that he meant to marry you."

"He told it me the last time he came. And it's settled. I'm simply waiting for him to get his mother's consent and make his formal offer."

"You lie, you lie, you wretched girl! You simply want to make me suffer, and you lie, you lie!"

Eve's grief at last burst forth in that cry of protest. She no longer knew that she was a mother, and was speaking to her daughter. The woman, the *amorosa*, alone remained in her, outraged and exasperated by a rival. And with a sob she confessed the truth: "It is I he loves! Only the last time I spoke to him, he swore to me – you hear me? – he swore upon his honour that he did not love you, and that he would never marry you!"

A faint, sharp laugh came from Camille. Then, with an air of derisive compassion, she replied: "Ah! my poor mamma, you really make me sorry for you! What a child you are! Yes, really, you are the child, not I. What! you who ought to have so much experience, you still allow yourself to be duped by a man's protests! That one really has no malice; and, indeed, that's why he swears whatever you want him to swear, just to please and quiet you, for at heart he's a bit of a coward."

"You lie, you lie!"

"But just think matters over. If he no longer comes here, if he didn't come to *dejeuner* this morning, it is simply because he's had enough of you. He has left you for good; just have the courage to realise it. Of course he's still polite and amiable, because he's a well-bred man, and doesn't know how to break off. The fact is that he takes pity on you."

"You lie, you lie!"

"Well, question him then. Have a frank explanation with him. Ask him his intentions in a friendly way. And then show some good nature yourself, and realise that if you care for him you ought to give him me at once in his own interest. Give him back his liberty, and you will soon see that I'm the one he loves."

"You lie, you lie! You wretched child, you only want to torture and kill me!"

Then, in her fury and distress, Eve remembered that she was the mother, and that it was for her to chastise that unworthy daughter. There was no stick near her, but from a basket of the yellow roses, whose powerful scent intoxicated both of them, she plucked a handful of blooms, with long and spiny stalks, and smote Camille across the face. A drop of blood appeared on the girl's left temple, near her eyelid.

But she sprang forward, flushed and maddened by this correction, with her hand raised and ready to strike back. "Take care, mother! I swear I'd beat you like a gipsy! And now just put this into your head: I mean to marry Gerard, and I will; and I'll

take him from you, even if I have to raise a scandal, should you refuse to give him to me with good grace."

Eve, after her one act of angry vigour, had sunk into an armchair, overcome, distracted. And all the horror of quarrels, which sprang from her egotistical desire to be happy, caressed, flattered and adored, was returning to her. But Camille, still threatening, still unsatiated, showed her heart as it really was, her stern, black, unforgiving heart, intoxicated with cruelty. There came a moment of supreme silence, while Duvillard's gay voice again rang out in the adjoining room.

The mother was gently weeping, when Hyacinthe, coming upstairs at a run, swept into the little *salon*. He looked at the two women, and made a gesture of indulgent contempt. "Ah! you're no doubt satisfied now! But what did I tell you? It would have been much better for you to have come downstairs at once! Everybody is asking for you. It's all idiotic. I've come to fetch you."

Eve and Camille would not yet have followed him, perhaps, if Duvillard and Fonseca had not at that moment come out of the former's room. Having finished their cigars they also spoke of going downstairs. And Eve had to rise and smile and show dry eyes, while Camille, standing before a looking-glass, arranged her hair, and stanchd the little drop of blood that had gathered on her temple.

There was already quite a number of people below, in the three huge saloons adorned with tapestry and plants. The stalls

had been draped with red silk, which set a gay, bright glow around the goods. And no ordinary bazaar could have put forth such a show, for there was something of everything among the articles of a thousand different kinds, from sketches by recognised masters, and the autographs of famous writers, down to socks and slippers and combs. The haphazard way in which things were laid out was in itself an attraction; and, in addition, there was a buffet, where the whitest of beautiful hands poured out champagne, and two lotteries, one for an organ and another for a pony-drawn village cart, the tickets for which were sold by a bevy of charming girls, who had scattered through the throng. As Duvillard had expected, however, the great success of the bazaar lay in the delightful little shiver which the beautiful ladies experienced as they passed through the entrance where the bomb had exploded. The rougher repairing work was finished, the walls and ceilings had been doctored, in part re-constructed. However, the painters had not yet come, and here and there the whiter stone and plaster work showed like fresh scars left by all the terrible gashes. It was with mingled anxiety and rapture that pretty heads emerged from the carriages which, arriving in a continuous stream, made the flagstones of the court re-echo. And in the three saloons, beside the stalls, there was no end to the lively chatter: "Ah! my dear, did you see all those marks? How frightful, how frightful! The whole house was almost blown up. And to think it might begin again while we are here! One really needs some courage to come, but then, that asylum is such

a deserving institution, and money is badly wanted to build a new wing. And besides, those monsters will see that we are not frightened, whatever they do."

When the Baroness at last came down to her stall with Camille she found the saleswomen feverishly at work already under the direction of Princess Rosemonde, who on occasions of this kind evinced the greatest cunning and rapacity, robbing the customers in the most impudent fashion. "Ah! here you are," she exclaimed. "Beware of a number of higglers who have come to secure bargains. I know them! They watch for their opportunities, turn everything topsy-turvy and wait for us to lose our heads and forget prices, so as to pay even less than they would in a real shop. But I'll get good prices from them, you shall see!"

At this, Eve, who for her own part was a most incapable saleswoman, had to laugh with the others. And in a gentle voice she made a pretence of addressing certain recommendations to Camille, who listened with a smiling and most submissive air. In point of fact the wretched mother was sinking with emotion, particularly at the thought that she would have to remain there till seven o'clock, and suffer in secret before all those people, without possibility of relief. And thus it was almost like a respite when she suddenly perceived Abbe Froment sitting and waiting for her on a settee, covered with red velvet, near her stall. Her legs were failing her, so she took a place beside him.

"You received my letter then, Monsieur l'Abbe. I am glad that you have come, for I have some good news to give you, and

wished to leave you the pleasure of imparting it to your *protege*, that man Laveuve, whom you so warmly recommended to me. Every formality has now been fulfilled, and you can bring him to the asylum to-morrow."

Pierre gazed at her in stupefaction. "Laveuve? Why, he is dead!"

In her turn she became astonished. "What, dead! But you never informed me of it! If I told you of all the trouble that has been taken, of all that had to be undone and done again, and the discussions and the papers and the writing! Are you quite sure that he is dead?"

"Oh! yes, he is dead. He has been dead a month."

"Dead a month! Well, we could not know; you yourself gave us no sign of life. Ah! *mon Dieu!* what a worry that he should be dead. We shall now be obliged to undo everything again!"

"He is dead, madame. It is true that I ought to have informed you of it. But that doesn't alter the fact – he is dead."

Dead! that word which kept on returning, the thought too, that for a month past she had been busying herself for a corpse, quite froze her, brought her to the very depths of despair, like an omen of the cold death into which she herself must soon descend, in the shroud of her last passion. And, meantime, Pierre, despite himself, smiled bitterly at the atrocious irony of it all. Ah! that lame and halting Charity, which proffers help when men are dead!

The priest still lingered on the settee when the Baroness rose.

She had seen magistrate Amadieu hurriedly enter like one who just wished to show himself, purchase some trifle, and then return to the Palace of Justice. However, he was also perceived by little Massot, the "Globe" reporter, who was prowling round the stalls, and who at once bore down upon him, eager for information. And he hemmed him in and forthwith interviewed him respecting the affair of that mechanician Salvat, who was accused of having deposited the bomb at the entrance of the house. Was this simply an invention of the police, as some newspapers pretended? Or was it really correct? And if so, would Salvat soon be arrested? In self-defence Amadieu answered correctly enough that the affair did not as yet concern him, and would only come within his attributions, if Salvat should be arrested and the investigation placed in his hands. At the same time, however, the magistrate's pompous and affectedly shrewd manner suggested that he already knew everything to the smallest details, and that, had he chosen, he could have promised some great events for the morrow. A circle of ladies had gathered round him as he spoke, quite a number of pretty women feverish with curiosity, who jostled one another in their eagerness to hear that brigand tale which sent a little shiver coursing under their skins. However, Amadieu managed to slip off after paying Rosemonde twenty francs for a cigarette case, which was perhaps worth thirty sous.

Massot, on recognising Pierre, came up to shake hands with him. "Don't you agree with me, Monsieur l'Abbe, that Salvat

must be a long way off by now if he's got good legs? Ah! the police will always make me laugh!"

However, Rosemonde brought Hyacinthe up to the journalist. "Monsieur Massot," said she, "you who go everywhere, I want you to be judge. That Chamber of Horrors at Montmartre, that tavern where Legras sings the 'Flowers of the Streets' – "

"Oh! a delightful spot, madame," interrupted Massot, "I wouldn't take even a gendarme there."

"No, don't jest, Monsieur Massot, I'm talking seriously. Isn't it quite allowable for a respectable woman to go there when she's accompanied by a gentleman?" And, without allowing the journalist time to answer her, she turned towards Hyacinthe: "There! you see that Monsieur Massot doesn't say no! You've got to take me there this evening, it's sworn, it's sworn."

Then she darted away to sell a packet of pins to an old lady, while the young man contented himself with remarking, in the voice of one who has no illusions left: "She's quite idiotic with her Chamber of Horrors!"

Massot philosophically shrugged his shoulders. It was only natural that a woman should want to amuse herself. And when Hyacinthe had gone off, passing with perverse contempt beside the lovely girls who were selling lottery tickets, the journalist ventured to murmur: "All the same, it would do that youngster good if a woman were to take him in hand."

Then, again addressing Pierre, he resumed: "Why, here comes Duthil! What did Sagnier mean this morning by saying that

Duthil would sleep at Mazas to-night?"

In a great hurry apparently, and all smiles, Duthil was cutting his way through the crowd in order to join Duvillard and Fongue, who still stood talking near the Baroness's stall. And he waved his hand to them in a victorious way, to imply that he had succeeded in the delicate mission entrusted to him. This was nothing less than a bold manoeuvre to hasten Silviane's admission to the Comedie Francaise. The idea had occurred to her of making the Baron give a dinner at the Cafe Anglais in order that she might meet at it an influential critic, who, according to her statements, would compel the authorities to throw the doors wide open for her as soon as he should know her. However, it did not seem easy to secure the critic's presence, as he was noted for his sternness and grumbling disposition. And, indeed, after a first repulse, Duthil had for three days past been obliged to exert all his powers of diplomacy, and bring even the remotest influence into play. But he was radiant now, for he had conquered.

"It's for this evening, my dear Baron, at half-past seven," he exclaimed. "Ah! dash it all, I've had more trouble than I should have had to secure a concession vote!" Then he laughed with the pretty impudence of a man of pleasure, whom political conscientiousness did not trouble. And, indeed, his allusion to the fresh denunciations of the "Voix du Peuple" hugely amused him.

"Don't jest," muttered Fongue, who for his part wished to amuse himself by frightening the young deputy. "Things are

going very badly!"

Duthil turned pale, and a vision of the police and Mazas rose before his eyes. In this wise sheer funk came over him from time to time. However, with his lack of all moral sense, he soon felt reassured and began to laugh. "Bah!" he retorted gaily, winking towards Duvillard, "the governor's there to pilot the barque!"

The Baron, who was extremely pleased, had pressed his hands, thanked him, and called him an obliging fellow. And now turning towards Fongue, he exclaimed: "I say, you must make one of us this evening. Oh! it's necessary. I want something imposing round Silviene. Duthil will represent the Chamber, you journalism, and I finance – " But he suddenly paused on seeing Gerard, who, with a somewhat grave expression, was leisurely picking his way through the sea of skirts. "Gerard, my friend," said the Baron, after beckoning to him, "I want you to do me a service." And forthwith he told him what was in question; how the influential critic had been prevailed upon to attend a dinner which would decide Silviene's future; and how it was the duty of all her friends to rally round her.

"But I can't," the young man answered in embarrassment. "I have to dine at home with my mother, who was rather poorly this morning."

"Oh! a sensible woman like your mother will readily understand that there are matters of exceptional importance. Go home and excuse yourself. Tell her some story, tell her that a friend's happiness is in question." And as Gerard began to

weaken, Duvillard added: "The fact is, that I really want you, my dear fellow; I must have a society man. Society, you know, is a great force in theatrical matters; and if Silviane has society with her, her triumph is certain."

Gerard promised, and then chatted for a moment with his uncle, General de Bozonnet, who was quite enlivened by that throng of women, among whom he had been carried hither and thither like an old rudderless ship. After acknowledging the amiability with which Madame Fongue had listened to his stories, by purchasing an autograph of Monseigneur Martha from her for a hundred francs, he had quite lost himself amid the bevy of girls who had passed him on, one to another. And now, on his return from them, he had his hands full of lottery tickets: "Ah! my fine fellow," said he, "I don't advise you to venture among all those young persons. You would have to part with your last copper. But, just look! there's Mademoiselle Camille beckoning to you!"

Camille, indeed, from the moment she had perceived Gerard, had been smiling at him and awaiting his approach. And when their glances met he was obliged to go to her, although, at the same moment, he felt that Eve's despairing and entreating eyes were fixed upon him. The girl, who fully realised that her mother was watching her, at once made a marked display of amiability, profiting by the license which charitable fervour authorised, to slip a variety of little articles into the young man's pockets, and then place others in his hands, which she pressed within her own,

showing the while all the sparkle of youth, indulging in fresh, merry laughter, which fairly tortured her rival.

So extreme was Eve's suffering, that she wished to intervene and part them. But it so chanced that Pierre barred her way, for he wished to submit an idea to her before leaving the bazaar. "Madame," said he, "since that man Laveuve is dead, and you have taken so much trouble with regard to the bed which you now have vacant, will you be so good as to keep it vacant until I have seen our venerable friend, Abbe Rose? I am to see him this evening, and he knows so many cases of want, and would be so glad to relieve one of them, and bring you some poor *protege* of his."

"Yes, certainly," stammered the Baroness, "I shall be very happy, – I will wait a little, as you desire, – of course, of course, Monsieur l'Abbe."

She was trembling all over; she no longer knew what she was saying; and, unable to conquer her passion, she turned aside from the priest, unaware even that he was still there, when Gerard, yielding to the dolorous entreaty of her eyes, at last managed to escape from Camille and join her.

"What a stranger you are becoming, my friend!" she said aloud, with a forced smile. "One never sees you now."

"Why, I have been poorly," he replied, in his amiable way. "Yes, I assure you I have been ailing a little."

He, ailing! She looked at him with maternal anxiety, quite upset. And, indeed, however proud and lofty his figure, his

handsome regular face did seem to her paler than usual. It was as if the nobility of the facade had, in some degree, ceased to hide the irreparable dilapidation within. And given his real good nature, it must be true that he suffered – suffered by reason of his useless, wasted life, by reason of all the money he cost his impoverished mother, and of the needs that were at last driving him to marry that wealthy deformed girl, whom at first he had simply pitied. And so weak did he seem to Eve, so like a piece of wreckage tossed hither and thither by a tempest, that, at the risk of being overheard by the throng, she let her heart flow forth in a low but ardent, entreating murmur: "If you suffer, ah! what sufferings are mine! – Gerard, we must see one another, I will have it so."

"No, I beg you, let us wait," he stammered in embarrassment.

"It must be, Gerard; Camille has told me your plans. You cannot refuse to see me. I insist on it."

He made yet another attempt to escape the cruel explanation. "But it's impossible at the usual place," he answered, quivering. "The address is known."

"Then to-morrow, at four o'clock, at that little restaurant in the Bois where we have met before."

He had to promise, and they parted. Camille had just turned her head and was looking at them. Moreover, quite a number of women had besieged the stall; and the Baroness began to attend to them with the air of a ripe and nonchalant goddess, while Gerard rejoined Duvillard, Fonseca and Duthil, who were quite

excited at the prospect of their dinner that evening.

Pierre had heard a part of the conversation between Gerard and the Baroness. He knew what skeletons the house concealed, what physiological and moral torture and wretchedness lay beneath all the dazzling wealth and power. There was here an envenomed, bleeding sore, ever spreading, a cancer eating into father, mother, daughter and son, who one and all had thrown social bonds aside. However, the priest made his way out of the *salons*, half stifling amidst the throng of lady-purchasers who were making quite a triumph of the bazaar. And yonder, in the depths of the gloom, he could picture Salvat still running and running on; while the corpse of Laveuve seemed to him like a buffet of atrocious irony dealt to noisy and delusive charity.

II

SPIRIT AND FLESH

How delightful was the quietude of the little ground-floor overlooking a strip of garden in the Rue Cortot, where good Abbe Rose resided! Hereabouts there was not even a rumble of wheels, or an echo of the panting breath of Paris, which one heard on the other side of the height of Montmartre. The deep silence and sleepy peacefulness were suggestive of some distant provincial town.

Seven o'clock had struck, the dusk had gathered slowly, and Pierre was in the humble dining-room, waiting for the *femme-de-menage* to place the soup upon the table. Abbe Rose, anxious at having seen so little of him for a month past, had written, asking him to come to dinner, in order that they might have a quiet chat concerning their affairs. From time to time Pierre still gave his friend money for charitable purposes; in fact, ever since the days of the asylum in the Rue de Charonne, they had had accounts together, which they periodically liquidated. So that evening after dinner they were to talk of it all, and see if they could not do even more than they had hitherto done. The good old priest was quite radiant at the thought of the peaceful evening which he was about to spend in attending to the affairs of his beloved poor; for therein lay his only amusement, the sole pleasure to which he persistently and passionately returned, in spite of all the worries

that his inconsiderate charity had already so often brought him.

Glad to be able to procure his friend this pleasure, Pierre, on his side, grew calmer, and found relief and momentary repose in sharing the other's simple repast and yielding to all the kindness around him, far from his usual worries. He remembered the vacant bed at the Asylum, which Baroness Duvillard had promised to keep in reserve until he should have asked Abbe Rose if he knew of any case of destitution particularly worthy of interest; and so before sitting down to table he spoke of the matter.

"Destitution worthy of interest!" replied Abbe Rose, "ah! my dear child, every case is worthy of interest. And when it's a question of old toilers without work the only trouble is that of selection, the anguish of choosing one and leaving so many others in distress." Nevertheless, painful though his scruples were, he strove to think and come to some decision. "I know the case which will suit you," he said at last. "It's certainly one of the greatest suffering and wretchedness; and, so humble a one, too – an old carpenter of seventy-five, who has been living on public charity during the eight or ten years that he has been unable to find work. I don't know his name, everybody calls him 'the big Old'un.' There are times when he does not come to my Saturday distributions for weeks together. We shall have to look for him at once. I think that he sleeps at the Night Refuge in the Rue d'Orsel when lack of room there doesn't force him to spend the night crouching behind some palings. Shall we go down the Rue

d'Orsel this evening?"

Abbe Rose's eyes beamed brightly as he spoke, for this proposal of his signified a great debauch, the tasting of forbidden fruit. He had been reproached so often and so roughly with his visits to those who had fallen to the deepest want and misery, that in spite of his overflowing, apostolic compassion, he now scarcely dared to go near them. However, he continued: "Is it agreed, my child? Only this once? Besides, it is our only means of finding the big Old'un. You won't have to stop with me later than eleven. And I should so like to show you all that! You will see what terrible sufferings there are! And perhaps we may be fortunate enough to relieve some poor creature or other."

Pierre smiled at the juvenile ardour displayed by this old man with snowy hair. "It's agreed, my dear Abbe," he responded, "I shall be very pleased to spend my whole evening with you, for I feel it will do me good to follow you once more on one of those rambles which used to fill our hearts with grief and joy."

At this moment the servant brought in the soup; however, just as the two priests were taking their seats a discreet ring was heard, and when Abbe Rose learnt that the visitor was a neighbour, Madame Mathis, who had come for an answer, he gave orders that she should be shown in.

"This poor woman," he explained to Pierre, "needed an advance of ten francs to get a mattress out of pawn; and I didn't have the money by me at the time. But I've since procured it. She lives in the house, you know, in silent poverty, on so small an

income that it hardly keeps her in bread."

"But hasn't she a big son of twenty?" asked Pierre, suddenly remembering the young man he had seen at Salvat's.

"Yes, yes. Her parents, I believe, were rich people in the provinces. I've been told that she married a music master, who gave her lessons, at Nantes; and who ran away with her and brought her to Paris, where he died. It was quite a doleful love-story. By selling the furniture and realising every little thing she possessed, she scraped together an income of about two thousand francs a year, with which she was able to send her son to college and live decently herself. But a fresh blow fell on her: she lost the greater part of her little fortune, which was invested in doubtful securities. So now her income amounts at the utmost to eight hundred francs; two hundred of which she has to expend in rent. For all her other wants she has to be content with fifty francs a month. About eighteen months ago her son left her so as not to be a burden on her, and he is trying to earn his living somewhere, but without success, I believe."

Madame Mathis, a short, dark woman, with a sad, gentle, retiring face, came in. Invariably clad in the same black gown, she showed all the anxious timidity of a poor creature whom the storms of life perpetually assailed. When Abbe Rose had handed her the ten francs discreetly wrapped in paper, she blushed and thanked him, promising to pay him back as soon as she received her month's money, for she was not a beggar and did not wish to encroach on the share of those who starved.

"And your son, Victor, has he found any employment?" asked the old priest.

She hesitated, ignorant as she was of what her son might be doing, for now she did not see him for weeks together. And finally, she contented herself with answering: "He has a good heart, he is very fond of me. It is a great misfortune that we should have been ruined before he could enter the Ecole Normale. It was impossible for him to prepare for the examination. But at the Lycee he was such a diligent and intelligent pupil!"

"You lost your husband when your son was ten years old, did you not?" said Abbe Rose.

At this she blushed again, thinking that her husband's story was known to the two priests. "Yes, my poor husband never had any luck," she said. "His difficulties embittered and excited his mind, and he died in prison. He was sent there through a disturbance at a public meeting, when he had the misfortune to wound a police officer. He had also fought at the time of the Commune. And yet he was a very gentle man and extremely fond of me."

Tears had risen to her eyes; and Abbe Rose, much touched, dismissed her: "Well, let us hope that your son will give you satisfaction, and be able to repay you for all you have done for him."

With a gesture of infinite sorrow, Madame Mathis discreetly withdrew. She was quite ignorant of her son's doings, but fate had pursued her so relentlessly that she ever trembled.

"I don't think that the poor woman has much to expect from her son," said Pierre, when she had gone. "I only saw him once, but the gleam in his eyes was as harsh and trenchant as that of a knife."

"Do you think so?" the old priest exclaimed, with his kindly *naivete*. "Well, he seemed to me very polite, perhaps a trifle eager to enjoy life; but then, all the young folks are impatient nowadays. Come, let us sit down to table, for the soup will be cold."

Almost at the same hour, on the other side of Paris, night had in like fashion slowly fallen in the drawing-room of the Countess de Quinsac, on the dismal, silent ground-floor of an old mansion in the Rue St. Dominique. The Countess was there, alone with her faithful friend, the Marquis de Morigny, she on one side, and he on the other side of the chimney-piece, where the last embers of the wood fire were dying out. The servant had not yet brought the lamp, and the Countess refrained from ringing, finding some relief from her anxiety in the falling darkness, which hid from view all the unconfessed thoughts that she was afraid of showing on her weary face. And it was only now, before that dim hearth, and in that black room, where never a sound of wheels disturbed the silence of the slumberous past, that she dared to speak.

"Yes, my friend," she said, "I am not satisfied with Gerard's health. You will see him yourself, for he promised to come home early and dine with me. Oh! I'm well aware that he looks big and strong; but to know him properly one must have nursed and watched him as I have done! What trouble I had to rear him!

In reality he is at the mercy of any petty ailment. His slightest complaint becomes serious illness. And the life he leads does not conduce to good health."

She paused and sighed, hesitating to carry her confession further.

"He leads the life he can," slowly responded the Marquis de Morigny, of whose delicate profile, and lofty yet loving bearing, little could be seen in the gloom. "As he was unable to endure military life, and as even the fatigues of diplomacy frighten you, what would you have him do? He can only live apart pending the final collapse, while this abominable Republic is dragging France to the grave."

"No doubt, my friend. And yet it is just that idle life which frightens me. He is losing in it all that was good and healthy in him. I don't refer merely to the *liaisons* which we have had to tolerate. The last one, which I found so much difficulty in countenancing at the outset, so contrary did it seem to all my ideas and beliefs, has since seemed to me to exercise almost a good influence. Only he is now entering his thirty-sixth year, and can he continue living in this fashion without object or duties? If he is ailing it is perhaps precisely because he does nothing, holds no position, and serves no purpose." Her voice again quavered. "And then, my friend, since you force me to tell you everything, I must own that I am not in good health myself. I have had several fainting fits of late, and have consulted a doctor. The truth is, that I may go off at any moment."

With a quiver, Morigny leant forward in the still deepening gloom, and wished to take hold of her hands. "You! what, am I to lose you, my last affection!" he faltered, "I who have seen the old world I belong to crumble away, I who only live in the hope that you at all events will still be here to close my eyes!"

But she begged him not to increase her grief: "No, no, don't take my hands, don't kiss them! Remain there in the shade, where I can scarcely see you... We have loved one another so long without aught to cause shame or regret; and that will prove our strength – our divine strength – till we reach the grave... And if you were to touch me, if I were to feel you too near me I could not finish, for I have not done so yet."

As soon as he had relapsed into silence and immobility, she continued: "If I were to die to-morrow, Gerard would not even find here the little fortune which he still fancies is in my hands. The dear child has often cost me large sums of money without apparently being conscious of it. I ought to have been more severe, more prudent. But what would you have? Ruin is at hand. I have always been too weak a mother. And do you now understand in what anguish I live? I ever have the thought that if I die Gerard will not even possess enough to live on, for he is incapable of effecting the miracle which I renew each day, in order to keep the house up on a decent footing... Ah! I know him, so supine, so sickly, in spite of his proud bearing, unable to do anything, even conduct himself. And so what will become of him; will he not fall into the most dire distress?"

Then her tears flowed freely, her heart opened and bled, for she foresaw what must happen after her death: the collapse of her race and of a whole world in the person of that big child. And the Marquis, still motionless but distracted, feeling that he had no title to offer his own fortune, suddenly understood her, foresaw in what disgrace this fresh disaster would culminate.

"Ah! my poor friend!" he said at last in a voice trembling with revolt and grief. "So you have agreed to that marriage – yes, that abominable marriage with that woman's daughter! Yet you swore it should never be! You would rather witness the collapse of everything, you said. And now you are consenting, I can feel it!"

She still wept on in that black, silent drawing-room before the chimney-piece where the fire had died out. Did not Gerard's marriage to Camille mean a happy ending for herself, a certainty of leaving her son wealthy, loved, and seated at the banquet of life? However, a last feeling of rebellion arose within her.

"No, no," she exclaimed, "I don't consent, I swear to you that I don't consent as yet. I am fighting with my whole strength, waging an incessant battle, the torture of which you cannot imagine."

Then, in all sincerity, she foresaw the likelihood of defeat. "If I should some day give way, my friend, at all events believe that I feel, as fully as you do, how abominable such a marriage must be. It will be the end of our race and our honour!"

This cry profoundly stirred the Marquis, and he was unable to

add a word. Haughty and uncompromising Catholic and Royalist that he was, he, on his side also, expected nothing but the supreme collapse. Yet how heartrending was the thought that this noble woman, so dearly and so purely loved, would prove one of the most mournful victims of the catastrophe! And in the shrouding gloom he found courage to kneel before her, take her hand, and kiss it.

Just as the servant was at last bringing a lighted lamp Gerard made his appearance. The past-century charm of the old Louis XVI. drawing-room, with its pale woodwork, again became apparent in the soft light. In order that his mother might not be over-saddened by his failure to dine with her that evening the young man had put on an air of brisk gaiety; and when he had explained that some friends were waiting for him, she at once released him from his promise, happy as she felt at seeing him so merry.

"Go, go, my dear boy," said she, "but mind you do not tire yourself too much... I am going to keep Morigny; and the General and Larombiere are coming at nine o'clock. So be easy, I shall have someone with me to keep me from fretting and feeling lonely."

In this wise Gerard after sitting down for a moment and chatting with the Marquis was able to slip away, dress, and betake himself to the Cafe Anglais.

When he reached it women in fur cloaks were already climbing the stairs, fashionable and merry parties were filling the

private rooms, the electric lights shone brilliantly, and the walls were already vibrating with the stir of pleasure and debauchery. In the room which Baron Duvillard had engaged the young man found an extraordinary display, the most superb flowers, and a profusion of plate and crystal as for a royal gala. The pomp with which the six covers were laid called forth a smile; while the bill of fare and the wine list promised marvels, all the rarest and most expensive things that could be selected.

"It's stylish, isn't it?" exclaimed Silviane, who was already there with Duvillard, Fongue and Duthil. "I just wanted to make your influential critic open his eyes a little! When one treats a journalist to such a dinner as this, he has got to be amiable, hasn't he?"

In her desire to conquer, it had occurred to the young woman to array herself in the most amazing fashion. Her gown of yellow satin, covered with old Alencon lace, was cut low at the neck; and she had put on all her diamonds, a necklace, a diadem, shoulder-knots, bracelets and rings. With her candid, girlish face, she looked like some Virgin in a missal, a Queen-Virgin, laden with the offerings of all Christendom.

"Well, well, you look so pretty," said Gerard, who sometimes jested with her, "that I think it will do all the same."

"Ah!" she replied with equanimity. "You consider me a *bourgeoise*, I see. Your opinion is that a simple little dinner and a modest gown would have shown better taste. But ah! my dear fellow, you don't know the way to get round men!"

Duvillard signified his approval, for he was delighted to be able to show her in all her glory, adorned like an idol. Fonseca, for his part, talked of diamonds, saying that they were now doubtful investments, as the day when they would become articles of current manufacture was fast approaching, thanks to the electrical furnace and other inventions. Meantime Duthil, with an air of ecstasy and the dainty gestures of a lady's maid, hovered around the young woman, either smoothing a rebellious bow or arranging some fold of her lace.

"But I say," resumed Silviane, "your critic seems to be an ill-bred man, for he's keeping us waiting."

Indeed, the critic arrived a quarter of an hour late, and while apologising, he expressed his regret that he should be obliged to leave at half-past nine, for he was absolutely compelled to put in an appearance at a little theatre in the Rue Pigalle. He was a big fellow of fifty with broad shoulders and a full, bearded face. His most disagreeable characteristic was the narrow dogmatic pedantry which he had acquired at the Ecole Normale, and had never since been able to shake off. All his herculean efforts to be sceptical and frivolous, and the twenty years he had spent in Paris mingling with every section of society, had failed to rid him of it. *Magister* he was, and *magister* he remained, even in his most strenuous flights of imagination and audacity. From the moment of his arrival he tried to show himself enraptured with Silviane. Naturally enough, he already knew her by sight, and had even criticised her on one occasion in five or six contemptuous

lines. However, the sight of her there, in full beauty, clad like a queen, and presented by four influential protectors, filled him with emotion; and he was struck with the idea that nothing would be more Parisian and less pedantic than to assert she had some talent and give her his support.

They had seated themselves at table, and the repast proved a magnificent one, the service ever prompt and assiduous, an attendant being allotted to each diner. While the flowers scattered their perfumes through the room, and the plate and crystal glittered on the snowy cloth, an abundance of delicious and unexpected dishes were handed round – a sturgeon from Russia, prohibited game, truffles as big as eggs, and hothouse vegetables and fruit as full of flavour as if they had been naturally matured. It was money flung out of window, simply for the pleasure of wasting more than other people, and eating what they could not procure. The influential critic, though he displayed the ease of a man accustomed to every sort of festivity, really felt astonished at it all, and became servile, promising his support, and pledging himself far more than he really wished to. Moreover, he showed himself very gay, found some witty remarks to repeat, and even some rather ribald jests. But when the champagne appeared after the roast and the grand burgundies, his over-excitement brought him back perforce to his real nature. The conversation had now turned on Corneille's "Polyeucte" and the part of "Pauline," in which Silviane wished to make her *debut* at the Comedie Francaise. This extraordinary

caprice, which had quite revolted the influential critic a week previously, now seemed to him simply a bold enterprise in which the young woman might even prove victorious if she consented to listen to his advice. And, once started, he delivered quite a lecture on the past, asserting that no actress had ever yet understood it properly, for at the outset Pauline was simply a well-meaning little creature of the middle classes, and the beauty of her conversion at the finish arose from the working of a miracle, a stroke of heavenly grace which endowed her with something divine. This was not the opinion of Silviane, who from the first lines regarded Pauline as the ideal heroine of some symbolical legend. However, as the critic talked on and on, she had to feign approval; and he was delighted at finding her so beautiful and docile beneath his ferule. At last, as ten o'clock was striking, he rose and tore out of the hot and reeking room in order to do his work.

"Ah! my dears," cried Silviane, "he's a nice bore is that critic of yours! What a fool he is with his idea of Pauline being a little *bourgeoise*! I would have given him a fine dressing if it weren't for the fact that I have some need of him. Ah! no, it's too idiotic! Pour me out a glass of champagne. I want something to set me right after all that!"

The *fete* then took quite an intimate turn between the four men who remained and that bare-armed, bare-breasted girl, covered with diamonds; while from the neighbouring passages and rooms came bursts of laughter and sounds of kissing, all the stir and

mirth of the debauchery now filling the house. And beneath the windows torrents of vehicles and pedestrians streamed along the Boulevards where reigned the wild fever of pleasure and harlotry.

"No, don't open it, or I shall catch cold!" resumed Silviane, addressing Fongue as he stepped towards the window. "Are you so very warm, then? I'm just comfortable... But, Duillard, my good fellow, please order some more champagne. It's wonderful what a thirst your critic has given me!"

Amidst the blinding glare of the lamps and the perfume of the flowers and wines, one almost stifled in the room. And Silviane was seized with an irresistible desire for a spree, a desire to tittle and amuse herself in some vulgar fashion, as in her bygone days. A few glasses of champagne brought her to full pitch, and she showed the boldest and giddiest gaiety. The others, who had never before seen her so lively, began on their own side to feel amused. As Fongue was obliged to go to his office she embraced him "like a daughter," as she expressed it. However, on remaining alone with the others she indulged in great freedom of speech, which became more and more marked as her intoxication increased. And to the class of men with whom she consorted her great attraction, as she was well aware, lay in the circumstance that with her virginal countenance and her air of ideal purity was coupled the most monstrous perversity ever displayed by any shameless woman. Despite her innocent blue eyes and lily-like candour, she would give rein, particularly when she was drunk, to the most diabolical of fancies.

Duvillard let her drink on, but she guessed his thoughts, like she guessed those of the others, and simply smiled while concocting impossible stories and descanting fantastically in the language of the gutter. And seeing her there in her dazzling gown fit for a queenly virgin, and hearing her pour forth the vilest words, they thought her most wonderfully droll. However, when she had drunk as much champagne as she cared for and was half crazy, a novel idea suddenly occurred to her.

"I say, my children," she exclaimed, "we are surely not going to stop here. It's so precious slow! You shall take me to the Chamber of Horrors – eh? just to finish the evening. I want to hear Legras sing 'La Chemise,' that song which all Paris is running to hear him sing."

But Duvillard indignantly rebelled: "Oh! no," said he; "most certainly not. It's a vile song and I'll never take you to such an abominable place."

But she did not appear to hear him. She had already staggered to her feet and was arranging her hair before a looking-glass. "I used to live at Montmartre," she said, "and it'll amuse me to go back there. And, besides, I want to know if this Legras is a Legras that I knew, oh! ever so long ago! Come, up you get, and let us be off!"

"But, my dear girl," pleaded Duvillard, "we can't take you into that den dressed as you are! Just fancy your entering that place in a low-necked gown and covered with diamonds! Why everyone would jeer at us! Come, Gerard, just tell her to be a

little reasonable."

Gerard, equally offended by the idea of such a freak, was quite willing to intervene. But she closed his mouth with her gloved hand and repeated with the gay obstinacy of intoxication: "Pooh, it will be all the more amusing if they do jeer at us! Come, let us be off, let us be off, quick!"

Thereupon Duthil, who had been listening with a smile and the air of a man of pleasure whom nothing astonishes or displeases, gallantly took her part. "But, my dear Baron, everybody goes to the Chamber of Horrors," said he. "Why, I myself have taken the noblest ladies there, and precisely to hear that song of Legras, which is no worse than anything else."

"Ah! you hear what Duthil says!" cried Silviane. "He's a deputy, he is, and he wouldn't go there if he thought it would compromise his honorability!"

Then, as Duvillard still struggled on in despair at the idea of exhibiting himself with her in such a scandalous place, she became all the merrier: "Well, my dear fellow, please yourself. I don't need you. You and Gerard can go home if you like. But I'm going to Montmartre with Duthil. You'll take charge of me, won't you, Duthil, eh?"

Still, the Baron was in no wise disposed to let the evening finish in that fashion. The mere idea of it gave him a shock, and he had to resign himself to the girl's stubborn caprice. The only consolation he could think of was to secure Gerard's presence, for the young man, with some lingering sense of decorum, still

obstinately refused to make one of the party. So the Baron took his hands and detained him, repeating in urgent tones that he begged him to come as an essential mark of friendship. And at last the wife's lover and daughter's suitor had to give way to the man who was the former's husband and the latter's father.

Silviane was immensely amused by it all, and, indiscreetly thee-ing and thou-ing Gerard, suggested that he at least owed the Baron some little compliance with his wishes.

Duvillard pretended not to hear her. He was listening to Duthil, who told him that there was a sort of box in a corner of the Chamber of Horrors, in which one could in some measure conceal oneself. And then, as Silviane's carriage – a large closed landau, whose coachman, a sturdy, handsome fellow, sat waiting impassively on his box – was down below, they started off.

The Chamber of Horrors was installed in premises on the Boulevard de Rochechouart, formerly occupied by a cafe whose proprietor had become bankrupt.¹ It was a suffocating place, narrow, irregular, with all sorts of twists, turns, and secluded nooks, and a low and smoky ceiling. And nothing could have been more rudimentary than its decorations. The walls had

¹ Those who know Paris will identify the site selected by M. Zola as that where 'Colonel' Lisbonne of the Commune installed his den the 'Bagne' some years ago. Nevertheless, such places as the 'Chamber of Horrors' now abound in the neighbourhood of Montmartre, and it must be admitted that whilst they are frequented by certain classes of Frenchmen they owe much of their success in a pecuniary sense to the patronage of foreigners. Among the latter, Englishmen are particularly conspicuous. – Trans.

simply been placarded with posters of violent hues, some of the crudest character, showing the barest of female figures. Behind a piano at one end there was a little platform reached by a curtained doorway. For the rest, one simply found a number of bare wooden forms set alongside the veriest pot-house tables, on which the glasses containing various beverages left round and sticky marks. There was no luxury, no artistic feature, no cleanliness even. Globeless gas burners flared freely, heating a dense mist compounded of tobacco smoke and human breath. Perspiring, apoplectical faces could be perceived through this veil, and an acrid odour increased the intoxication of the assembly, which excited itself with louder and louder shouts at each fresh song. It had been sufficient for an enterprising fellow to set up these boards, bring out Legras, accompanied by two or three girls, make him sing his frantic and abominable songs, and in two or three evenings overwhelming success had come, all Paris being enticed and flocking to the place, which for ten years or so had failed to pay as a mere cafe, where by way of amusement petty cits had been simply allowed their daily games at dominoes.

And the change had been caused by the passion for filth, the irresistible attraction exercised by all that brought opprobrium and disgust. The Paris of enjoyment, the *bourgeoisie* which held all wealth and power, which would relinquish naught of either, though it was surfeited and gradually wearying of both, simply hastened to the place in order that obscenity and insult might

be flung in its face. Hypnotised, as it were, while staggering to its fall, it felt a need of being spat upon. And what a frightful symptom there lay in it all: those condemned ones rushing upon dirt of their own accord, voluntarily hastening their own decomposition by that unquenchable thirst for the vile, which attracted men, reputed to be grave and upright, and lovely women of the most perfect grace and luxury, to all the beastliness of that low den!

At one of the tables nearest the stage sat little Princess Rosemonde de Harn, with wild eyes and quivering nostrils, delighted as she felt at now being able to satisfy her curiosity regarding the depths of Paris life. Young Hyacinthe had resigned himself to the task of bringing her, and, correctly buttoned up in his long frock-coat, he was indulgent enough to refrain from any marked expression of boredom. At a neighbouring table they had found a shadowy Spaniard of their acquaintance, a so-called Bourse jobber, Bergaz, who had been introduced to the Princess by Janzen, and usually attended her entertainments. They virtually knew nothing about him, not even if he really earned at the Bourse all the money which he sometimes spent so lavishly, and which enabled him to dress with affected elegance. His slim, lofty figure was not without a certain air of distinction, but his red lips spoke of strong passions and his bright eyes were those of a beast of prey. That evening he had two young fellows with him, one Rossi, a short, swarthy Italian, who had come to Paris as a painter's model, and had soon glided into the lazy

life of certain disreputable callings, and the other, Sanfaute, a born Parisian blackguard, a pale, beardless, vicious and impudent stripling of La Chapelle, whose long curly hair fell down upon either side of his bony cheeks.

"Oh! pray now!" feverishly said Rosemonde to Bergaz; "as you seem to know all these horrid people, just show me some of the celebrities. Aren't there some thieves and murderers among them?"

He laughed shrilly, and in a bantering way replied: "But you know these people well enough, madame. That pretty, pink, delicate-looking woman over yonder is an American lady, the wife of a consul, whom, I believe, you receive at your house. That other on the right, that tall brunette who shows such queenly dignity, is a Countess, whose carriage passes yours every day in the Bois. And the thin one yonder, whose eyes glitter like those of a she-wolf, is the particular friend of a high official, who is well known for his reputation of austerity."

But she stopped him, in vexation: "I know, I know. But the others, those of the lower classes, those whom one comes to see."

Then she went on asking questions, and seeking for terrifying and mysterious countenances. At last, two men seated in a corner ended by attracting her attention; one of them a very young fellow with a pale, pinched face, and the other an ageless individual who, besides being buttoned up to his neck in an old coat, had pulled his cap so low over his eyes, that one saw little of his face beyond the beard which fringed it. Before these two stood a couple of

mugs of beer, which they drank slowly and in silence.

"You are making a great mistake, my dear," said Hyacinthe with a frank laugh, "if you are looking for brigands in disguise. That poor fellow with the pale face, who surely doesn't have food to eat every day, was my schoolfellow at Condorcet!"

Bergaz expressed his amazement. "What! you knew Mathis at Condorcet! After all, though, you're right, he received a college education. Ah! and so you knew him. A very remarkable young man he is, though want is throttling him. But, I say, the other one, his companion, you don't know him?"

Hyacinthe, after looking at the man with the cap-hidden face, was already shaking his head, when Bergaz suddenly gave him a nudge as a signal to keep quiet, and by way of explanation he muttered: "Hush! Here's Raphanel. I've been distrusting him for some time past. Whenever he appears anywhere, the police is not far off."

Raphanel was another of the vague, mysterious Anarchists whom Janzen had presented to the Princess by way of satisfying her momentary passion for revolutionism. This one, though he was a fat, gay, little man, with a doll-like face and childish nose, which almost disappeared between his puffy cheeks, had the reputation of being a thorough desperado; and at public meetings he certainly shouted for fire and murder with all his lungs. Still, although he had already been compromised in various affairs, he had invariably managed to save his own bacon, whilst his companions were kept under lock and key; and this they were

now beginning to think somewhat singular.

He at once shook hands with the Princess in a jovial way, took a seat near her without being invited, and forthwith denounced the dirty *bourgeoisie* which came to wallow in places of ill fame. Rosemonde was delighted, and encouraged him, but others near by began to get angry, and Bergaz examined him with his piercing eyes, like a man of energy who acts, and lets others talk. Now and then, too, he exchanged quick glances of intelligence with his silent lieutenants, Sanfaute and Rossi, who plainly belonged to him, both body and soul. They were the ones who found their profit in Anarchy, practising it to its logical conclusions, whether in crime or in vice.

Meantime, pending the arrival of Legras with his "Flowers of the Pavement," two female vocalists had followed one another on the stage, the first fat and the second thin, one chirruping some silly love songs with an under-current of dirt, and the other shouting the coarsest of refrains, in a most violent, fighting voice. She had just finished amidst a storm of bravos, when the assembly, stirred to merriment and eager for a laugh, suddenly exploded once more. Silviane was entering the little box at one end of the hall. When she appeared erect in the full light, with bare arms and shoulders, looking like a planet in her gown of yellow satin and her blazing diamonds, there arose a formidable uproar, shouts, jeers, hisses, laughing and growling, mingled with ferocious applause. And the scandal increased, and the vilest expressions flew about as soon as Duvillard, Gerard and Duthil

also showed themselves, looking very serious and dignified with their white ties and spreading shirt fronts.

"We told you so!" muttered Duvillard, who was much annoyed with the affair, while Gerard tried to conceal himself in a dim corner.

She, however, smiling and enchanted, faced the public, accepting the storm with the candid bearing of a foolish virgin, much as one inhales the vivifying air of the open when it bears down upon one in a squall. And, indeed, she herself had sprung from the sphere before her, its atmosphere was her native air.

"Well, what of it?" she said replying to the Baron who wanted her to sit down. "They are merry. It's very nice. Oh! I'm really amusing myself!"

"Why, yes, it's very nice," declared Duthil, who in like fashion set himself at his ease. "Silviane is right, people naturally like a laugh now and then!"

Amidst the uproar, which did not cease, little Princess Rosemonde rose enthusiastically to get a better view. "Why, it's your father who's with that woman Silviane," she said to Hyacinthe. "Just look at them! Well, he certainly has plenty of bounce to show himself here with her!"

Hyacinthe, however, refused to look. It didn't interest him, his father was an idiot, only a child would lose his head over a girl in that fashion. And with his contempt for woman the young man became positively insulting.

"You try my nerves, my dear fellow," said Rosemonde as she

sat down. "You are the child with your silly ideas about us. And as for your father, he does quite right to love that girl. I find her very pretty indeed, quite adorable!"

Then all at once the uproar ceased, those who had risen resumed their seats, and the only sound was that of the feverish throb which coursed through the assembly. Legras had just appeared on the platform. He was a pale sturdy fellow with a round and carefully shaven face, stern eyes, and the powerful jaws of a man who compels the adoration of women by terrorising them. He was not deficient in talent, he sang true, and his ringing voice was one of extraordinary penetration and pathetic power. And his *repertoire*, his "Flowers of the Pavement," completed the explanation of his success; for all the foulness and suffering of the lower spheres, the whole abominable sore of the social hell created by the rich, shrieked aloud in these songs in words of filth and fire and blood.

A prelude was played on the piano, and Legras standing there in his velvet jacket sang "La Chemise," the horrible song which brought all Paris to hear him. All the lust and vice that crowd the streets of the great city appeared with their filth and their poison; and amid the picture of Woman stripped, degraded, ill-treated, dragged through the mire and cast into a cesspool, there rang out the crime of the *bourgeoisie*. But the scorching insult of it all was less in the words themselves than in the manner in which Legras cast them in the faces of the rich, the happy, the beautiful ladies who came to listen to him. Under the low ceiling,

amidst the smoke from the pipes, in the blinding glare of the gas, he sent his lines flying through the assembly like expectorations, projected by a whirlwind of furious contempt. And when he had finished there came delirium; the beautiful ladies did not even think of wiping away the many affronts they had received, but applauded frantically. The whole assembly stamped and shouted, and wallowed, distracted, in its ignominy.

"Bravo! bravo!" the little Princess repeated in her shrill voice. "It's astonishing, astonishing, prodigious!"

And Silviane, whose intoxication seemed to have increased since she had been there, in the depths of that fiery furnace, made herself particularly conspicuous by the manner in which she clapped her hands and shouted: "It's he, it's my Legras! I really must kiss him, he's pleased me so much!"

Duvillard, now fairly exasperated, wished to take her off by force. But she clung to the hand-rest of the box, and shouted yet more loudly, though without any show of temper. It became necessary to parley with her. Yes, she was willing to go off and let them drive her home; but, first of all, she must embrace Legras, who was an old friend of hers. "Go and wait for me in the carriage!" she said, "I will be with you in a moment."

Just as the assembly was at last becoming calmer, Rosemonde perceived that the box was emptying; and her own curiosity being satisfied, she thought of prevailing on Hyacinthe to see her home. He, who had listened to Legras in a languid way without even applauding, was now talking of Norway with Bergaz, who

pretended that he had travelled in the North. Oh! the fiords! oh! the ice-bound lakes! oh! the pure lily-white, chaste coldness of the eternal winter! It was only amid such surroundings, said Hyacinthe, that he could understand woman and love, like a kiss of the very snow itself.

"Shall we go off there to-morrow?" exclaimed the Princess with her vivacious effrontery. "I'll shut up my house and slip the key under the door."

Then she added that she was jesting, of course. But Bergaz knew her to be quite capable of such a freak; and at the idea that she might shut up her little mansion and perhaps leave it unprotected he exchanged a quick glance with Sanfaute and Rossi, who still smiled in silence. Ah! what an opportunity for a fine stroke! What an opportunity to get back some of the wealth of the community appropriated by the blackguard *bourgeoisie*!

Meantime Raphanel, after applauding Legras, was looking all round the place with his little grey, sharp eyes. And at last young Mathis and his companion, the ill-clad individual, of whose face only a scrap of beard could be seen, attracted his attention. They had neither laughed nor applauded; they seemed to be simply a couple of tired fellows who were resting, and in whose opinion one is best hidden in the midst of a crowd.

All at once, though, Raphanel turned towards Bergaz: "That's surely little Mathis over yonder. But who's that with him?"

Bergaz made an evasive gesture; he did not know. Still, he no longer took his eyes from Raphanel. And he saw the other

feign indifference at what followed, and finish his beer and take his leave, with the jesting remark that he had an appointment with a lady at a neighbouring omnibus office. No sooner had he gone than Bergaz rose, sprang over some of the forms and jostled people in order to reach little Mathis, into whose ear he whispered a few words. And the young man at once left his table, taking his companion and pushing him outside through an occasional exit. It was all so rapidly accomplished that none of the general public paid attention to the flight.

"What is it?" said the Princess to Bergaz, when he had quietly resumed his seat between Rossi and Sanfaute.

"Oh! nothing, I merely wished to shake hands with Mathis as he was going off."

Thereupon Rosemonde announced that she meant to do the same. Nevertheless, she lingered a moment longer and again spoke of Norway on perceiving that nothing could impassion Hyacinthe except the idea of the eternal snow, the intense, purifying cold of the polar regions. In his poem on the "End of Woman," a composition of some thirty lines, which he hoped he should never finish, he thought of introducing a forest of frozen pines by way of final scene. Now the Princess had risen and was gaily reverting to her jest, declaring that she meant to take him home to drink a cup of tea and arrange their trip to the Pole, when an involuntary exclamation fell from Bergaz, who, while listening, had kept his eyes on the doorway.

"Mondesir! I was sure of it!"

There had appeared at the entrance a short, sinewy, broad-backed little man, about whose round face, bumpy forehead, and snub nose there was considerable military roughness. One might have thought him a non-commissioned officer in civilian attire. He gazed over the whole room, and seemed at once dismayed and disappointed.

Bergaz, however, wishing to account for his exclamation, resumed in an easy way: "Ah! I said there was a smell of the police about the place! You see that fellow – he's a detective, a very clever one, named Mondesir, who had some trouble when he was in the army. Just look at him, sniffing like a dog that has lost scent! Well, well, my brave fellow, if you've been told of any game you may look and look for it, the bird's flown already!"

Once outside, when Rosemonde had prevailed on Hyacinthe to see her home, they hastened to get into the brougham, which was waiting for them, for near at hand they perceived Silviane's landau, with the majestic coachman motionless on his box, while Duvillard, Gerard, and Duthil still stood waiting on the curbstone. They had been there for nearly twenty minutes already, in the semi-darkness of that outer boulevard, where all the vices of the poor districts of Paris were on the prowl. They had been jostled by drunkards; and shadowy women brushed against them as they went by whispering beneath the oaths and blows of bullies. And there were couples seeking the darkness under the trees, and lingering on the benches there; while all around were low taverns and dirty lodging-houses and places

of ill-fame. All the human degradation which till break of day swarms in the black mud of this part of Paris, enveloped the three men, giving them the horrors, and yet neither the Baron nor Gerard nor Duthil was willing to go off. Each hoped that he would tire out the others, and take Silviane home when she should at last appear.

But after a time the Baron grew impatient, and said to the coachman: "Jules, go and see why madame doesn't come."

"But the horses, Monsieur le Baron?"

"Oh! they will be all right, we are here."

A fine drizzle had begun to fall; and the wait went on again as if it would never finish. But an unexpected meeting gave them momentary occupation. A shadowy form, something which seemed to be a thin, black-skirted woman, brushed against them. And all of a sudden they were surprised to find it was a priest.

"What, is it you, Monsieur l'Abbe Froment?" exclaimed Gerard. "At this time of night? And in this part of Paris?"

Thereupon Pierre, without venturing either to express his own astonishment at finding them there themselves, or to ask them what they were doing, explained that he had been belated through accompanying Abbe Rose on a visit to a night refuge. Ah! to think of all the frightful want which at last drifted to those pestilential dormitories where the stench had almost made him faint! To think of all the weariness and despair which there sank into the slumber of utter prostration, like that of beasts falling to the ground to sleep off the abominations of life! No name could

be given to the promiscuity; poverty and suffering were there in heaps, children and men, young and old, beggars in sordid rags, beside the shameful poor in threadbare frock-coats, all the waifs and strays of the daily shipwrecks of Paris life, all the laziness and vice, and ill-luck and injustice which the torrent rolls on, and throws off like scum. Some slept on, quite annihilated, with the faces of corpses. Others, lying on their backs with mouths agape, snored loudly as if still venting the plaint of their sorry life. And others tossed restlessly, still struggling in their slumber against fatigue and cold and hunger, which pursued them like nightmares of monstrous shape. And from all those human beings, stretched there like wounded after a battle, from all that ambulance of life reeking with a stench of rottenness and death, there ascended a nausea born of revolt, the vengeance-prompting thought of all the happy chambers where, at that same hour, the wealthy loved or rested in fine linen and costly lace.²

² Even the oldest Paris night refuges, which are the outcome of private philanthropy – L'Oeuvre de l'Hospitalite de Nuit – have only been in existence some fourteen or fifteen years. Before that time, and from the period of the great Revolution forward, there was absolutely no place, either refuge, asylum, or workhouse, in the whole of that great city of wealth and pleasure, where the houseless poor could crave a night's shelter. The various royalist, imperialist and republican governments and municipalities of modern France have often been described as 'paternal,' but no governments and municipalities in the whole civilised world have done less for the very poor. The official Poor Relief Board – L'Assistance Publique – has for fifty years been a by-word, a mockery and a sham, in spite of its large revenue. And this neglect of the very poor has been an important factor in every French revolution. Each of these – even that of 1870 – had its purely economic side, though many superficial historians are content to ascribe economic causes to the one Revolution of 1789, and to pass them by in all

In vain had Pierre and Abbe Rose passed all the poor wretches in review while seeking the big Old'un, the former carpenter, so as to rescue him from the cesspool of misery, and send him to the Asylum on the very morrow. He had presented himself at the refuge that evening, but there was no room left, for, horrible to say, even the shelter of that hell could only be granted to early comers. And so he must now be leaning against a wall, or lying behind some palings. This had greatly distressed poor Abbe Rose and Pierre, but it was impossible for them to search every dark, suspicious corner; and so the former had returned to the Rue Cortot, while the latter was seeking a cab to convey him back to Neuilly.

The fine drizzling rain was still falling and becoming almost icy, when Silviane's coachman, Jules, at last reappeared and interrupted the priest, who was telling the Baron and the others how his visit to the refuge still made him shudder.

"Well, Jules – and madame?" asked Duvillard, quite anxious at seeing the coachman return alone.

Impassive and respectful, with no other sign of irony than a slight involuntary twist of the lips, Jules answered: "Madame sends word that she is not going home; and she places her carriage at the gentlemen's disposal if they will allow me to drive them home."

This was the last straw, and the Baron flew into a passion. To have allowed her to drag him to that vile den, to have waited

there hopefully so long, and to be treated in this fashion for the sake of a Legras! No, no, he, the Baron, had had enough of it, and she should pay dearly for her abominable conduct! Then he stopped a passing cab and pushed Gerard inside it saying, "You can set me down at my door."

"But she's left us the carriage!" shouted Duthil, who was already consoled, and inwardly laughed at the termination of it all. "Come here, there's plenty of room for three. No? you prefer the cab? Well, just as you like, you know."

For his part he gaily climbed into the landau and drove off lounging on the cushions, while the Baron, in the jolting old cab, vented his rage without a word of interruption from Gerard, whose face was hidden by the darkness. To think of it! that she, whom he had overwhelmed with gifts, who had already cost him two millions of francs, should in this fashion insult him, the master who could dispose both of fortunes and of men! Well, she had chosen to do it, and he was delivered! Then Duvillard drew a long breath like a man released from the galleys.

For a moment Pierre watched the two vehicles go off; and then took his own way under the trees, so as to shelter himself from the rain until a vacant cab should pass. Full of distress and battling thoughts he had begun to feel icy cold. The whole monstrous night of Paris, all the debauchery and woe that sobbed around him made him shiver. Phantom-like women who, when young, had led lives of infamy in wealth, and who now, old and faded, led lives of infamy in poverty, were still and ever wandering past

him in search of bread, when suddenly a shadowy form grazed him, and a voice murmured in his ear: "Warn your brother, the police are on Salvat's track, he may be arrested at any moment."

The shadowy figure was already going its way, and as a gas ray fell upon it, Pierre thought that he recognised the pale, pinched face of Victor Mathis. And at the same time, yonder in Abbe Rose's peaceful dining-room, he fancied he could again see the gentle face of Madame Mathis, so sad and so resigned, living on solely by the force of the last trembling hope which she had unhappily set in her son.

III

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

ALREADY at eight o'clock on that holiday-making mid-Lent Thursday, when all the offices of the Home Department were empty, Monferrand, the Minister, sat alone in his private room. A single usher guarded his door, and in the first ante-chamber there were only a couple of messengers.

The Minister had experienced, on awaking, the most unpleasant of emotions. The "Voix du Peuple," which on the previous day had revived the African Railway scandal, by accusing Barroux of having pocketed 20,000 francs, had that morning published its long-promised list of the bribe-taking senators and deputies. And at the head of this list Monferrand had found his own name set down against a sum of 80,000 francs, while Fongueu was credited with 50,000. Then a fifth of the latter amount was said to have been Duthil's share, and Chaigneux had contented himself with the beggarly sum of 3,000 francs – the lowest price paid for any one vote, the cost of each of the others ranging from 5 to 20,000.

It must be said that there was no anger in Monferrand's emotion. Only he had never thought that Sagnier would carry his passion for uproar and scandal so far as to publish this list – a page which was said to have been torn from a memorandum book belonging to Duvillard's agent, Hunter, and which was

covered with incomprehensible hieroglyphics that ought to have been discussed and explained, if, indeed, the real truth was to be arrived at. Personally, Monferrand felt quite at ease, for he had written nothing, signed nothing, and knew that one could always extricate oneself from a mess by showing some audacity, and never confessing. Nevertheless, what a commotion it would all cause in the parliamentary duck-pond. He at once realised the inevitable consequences, the ministry overthrown and swept away by this fresh whirlwind of denunciation and tittle-tattle. Mege would renew his interpellation on the morrow, and Vignon and his friends would at once lay siege to the posts they coveted. And he, Monferrand, could picture himself driven out of that ministerial sanctum where, for eight months past, he had been taking his ease, not with any foolish vainglory, but with the pleasure of feeling that he was in his proper place as a born ruler, who believed he could tame and lead the multitude.

Having thrown the newspapers aside with a disdainful gesture, he rose and stretched himself, growling the while like a plagued lion. And then he began to walk up and down the spacious room, which showed all the faded official luxury of mahogany furniture and green damask hangings. Stepping to and fro, with his hands behind his back, he no longer wore his usual fatherly, good-natured air. He appeared as he really was, a born wrestler, short, but broad shouldered, with sensual mouth, fleshy nose and stern eyes, that all proclaimed him to be unscrupulous, of iron will and fit for the greatest tasks. Still, in this case, in what direction

lay his best course? Must he let himself be dragged down with Barroux? Perhaps his personal position was not absolutely compromised? And yet how could he part company from the others, swim ashore, and save himself while they were being drowned? It was a grave problem, and with his frantic desire to retain power, he made desperate endeavours to devise some suitable manoeuvre.

But he could think of nothing, and began to swear at the virtuous fits of that silly Republic, which, in his opinion, rendered all government impossible. To think of such foolish fiddle-faddle stopping a man of his acumen and strength! How on earth can one govern men if one is denied the use of money, that sovereign means of sway? And he laughed bitterly; for the idea of an idyllic country where all great enterprises would be carried out in an absolutely honest manner seemed to him the height of absurdity.

At last, however, unable as he was to come to a determination, it occurred to him to confer with Baron Duvillard, whom he had long known, and whom he regretted not having seen sooner so as to urge him to purchase Sagnier's silence. At first he thought of sending the Baron a brief note by a messenger; but he disliked committing anything to paper, for the veriest scrap of writing may prove dangerous; so he preferred to employ the telephone which had been installed for his private use near his writing-table.

"It is Baron Duvillard who is speaking to me?.. Quite so. It's I, the Minister, Monsieur Monferrand. I shall be much obliged

if you will come to see me at once... Quite so, quite so, I will wait for you."

Then again he walked to and fro and meditated. That fellow Duvillard was as clever a man as himself, and might be able to give him an idea. And he was still laboriously trying to devise some scheme, when the usher entered saying that Monsieur Gascogne, the Chief of the Detective Police, particularly wished to speak to him. Monferrand's first thought was that the Prefecture of Police desired to know his views respecting the steps which ought to be taken to ensure public order that day; for two mid-Lent processions – one of the Washerwomen and the other of the Students – were to march through Paris, whose streets would certainly be crowded.

"Show Monsieur Gascogne in," he said.

A tall, slim, dark man, looking like an artisan in his Sunday best, then stepped into the ministerial sanctum. Fully acquainted with the under-currents of Paris life, this Chief of the Detective Force had a cold dispassionate nature and a clear and methodical mind. Professionalism slightly spoilt him, however: he would have possessed more intelligence if he had not credited himself with so much.

He began by apologising for his superior the Prefect, who would certainly have called in person had he not been suffering from indisposition. However, it was perhaps best that he, Gascogne, should acquaint Monsieur le Ministre with the grave affair which brought him, for he knew every detail of it. Then he

revealed what the grave affair was.

"I believe, Monsieur le Ministre, that we at last hold the perpetrator of the crime in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy."

At this, Monferrand, who had been listening impatiently, became quite impassioned. The fruitless searches of the police, the attacks and the jeers of the newspapers, were a source of daily worry to him. "Ah! – Well, so much the better for you Monsieur Gascogne," he replied with brutal frankness. "You would have ended by losing your post. The man is arrested?"

"Not yet, Monsieur le Ministre; but he cannot escape, and it is merely an affair of a few hours."

Then the Chief of the Detective Force told the whole story: how Detective Mondesir, on being warned by a secret agent that the Anarchist Salvat was in a tavern at Montmartre, had reached it just as the bird had flown; then how chance had again set him in presence of Salvat at a hundred paces or so from the tavern, the rascal having foolishly loitered there to watch the establishment; and afterwards how Salvat had been stealthily shadowed in the hope that they might catch him in his hiding-place with his accomplices. And, in this wise, he had been tracked to the Porte-Maillot, where, realising, no doubt, that he was pursued, he had suddenly bolted into the Bois de Boulogne. It was there that he had been hiding since two o'clock in the morning in the drizzle which had not ceased to fall. They had waited for daylight in order to organise a *battue* and hunt him down like some animal, whose weariness must necessarily ensure capture. And so, from

one moment to another, he would be caught.

"I know the great interest you take in the arrest, Monsieur le Ministre," added Gascogne, "and it occurred to me to ask your orders. Detective Mondesir is over there, directing the hunt. He regrets that he did not apprehend the man on the Boulevard de Rochechouart; but, all the same, the idea of following him was a capital one, and one can only reproach Mondesir with having forgotten the Bois de Boulogne in his calculations."

Salvat arrested! That fellow Salvat whose name had filled the newspapers for three weeks past. This was a most fortunate stroke which would be talked of far and wide! In the depths of Monferrand's fixed eyes one could divine a world of thoughts and a sudden determination to turn this incident which chance had brought him to his own personal advantage. In his own mind a link was already forming between this arrest and that African Railways interpellation which was likely to overthrow the ministry on the morrow. The first outlines of a scheme already rose before him. Was it not his good star that had sent him what he had been seeking – a means of fishing himself out of the troubled waters of the approaching crisis?

"But tell me, Monsieur Gascogne," said he, "are you quite sure that this man Salvat committed the crime?"

"Oh! perfectly sure, Monsieur le Ministre. He'll confess everything in the cab before he reaches the Prefecture."

Monferrand again walked to and fro with a pensive air, and ideas came to him as he spoke on in a slow, meditative

fashion. "My orders! well, my orders, they are, first, that you must act with the very greatest prudence. Yes, don't gather a mob of promenaders together. Try to arrange things so that the arrest may pass unperceived – and if you secure a confession keep it to yourself, don't communicate it to the newspapers. Yes, I particularly recommend that point to you, don't take the newspapers into your confidence at all – and finally, come and tell me everything, and observe secrecy, absolute secrecy, with everybody else."

Gascogne bowed and would have withdrawn, but Monferrand detained him to say that not a day passed without his friend Monsieur Lehmann, the Public Prosecutor, receiving letters from Anarchists who threatened to blow him up with his family; in such wise that, although he was by no means a coward, he wished his house to be guarded by plain-clothes officers. A similar watch was already kept upon the house where investigating magistrate Amadiou resided. And if the latter's life was precious, that of Public Prosecutor Lehmann was equally so, for he was one of those political magistrates, one of those shrewd talented Israelites, who make their way in very honest fashion by invariably taking the part of the Government in office.

Then Gascogne in his turn remarked: "There is also the Barthes affair, Monsieur le Ministre – we are still waiting. Are we to arrest Barthes at that little house at Neuilly?"

One of those chances which sometimes come to the help of detectives and make people think the latter to be men of genius

had revealed to him the circumstance that Barthes had found a refuge with Abbe Pierre Froment. Ever since the Anarchist terror had thrown Paris into dismay a warrant had been out against the old man, not for any precise offence, but simply because he was a suspicious character and might, therefore, have had some intercourse with the Revolutionists. However, it had been repugnant to Gascogne to arrest him at the house of a priest whom the whole district venerated as a saint; and the Minister, whom he had consulted on the point, had warmly approved of his reserve, since a member of the clergy was in question, and had undertaken to settle the affair himself.

"No, Monsieur Gascogne," he now replied, "don't move in the matter. You know what my feelings are, that we ought to have the priests with us and not against us – I have had a letter written to Abbe Froment in order that he may call here this morning, as I shall have no other visitors. I will speak to him myself, and you may take it that the affair no longer concerns you."

Then he was about to dismiss him when the usher came back saying that the President of the Council was in the ante-room.³

"Barroux! – Ah! dash it, then, Monsieur Gascogne, you had better go out this way. It is as well that nobody should meet you, as I wish you to keep silent respecting Salvat's arrest. It's fully understood, is it not? I alone am to know everything; and you will communicate with me here direct, by the telephone, if any serious incident should arise."

³ The title of President of the Council is given to the French prime minister. – Trans.

The Chief of the Detective Police had scarcely gone off, by way of an adjoining *salon*, when the usher reopened the door communicating with the ante-room: "Monsieur le President du Conseil."

With a nicely adjusted show of deference and cordiality, Monferrand stepped forward, his hands outstretched: "Ah! my dear President, why did you put yourself out to come here? I would have called on you if I had known that you wished to see me."

But with an impatient gesture Barroux brushed aside all question of etiquette. "No, no! I was taking my usual stroll in the Champs Elysees, and the worries of the situation impressed me so keenly that I preferred to come here at once. You yourself must realise that we can't put up with what is taking place. And pending to-morrow morning's council, when we shall have to arrange a plan of defence, I felt that there was good reason for us to talk things over."

He took an armchair, and Monferrand on his side rolled another forward so as to seat himself with his back to the light. Whilst Barroux, the elder of the pair by ten years, blanched and solemn, with a handsome face, snowy whiskers, clean-shaven chin and upper-lip, retained all the dignity of power, the bearing of a Conventiennel of romantic views, who sought to magnify the simple loyalty of a rather foolish but good-hearted *bourgeois* nature into something great; the other, beneath his heavy common countenance and feigned frankness and

simplicity, concealed unknown depths, the unfathomable soul of a shrewd enjoyer and despot who was alike pitiless and unscrupulous in attaining his ends.

For a moment Barroux drew breath, for in reality he was greatly moved, his blood rising to his head, and his heart beating with indignation and anger at the thought of all the vulgar insults which the "Voix du Peuple" had poured upon him again that morning. "Come, my dear colleague," said he, "one must stop that scandalous campaign. Moreover, you can realise what awaits us at the Chamber to-morrow. Now that the famous list has been published we shall have every malcontent up in arms. Vignon is bestirring himself already – "

"Ah! you have news of Vignon?" exclaimed Monferrand, becoming very attentive.

"Well, as I passed his door just now, I saw a string of cabs waiting there. All his creatures have been on the move since yesterday, and at least twenty persons have told me that the band is already dividing the spoils. For, as you must know, the fierce and ingenuous Mege is again going to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for others. Briefly, we are dead, and the others claim that they are going to bury us in mud before they fight over our leavings." With his arm outstretched Barroux made a theatrical gesture, and his voice resounded as if he were in the tribune. Nevertheless, his emotion was real, tears even were coming to his eyes. "To think that I who have given my whole life to the Republic, I who founded it, who saved it, should be

covered with insults in this fashion, and obliged to defend myself against abominable charges! To say that I abused my trust! That I sold myself and took 200,000 francs from that man Hunter, simply to slip them into my pocket! Well, certainly there *was* a question of 200,000 francs between us. But how and under what circumstances? They were doubtless the same as in your case, with regard to the 80,000 francs that he is said to have handed you – "

But Monferrand interrupted his colleague in a clear trenchant voice: "He never handed me a centime."

The other looked at him in astonishment, but could only see his big, rough head, whose features were steeped in shadow: "Ah! But I thought you had business relations with him, and knew him particularly well."

"No, I simply knew Hunter as everyone knew him. I was not even aware that he was Baron Duvillard's agent in the African Railways matter; and there was never any question of that affair between us."

This was so improbable, so contrary to everything Barroux knew of the business, that for a moment he felt quite scared. Then he waved his hand as if to say that others might as well look after their own affairs, and reverted to himself. "Oh! as for me," he said, "Hunter called on me more than ten times, and made me quite sick with his talk of the African Railways. It was at the time when the Chamber was asked to authorise

the issue of lottery stock.⁴ And, by the way, my dear fellow, I was then here at the Home Department, while you had just taken that of Public Works. I can remember sitting at that very writing-table, while Hunter was in the same armchair that I now occupy. That day he wanted to consult me about the employment of the large sum which Duvillard's house proposed to spend in advertising; and on seeing what big amounts were set down against the Royalist journals, I became quite angry, for I realised with perfect accuracy that this money would simply be used to wage war against the Republic. And so, yielding to Hunter's entreaties, I also drew up a list allotting 200,000 francs among the friendly Republican newspapers, which were paid through me, I admit it. And that's the whole story."⁵

Then he sprang to his feet and struck his chest, whilst his voice again rose: "Well, I've had more than enough of all that calumny and falsehood! And I shall simply tell the Chamber my story to-morrow. It will be my only defence. An honest man does not fear the truth!"

⁴ This kind of stock is common enough in France. A part of it is extinguished annually at a public "drawing," when all such shares or bonds that are drawn become entitled to redemption at "par," a percentage of them also securing prizes of various amounts. City of Paris Bonds issued on this system are very popular among French people with small savings; but, on the other hand, many ventures, whose lottery stock has been authorised by the Legislature, have come to grief and ruined investors. – Trans.

⁵ All who are acquainted with recent French history will be aware that Barroux' narrative is simply a passage from the life of the late M. Floquet, slightly modified to suit the requirements of M. Zola's story. – Trans.

But Monferrand, in his turn, had sprung up with a cry which was a complete confession of his principles: "It's ridiculous, one never confesses; you surely won't do such a thing!"

"I shall," retorted Barroux with superb obstinacy. "And we shall see if the Chamber won't absolve me by acclamation."

"No, you will fall beneath an explosion of hisses, and drag all of us down with you."

"What does it matter? We shall fall with dignity, like honest men!"

Monferrand made a gesture of furious anger, and then suddenly became calm. Amidst all the anxious confusion in which he had been struggling since daybreak, a gleam now dawned upon him. The vague ideas suggested by Salvat's approaching arrest took shape, and expanded into an audacious scheme. Why should he prevent the fall of that big ninny Barroux? The only thing of importance was that he, Monferrand, should not fall with him, or at any rate that he should rise again. So he protested no further, but merely mumbled a few words, in which his rebellious feeling seemingly died out. And at last, putting on his good-natured air once more, he said: "Well, after all you are perhaps right. One must be brave. Besides, you are our head, my dear President, and we will follow you."

They had now again sat down face to face, and their conversation continued till they came to a cordial agreement respecting the course which the Government should adopt in view of the inevitable interpellation on the morrow.

Meantime, Baron Duvillard was on his way to the ministry. He had scarcely slept that night. When on the return from Montmartre Gerard had set him down at his door in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, he had at once gone to bed, like a man who is determined to compel sleep, so that he may forget his worries and recover self-control. But slumber would not come; for hours and hours he vainly sought it. The manner in which he had been insulted by that creature Silviane was so monstrous! To think that she, whom he had enriched, whose every desire he had contented, should have cast such mud at him, the master, who flattered himself that he held Paris and the Republic in his hands, since he bought up and controlled consciences just as others might make corners in wool or leather for the purposes of Bourse speculation. And the dim consciousness that Silviane was the avenging sore, the cancer preying on him who preyed on others, completed his exasperation. In vain did he try to drive away his haunting thoughts, remember his business affairs, his appointments for the morrow, his millions which were working in every quarter of the world, the financial omnipotence which placed the fate of nations in his grasp. Ever, and in spite of all, Silviane rose up before him, splashing him with mud. In despair he tried to fix his mind on a great enterprise which he had been planning for months past, a Trans-Saharan railway, a colossal venture which would set millions of money at work, and revolutionise the trade of the world. And yet Silviane appeared once more, and smacked him on both cheeks with her dainty little

hand, which she had dipped in the gutter. It was only towards daybreak that he at last dozed off, while vowing in a fury that he would never see her again, that he would spurn her, and order her away, even should she come and drag herself at his feet.

However, when he awoke at seven, still tired and aching, his first thought was for her, and he almost yielded to a fit of weakness. The idea came to him to ascertain if she had returned home, and if so make his peace. But he jumped out of bed, and after his ablutions he recovered all his bravery. She was a wretch, and he this time thought himself for ever cured of his passion. To tell the truth, he forgot it as soon as he opened the morning newspapers. The publication of the list of bribe-takers in the "Voix du Peuple" quite upset him, for he had hitherto thought it unlikely that Sagnier held any such list. However, he judged the document at a glance, at once separating the few truths it contained from a mass of foolishness and falsehood. And this time also he did not consider himself personally in danger. There was only one thing that he really feared: the arrest of his intermediary, Hunter, whose trial might have drawn him into the affair. As matters stood, and as he did not cease to repeat with a calm and smiling air, he had merely done what every banking-house does when it issues stock, that is, pay the press for advertisements and puffery, employ brokers, and reward services discreetly rendered to the enterprise. It was all a business matter, and for him that expression summed up everything. Moreover, he played the game of life bravely, and spoke with indignant

contempt of a banker who, distracted and driven to extremities by blackmailing, had imagined that he would bring a recent scandal to an end by killing himself: a pitiful tragedy, from all the mire and blood of which the scandal had sprouted afresh with the most luxuriant and indestructible vegetation. No, no! suicide was not the course to follow: a man ought to remain erect, and struggle on to his very last copper, and the very end of his energy.

At about nine o'clock a ringing brought Duvillard to the telephone installed in his private room. And then his folly took possession of him once more: it must be Silviane who wished to speak to him. She often amused herself by thus disturbing him amidst his greatest cares. No doubt she had just returned home, realising that she had carried things too far on the previous evening and desiring to be forgiven. However, when he found that the call was from Monferrand, who wished him to go to the ministry, he shivered slightly, like a man saved from the abyss beside which he is travelling. And forthwith he called for his hat and stick, desirous as he was of walking and reflecting in the open air. And again he became absorbed in the intricacies of the scandalous business which was about to stir all Paris and the legislature. Kill himself! ah, no, that would be foolish and cowardly. A gust of terror might be sweeping past; nevertheless, for his part he felt quite firm, superior to events, and resolved to defend himself without relinquishing aught of his power.

As soon as he entered the ante-rooms of the ministry he realised that the gust of terror was becoming a tempest. The

publication of the terrible list in the "Voix du Peuple" had chilled the guilty ones to the heart; and, pale and distracted, feeling the ground give way beneath them, they had come to take counsel of Monferrand, who, they hoped, might save them. The first whom Duvillard perceived was Duthil, looking extremely feverish, biting his moustaches, and constantly making grimaces in his efforts to force a smile. The banker scolded him for coming, saying that it was a great mistake to have done so, particularly with such a scared face. The deputy, however, his spirits already cheered by these rough words, began to defend himself, declaring that he had not even read Sagnier's article, and had simply come to recommend a lady friend to the Minister. Thereupon the Baron undertook this business for him and sent him away with the wish that he might spend a merry mid-Lent. However, the one who most roused Duvillard's pity was Chaigneux, whose figure swayed about as if bent by the weight of his long equine head, and who looked so shabby and untidy that one might have taken him for an old pauper. On recognising the banker he darted forward, and bowed to him with obsequious eagerness.

"Ah! Monsieur le Baron," said he, "how wicked some men must be! They are killing me, I shall die of it all; and what will become of my wife, what will become of my three daughters, who have none but me to help them?"

The whole of his woeful story lay in that lament. A victim of politics, he had been foolish enough to quit Arras and his

business there as a solicitor, in order to seek triumph in Paris with his wife and daughters, whose menial he had then become – a menial dismayed by the constant rebuffs and failures which his mediocrity brought upon him. An honest deputy! ah, good heavens! yes, he would have liked to be one; but was he not perpetually "hard-up," ever in search of a hundred-franc note, and thus, perforce, a deputy for sale? And withal he led such a pitiable life, so badgered by the women folk about him, that to satisfy their demands he would have picked up money no matter where or how.

"Just fancy, Monsieur le Baron, I have at last found a husband for my eldest girl. It is the first bit of luck that I have ever had; there will only be three women left on my hands if it comes off. But you can imagine what a disastrous impression such an article as that of this morning must create in the young man's family. So I have come to see the Minister to beg him to give my future son-in-law a prefectoral secretaryship. I have already promised him the post, and if I can secure it things may yet be arranged."

He looked so terribly shabby and spoke in such a doleful voice that it occurred to Duvillard to do one of those good actions on which he ventured at times when they were likely to prove remunerative investments. It is, indeed, an excellent plan to give a crust of bread to some poor devil whom one can turn, if necessary, into a valet or an accomplice. So the banker dismissed Chaigneux, undertaking to do his business for him in the same way as he had undertaken to do Duthil's. And he added that he

would be pleased to see him on the morrow, and have a chat with him, as he might be able to help him in the matter of his daughter's marriage.

At this Chaigneux, scenting a loan, collapsed into the most lavish thanks. "Ah! Monsieur le Baron, my life will not be long enough to enable me to repay such a debt of gratitude."

As Duvillard turned round he was surprised to see Abbe Froment waiting in a corner of the ante-room. Surely that one could not belong to the batch of *suspects*, although by the manner in which he was pretending to read a newspaper it seemed as if he were trying to hide some keen anxiety. At last the Baron stepped forward, shook hands, and spoke to him cordially. And Pierre thereupon related that he had received a letter requesting him to call on the Minister that day. Why, he could not tell; in fact, he was greatly surprised, he said, putting on a smile in order to conceal his disquietude. He had been waiting a long time already, and hoped that he would not be forgotten on that bench.

Just then the usher appeared, and hastened up to the banker. "The Minister," said he, "was at that moment engaged with the President of the Council; but he had orders to admit the Baron as soon as the President withdrew." Almost immediately afterwards Barroux came out, and as Duvillard was about to enter he recognised and detained him. And he spoke of the denunciations very bitterly, like one indignant with all the slander. Would not he, Duvillard, should occasion require it, testify that he, Barroux, had never taken a centime for himself? Then, forgetting

that he was speaking to a banker, and that he was Minister of Finances, he proceeded to express all his disgust of money. Ah! what poisonous, murky, and defiling waters were those in which money-making went on! However, he repeated that he would chastise his insulters, and that a statement of the truth would suffice for the purpose.

Duvillard listened and looked at him. And all at once the thought of Silviane came back, and took possession of the Baron, without any attempt on his part to drive it away. He reflected that if Barroux had chosen to give him a helping hand when he had asked for it, Silviane would now have been at the Comedie Francaise, in which case the deplorable affair of the previous night would not have occurred; for he was beginning to regard himself as guilty in the matter; if he had only contented Silviane's whim she would never have dismissed him in so vile a fashion.

"You know, I owe you a grudge," he said, interrupting Barroux.

The other looked at him in astonishment. "And why, pray?" he asked.

"Why, because you never helped me in the matter of that friend of mine who wishes to make her *debut* in 'Polyeucte.'"

Barroux smiled, and with amiable condescension replied: "Ah! yes, Silviane d'Aulnay! But, my dear sir, it was Taboureau who put spokes in the wheel. The Fine Arts are his department, and the question was entirely one for him. And I could do nothing; for that very worthy and honest gentleman, who came

to us from a provincial faculty, was full of scruples. For my own part I'm an old Parisian, I can understand anything, and I should have been delighted to please you."

At this fresh resistance offered to his passion Duvillard once more became excited, eager to obtain that which was denied him. "Taboureau, Taboureau!" said he, "he's a nice deadweight for you to load yourself with! Honest! isn't everybody honest? Come, my dear Minister, there's still time, get Silviane admitted, it will bring you good luck for to-morrow."

This time Barroux burst into a frank laugh: "No, no, I can't cast Taboureau adrift at this moment – people would make too much sport of it – a ministry wrecked or saved by a Silviane question!"

Then he offered his hand before going off. The Baron pressed it, and for a moment retained it in his own, whilst saying very gravely and with a somewhat pale face: "You do wrong to laugh, my dear Minister. Governments have fallen or set themselves erect again through smaller matters than that. And should you fall to-morrow I trust that you will never have occasion to regret it."

Wounded to the heart by the other's jesting air, exasperated by the idea that there was something he could not achieve, Duvillard watched Barroux as he withdrew. Most certainly the Baron did not desire a reconciliation with Silviane, but he vowed that he would overturn everything if necessary in order to send her a signed engagement for the Comedie, and this simply by way of vengeance, as a slap, so to say, – yes, a slap which would make

her tingle! That moment spent with Barroux had been a decisive one.

However, whilst still following Barroux with his eyes, Duvillard was surprised to see Fongue arrive and manoeuvre in such a way as to escape the Prime Minister's notice. He succeeded in doing so, and then entered the ante-room with an appearance of dismay about the whole of his little figure, which was, as a rule, so sprightly. It was the gust of terror, still blowing, that had brought him thither.

"Didn't you see your friend Barroux?" the Baron asked him, somewhat puzzled.

"Barroux? No!"

This quiet lie was equivalent to a confession of everything. Fongue was so intimate with Barroux that he thee'd and thou'd him, and for ten years had been supporting him in his newspaper, having precisely the same views, the same political religion. But with a smash-up threatening, he doubtless realised, thanks to his wonderfully keen scent, that he must change his friendships if he did not wish to remain under the ruins himself. If he had, for long years, shown so much prudence and diplomatic virtue in order to firmly establish the most dignified and respected of Parisian newspapers, it was not for the purpose of letting that newspaper be compromised by some foolish blunder on the part of an honest man.

"I thought you were on bad terms with Monferrand," resumed Duvillard. "What have you come here for?"

"Oh! my dear Baron, the director of a leading newspaper is never on bad terms with anybody. He's at the country's service."

In spite of his emotion, Duvillard could not help smiling. "You are right," he responded. "Besides, Monferrand is really an able man, whom one can support without fear."

At this Fonseca began to wonder whether his anguish of mind was visible. He, who usually played the game of life so well, with his own hand under thorough control, had been terrified by the article in the "Voix du Peuple." For the first time in his career he had perpetrated a blunder, and felt that he was at the mercy of some denunciation, for with unpardonable imprudence he had written a very brief but compromising note. He was not anxious concerning the 50,000 francs which Barroux had handed him out of the 200,000 destined for the Republican press. But he trembled lest another affair should be discovered, that of a sum of money which he had received as a present. It was only on feeling the Baron's keen glance upon him that he was able to recover some self-possession. How silly it was to lose the knack of lying and to confess things simply by one's demeanour!

But the usher drew near and repeated that the Minister was now waiting for the Baron; and Fonseca went to sit down beside Abbe Froment, whom he also was astonished to find there. Pierre repeated that he had received a letter, but had no notion what the Minister might wish to say to him. And the quiver of his hands again revealed how feverishly impatient he was to know what it might be. However, he could only wait, since Monferrand was

still busy discussing such grave affairs.

On seeing Duvillard enter, the Minister had stepped forward, offering his hand. However much the blast of terror might shake others, he had retained his calmness and good-natured smile. "What an affair, eh, my dear Baron!" he exclaimed.

"It's idiotic!" plainly declared the other, with a shrug of his shoulders. Then he sat down in the armchair vacated by Barroux, while the Minister installed himself in front of him. These two were made to understand one another, and they indulged in the same despairing gestures and furious complaints, declaring that government, like business, would no longer be possible if men were required to show such virtue as they did not possess. At all times, and under every *regime*, when a decision of the Chambers had been required in connection with some great enterprise, had not the natural and legitimate tactics been for one to do what might be needful to secure that decision? It was absolutely necessary that one should obtain influential and sympathetic support, in a word, make sure of votes. Well, everything had to be paid for, men like other things, some with fine words, others with favours or money, presents made in a more or less disguised manner. And even admitting that, in the present cases, one had gone rather far in the purchasing, that some of the bartering had been conducted in an imprudent way, was it wise to make such an uproar over it? Would not a strong government have begun by stifling the scandal, from motives of patriotism, a mere sense of cleanliness even?

"Why, of course! You are right, a thousand times right!" exclaimed Monferrand. "Ah! if I were the master you would see what a fine first-class funeral I would give it all!" Then, as Duvillard looked at him fixedly, struck by these last words, he added with his expressive smile: "Unfortunately I'm not the master, and it was to talk to you of the situation that I ventured to disturb you. Barroux, who was here just now, seemed to me in a regrettable frame of mind."

"Yes, I saw him, he has such singular ideas at times – " Then, breaking off, the Baron added: "Do you know that Fonseca is in the ante-room? As he wishes to make his peace with you, why not send for him? He won't be in the way, in fact, he's a man of good counsel, and the support of his newspaper often suffices to give one the victory."

"What, is Fonseca there!" cried Monferrand. "Why, I don't ask better than to shake hands with him. There were some old affairs between us that don't concern anybody! But, good heavens! if you only knew what little spite I harbour!"

When the usher had admitted Fonseca the reconciliation took place in the simplest fashion. They had been great friends at college in their native Correze, but had not spoken together for ten years past in consequence of some abominable affair the particulars of which were not exactly known. However, it becomes necessary to clear away all corpses when one wishes to have the arena free for a fresh battle.

"It's very good of you to come back the first," said

Monferrand. "So it's all over, you no longer bear me any grudge?"

"No, indeed!" replied Fongseue. "Why should people devour one another when it would be to their interest to come to an understanding?"

Then, without further explanations, they passed to the great affair, and the conference began. And when Monferrand had announced Barroux' determination to confess and explain his conduct, the others loudly protested. That meant certain downfall, they would prevent him, he surely would not be guilty of such folly. Forthwith they discussed every imaginable plan by which the Ministry might be saved, for that must certainly be Monferrand's sole desire. He himself with all eagerness pretended to seek some means of extricating his colleagues and himself from the mess in which they were. However, a faint smile, still played around his lips, and at last as if vanquished he sought no further. "There's no help for it," said he, "the ministry's down."

The others exchanged glances, full of anxiety at the thought of another Cabinet dealing with the African Railways affair. A Vignon Cabinet would doubtless plume itself on behaving honestly.

"Well, then, what shall we do?"

But just then the telephone rang, and Monferrand rose to respond to the summons: "Allow me."

He listened for a moment and then spoke into the tube, nothing that he said giving the others any inkling of the

information which had reached him. This had come from the Chief of the Detective Police, and was to the effect that Salvat's whereabouts in the Bois de Boulogne had been discovered, and that he would be hunted down with all speed. "Very good! And don't forget my orders," replied Monferrand.

Now that Salvat's arrest was certain, the Minister determined to follow the plan which had gradually taken shape in his mind; and returning to the middle of the room he slowly walked to and fro, while saying with his wonted familiarity: "But what would you have, my friends? It would be necessary for me to be the master. Ah! if I were the master! A Commission of Inquiry, yes! that's the proper form for a first-class funeral to take in a big affair like this, so full of nasty things. For my part, I should confess nothing, and I should have a Commission appointed. And then you would see the storm subside."

Duvillard and Fonseca began to laugh. The latter, however, thanks to his intimate knowledge of Monferrand, almost guessed the truth. "Just listen!" said he; "even if the ministry falls it doesn't necessarily follow that you must be on the ground with it. Besides, a ministry can be mended when there are good pieces of it left."

Somewhat anxious at finding his thoughts guessed, Monferrand protested: "No, no, my dear fellow, I don't play that game. We are jointly responsible, we've got to keep together, dash it all!"

"Keep together! Pooh! Not when simpletons purposely drown

themselves! And, besides, if we others have need of you, we have a right to save you in spite of yourself! Isn't that so, my dear Baron?"

Then, as Monferrand sat down, no longer protesting but waiting, Duvillard, who was again thinking of his passion, full of anger at the recollection of Barroux' refusal, rose in his turn, and exclaimed: "Why, certainly! If the ministry's condemned let it fall! What good can you get out of a ministry which includes such a man as Taboureau! There you have an old, worn-out professor without any prestige, who comes to Paris from Grenoble, and has never set foot in a theatre in his life! Yet the control of the theatres is handed over to him, and naturally he's ever doing the most stupid things!"

Monferrand, who was well informed on the Silviane question, remained grave, and for a moment amused himself by trying to excite the Baron. "Taboureau," said he, "is a somewhat dull and old-fashioned University man, but at the department of Public Instruction he's in his proper element."

"Oh! don't talk like that, my dear fellow! You are more intelligent than that, you are not going to defend Taboureau as Barroux did. It's quite true that I should very much like to see Silviane at the Comedie. She's a very good girl at heart, and she has an amazing lot of talent. Would you stand in her way if you were in Taboureau's place?"

"I? Good heavens, no! A pretty girl on the stage, why, it would please everybody, I'm sure. Only it would be necessary to have a

man of the same views as were at the department of Instruction and Fine Arts."

His sly smile had returned to his face. The securing of that girl's *debut* was certainly not a high price to pay for all the influence of Duvillard's millions. Monferrand therefore turned towards Fonseca as if to consult him. The other, who fully understood the importance of the affair, was meditating in all seriousness: "A senator is the proper man for Public Instruction," said he. "But I can think of none, none at all, such as would be wanted. A man of broad mind, a real Parisian, and yet one whose presence at the head of the University wouldn't cause too much astonishment – there's perhaps Dauvergne – "

"Dauvergne! Who's he?" exclaimed Monferrand in surprise. "Ah! yes, Dauvergne the senator for Dijon – but he's altogether ignorant of University matters, he hasn't the slightest qualification."

"Well, as for that," resumed Fonseca, "I'm trying to think. Dauvergne is certainly a good-looking fellow, tall and fair and decorative. Besides, he's immensely rich, has a most charming young wife – which does no harm, on the contrary – and he gives real *fetes* at his place on the Boulevard St. Germain."

It was only with hesitation that Fonseca himself had ventured to suggest Dauvergne. But by degrees his selection appeared to him a real "find." "Wait a bit! I recollect now that in his young days Dauvergne wrote a comedy, a one act comedy in verse, and had it performed at Dijon. And Dijon's a literary town, you

know, so that piece of his sets a little perfume of 'Belles-Lettres' around him. And then, too, he left Dijon twenty years ago, and is a most determined Parisian, frequenting every sphere of society. Dauvergne will do whatever one desires. He's the man for us, I tell you."

Duvillard thereupon declared that he knew him, and considered him a very decent fellow. Besides, he or another, it mattered nothing!

"Dauvergne, Dauvergne," repeated Monferrand. "*Mon Dieu*, yes! After all, why not? He'll perhaps make a very good minister. Let us say Dauvergne." Then suddenly bursting into a hearty laugh: "And so we are reconstructing the Cabinet in order that that charming young woman may join the Comedie! The Silviane cabinet – well, and what about the other departments?"

He jested, well knowing that gaiety often hastens difficult solutions. And, indeed, they merrily continued settling what should be done if the ministry were defeated on the morrow. Although they had not plainly said so the plan was to let Barroux sink, even help him to do so, and then fish Monferrand out of the troubled waters. The latter engaged himself with the two others, because he had need of them, the Baron on account of his financial sovereignty, and the director of "Le Globe" on account of the press campaign which he could carry on in his favour. And in the same way the others, quite apart from the Silviane business, had need of Monferrand, the strong-handed man of government, who undertook to bury the African Railways

scandal by bringing about a Commission of Inquiry, all the strings of which would be pulled by himself. There was soon a perfect understanding between the three men, for nothing draws people more closely together than common interest, fear and need. Accordingly, when Duvillard spoke of Duthil's business, the young lady whom he wished to recommend, the Minister declared that it was settled. A very nice fellow was Duthil, they needed a good many like him. And it was also agreed that Chaigneux' future son-in-law should have his secretaryship. Poor Chaigneux! He was so devoted, always ready to undertake any commission, and his four women folk led him such a hard life!

"Well, then, it's understood." And Monferrand, Duvillard and Fongue vigorously shook hands.

However, when the first accompanied the others to the door, he noticed a prelate, in a cassock of fine material, edged with violet, speaking to a priest in the ante-room. Thereupon he, the Minister, hastened forward, looking much distressed. "Ah! you were waiting, Monseigneur Martha! Come in, come in quick!"

But with perfect urbanity the Bishop refused. "No, no, Monsieur l'Abbe Froment was here before me. Pray receive him first."

Monferrand had to give way; he admitted the priest, and speedily dealt with him. He who usually employed the most diplomatic reserve when he was in presence of a member of the clergy plumply unfolded the Barthes business. Pierre had experienced the keenest anguish during the two hours that he had

been waiting there, for he could only explain the letter he had received by a surmise that the police had discovered his brother's presence in his house. And so when he heard the Minister simply speak of Barthes, and declare that the government would rather see him go into exile than be obliged to imprison him once more, he remained for a moment quite disconcerted. As the police had been able to discover the old conspirator in the little house at Neuilly, how was it that they seemed altogether ignorant of Guillaume's presence there? It was, however, the usual gap in the genius of great detectives.

"Pray what do you desire of me, Monsieur le Ministre?" said Pierre at last; "I don't quite understand."

"Why, Monsieur l'Abbe, I leave all this to your sense of prudence. If that man were still at your house in forty-eight hours from now, we should be obliged to arrest him there, which would be a source of grief to us, for we are aware that your residence is the abode of every virtue. So advise him to leave France. If he does that we shall not trouble him."

Then Monferrand hastily brought Pierre back to the ante-room; and, smiling and bending low, he said: "Monseigneur, I am entirely at your disposal. Come in, come in, I beg you."

The prelate, who was gaily chatting with Duvillard and Fongue, shook hands with them, and then with Pierre. In his desire to win all hearts, he that morning displayed the most perfect graciousness. His bright, black eyes were all smiles, the whole of his handsome face wore a caressing expression, and he

entered the ministerial sanctum leisurely and gracefully, with an easy air of conquest.

And now only Monferrand and Monseigneur Martha were left, talking on and on in the deserted building. Some people had thought that the prelate wished to become a deputy. But he played a far more useful and lofty part in governing behind the scenes, in acting as the directing mind of the Vatican's policy in France. Was not France still the Eldest Daughter of the Church, the only great nation which might some day restore omnipotence to the Papacy? For that reason he had accepted the Republic, preached the duty of "rallying" to it, and inspired the new Catholic group in the Chamber. And Monferrand, on his side, struck by the progress of the New Spirit, that reaction of mysticism which flattered itself that it would bury science, showed the prelate much amiability, like a strong-handed man who, to ensure his own victory, utilised every force that was offered him.

IV

THE MAN HUNT

ON the afternoon of that same day such a keen desire for space and the open air came upon Guillaume, that Pierre consented to accompany him on a long walk in the Bois de Boulogne. The priest, upon returning from his interview with Monferrand, had informed his brother that the government once more wished to get rid of Nicholas Barthes. However, they were so perplexed as to how they should impart these tidings to the old man, that they resolved to postpone the matter until the evening. During their walk they might devise some means of breaking the news in a gentle way. As for the walk, this seemed to offer no danger; to all appearance Guillaume was in no wise threatened, so why should he continue hiding? Thus the brothers sallied forth and entered the Bois by the Sablons gate, which was the nearest to them.

The last days of March had now come, and the trees were beginning to show some greenery, so soft and light, however, that one might have thought it was pale moss or delicate lace hanging between the stems and boughs. Although the sky remained of an ashen grey, the rain, after falling throughout the night and morning, had ceased; and exquisite freshness pervaded that wood now awakening to life once more, with its foliage dripping in the mild and peaceful atmosphere. The mid-Lent rejoicings had apparently attracted the populace to the centre of Paris,

for in the avenues one found only the fashionable folks of select days, the people of society who come thither when the multitude stops away. There were carriages and gentlemen on horseback; beautiful aristocratic ladies who had alighted from their broughams or landaus; and wet-nurses with streaming ribbons, who carried infants wearing the most costly lace. Of the middle-classes, however, one found only a few matrons living in the neighbourhood, who sat here and there on the benches busy with embroidery or watching their children play.

Pierre and Guillaume followed the Allee de Longchamp as far as the road going from Madrid to the lakes. Then they took their way under the trees, alongside the little Longchamp rivulet. They wished to reach the lakes, pass round them, and return home by way of the Maillot gate. But so charming and peaceful was the deserted plantation through which they passed, that they yielded to a desire to sit down and taste the delight of resting amidst all the budding springtide around them. A fallen tree served them as a bench, and it was possible for them to fancy themselves far away from Paris, in the depths of some real forest. It was, too, of a real forest that Guillaume began to think on thus emerging from his long, voluntary imprisonment. Ah! for the space; and for the health-bringing air which courses between that forest's branches, that forest of the world which by right should be man's inalienable domain! However, the name of Barthes, the perpetual prisoner, came back to Guillaume's lips, and he sighed mournfully. The thought that there should be even a single man whose liberty

was thus ever assailed, sufficed to poison the pure atmosphere he breathed.

"What will you say to Barthes?" he asked his brother. "The poor fellow must necessarily be warned. Exile is at any rate preferable to imprisonment."

Pierre sadly waved his hand. "Yes, of course, I must warn him. But what a painful task it is!"

Guillaume made no rejoinder, for at that very moment, in that remote, deserted nook, where they could fancy themselves at the world's end, a most extraordinary spectacle was presented to their view. Something or rather someone leapt out of a thicket and bounded past them. It was assuredly a man, but one who was so unrecognisable, so miry, so woeful and so frightful, that he might have been taken for an animal, a boar that hounds had tracked and forced from his retreat. On seeing the rivulet, he hesitated for a moment, and then followed its course. But, all at once, as a sound of footsteps and panting breath drew nearer, he sprang into the water, which reached his thighs, bounded on to the further bank, and vanished from sight behind a clump of pines. A moment afterwards some keepers and policemen rushed by, skirting the rivulet, and in their turn disappearing. It was a man hunt that had gone past, a fierce, secret hunt with no display of scarlet or blast of horns athwart the soft, sprouting foliage.

"Some rascal or other," muttered Pierre. "Ah! the wretched fellow!"

Guillaume made a gesture of discouragement. "Gendarmes

and prison!" said he. "They still constitute society's only schooling system!"

Meantime the man was still running on, farther and farther away.

When, on the previous night, Salvat had suddenly escaped from the detectives by bounding into the Bois de Boulogne, it had occurred to him to slip round to the Dauphine gate and there descend into the deep ditch⁶ of the city ramparts. He remembered days of enforced idleness which he had spent there, in nooks where, for his own part, he had never met a living soul. Nowhere, indeed, could one find more secret places of retreat, hedged round by thicker bushes, or concealed from view by loftier herbage. Some corners of the ditch, at certain angles of the massive bastions, are favourite dens or nests for thieves and lovers. Salvat, as he made his way through the thickest of the brambles, nettles and ivy, was lucky enough to find a cavity full of dry leaves, in which he buried himself to the chin. The rain had already drenched him, and after slipping down the muddy slope, he had frequently been obliged to grope his way upon all fours. So those dry leaves proved a boon such as he had not dared to hope for. They dried him somewhat, serving as a blanket in which he coiled himself after his wild race through the dank darkness. The rain still fell, but he now only felt it on his head, and, weary as he was, he gradually sank into deep slumber beneath the continuous

⁶ This ditch or dry moat is about 30 feet deep and 50 feet wide. The counterscarp by which one may descend into it has an angle of 45 degrees. – Trans.

drizzle. When he opened his eyes again, the dawn was breaking, and it was probably about six o'clock. During his sleep the rain had ended by soaking the leaves, so that he was now immersed in a kind of chilly bath. Still he remained in it, feeling that he was there sheltered from the police, who must now surely be searching for him. None of those bloodhounds would guess his presence in that hole, for his body was quite buried, and briars almost completely hid his head. So he did not stir, but watched the rise of the dawn.

When at eight o'clock some policemen and keepers came by, searching the ditch, they did not perceive him. As he had anticipated, the hunt had begun at the first glimmer of light. For a time his heart beat violently; however, nobody else passed, nothing whatever stirred the grass. The only sounds that reached him were faint ones from the Bois de Boulogne, the ring of a bicyclist's bell, the thud of a horse's hoofs, the rumble of carriage wheels. And time went by, nine o'clock came, and then ten o'clock. Since the rain had ceased falling, Salvat had not suffered so much from the cold, for he was wearing a thick overcoat which little Mathis had given him. But, on the other hand, hunger was coming back; there was a burning sensation in his stomach, and leaden hoops seemed to be pressing against his ribs. He had eaten nothing for two days; he had been starving already on the previous evening, when he had accepted a glass of beer at that tavern at Montmartre. Nevertheless, his plan was to remain in the ditch until nightfall, and then slip away in the

direction of the village of Boulogne, where he knew of a means of egress from the wood. He was not caught yet, he repeated, he might still manage to escape. Then he tried to get to sleep again, but failed, so painful had his sufferings become. By the time it was eleven, everything swam before his eyes. He once nearly fainted, and thought that he was going to die. Then rage gradually mastered him, and, all at once, he sprang out of his leafy hiding-place, desperately hungering for food, unable to remain there any longer, and determined to find something to eat, even should it cost him his liberty and life. It was then noon.

On leaving the ditch he found the spreading lawns of the chateau of La Muette before him. He crossed them at a run, like a madman, instinctively going towards Boulogne, with the one idea that his only means of escape lay in that direction. It seemed miraculous that nobody paid attention to his helter-skelter flight. However, when he had reached the cover of some trees he became conscious of his imprudence, and almost regretted the sudden madness which had borne him along, eager for escape. Trembling nervously, he bent low among some furze bushes, and waited for a few minutes to ascertain if the police were behind him. Then with watchful eye and ready ear, wonderful instinct and scent of danger, he slowly went his way again. He hoped to pass between the upper lake and the Auteuil race-course; but there were few trees in that part, and they formed a broad avenue. He therefore had to exert all his skill in order to avoid observation, availing himself of the slenderest stems, the smallest

bushes, as screens, and only venturing onward after a lengthy inspection of his surroundings. Before long the sight of a guard in the distance revived his fears and detained him, stretched on the ground behind some brambles, for a full quarter of an hour. Then the approach first of a cab, whose driver had lost his way, and afterwards of a strolling pedestrian, in turn sufficed to stop him. He breathed once more, however, when, after passing the Mortemart hillock, he was able to enter the thickets lying between the two roads which lead to Boulogne and St. Cloud. The coppices thereabouts were dense, and he merely had to follow them, screened from view, in order to reach the outlet he knew of, which was now near at hand. So he was surely saved.

But all at once, at a distance of some five and thirty yards, he saw a keeper, erect and motionless, barring his way. He turned slightly to the left and there perceived another keeper, who also seemed to be awaiting him. And there were more and more of them; at every fifty paces or so stood a fresh one, the whole forming a *cordon*, the meshes as it were of a huge net. The worst was that he must have been perceived, for a light cry, like the clear call of an owl, rang out, and was repeated farther and farther off. The hunters were at last on the right scent, prudence had become superfluous, and it was only by flight that the quarry might now hope to escape. Salvat understood this so well that he suddenly began to run, leaping over all obstacles and darting between the trees, careless whether he were seen or heard. A few bounds carried him across the Avenue de St.

Cloud into the plantations stretching to the Allee de la Reine Marguerite. There the undergrowth was very dense; in the whole Bois there are no more closely set thickets. In summer they become one vast entanglement of verdure, amidst which, had it been the leafy season, Salvat might well have managed to secrete himself. For a moment he did find himself alone, and thereupon he halted to listen. He could neither see nor hear the keepers now. Had they lost his track, then? Profound quietude reigned under the fresh young foliage. But the light, owlsh cry arose once more, branches cracked, and he resumed his wild flight, hurrying straight before him. Unluckily he found the Allee de la Reine Marguerite guarded by policemen, so that he could not cross over, but had to skirt it without quitting the thickets. And now his back was turned towards Boulogne; he was retracing his steps towards Paris. However, a last idea came to his bewildered mind: it was to run on in this wise as far as the shady spots around Madrid, and then, by stealing from copse to copse, attempt to reach the Seine. To proceed thither across the bare expanse of the race-course and training ground was not for a moment to be thought of.

So Salvat still ran on and on. But on reaching the Allee de Longchamp he found it guarded like the other roads, and therefore had to relinquish his plan of escaping by way of Madrid and the river-bank. While he was perforce making a bend alongside the Pre Catelan, he became aware that the keepers, led by detectives, were drawing yet nearer to him, confining his

movements to a smaller and smaller area. And his race soon acquired all the frenzy of despair. Haggard and breathless he leapt mounds, rushed past multitudinous obstacles. He forced a passage through brambles, broke down palings, thrice caught his feet in wire work which he had not seen, and fell among nettles, yet picked himself up went on again, spurred by the stinging of his hands and face. It was then Guillaume and Pierre saw him pass, unrecognisable and frightful, taking to the muddy water of the rivulet like a stag which seeks to set a last obstacle between itself and the hounds. There came to him a wild idea of getting to the lake, and swimming, unperceived, to the island in the centre of it. That, he madly thought, would be a safe retreat, where he might burrow and hide himself without possibility of discovery. And so he still ran on. But once again the sight of some guards made him retrace his steps, and he was compelled to go back and back in the direction of Paris, chased, forced towards the very fortifications whence he had started that morning. It was now nearly three in the afternoon. For more than two hours and a half he had been running.

At last he saw a soft, sandy ride for horsemen before him. He crossed it, splashing through the mire left by the rain, and reached a little pathway, a delightful lovers' lane, as shady in summer as any arbour. For some time he was able to follow it, concealed from observation, and with his hopes reviving. But it led him to one of those broad, straight avenues where carriages and bicycles, the whole afternoon pageant of society, swept past

under the mild and cloudy sky. So he returned to the thickets, fell once more upon the keepers, lost all notion of the direction he took, and even all power of thought, becoming a mere thing carried along and thrown hither and thither by the chances of the pursuit which pressed more and more closely upon him. Star-like crossways followed one upon other, and at last he came to a broad lawn, where the full light dazzled him. And there he suddenly felt the hot, panting breath of his pursuers close in the rear. Eager, hungry breath it was, like that of hounds seeking to devour him. Shouts rang out, one hand almost caught hold of him, there was a rush of heavy feet, a scramble to seize him. But with a supreme effort he leapt upon a bank, crawled to its summit, rose again, and once more found himself alone, still running on amid the fresh and quiet greenery.

Nevertheless, this was the end. He almost fell flat upon the ground. His aching feet could no longer carry him; blood was oozing from his ears, and froth had come to his mouth. His heart beat with such violence that it seemed likely to break his ribs. Water and perspiration streamed from him, he was miry and haggard and tortured by hunger, conquered, in fact, more by hunger than by fatigue. And through the mist which seemed to have gathered before his wild eyes, he suddenly saw an open doorway, the doorway of a coach-house in the rear of a kind of chalet, sequestered among trees. Excepting a big white cat, which took to flight, there was not a living creature in the place. Salvat plunged into it and rolled over on a heap of straw,

among some empty casks. He was scarcely hidden there when he heard the chase sweep by, the detectives and the keepers losing scent, passing the chalet and rushing in the direction of the Paris ramparts. The noise of their heavy boots died away, and deep silence fell, while the hunted man, who had carried both hands to his heart to stay its beating, sank into the most complete prostration, with big tears trickling from his closed eyes.

Whilst all this was going on, Pierre and Guillaume, after a brief rest, had resumed their walk, reaching the lake and proceeding towards the crossway of the Cascades, in order to return to Neuilly by the road beyond the water. However, a shower fell, compelling them to take shelter under the big leafless branches of a chestnut-tree. Then, as the rain came down more heavily and they could perceive a kind of chalet, a little cafe-restaurant amid a clump of trees, they hastened thither for better protection. In a side road, which they passed on their way, they saw a cab standing, its driver waiting there in philosophical fashion under the falling shower. Pierre, moreover, noticed a young man stepping out briskly in front of them, a young man resembling Gerard de Quinsac, who, whilst walking in the Bois, had no doubt been overtaken by the rain, and like themselves was seeking shelter in the chalet. However, on entering the latter's public room, the priest saw no sign of the gentleman, and concluded that he must have been mistaken. This public room, which had a kind of glazed verandah overlooking the Bois, contained a few chairs and tables, the latter with marble tops.

On the first floor there were four or five private rooms reached by a narrow passage. Though the doors were open the place had as yet scarcely emerged from its winter's rest. There was nobody about, and on all sides one found the dampness common to establishments which, from lack of custom, are compelled to close from November until March. In the rear were some stables, a coach-house, and various mossy, picturesque outbuildings, which painters and gardeners would now soon embellish for the gay pleasure parties which the fine weather would bring.

"I really think that they haven't opened for the season yet," said Guillaume as he entered the silent house.

"At all events they will let us stay here till the rain stops," answered Pierre, seating himself at one of the little tables.

However, a waiter suddenly made his appearance seemingly in a great hurry. He had come down from the first floor, and eagerly rummaged a cupboard for a few dry biscuits, which he laid upon a plate. At last he condescended to serve the brothers two glasses of Chartreuse.

In one of the private rooms upstairs Baroness Duvillard, who had driven to the chalet in a cab, had been awaiting her lover Gerard for nearly half an hour. It was there that, during the charity bazaar, they had given each other an appointment. For them the chalet had precious memories: two years previously, on discovering that secluded nest, which was so deserted in the early, hesitating days of chilly spring, they had met there under circumstances which they could not forget. And the Baroness,

in choosing the house for the supreme assignation of their dying passion, had certainly not been influenced merely by a fear that she might be spied upon elsewhere. She had, indeed, thought of the first kisses that had been showered on her there, and would fain have revived them even if they should now prove the last that Gerard would bestow on her.

But she would also have liked to see some sunlight playing over the youthful foliage. The ashen sky and threatening rain saddened her. And when she entered the private room she did not recognise it, so cold and dim it seemed with its faded furniture. Winter had tarried there, with all the dampness and mouldy smell peculiar to rooms which have long remained closed. Then, too, some of the wall paper which had come away from the plaster hung down in shreds, dead flies were scattered over the parquet flooring; and in order to open the shutters the waiter had to engage in a perfect fight with their fastenings. However, when he had lighted a little gas-stove, which at once flamed up and diffused some warmth, the room became more cosy.

Eve had seated herself on a chair, without raising the thick veil which hid her face. Gowned, gloved, and bonneted in black, as if she were already in mourning for her last passion, she showed naught of her own person save her superb fair hair, which glittered like a helm of tawny gold. She had ordered tea for two, and when the waiter brought it with a little plateful of dry biscuits, left, no doubt, from the previous season, he found her in the same place, still veiled and motionless, absorbed, it seemed, in a

gloomy reverie. If she had reached the cafe half an hour before the appointed time it was because she desired some leisure and opportunity to overcome her despair and compose herself. She resolved that of all things she would not weep, that she would remain dignified and speak calmly, like one who, whatever rights she might possess, preferred to appeal to reason only. And she was well pleased with the courage that she found within her. Whilst thinking of what she should say to dissuade Gerard from a marriage which to her mind would prove both a calamity and a blunder, she fancied herself very calm, indeed almost resigned to whatsoever might happen.

But all at once she started and began to tremble. Gerard was entering the room.

"What! are you here the first, my dear?" he exclaimed. "I thought that I myself was ten minutes before the time! And you've ordered some tea and are waiting for me!"

He forced a smile as he spoke, striving to display the same delight at seeing her as he had shown in the early golden days of their passion. But at heart he was much embarrassed, and he shuddered at the thought of the awful scene which he could foresee.

She had at last risen and raised her veil. And looking at him she stammered: "Yes, I found myself at liberty earlier than I expected... I feared some impediment might arise.. and so I came."

Then, seeing how handsome and how affectionate he still

looked, she could not restrain her passion. All her skilful arguments, all her fine resolutions, were swept away. Her flesh irresistibly impelled her towards him; she loved him, she would keep him, she would never surrender him to another. And she wildly flung her arms around his neck.

"Oh! Gerard, Gerard! I suffer too cruelly; I cannot, I cannot bear it! Tell me at once that you will not marry her, that you will never marry her!"

Her voice died away in a sob, tears started from her eyes. Ah! those tears which she had sworn she would never shed! They gushed forth without cessation, they streamed from her lovely eyes like a flood of the bitterest grief.

"My daughter, O God! What! you would marry my daughter! She, here, on your neck where I am now! No, no, such torture is past endurance, it must not be, I will not have it!"

He shivered as he heard that cry of frantic jealousy raised by a mother who now was but a woman, maddened by the thought of her rival's youth, those five and twenty summers which she herself had left far behind. For his part, on his way to the assignation, he had come to what he thought the most sensible decision, resolving to break off the intercourse after the fashion of a well-bred man, with all sorts of fine consolatory speeches. But sternness was not in his nature. He was weak and soft-hearted, and had never been able to withstand a woman's tears. Nevertheless, he endeavoured to calm her, and in order to rid himself of her embrace, he made her sit down upon the sofa. And

there, beside her, he replied: "Come, be reasonable, my dear. We came here to have a friendly chat, did we not? I assure you that you are greatly exaggerating matters."

But she was determined to obtain a more positive answer from him. "No, no!" she retorted, "I am suffering too dreadfully, I must know the truth at once. Swear to me that you will never, never marry her!"

He again endeavoured to avoid replying as she wished him to do. "Come, come," he said, "you will do yourself harm by giving way to such grief as this; you know that I love you dearly."

"Then swear to me that you will never, never marry her."

"But I tell you that I love you, that you are the only one I love."

Then she again threw her arms around him, and kissed him passionately upon the eyes. "Is it true?" she asked in a transport. "You love me, you love no one else? Oh! tell me so again, and kiss me, and promise me that you will never belong to her."

Weak as he was he could not resist her ardent caresses and pressing entreaties. There came a moment of supreme cowardice and passion; her arms were around him and he forgot all but her, again and again repeating that he loved none other, and would never, never marry her daughter. At last he even sank so low as to pretend that he simply regarded that poor, infirm creature with pity. His words of compassionate disdain for her rival were like nectar to Eve, for they filled her with the blissful idea that it was she herself who would ever remain beautiful in his eyes and whom he would ever love..

At last silence fell between them, like an inevitable reaction after such a tempest of despair and passion. It disturbed Gerard. "Won't you drink some tea?" he asked. "It is almost cold already."

She was not listening, however. To her the reaction had come in a different form; and as though the inevitable explanation were only now commencing, she began to speak in a sad and weary voice. "My dear Gerard, you really cannot marry my daughter. In the first place it would be so wrong, and then there is the question of your name, your position. Forgive my frankness, but the fact is that everybody would say that you had sold yourself – such a marriage would be a scandal for both your family and mine."

As she spoke she took hold of his hands, like a mother seeking to prevent her big son from committing some terrible blunder. And he listened to her, with bowed head and averted eyes. She now evinced no anger, no jealous rage; all such feelings seemed to have departed with the rapture of her passion.

"Just think of what people would say," she continued. "I don't deceive myself, I am fully aware that there is an abyss between your circle of society and ours. It is all very well for us to be rich, but money simply enlarges the gap. And it was all very fine for me to be converted, my daughter is none the less 'the daughter of the Jewess,' as folks so often say. Ah! my Gerard, I am so proud of you, that it would rend my heart to see you lowered, degraded almost, by a marriage for money with a girl who is deformed, who is unworthy of you and whom you could never love."

He raised his eyes and looked at her entreatingly, anxious as he was to be spared such painful talk. "But haven't I sworn to you, that you are the only one I love?" he said. "Haven't I sworn that I would never marry her! It's all over. Don't let us torture ourselves any longer."

Their glances met and lingered on one another, instinct with all the misery which they dared not express in words. Eve's face had suddenly aged; her eyelids were red and swollen, and blotches marbled her quivering cheeks, down which her tears again began to trickle. "My poor, poor Gerard," said she, "how heavily I weigh on you. Oh! do not deny it! I feel that I am an intolerable burden on your shoulders, an impediment in your life, and that I shall bring irreparable disaster on you by my obstinacy in wishing you to be mine alone."

He tried to speak, but she silenced him. "No, no, all is over between us. I am growing ugly, all is ended. And besides, I shut off the future from you. I can be of no help to you, whereas you bestow all on me. And yet the time has come for you to assure yourself a position. At your age you can't continue living without any certainty of the morrow, without a home and hearth of your own; and it would be cowardly and cruel of me to set myself up as an obstacle, and prevent you from ending your life happily, as I should do if I clung to you and dragged you down with me."

Gazing at him through her tears she continued speaking in this fashion. Like his mother she was well aware that he was weak and even sickly; and she therefore dreamt of arranging a quiet life for

him, a life of tranquil happiness free from all fear of want. She loved him so fondly; and possessed so much genuine kindness of heart that perhaps it might be possible for her to rise even to renunciation and sacrifice. Moreover, the very egotism born of her beauty suggested that it might be well for her to think of retirement and not allow the autumn of her life to be spoilt by torturing dramas. All this she said to him, treating him like a child whose happiness she wished to ensure even at the price of her own; and he, his eyes again lowered, listened without further protest, pleased indeed to let her arrange a happy life for him.

Examining the situation from every aspect, she at last began to recapitulate the points in favour of that abominable marriage, the thought of which had so intensely distressed her. "It is certain," she said, "that Camille would bring you all that I should like you to have. With her, I need hardly say it, would come plenty, affluence. And as for the rest, well, I do not wish to excuse myself or you, but I could name twenty households in which there have been worse things. Besides, I was wrong when I said that money opened a gap between people. On the contrary, it draws them nearer together, it secures forgiveness for every fault; so nobody would dare to blame you, there would only be jealous ones around you, dazzled by your good fortune."

Gerard rose, apparently rebelling once more. "Surely," said he, "*you* don't insist on my marrying your daughter?"

"Ah! no indeed! But I am sensible, and I tell you what I ought to tell you. You must think it all over."

"I have done so already. It is you that I have loved, and that I love still. What you say is impossible."

She smiled divinely, rose, and again embraced him. "How good and kind you are, my Gerard. Ah! if you only knew how I love you, how I shall always love you, whatever happens."

Then she again began to weep, and even he shed tears. Their good faith was absolute; tender of heart as they were, they sought to delay the painful wrenching and tried to hope for further happiness. But they were conscious that the marriage was virtually an accomplished fact. Only tears and words were left them, while life and destiny were marching on. And if their emotion was so acute it was probably because they felt that this was the last time they would meet as lovers. Still they strove to retain the illusion that they were not exchanging their last farewell, that their lips would some day meet again in a kiss of rapture.

Eve removed her arms from the young man's neck, and they both gazed round the room, at the sofa, the table, the four chairs, and the little hissing gas-stove. The moist, hot atmosphere was becoming quite oppressive.

"And so," said Gerard, "you won't drink a cup of tea?"

"No, it's so horrid here," she answered, while arranging her hair in front of the looking-glass.

At that parting moment the mournfulness of this place, where she had hoped to find such delightful memories, filled her with distress, which was turning to positive anguish, when

she suddenly heard an uproar of gruff voices and heavy feet. People were hastening along the passage and knocking at the doors. And, on darting to the window, she perceived a number of policemen surrounding the chalet. At this the wildest ideas assailed her. Had her daughter employed somebody to follow her? Did her husband wish to divorce her so as to marry Silviane? The scandal would be awful, and all her plans must crumble! She waited in dismay, white like a ghost; while Gerard, also paling and quivering, begged her to be calm. At last, when loud blows were dealt upon the door and a Commissary of Police enjoined them to open it, they were obliged to do so. Ah! what a moment, and what dismay and shame!

Meantime, for more than an hour, Pierre and Guillaume had been waiting for the rain to cease. Seated in a corner of the glazed verandah they talked in undertones of Barthes' painful affair, and ultimately decided to ask Theophile Morin to dine with them on the following evening, and inform his old friend that he must again go into exile.

"That is the best course," repeated Guillaume. "Morin is very fond of him and will know how to break the news. I have no doubt too that he will go with him as far as the frontier."

Pierre sadly looked at the falling rain. "Ah! what a choice," said he, "to be ever driven to a foreign land under penalty of being thrust into prison. Poor fellow! how awful it is to have never known a moment of happiness and gaiety in one's life, to have devoted one's whole existence to the idea of liberty, and to see

it scoffed at and expire with oneself!"

Then the priest paused, for he saw several policemen and keepers approach the cafe and prowl round it. Having lost scent of the man they were hunting, they had retraced their steps with the conviction no doubt that he had sought refuge in the chalet. And in order that he might not again escape them, they now took every precaution, exerted all their skill in surrounding the place before venturing on a minute search. Covert fear came upon Pierre and Guillaume when they noticed these proceedings. It seemed to them that it must all be connected with the chase which they had caught a glimpse of some time previously. Still, as they happened to be in the chalet they might be called upon to give their names and addresses. At this thought they glanced at one another, and almost made up their minds to go off under the rain. But they realised that anything like flight might only compromise them the more. So they waited; and all at once there came a diversion, for two fresh customers entered the establishment.

A victoria with its hood and apron raised had just drawn up outside the door. The first to alight from it was a young, well-dressed man with a bored expression of face. He was followed by a young woman who was laughing merrily, as if much amused by the persistence of the downpour. By way of jesting, indeed, she expressed her regret that she had not come to the Bois on her bicycle, whereupon her companion retorted that to drive about in a deluge appeared to him the height of idiocy.

"But we were bound to go somewhere, my dear fellow," she gaily answered. "Why didn't you take me to see the maskers?"

"The maskers, indeed! No, no, my dear. I prefer the Bois, and even the bottom of the lake, to them."

Then, as the couple entered the chalet, Pierre saw that the young woman who made merry over the rain was little Princess Rosemonde, while her companion, who regarded the mid-Lent festivities as horrible, and bicycling as an utterly unaesthetic amusement, was handsome Hyacinthe Duvillard. On the previous evening, while they were taking a cup of tea together on their return from the Chamber of Horrors, the young man had responded to the Princess's blandishments by declaring that the only form of attachment he believed in was a mystic union of intellects and souls. And as such a union could only be fittingly arrived at amidst the cold, chaste snow, they had decided that they would start for Christiania on the following Monday. Their chief regret was that by the time they reached the fiords the worst part of the northern winter would be over.

They sat down in the cafe and ordered some kummel, but there was none, said the waiter, so they had to content themselves with common anisette. Then Hyacinthe, who had been a schoolfellow of Guillaume's sons, recognised both him and Pierre; and leaning towards Rosemonde told her in a whisper who the elder brother was.

Thereupon, with sudden enthusiasm, she sprang to her feet: "Guillaume Froment, indeed! the great chemist!" And stepping

forward with arm outstretched, she continued: "Ah! monsieur, you must excuse me, but I really must shake hands with you. I have so much admiration for you! You have done such wonderful work in connection with explosives!" Then, noticing the chemist's astonishment, she again burst into a laugh: "I am the Princess de Harn, your brother Abbe Froment knows me, and I ought to have asked him to introduce me. However, we have mutual friends, you and I; for instance, Monsieur Janzen, a very distinguished man, as you are aware. He was to have taken me to see you, for I am a modest disciple of yours. Yes, I have given some attention to chemistry, oh! from pure zeal for truth and in the hope of helping good causes, not otherwise. So you will let me call on you – won't you? – directly I come back from Christiania, where I am going with my young friend here, just to acquire some experience of unknown emotions."

In this way she rattled on, never allowing the others an opportunity to say a word. And she mingled one thing with another; her cosmopolitan tastes, which had thrown her into Anarchism and the society of shady adventurers; her new passion for mysticism and symbolism; her belief that the ideal must triumph over base materialism; her taste for aesthetic verse; and her dream of some unimagined rapture when Hyacinthe should kiss her with his frigid lips in a realm of eternal snow.

All at once, however, she stopped short and again began to laugh. "Dear me!" she exclaimed. "What are those policemen looking for here? Have they come to arrest us? How amusing it

would be!"

Police Commissary Dupot and detective Mondesir had just made up their minds to search the cafe, as their men had hitherto failed to find Salvat in any of the outbuildings. They were convinced that he was here. Dupot, a thin, bald, short-sighted, spectacled little man, wore his usual expression of boredom and weariness; but in reality he was very wide awake and extremely courageous. He himself carried no weapons; but, as he anticipated a most violent resistance, such as might be expected from a trapped wolf, he advised Mondesir to have his revolver ready. From considerations of hierarchical respect, however, the detective, who with his snub nose and massive figure had much the appearance of a bull-dog, was obliged to let his superior enter first.

From behind his spectacles the Commissary of Police quickly scrutinized the four customers whom he found in the cafe: the lady, the priest, and the two other men. And passing them in a disdainful way, he at once made for the stairs, intending to inspect the upper floor. Thereupon the waiter, frightened by the sudden intrusion of the police, lost his head and stammered: "But there's a lady and gentleman upstairs in one of the private rooms."

Dupot quietly pushed him aside. "A lady and gentleman, that's not what we are looking for... Come, make haste, open all the doors, you mustn't leave a cupboard closed."

Then climbing to the upper floor, he and Mondesir explored

in turn every apartment and corner till they at last reached the room where Eve and Gerard were together. Here the waiter was unable to admit them, as the door was bolted inside. "Open the door!" he called through the keyhole, "it isn't you that they want!"

At last the bolt was drawn back, and Dupot, without even venturing to smile, allowed the trembling lady and gentleman to go downstairs, while Mondesir, entering the room, looked under every article of furniture, and even peeped into a little cupboard in order that no neglect might be imputed to him.

Meantime, in the public room which they had to cross after descending the stairs, Eve and Gerard experienced fresh emotion; for people whom they knew were there, brought together by an extraordinary freak of chance. Although Eve's face was hidden by a thick veil, her eyes met her son's glance and she felt sure that he recognised her. What a fatality! He had so long a tongue and told his sister everything! Then, as the Count, in despair at such a scandal, hurried off with the Baroness to conduct her through the pouring rain to her cab, they both distinctly heard little Princess Rosemonde exclaim: "Why, that was Count de Quinsac! Who was the lady, do you know?" And as Hyacinthe, greatly put out, returned no answer, she insisted, saying: "Come, you must surely know her. Who was she, eh?"

"Oh! nobody. Some woman or other," he ended by replying.

Pierre, who had understood the truth, turned his eyes away to hide his embarrassment. But all at once the scene changed. At the very moment when Commissary Dupot and detective Mondesir

came downstairs again, after vainly exploring the upper floor, a loud shout was raised outside, followed by a noise of running and scrambling. Then Gascogne, the Chief of the Detective Force, who had remained in the rear of the chalet, continuing the search through the outbuildings, made his appearance, pushing before him a bundle of rags and mud, which two policemen held on either side. And this bundle was the man, the hunted man, who had just been discovered in the coach-house, inside a staved cask, covered with hay.

Ah! what a whoop of victory there was after that run of two hours' duration, that frantic chase which had left them all breathless and footsore! It had been the most exciting, the most savage of all sports – a man hunt! They had caught the man at last, and they pushed him, they dragged him, they belaboured him with blows. And he, the man, what a sorry prey he looked! A wreck, wan and dirty from having spent the night in a hole full of leaves, still soaked to his waist from having rushed through a stream, drenched too by the rain, bespattered with mire, his coat and trousers in tatters, his cap a mere shred, his legs and hands bleeding from his terrible rush through thickets bristling with brambles and nettles. There no longer seemed anything human about his face; his hair stuck to his moist temples, his bloodshot eyes protruded from their sockets; fright, rage, and suffering were all blended on his wasted, contracted face. Still it was he, the man, the quarry, and they gave him another push, and he sank on one of the tables of the little cafe, still held and shaken, however,

by the rough hands of the policemen.

Then Guillaume shuddered as if thunderstruck, and caught hold of Pierre's hand. At this the priest, who was looking on, suddenly understood the truth and also quivered. Salvat! the man was Salvat! It was Salvat whom they had seen rushing through the wood like a wild boar forced by the hounds. And it was Salvat who was there, now conquered and simply a filthy bundle. Then once more there came to Pierre, amidst his anguish, a vision of the errand girl lying yonder at the entrance of the Duvillard mansion, the pretty fair-haired girl whom the bomb had ripped and killed!

Dupot and Mondesir made haste to participate in Gascogne's triumph. To tell the truth, however, the man had offered no resistance; it was like a lamb that he had let the police lay hold of him. And since he had been in the cafe, still roughly handled, he had simply cast a weary and mournful glance around him.

At last he spoke, and the first words uttered by his hoarse, gasping voice were these: "I am hungry."

He was sinking with hunger and weariness. This was the third day that he had eaten nothing.

"Give him some bread," said Commissary Dupot to the waiter. "He can eat it while a cab is being fetched."

A policeman went off to find a vehicle. The rain had suddenly ceased falling, the clear ring of a bicyclist's bell was heard in the distance, some carriages drove by, and under the pale sunrays life again came back to the Bois.

Meantime, Salvat had fallen gluttonously upon the hunk of bread which had been given him, and whilst he was devouring it with rapturous animal satisfaction, he perceived the four customers seated around. He seemed irritated by the sight of Hyacinthe and Rosemonde, whose faces expressed the mingled anxiety and delight they felt at thus witnessing the arrest of some bandit or other. But all at once his mournful, bloodshot eyes wavered, for to his intense surprise he had recognised Pierre and Guillaume. When he again looked at the latter it was with the submissive affection of a grateful dog, and as if he were once more promising that he would divulge nothing, whatever might happen.

At last he again spoke, as if addressing himself like a man of courage, both to Guillaume, from whom he had averted his eyes, and to others also, his comrades who were not there: "It was silly of me to run," said he. "I don't know why I did so. It's best that it should be all ended. I'm ready."

V

THE GAME OF POLITICS

ON reading the newspapers on the following morning Pierre and Guillaume were greatly surprised at not finding in them the sensational accounts of Salvat's arrest which they had expected. All they could discover was a brief paragraph in a column of general news, setting forth that some policemen on duty in the Bois de Boulogne had there arrested an Anarchist, who was believed to have played a part in certain recent occurrences. On the other hand, the papers gave a deal of space to the questions raised by Sagnier's fresh denunciations. There were innumerable articles on the African Railways scandal, and the great debate which might be expected at the Chamber of Deputies, should Mege, the Socialist member, really renew his interpellation, as he had announced his intention of doing.

As Guillaume's wrist was now fast healing, and nothing seemed to threaten him, he had already, on the previous evening, decided that he would return to Montmartre. The police had passed him by without apparently suspecting any responsibility on his part; and he was convinced that Salvat would keep silent. Pierre, however, begged him to wait a little longer, at any rate until the prisoner should have been interrogated by the investigating magistrate, by which time they would be able to judge the situation more clearly. Pierre, moreover, during his

long stay at the Home Department on the previous morning, had caught a glimpse of certain things and overheard certain words which made him suspect some dim connection between Salvat's crime and the parliamentary crisis; and he therefore desired a settlement of the latter before Guillaume returned to his wonted life.

"Just listen," he said to his brother. "I am going to Morin's to ask him to come and dine here this evening, for it is absolutely necessary that Barthes should be warned of the fresh blow which is falling on him. And then I think I shall go to the Chamber, as I want to know what takes place there. After that, since you desire it, I will let you go back to your own home."

It was not more than half-past one when Pierre reached the Palais-Bourbon. It had occurred to him that Fonseca would be able to secure him admittance to the meeting-hall, but in the vestibule he met General de Bozonnet, who happened to possess a couple of tickets. A friend of his, who was to have accompanied him, had, at the last moment, been unable to come. So widespread was the curiosity concerning the debate now near at hand, and so general were the predictions that it would prove a most exciting one, that the demand for tickets had been extremely keen during the last twenty-four hours. In fact Pierre would never have been able to obtain admittance if the General had not good-naturedly offered to take him in. As a matter of fact the old warrior was well pleased to have somebody to chat with. He explained that he had simply come there to kill time, just as he

might have killed it at a concert or a charity bazaar. However, like the ex-Legitimist and Bonapartist that he was, he had really come for the pleasure of feasting his eyes on the shameful spectacle of parliamentary ignominy.

When the General and Pierre had climbed the stairs, they were able to secure two front seats in one of the public galleries. Little Massot, who was already there, and who knew them both, placed one of them on his right and the other on his left. "I couldn't find a decent seat left in the press gallery," said he, "but I managed to get this place, from which I shall be able to see things properly. It will certainly be a big sitting. Just look at the number of people there are on every side!"

The narrow and badly arranged galleries were packed to overflowing. There were men of every age and a great many women too in the confused, serried mass of spectators, amidst which one only distinguished a multiplicity of pale white faces. The real scene, however, was down below in the meeting-hall, which was as yet empty, and with its rows of seats disposed in semi-circular fashion looked like the auditorium of a theatre. Under the cold light which fell from the glazed roofing appeared the solemn, shiny tribune, whence members address the Chamber, whilst behind it, on a higher level, and running right along the rear wall, was what is called the Bureau, with its various tables and seats, including the presidential armchair. The Bureau, like the tribune, was still unoccupied. The only persons one saw there were a couple of attendants who were laying out

new pens and filling inkstands.

"The women," said Massot with a laugh, after another glance at the galleries, "come here just as they might come to a menagerie, that is, in the secret hope of seeing wild beasts devour one another. But, by the way, did you read the article in the 'Voix du Peuple' this morning? What a wonderful fellow that Sagnier is. When nobody else can find any filth left, he manages to discover some. He apparently thinks it necessary to add something new every day, in order to send his sales up. And of course it all disturbs the public, and it's thanks to him that so many people have come here in the hope of witnessing some horrid scene."

Then he laughed again, as he asked Pierre if he had read an unsigned article in the "Globe," which in very dignified but perfidious language had called upon Barroux to give the full and frank explanations which the country had a right to demand in that matter of the African Railways. This paper had hitherto vigorously supported the President of the Council, but in the article in question the coldness which precedes a rupture was very apparent. Pierre replied that the article had much surprised him, for he had imagined that Fonseca and Barroux were linked together by identity of views and long-standing personal friendship.

Massot was still laughing. "Quite so," said he. "And you may be sure that the governor's heart bled when he wrote that article. It has been much noticed, and it will do the government a deal of harm. But the governor, you see, knows better than anybody

else what line he ought to follow to save both his own position and the paper's."

Then he related what extraordinary confusion and emotion reigned among the deputies in the lobbies through which he had strolled before coming upstairs to secure a seat. After an adjournment of a couple of days the Chamber found itself confronted by this terrible scandal, which was like one of those conflagrations which, at the moment when they are supposed to be dying out, suddenly flare up again and devour everything. The various figures given in Sagnier's list, the two hundred thousand francs paid to Barroux, the eighty thousand handed to Monferrand, the fifty thousand allotted to Fonsegue, the ten thousand pocketed by Duthil, and the three thousand secured by Chaigneux, with all the other amounts distributed among So-and-so and So-and-so, formed the general subject of conversation. And at the same time some most extraordinary stories were current; there was no end of tittle-tattle in which fact and falsehood were so inextricably mingled that everybody was at sea as to the real truth. Whilst many deputies turned pale and trembled as beneath a blast of terror, others passed by purple with excitement, bursting with delight, laughing with exultation at the thought of coming victory. For, in point of fact, beneath all the assumed indignation, all the calls for parliamentary cleanliness and morality, there simply lay a question of persons – the question of ascertaining whether the government would be overthrown, and in that event of whom the new administration

would consist. Barroux no doubt appeared to be in a bad way; but with things in such a muddle one was bound to allow a margin for the unexpected. From what was generally said it seemed certain that Mege would be extremely violent. Barroux would answer him, and the Minister's friends declared that he was determined to speak out in the most decisive manner. As for Monferrand he would probably address the Chamber after his colleague, but Vignon's intentions were somewhat doubtful, as, in spite of his delight, he made a pretence of remaining in the back, ground. He had been seen going from one to another of his partisans, advising them to keep calm, in order that they might retain the cold, keen *coup d'oeil* which in warfare generally decides the victory. Briefly, such was the plotting and intriguing that never had any witch's cauldron brimful of drugs and nameless abominations been set to boil on a more hellish fire than that of this parliamentary cook-shop.

"Heaven only knows what they will end by serving us," said little Massot by way of conclusion.

General de Bozonnet for his part anticipated nothing but disaster. If France had only possessed an army, said he, one might have swept away that handful of bribe-taking parliamentarians who preyed upon the country and rotted it. But there was no army left, there was merely an armed nation, a very different thing. And thereupon, like a man of a past age whom the present times distracted, he started on what had been his favourite subject of complaint ever since he had been retired

from the service.

"Here's an idea for an article if you want one," he said to Massot. "Although France may have a million soldiers she hasn't got an army. I'll give you some notes of mine, and you will be able to tell people the truth."

Warfare, he continued, ought to be purely and simply a caste occupation, with commanders designated by divine right, leading mercenaries or volunteers into action. By democratising warfare people had simply killed it; a circumstance which he deeply regretted, like a born soldier who regarded fighting as the only really noble occupation that life offered. For, as soon as it became every man's duty to fight, none was willing to do so; and thus compulsory military service – what was called "the nation in arms" – would, at a more or less distant date, certainly bring about the end of warfare. If France had not engaged in a European war since 1870 this was precisely due to the fact that everybody in France was ready to fight. But rulers hesitated to throw a whole nation against another nation, for the loss both in life and treasure would be tremendous. And so the thought that all Europe was transformed into a vast camp filled the General with anger and disgust. He sighed for the old times when men fought for the pleasure of the thing, just as they hunted; whereas nowadays people were convinced that they would exterminate one another at the very first engagement.

"But surely it wouldn't be an evil if war should disappear," Pierre gently remarked.

This somewhat angered the General. "Well, you'll have pretty nations if people no longer fight," he answered, and then trying to show a practical spirit, he added: "Never has the art of war cost more money than since war itself has become an impossibility. The present-day defensive peace is purely and simply ruining every country in Europe. One may be spared defeat, but utter bankruptcy is certainly at the end of it all. And in any case the profession of arms is done for. All faith in it is dying out, and it will soon be forsaken, just as men have begun to forsake the priesthood."

Thereupon he made a gesture of mingled grief and anger, almost cursing that parliament, that Republican legislature before him, as if he considered it responsible for the future extinction of warfare. But little Massot was wagging his head dubiously, for he regarded the subject as rather too serious a one for him to write upon. And, all at once, in order to turn the conversation into another channel, he exclaimed: "Ah! there's Monseigneur Martha in the diplomatic gallery beside the Spanish Ambassador. It's denied, you know, that he intends to come forward as a candidate in Morbihan. He's far too shrewd to wish to be a deputy. He already pulls the strings which set most of the Catholic deputies who have 'rallied' to the Republican Government in motion."

Pierre himself had just noticed Monseigneur Martha's smiling face. And, somehow or other, however modest might be the prelate's demeanour, it seemed to him that he really played an

important part in what was going on. He could hardly take his eyes from him. It was as if he expected that he would suddenly order men hither and thither, and direct the whole march of events.

"Ah!" said Massot again. "Here comes Mege. It won't be long now before the sitting begins."

The hall, down below, was gradually filling. Deputies entered and descended the narrow passages between the benches. Most of them remained standing and chatting in a more or less excited way; but some seated themselves and raised their grey, weary faces to the glazed roof. It was a cloudy afternoon, and rain was doubtless threatening, for the light became quite livid. If the hall was pompous it was also dismal with its heavy columns, its cold allegorical statues, and its stretches of bare marble and woodwork. The only brightness was that of the red velvet of the benches and the gallery hand-rests.

Every deputy of any consequence who entered was named by Massot to his companions. Mege, on being stopped by another member of the little Socialist group, began to fume and gesticulate. Then Vignon, detaching himself from a group of friends and putting on an air of smiling composure, descended the steps towards his seat. The occupants of the galleries, however, gave most attention to the accused members, those whose names figured in Sagnier's list. And these were interesting studies. Some showed themselves quite sprightly, as if they were entirely at their ease; but others had assumed a most grave and

indignant demeanour. Chaigneux staggered and hesitated as if beneath the weight of some frightful act of injustice; whereas Duthil looked perfectly serene save for an occasional twitch of his lips. The most admired, however, was Fonseca, who showed so candid a face, so open a glance, that his colleagues as well as the spectators might well have declared him innocent. Nobody indeed could have looked more like an honest man.

"Ah! there's none like the governor," muttered Massot with enthusiasm. "But be attentive, for here come the ministers. One mustn't miss Barroux' meeting with Fonseca, after this morning's article."

Chance willed it that as Barroux came along with his head erect, his face pale, and his whole demeanour aggressive, he was obliged to pass Fonseca in order to reach the ministerial bench. In doing so he did not speak to him, but he gazed at him fixedly like one who is conscious of defection, of a cowardly stab in the back on the part of a traitor. Fonseca seemed quite at ease, and went on shaking hands with one and another of his colleagues as if he were altogether unconscious of Barroux' glance. Nor did he even appear to see Monferrand, who walked by in the rear of the Prime Minister, wearing a placid good-natured air, as if he knew nothing of what was impending, but was simply coming to some ordinary humdrum sitting. However, when he reached his seat, he raised his eyes and smiled at Monseigneur Martha, who gently nodded to him. Then well pleased to think that things were going as he wished them to go, he began to rub his hands, as he often

did by way of expressing his satisfaction.

"Who is that grey-haired, mournful-looking gentleman on the ministerial bench?" Pierre inquired of Massot.

"Why, that's Taboureau, the Minister of Public Instruction, the excellent gentleman who is said to have no prestige. One's always hearing of him, and one never recognises him; he looks like an old, badly worn coin. Just like Barroux he can't feel very well pleased with the governor this afternoon, for to-day's 'Globe' contained an article pointing out his thorough incapacity in everything concerning the fine arts. It was an article in measured language, but all the more effective for that very reason. It would surprise me if Taboureau should recover from it."

Just then a low roll of drums announced the arrival of the President and other officials of the Chamber. A door opened, and a little procession passed by amidst an uproar of exclamations and hasty footsteps. Then, standing at his table, the President rang his bell and declared the sitting open. But few members remained silent, however, whilst one of the secretaries, a dark, lanky young man with a harsh voice, read the minutes of the previous sitting. When they had been adopted, various letters of apology for non-attendance were read, and a short, unimportant bill was passed without discussion. And then came the big affair, Mege's interpellation, and at once the whole Chamber was in a flutter, while the most passionate curiosity reigned in the galleries above. On the Government consenting to the interpellation, the Chamber decided that the debate should take

place at once. And thereupon complete silence fell, save that now and again a brief quiver sped by, in which one could detect the various feelings, passions and appetites swaying the assembly.

Mege began to speak with assumed moderation, carefully setting forth the various points at issue. Tall and thin, gnarled and twisted like a vine-stock, he rested his hands on the tribune as if to support his bent figure, and his speech was often interrupted by the little dry cough which came from the tuberculosis that was burning him. But his eyes sparkled with passion behind his glasses, and little by little his voice rose in piercing accents and he drew his lank figure erect and began to gesticulate vehemently. He reminded the Chamber that some two months previously, at the time of the first denunciations published by the "Voix du Peuple," he had asked leave to interpellate the Government respecting that deplorable affair of the African Railways; and he remarked, truly enough, that if the Chamber had not yielded to certain considerations which he did not wish to discuss, and had not adjourned his proposed inquiries, full light would long since have been thrown on the whole affair, in such wise that there would have been no revival, no increase of the scandal, and no possible pretext for that abominable campaign of denunciation which tortured and disgusted the country. However, it had at last been understood that silence could be maintained no longer. It was necessary that the two ministers who were so loudly accused of having abused their trusts, should prove their innocence, throw full light upon all they had done; apart from which the Chamber

itself could not possibly remain beneath the charge of wholesale venality.

Then he recounted the whole history of the affair, beginning with the grant of a concession for the African Lines to Baron Duvillard; and next passing to the proposals for the issue of lottery stock, which proposals, it was now said, had only been sanctioned by the Chamber after the most shameful bargaining and buying of votes. At this point Mege became extremely violent. Speaking of that mysterious individual Hunter, Baron Duvillard's recruiter and go-between, he declared that the police had allowed him to flee from France, much preferring to spend its time in shadowing Socialist deputies. Then, hammering the tribune with his fist, he summoned Barroux to give a categorical denial to the charges brought against him, and to make it absolutely clear that he had never received a single copper of the two hundred thousand francs specified in Hunter's list. Forthwith certain members shouted to Mege that he ought to read the whole list; but when he wished to do so others vociferated that it was abominable, that such a mendacious and slanderous document ought not to be accorded a place in the proceedings of the French legislature. Mege went on still in frantic fashion, figuratively casting Sagnier into the gutter, and protesting that there was nothing in common between himself and such a base insulter. But at the same time he demanded that justice and punishment should be meted out equally to one and all, and that if indeed there were any bribe-takers among his colleagues, they should be

sent that very night to the prison of Mazas.

Meantime the President, erect at his table, rang and rang his bell without managing to quell the uproar. He was like a pilot who finds the tempest too strong for him. Among all the men with purple faces and barking mouths who were gathered in front of him, the ushers alone maintained imperturbable gravity. At intervals between the bursts of shouting, Mege's voice could still be heard. By some sudden transition he had come to the question of a Collectivist organisation of society such as he dreamt of, and he contrasted it with the criminal capitalist society of the present day, which alone, said he, could produce such scandals. And yielding more and more to his apostolic fervour, declaring that there could be no salvation apart from Collectivism, he shouted that the day of triumph would soon dawn. He awaited it with a smile of confidence. In his opinion, indeed, he merely had to overthrow that ministry and perhaps another one, and then he himself would at last take the reins of power in hand, like a reformer who would know how to pacify the nation. As outside Socialists often declared, it was evident that the blood of a dictator flowed in that sectarian's veins. His feverish, stubborn rhetoric ended by exhausting his interrupters, who were compelled to listen to him. When he at last decided to leave the tribune, loud applause arose from a few benches on the left.

"Do you know," said Massot to the General, "I met Mege taking a walk with his three little children in the Jardin des Plantes the other day. He looked after them as carefully as an

old nurse. I believe he's a very worthy fellow at heart, and lives in a very modest way."

But a quiver had now sped through the assembly. Barroux had quitted his seat to ascend the tribune. He there drew himself erect, throwing his head back after his usual fashion. There was a haughty, majestic, slightly sorrowful expression on his handsome face, which would have been perfect had his nose only been a little larger. He began to express his sorrow and indignation in fine flowery language, which he punctuated with theatrical gestures. His eloquence was that of a tribune of the romantic school, and as one listened to him one could divine that in spite of all his pomposity he was really a worthy, tender-hearted and somewhat foolish man. That afternoon he was stirred by genuine emotion; his heart bled at the thought of his disastrous destiny, he felt that a whole world was crumbling with himself. Ah! what a cry of despair he stifled, the cry of the man who is buffeted and thrown aside by the course of events on the very day when he thinks that his civic devotion entitles him to triumph! To have given himself and all he possessed to the cause of the Republic, even in the dark days of the Second Empire; to have fought and struggled and suffered persecution for that Republic's sake; to have established that Republic amidst the battle of parties, after all the horrors of national and civil war; and then, when the Republic at last triumphed and became a living fact, secure from all attacks and intrigues, to suddenly feel like a survival of some other age, to hear new comers speak a new language, preach a

new ideal, and behold the collapse of all he had loved, all he had revered, all that had given him strength to fight and conquer! The mighty artisans of the early hours were no more; it had been meet that Gambetta should die. How bitter it all was for the last lingering old ones to find themselves among the men of the new, intelligent and shrewd generation, who gently smiled at them, deeming their romanticism quite out of fashion! All crumbled since the ideal of liberty collapsed, since liberty was no longer the one desideratum, the very basis of the Republic whose existence had been so dearly purchased after so long an effort!

Erect and dignified Barroux made his confession. The Republic to him was like the sacred ark of life; the very worst deeds became saintly if they were employed to save her from peril. And in all simplicity he, told his story, how he had found the great bulk of Baron Duvillard's money going to the opposition newspapers as pretended payment for puffery and advertising, whilst on the other hand the Republican organs received but beggarly, trumpery amounts. He had been Minister of the Interior at the time, and had therefore had charge of the press; so what would have been said of him if he had not endeavoured to reestablish some equilibrium in this distribution of funds in order that the adversaries of the institutions of the country might not acquire a great increase of strength by appropriating all the sinews of war? Hands had been stretched out towards him on all sides, a score of newspapers, the most faithful, the most meritorious, had claimed their legitimate share.

And he had ensured them that share by distributing among them the two hundred thousand francs set down in the list against his name. Not a centime of the money had gone into his own pocket, he would allow nobody to impugn his personal honesty, on that point his word must suffice. At that moment Barroux was really grand. All his emphatic pomposity disappeared; he showed himself, as he really was – an honest man, quivering, his heart bared, his conscience bleeding, in his bitter distress at having been among those who had laboured and at now being denied reward.

For, truth to tell, his words fell amidst icy silence. In his childish simplicity he had anticipated an outburst of enthusiasm; a Republican Chamber could but acclaim him for having saved the Republic; and now the frigidity of one and all quite froze him. He suddenly felt that he was all alone, done for, touched by the hand of death. Nevertheless, he continued speaking amidst that terrible silence with the courage of one who is committing suicide, and who, from his love of noble and eloquent attitudes, is determined to die standing. He ended with a final impressive gesture. However, as he came down from the tribune, the general coldness seemed to increase, not a single member applauded. With supreme clumsiness he had alluded to the secret scheming of Rome and the clergy, whose one object, in his opinion, was to recover the predominant position they had lost and restore monarchy in France at a more or less distant date.

"How silly of him! Ought a man ever to confess?" muttered

Massot. "He's done for, and the ministry too!"

Then, amidst the general frigidity, Monferrand boldly ascended the tribune stairs. The prevailing uneasiness was compounded of all the secret fear which sincerity always causes, of all the distress of the bribe-taking deputies who felt that they were rolling into an abyss, and also of the embarrassment which the others felt at thought of the more or less justifiable compromises of politics. Something like relief, therefore, came when Monferrand started with the most emphatic denials, protesting in the name of his outraged honour, and dealing blow after blow on the tribune with one hand, while with the other he smote his chest. Short and thick-set, with his face thrust forward, hiding his shrewdness beneath an expression of indignant frankness, he was for a moment really superb. He denied everything. He was not only ignorant of what was meant by that sum of eighty thousand francs set down against his name, but he defied the whole world to prove that he had even touched a single copper of that money. He boiled over with indignation to such a point that he did not simply deny bribe-taking on his own part, he denied it on behalf of the whole assembly, of all present and past French legislatures, as if, indeed, bribe-taking on the part of a representative of the people was altogether too monstrous an idea, a crime that surpassed possibility to such an extent that the mere notion of it was absurd. And thereupon applause rang out; the Chamber, delivered from its fears, thrilled by his words, acclaimed him.

From the little Socialist group, however, some jeers arose, and voices summoned Monferrand to explain himself on the subject of the African Railways, reminding him that he had been at the head of the Public Works Department at the time of the vote, and requiring of him that he should state what he now meant to do, as Minister of the Interior, in order to reassure the country. He juggled with this question, declaring that if there were any guilty parties they would be punished, for he did not require anybody to remind him of his duty. And then, all at once, with incomparable maestria, he had recourse to the diversion which he had been preparing since the previous day. His duty, said he, was a thing which he never forgot; he discharged it like a faithful soldier of the nation hour by hour, and with as much vigilance as prudence. He had been accused of employing the police on he knew not what base spying work in such wise as to allow the man Hunter to escape. Well, as for that much-slandered police force, he would tell the Chamber on what work he had really employed it the day before, and how zealously it had laboured for the cause of law and order. In the Bois de Boulogne, on the previous afternoon, it had arrested that terrible scoundrel, the perpetrator of the crime in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, that Anarchist mechanician Salvat, who for six weeks past had so cunningly contrived to elude capture. The scoundrel had made a full confession during the evening, and the law would now take its course with all despatch. Public morality was at last avenged, Paris might now emerge in safety from its long spell of terror, Anarchism would be struck

down, annihilated. And that was what he, Monferrand, had done as a Minister for the honour and safety of his country, whilst villains were vainly seeking to dishonour him by inscribing his name on a list of infamy, the outcome of the very basest political intrigues.

The Chamber listened agape and quivering. This story of Salvat's arrest, which none of the morning papers had reported; the present which Monferrand seemed to be making them of that terrible Anarchist whom many had already begun to regard as a myth; the whole *mise-en-scene* of the Minister's speech transported the deputies as if they were suddenly witnessing the finish of a long-interrupted drama. Stirred and flattered, they prolonged their applause, while Monferrand went on celebrating his act of energy, how he had saved society, how crime should be punished, and how he himself would ever prove that he had a strong arm and could answer for public order. He even won favour with the Conservatives and Clericals on the Right by separating himself from Barroux, addressing a few words of sympathy to those Catholics who had "rallied" to the Republic, and appealing for concord among men of different beliefs in order that they might fight the common enemy, that fierce, wild socialism which talked of overthrowing everything!

By the time Monferrand came down from the tribune, the trick was played, he had virtually saved himself. Both the Right and Left of the Chamber⁷ applauded, drowning the protests

⁷ Ever since the days of the Bourbon Restoration it has been the practice in the

of the few Socialists whose vociferations only added to the triumphal tumult. Members eagerly stretched out their hands to the Minister, who for a moment remained standing there and smiling. But there was some anxiety in that smile of his; his success was beginning to frighten him. Had he spoken too well, and saved the entire Cabinet instead of merely saving himself? That would mean the ruin of his plan. The Chamber ought not to vote under the effect of that speech which had thrilled it so powerfully. Thus Monferrand, though he still continued to smile, spent a few anxious moments in waiting to see if anybody would rise to answer him.

His success had been as great among the occupants of the galleries as among the deputies themselves. Several ladies had been seen applauding, and Monseigneur Martha had given unmistakable signs of the liveliest satisfaction. "Ah, General!" said Massot to Bozonnet in a sneering way. "Those are our fighting men of the present time. And he's a bold and strong one, is Monferrand. Of course it is all what people style 'saving one's bacon,' but none the less it's very clever work."

French Chambers for the more conservative members to seat themselves on the President's right, and for the Radical ones to place themselves on his left. The central seats of the semicircle in which the members' seats are arranged in tiers are usually occupied by men of moderate views. Generally speaking, such terms as Right Centre and Left Centre are applied to groups of Moderates inclining in the first place to Conservatism and in the latter to Radicalism. All this is of course known to readers acquainted with French institutions, but I give the explanation because others, after perusing French news in some daily paper, have often asked me what was meant by "a deputy of the Right," and so forth. – Trans.

Just then, however, Monferrand to his great satisfaction had seen Vignon rise from his seat in response to the urging of his friends. And thereupon all anxiety vanished from the Minister's smile, which became one of malicious placidity.

The very atmosphere of the Chamber seemed to change with Vignon in the tribune. He was slim, with a fair and carefully tended beard, blue eyes and all the suppleness of youth. He spoke, moreover, like a practical man, in simple, straightforward language, which made the emptiness of the other's declamatory style painfully conspicuous. His term of official service as a prefect in the provinces had endowed him with keen insight; and it was in an easy way that he propounded and unravelled the most intricate questions. Active and courageous, confident in his own star, too young and too shrewd to have compromised himself in anything so far, he was steadily marching towards the future. He had already drawn up a rather more advanced political programme than that of Barroux and Monferrand, so that when opportunity offered there might be good reasons for him to take their place. Moreover, he was quite capable of carrying out his programme by attempting some of the long-promised reforms for which the country was waiting. He had guessed that honesty, when it had prudence and shrewdness as its allies, must some day secure an innings. In a clear voice, and in a very quiet, deliberate way, he now said what it was right to say on the subject under discussion, the things that common sense dictated and that the Chamber itself secretly desired should be said. He was

certainly the first to rejoice over an arrest which would reassure the country; but he failed to understand what connection there could be between that arrest and the sad business that had been brought before the Chamber. The two affairs were quite distinct and different, and he begged his colleagues not to vote in the state of excitement in which he saw them. Full light must be thrown on the African Railways question, and this, one could not expect from the two incriminated ministers. However, he was opposed to any suggestion of a committee of inquiry. In his opinion the guilty parties, if such there were, ought to be brought immediately before a court of law. And, like Barroux, he wound up with a discreet allusion to the growing influence of the clergy, declaring that he was against all unworthy compromises, and was equally opposed to any state dictatorship and any revival of the ancient theocratic spirit.

Although there was but little applause when Vignon returned to his seat, it was evident that the Chamber was again master of its emotions. And the situation seemed so clear, and the overthrow of the ministry so certain, that Mege, who had meant to reply to the others, wisely abstained from doing so. Meantime people noticed the placid demeanour of Monferrand, who had listened to Vignon with the utmost complacency, as if he were rendering homage to an adversary's talent; whereas Barroux, ever since the cold silence which had greeted his speech, had remained motionless in his seat, bowed down and pale as a corpse.

"Well, it's all over," resumed Massot, amidst the hubbub which arose as the deputies prepared to vote; "the ministry's done for. Little Vignon will go a long way, you know. People say that he dreams of the Elysee. At all events everything points to him as our next prime minister."

Then, as the journalist rose, intending to go off, the General detained him: "Wait a moment, Monsieur Massot," said he. "How disgusting all that parliamentary cooking is! You ought to point it out in an article, and show people how the country is gradually being weakened and rotted to the marrow by all such useless and degrading discussions. Why, a great battle resulting in the loss of 50,000 men would exhaust us less than ten years of this abominable parliamentary system. You must call on me some morning. I will show you a scheme of military reform, in which I point out the necessity of returning to the limited professional armies which we used to have, for this present-day national army, as folks call it, which is a semi-civilian affair and at best a mere herd of men, is like a dead weight on us, and is bound to pull us down!"

Pierre, for his part, had not spoken a word since the beginning of the debate. He had listened to everything, at first influenced by the thought of his brother's interests, and afterwards mastered by the feverishness which gradually took possession of everybody present. He had become convinced that there was nothing more for Guillaume to fear; but how curiously did one event fit into another, and how loudly had Salvat's arrest re-echoed in the

Chamber! Looking down into the seething hall below him, he had detected all the clash of rival passions and interests. After watching the great struggle between Barroux, Monferrand and Vignon, he had gazed upon the childish delight of that terrible Socialist Mege, who was so pleased at having been able to stir up the depths of those troubled waters, in which he always unwittingly angled for the benefit of others. Then, too, Pierre had become interested in Fonsegue, who, knowing what had been arranged between Monferrand, Duvillard and himself, evinced perfect calmness and strove to reassure Duthil and Chaigneux, who, on their side, were quite dismayed by the ministry's impending fall. Yet, Pierre's eyes always came back to Monseigneur Martha. He had watched his serene smiling face throughout the sitting, striving to detect his impressions of the various incidents that had occurred, as if in his opinion that dramatic parliamentary comedy had only been played as a step towards the more or less distant triumph for which the prelate laboured. And now, while awaiting the result of the vote, as Pierre turned towards Massot and the General, he found that they were talking of nothing but recruiting and tactics and the necessity of a bath of blood for the whole of Europe. Ah! poor mankind, ever fighting and ever devouring one another in parliaments as well as on battle-fields, when, thought Pierre, would it decide to disarm once and for all, and live at peace according to the laws of justice and reason!

Then he again looked down into the hall, where the greatest

confusion was prevailing among the deputies with regard to the coming vote. There was quite a rainfall of suggested "resolutions," from a very violent one proposed by Mege, to another, which was merely severe, emanating from Vignon. The ministry, however, would only accept the "Order of the day pure and simple," a mere decision, that is, to pass to the next business, as if Mege's interpellation had been unworthy of attention. And presently the Government was defeated, Vignon's resolution being adopted by a majority of twenty-five. Some portion of the Left had evidently joined hands with the Right and the Socialist group. A prolonged hubbub followed this result.

"Well, so we are to have a Vignon Cabinet," said Massot, as he went off with Pierre and the General. "All the same, though, Monferrand has saved himself, and if I were in Vignon's place I should distrust him."

That evening there was a very touching farewell scene at the little house at Neuilly. When Pierre returned thither from the Chamber, saddened but reassured with regard to the future, Guillaume at once made up his mind to go home on the morrow. And as Nicholas Barthes was compelled to leave, the little dwelling seemed on the point of relapsing into dreary quietude once more.

Theophile Morin, whom Pierre had informed of the painful alternative in which Barthes was placed, duly came to dinner; but he did not have time to speak to the old man before they all sat down to table at seven o'clock. As usual Barthes had spent his day

in marching, like a caged lion, up and down the room in which he had accepted shelter after the fashion of a big fearless child, who never worried with regard either to his present circumstances or the troubles which the future might have in store for him. His life had ever been one of unlimited hope, which reality had ever shattered. Although all that he had loved, all that he had hoped to secure by fifty years of imprisonment or exile, – liberty, equality and a real brotherly republic, – had hitherto failed to come, such as he had dreamt of them, he nevertheless retained the candid faith of his youth, and was ever confident in the near future. He would smile indulgently when new comers, men of violent ideas, derided him and called him a poor old fellow. For his part, he could make neither head nor tail of the many new sects. He simply felt indignant with their lack of human feeling, and stubbornly adhered to his own idea of basing the world's regeneration on the simple proposition that men were naturally good and ought to be free and brotherly.

That evening at dinner, feeling that he was with friends who cared for him, Barthes proved extremely gay, and showed all his ingenuousness in talking of his ideal, which would soon be realised, said he, in spite of everything. He could tell a story well whenever he cared to chat, and on that occasion he related some delightful anecdotes about the prisons through which he had passed. He knew all the dungeons, Ste. Pelagie and Mont St. Michel, Belle-Ile-en-Mer and Clairvaux, to say nothing of temporary gaols and the evil-smelling hulks on board which

political prisoners are often confined. And he still laughed at certain recollections, and related how in the direst circumstances he had always been able to seek refuge in his conscience. The others listened to him quite charmed by his conversation, but full of anguish at the thought that this perpetual prisoner or exile must again rise and take his staff to sally forth, driven from his native land once more.

Pierre did not speak out until they were partaking of dessert. Then he related how the Minister had written to him, and how in a brief interview he had stated that Barthes must cross the frontier within forty-eight hours if he did not wish to be arrested. Thereupon the old man gravely rose, with his white fleece, his eagle beak and his bright eyes still sparkling with the fire of youth. And he wished to go off at once. "What!" said he, "you have known all this since yesterday, and have still kept me here at the risk of my compromising you even more than I had done already! You must forgive me, I did not think of the worry I might cause you, I thought that everything would be satisfactorily arranged. I must thank you both – yourself and Guillaume – for the few days of quietude that you have procured to an old vagabond and madman like myself."

Then, as they tried to prevail on him to remain until the following morning, he would not listen to them. There would be a train for Brussels about midnight, and he had ample time to take it. He refused to let Morin accompany him. No, no, said he, Morin was not a rich man, and moreover he had work to attend

to. Why should he take him away from his duties, when it was so easy, so simple, for him to go off alone? He was going back into exile as into misery and grief which he had long known, like some Wandering Jew of Liberty, ever driven onward through the world.

When he took leave of the others at ten o'clock, in the little sleepy street just outside the house, tears suddenly dimmed his eyes. "Ah! I'm no longer a young man," he said; "it's all over this time. I shall never come back again. My bones will rest in some corner over yonder." And yet, after he had affectionately embraced Pierre and Guillaume, he drew himself up like one who remained unconquered, and he raised a supreme cry of hope. "But after all, who knows? Triumph may perhaps come to-morrow. The future belongs to those who prepare it and wait for it!"

Then he walked away, and long after he had disappeared his firm, sonorous footsteps could be heard re-echoing in the quiet night.