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THE THREE CITIES

PARIS

BY

EMILE ZOLA

TRANSLATED BY ERNEST A. VIZETELLY

BOOK IV

I

PIERRE AND MARIE

ON the mild March morning when Pierre left his little house at Neuilly to accompany Guillaume to Montmartre, he was oppressed by the thought that on returning home he would once more find himself alone with nothing to prevent him from relapsing into negation and despair. The idea of this had kept him from sleeping, and he still found it difficult to hide his distress and force a smile.

The sky was so clear and the atmosphere so mild that the brothers had resolved to go to Montmartre on foot by way of the outer boulevards. Nine o'clock was striking when they set out. Guillaume for his part was very gay at the thought of the surprise he would give his family. It was as if he were suddenly coming back from a long journey. He had not warned them of his intentions; he had merely written to them now and again to tell them that he was recovering, and they certainly had no idea that his return was so near at hand.

When Guillaume and Pierre had climbed the sunlit slopes of Montmartre, and crossed the quiet countrified Place du Tertre, the former, by means of a latch-key, quietly opened the door of his house, which seemed to be asleep, so profound was the stillness both around and within it. Pierre found it the same as on the occasion of his previous and only visit. First came the narrow passage which ran through the ground-floor, affording a view of all Paris at the further end. Next there was the garden, reduced to a couple of plum-trees and a clump of lilac-bushes, the leaves of which had now sprouted. And this time the priest perceived three bicycles leaning against the trees. Beyond them stood the large work-shop, so gay, and yet so peaceful, with its huge window overlooking a sea of roofs.

Guillaume had reached the work-shop without meeting anybody. With an

expression of much amusement he raised a finger to his lips. "Attention, Pierre," he whispered; "you'll just see!"

Then having noiselessly opened the door, they remained for a moment on the threshold.

The three sons alone were there. Near his forge stood Thomas working a boring machine, with which he was making some holes in a small brass plate. Then Francois and Antoine were seated on either side of their large table, the former reading, and the latter finishing a block. The bright sunshine streamed in, playing over all the seeming disorder of the room, where so many callings and so many implements found place. A large bunch of wallflowers bloomed on the women's work-table near the window; and absorbed as the young men were in their respective tasks the only sound was the slight hissing of the boring machine each time that the eldest of them drilled another hole.

However, although Guillaume did not stir, there suddenly came a quiver, an awakening. His sons seemed to guess his presence, for they raised their heads, each at the same moment. From each, too, came the same cry, and a common impulse brought them first to their feet and then to his arms.

"Father!"

Guillaume embraced them, feeling very happy. And that was all; there was no long spell of emotion, no useless talk. It was as if he had merely gone out the day before and, delayed by business, had now come back. Still, he looked at them with his kindly smile, and they likewise smiled with their eyes fixed on his. Those glances proclaimed everything, the closest affection and complete self-bestowal for ever.

"Come in, Pierre," called Guillaume; "shake hands with these young men."

The priest had remained near the door, overcome by a singular feeling of discomfort. When his nephews had vigorously shaken hands with him, he sat down near the window apart from them, as if he felt out of his element there.

"Well, youngsters," said Guillaume, "where's Mere-Grand, and where's Marie?"

Their grandmother was upstairs in her room, they said; and Marie had taken it into her head to go marketing. This, by the way, was one of her delights. She asserted that she was the only one who knew how to buy new-laid eggs and butter of a nutty odour. Moreover, she sometimes brought some dainty or some flowers home, in her delight at proving herself to be so good a housewife.

"And so things are going on well?" resumed Guillaume. "You are all satisfied, your work is progressing, eh?"

He addressed brief questions to each of them, like one who, on his return

home, at once reverts to his usual habits. Thomas, with his rough face beaming, explained in a couple of sentences that he was now sure of perfecting his little motor; Francois, who was still preparing for his examination, jestingly declared that he yet had to lodge a heap of learning in his brain; and then Antoine produced the block which he was finishing, and which depicted his little friend Lise, Jahan's sister, reading in her garden amidst the sunshine. It was like a florescence of that dear belated creature whose mind had been awakened by his affection.

However, the three brothers speedily went back to their places, reverting to their work with a natural impulse, for discipline had made them regard work as life itself. Then Guillaume, who had glanced at what each was doing, exclaimed: "Ah! youngsters, I schemed and prepared a lot of things myself while I was laid up. I even made a good many notes. We walked here from Neuilly, but my papers and the clothes which Mere-Grand sent me will come in a cab by-and-by. . . . Ah! how pleased I am to find everything in order here, and to be able to take up my task with you again! Ah! I shall polish off some work now, and no mistake!"

He had already gone to his own corner, the space reserved for him between the window and the forge. He there had a chemical furnace, several glass cases and shelves crowded with appliances, and a long table, one end of which he used for writing purposes. And he once more took possession of that little world. After glancing around with delight at seeing everything in its place, he began to handle one object and another, eager to be at work like his sons.

All at once, however, Mere-Grand appeared, calm, grave and erect in her black gown, at the top of the little staircase which conducted to the bedrooms. "So it's you, Guillaume?" said she. "Will you come up for a moment?"

He immediately did so, understanding that she wished to speak to him alone and tranquillise him. It was a question of the great secret between them, that one thing of which his sons knew nothing, and which, after Salvat's crime, had brought him much anguish, through his fear that it might be divulged. When he reached Mere-Grand's room she at once took him to the hiding-place near her bed, and showed him the cartridges of the new explosive, and the plans of the terrible engine of warfare which he had invented. He found them all as he had left them. Before anyone could have reached them, she would have blown up the whole place at the risk of perishing herself in the explosion. With her wonted air of quiet heroism, she handed Guillaume the key which he had sent her by Pierre.

"You were not anxious, I hope?" she said.

He pressed her hands with a commingling of affection and respect. "My only anxiety," he replied, "was that the police might come here and treat you roughly. . . . You are the guardian of our secret, and it would be for you to finish my work should I disappear."

While Guillaume and Madame Leroi were thus engaged upstairs, Pierre, still seated near the window below, felt his discomfort increasing. The

inmates of the house certainly regarded him with no other feeling than one of affectionate sympathy; and so how came it that he considered them hostile? The truth was that he asked himself what would become of him among those workers, who were upheld by a faith of their own, whereas he believed in nothing, and did not work. The sight of those young men, so gaily and zealously toiling, ended by quite irritating him; and the arrival of Marie brought his distress to a climax.

Joyous and full of life, she came in without seeing him, a basket on her arm. And she seemed to bring all the sunlight of the spring morning with her, so bright was the sparkle of her youth. The whole of her pink face, her delicate nose, her broad intelligent brow, her thick, kindly lips, beamed beneath the heavy coils of her black hair. And her brown eyes ever laughed with the joyousness which comes from health and strength.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "I have brought such a lot of things, youngsters. Just come and see them; I wouldn't unpack the basket in the kitchen."

It became absolutely necessary for the brothers to draw round the basket which she had laid upon the table. "First there's the butter!" said she; "just smell if it hasn't a nice scent of nuts! It's churned especially for me, you know. Then here are the eggs. They were laid only yesterday, I'll answer for it. And, in fact, that one there is this morning's. And look at the cutlets! They're wonderful, aren't they? The butcher cuts them carefully when he sees me. And then here's a cream cheese, real cream, you know, it will be delicious! Ah! and here's the surprise, something dainty, some radishes, some pretty little pink radishes. Just fancy! radishes in March, what a luxury!"

She triumphed like the good little housewife she was, one who had followed a whole course of cookery and home duties at the Lycee Fenelon. The brothers, as merry as she herself, were obliged to compliment her.

All at once, however, she caught sight of Pierre. "What! you are there, Monsieur l'Abbe?" she exclaimed; "I beg your pardon, but I didn't see you. How is Guillaume? Have you brought us some news of him?"

"But father's come home," said Thomas; "he's upstairs with Mere-Grand."

Quite thunderstruck, she hastily placed her purchases in the basket. "Guillaume's come back, Guillaume's come back!" said she, "and you don't tell me of it, you let me unpack everything! Well, it's nice of me, I must say, to go on praising my butter and eggs when Guillaume's come back."

Guillaume, as it happened, was just coming down with Madame Leroi. Marie gaily hastened to him and offered him her cheeks, on which he planted two resounding kisses. Then she, resting her hands on his shoulders, gave him a long look, while saying in a somewhat tremulous voice: "I am pleased, very pleased to see you, Guillaume. I may confess it now, I thought I had lost you, I was very anxious and very unhappy."

Although she was still smiling, tears had gathered in her eyes, and he,

likewise moved, again kissed her, murmuring: "Dear Marie! How happy it makes me to find you as beautiful and as affectionate as ever."

Pierre, who was looking at them, deemed them cold. He had doubtless expected more tears, and a more passionate embrace on the part of an affianced pair, whom so grievous an accident had separated almost on the eve of their wedding. Moreover, his feelings were hurt by the disproportion of their respective ages. No doubt his brother still seemed to him very sturdy and young, and his feeling of repulsion must have come from that young woman whom, most decidedly, he did not like. Ever since her arrival he had experienced increasing discomfort, a keener and keener desire to go off and never return.

So acute became his suffering at feeling like a stranger in his brother's home, that he at last rose and sought to take his leave, under the pretext that he had some urgent matters to attend to in town.

"What! you won't stay to /dejeuner/ with us!" exclaimed Guillaume in perfect stupefaction. "Why, it was agreed! You surely won't distress me like that! This house is your own, remember!"

Then, as with genuine affection they all protested and pressed him to stay, he was obliged to do so. However, he soon relapsed into silence and embarrassment, seated on the same chair as before, and listening moodily to those people who, although they were his relatives, seemed to be far removed from him.

As it was barely eleven o'clock they resumed work, but every now and again there was some merry talk. On one of the servants coming for the provisions, Marie told the girl to call her as soon as it should be time to boil the eggs, for she prided herself on boiling them to a nicety, in such wise as to leave the whites like creamy milk. This gave an opportunity for a few jests from Francois, who occasionally teased her about all the fine things she had learnt at the Lycee Fenelon, where her father had placed her when she was twelve years old. However, she was not afraid of him, but gave him tit for tat by chaffing him about all the hours which he lost at the Ecole Normale over a mass of pedagogic trash.

"Ah! you big children!" she exclaimed, while still working at her embroidery. "You are all very intelligent, and you all claim to have broad minds, and yet--confess it now--it worries you a little that a girl like me should have studied at college in the same way as yourselves. It's a sexual quarrel, a question of rivalry and competition, isn't it?"

They protested the contrary, declaring that they were in favour of girls receiving as complete an education as possible. She was well aware of this; however, she liked to tease them in return for the manner in which they themselves plagued her.

"But do you know," said she, "you are a great deal behind the times? I am well aware of the reproaches which are levelled at girls' colleges by so-called right-minded people. To begin, there is no religious element whatever in the education one receives there, and this alarms many

families which consider religious education to be absolutely necessary for girls, if only as a moral weapon of defence. Then, too, the education at our Lycees is being democratised--girls of all positions come to them. Thanks to the scholarships which are so liberally offered, the daughter of the lady who rents a first floor flat often finds the daughter of her door-keeper among her school-fellows, and some think this objectionable. It is said also that the pupils free themselves too much from home influence, and that too much opportunity is left for personal initiative. As a matter of fact the extensiveness of the many courses of study, all the learning that is required of pupils at the examinations, certainly does tend to their emancipation, to the coming of the future woman and future society, which you young men are all longing for, are you not?"

"Of course we are!" exclaimed Francois; "we all agree on that point."

She waved her hand in a pretty way, and then quietly continued: "I'm jesting. My views are simple enough, as you well know, and I don't ask for nearly as much as you do. As for woman's claims and rights, well, the question is clear enough; woman is man's equal so far as nature allows it. And the only point is to agree and love one another. At the same time I'm well pleased to know what I do--oh! not from any spirit of pedantry but simply because I think it has all done me good, and given me some moral as well as physical health."

It delighted her to recall the days she had spent at the Lycee Fenelon, which of the five State colleges for girls opened in Paris was the only one counting a large number of pupils. Most of these were the daughters of officials or professors, who purposed entering the teaching profession. In this case, they had to win their last diploma at the Ecole Normale of Sevres, after leaving the Lycee. Marie, for her part, though her studies had been brilliant, had felt no taste whatever for the calling of teacher. Moreover, when Guillaume had taken charge of her after her father's death, he had refused to let her run about giving lessons. To provide herself with a little money, for she would accept none as a gift, she worked at embroidery, an art in which she was most accomplished.

While she was talking to the young men Guillaume had listened to her without interfering. If he had fallen in love with her it was largely on account of her frankness and uprightness, the even balance of her nature, which gave her so forcible a charm. She knew all; but if she lacked the poetry of the shrinking, lamb-like girl who has been brought up in ignorance, she had gained absolute rectitude of heart and mind, exempt from all hypocrisy, all secret perversity such as is stimulated by what may seem mysterious in life. And whatever she might know, she had retained such child-like purity that in spite of her six-and-twenty summers all the blood in her veins would occasionally rush to her cheeks in fiery blushes, which drove her to despair.

"My dear Marie," Guillaume now exclaimed, "you know very well that the youngsters were simply joking. You are in the right, of course. . . . And your boiled eggs cannot be matched in the whole world."

He said this in so soft and affectionate a tone that the young woman flushed purple. Then, becoming conscious of it, she coloured yet more deeply, and as the three young men glanced at her maliciously she grew angry with herself. "Isn't it ridiculous, Monsieur l'Abbe," she said, turning towards Pierre, "for an old maid like myself to blush in that fashion? People might think that I had committed a crime. It's simply to make me blush, you know, that those children tease me. I do all I can to prevent it, but it's stronger than my will."

At this Mere-Grand raised her eyes from the shirt she was mending, and remarked: "Oh! it's natural enough, my dear. It is your heart rising to your cheeks in order that we may see it."

The /dejeuner/ hour was now at hand; and they decided to lay the table in the work-shop, as was occasionally done when they had a guest. The simple, cordial meal proved very enjoyable in the bright sunlight. Marie's boiled eggs, which she herself brought from the kitchen covered with a napkin, were found delicious. Due honour was also done to the butter and the radishes. The only dessert that followed the cutlets was the cream cheese, but it was a cheese such as nobody else had ever partaken of. And, meantime, while they ate and chatted all Paris lay below them, stretching away to the horizon with its mighty rumbling.

Pierre had made an effort to become cheerful, but he soon relapsed into silence. Guillaume, however, was very talkative. Having noticed the three bicycles in the garden, he inquired of Marie how far she had gone that morning. She answered that Francois and Antoine had accompanied her in the direction of Orgemont. The worry of their excursions was that each time they returned to Montmartre they had to push their machines up the height. From the general point of view, however, the young woman was delighted with bicycling, which had many virtues, said she. Then, seeing Pierre glance at her in amazement, she promised that she would some day explain her opinions on the subject to him. After this bicycling became the one topic of conversation until the end of the meal. Thomas gave an account of the latest improvements introduced into Grandidier's machines; and the others talked of the excursions they had made or meant to make, with all the exuberant delight of school children eager for the open air.

In the midst of the chatter, Mere-Grand, who presided at table with the serene dignity of a queen-mother, leant towards Guillaume, who sat next to her, and spoke to him in an undertone. Pierre understood that she was referring to his marriage, which was to have taken place in April, but must now necessarily be deferred. This sensible marriage, which seemed likely to ensure the happiness of the entire household, was largely the work of Mere-Grand and the three young men, for Guillaume would never have yielded to his heart if she whom he proposed to make his wife had not already been a well-loved member of the family. At the present time the last week in June seemed, for all sorts of reasons, to be a favourable date for the wedding.

Marie, who heard the suggestion, turned gaily towards Mere-Grand.

"The end of June will suit very well, will it not, my dear?" said the

latter.

Pierre expected to see a deep flush rise to the young woman's cheeks, but she remained very calm. She felt deep affection, blended with the most tender gratitude, for Guillaume, and was convinced that in marrying him she would be acting wisely and well both for herself and the others.

"Certainly, the end of June," she repeated, "that will suit very well indeed."

Then the sons, who likewise had heard the proposal, nodded their heads by way of assenting also.

When they rose from table Pierre was absolutely determined to go off. The cordial and simple meal, the sight of that family, which had been rendered so happy by Guillaume's return, and of that young woman who smiled so placidly at life, had brought him keen suffering, though why he could not tell. However, it all irritated him beyond endurance; and he therefore again pretended that he had a number of things to see to in Paris. He shook hands in turn with the young men, Mere-Grand and Marie; both of the women evincing great friendliness but also some surprise at his haste to leave the house. Guillaume, who seemed saddened and anxious, sought to detain him, and failing in this endeavour followed him into the little garden, where he stopped him in order to have an explanation.

"Come," said he, "what is the matter with you, Pierre? Why are you running off like this?"

"Oh! there's nothing the matter I assure you; but I have to attend to a few urgent affairs."

"Oh, Pierre, pray put all pretence aside. Nobody here has displeased you or hurt your feelings, I hope. They also will soon love you as I do."

"I have no doubt of it, and I complain of nobody excepting perhaps myself."

Guillaume's sorrow was increasing. "Ah! brother, little brother," he resumed, "you distress me, for I can detect that you are hiding something from me. Remember that new ties have linked us together and that we love one another as in the old days when you were in your cradle and I used to come to play with you. I know you well, remember. I know all your tortures, since you have confessed them to me; and I won't have you suffer, I want to cure you, I do!"

Pierre's heart was full, and as he heard those words he could not restrain his tears. "Oh! you must leave me to my sufferings," he responded. "They are incurable. You can do nothing for me, I am beyond the pale of nature, I am a monster."

"What do you say! Can you not return within nature's pale even if you /have/ gone beyond it? One thing that I will not allow is that you should go and shut yourself up in that solitary little house of yours, where you

madden yourself by brooding over the fall of your faith. Come and spend your time with us, so that we may again give you some taste for life."

Ah! the empty little house which awaited him! Pierre shivered at the thought of it, at the idea that he would now find himself all alone there, bereft of the brother with whom he had lately spent so many happy days. Into what solitude and torment must he not now relapse after that companionship to which he had become accustomed? However, the very thought of the latter increased his grief, and confession suddenly gushed from his lips: "To spend my time here, live with you, oh! no, that is an impossibility. Why do you compel me to speak out, and tell you things that I am ashamed of and do not even understand. Ever since this morning you must have seen that I have been suffering here. No doubt it is because you and your people work, whereas I do nothing, because you love one another and believe in your efforts, whereas I no longer know how to love or believe. I feel out of my element. I'm embarrassed here, and I embarrass you. In fact you all irritate me, and I might end by hating you. There remains nothing healthy in me, all natural feelings have been spoilt and destroyed, and only envy and hatred could sprout up from such ruins. So let me go back to my accursed hole, where death will some day come for me. Farewell, brother!"

But Guillaume, full of affection and compassion, caught hold of his arms and detained him. "You shall not go, I will not allow you to go, without a positive promise that you will come back. I don't wish to lose you again, especially now that I know all you are worth and how dreadfully you suffer. I will save you, if need be, in spite of yourself. I will cure you of your torturing doubts, oh! without catechising you, without imposing any particular faith on you, but simply by allowing life to do its work, for life alone can give you back health and hope. So I beg you, brother, in the name of our affection, come back here, come as often as you can to spend a day with us. You will then see that when folks have allotted themselves a task and work together in unison, they escape excessive unhappiness. A task of any kind--yes, that is what is wanted, together with some great passion and frank acceptance of life, so that it may be lived as it should be and loved."

"But what would be the use of my living here?" Pierre muttered bitterly. "I've no task left me, and I no longer know how to love."

"Well, I will give you a task, and as for love, that will soon be awakened by the breath of life. Come, brother, consent, consent!"

Then, seeing that Pierre still remained gloomy and sorrowful, and persisted in his determination to go away and bury himself, Guillaume added, "Ah! I don't say that the things of this world are such as one might wish them to be. I don't say that only joy and truth and justice exist. For instance, the affair of that unhappy fellow Salvat fills me with anger and revolt. Guilty he is, of course, and yet how many excuses he had, and how I shall pity him if the crimes of all of us are laid at his door, if the various political gangs bandy him from one to another, and use him as a weapon in their sordid fight for power. The thought of it all so exasperates me that at times I am as unreasonable as yourself."

But now, brother, just to please me, promise that you will come and spend the day after to-morrow with us."

Then, as Pierre still kept silent, Guillaume went on: "I will have it so. It would grieve me too much to think that you were suffering from martyrdom in your solitary nook. I want to cure and save you."

Tears again rose to Pierre's eyes, and in a tone of infinite distress he answered: "Don't compel me to promise. . . . All I can say is that I will try to conquer myself."

The week he then spent in his little, dark, empty home proved a terrible one. Shutting himself up he brooded over his despair at having lost the companionship of that elder brother whom he once more loved with his whole soul. He had never before been so keenly conscious of his solitude; and he was a score of times on the point of hastening to Montmartre, for he vaguely felt that affection, truth and life were there. But on each occasion he was held back by a return of the discomfort which he had already experienced, discomfort compounded of shame and fear. Priest that he was, cut off from love and the avocations of other men, he would surely find nothing but hurt and suffering among creatures who were all nature, freedom and health. While he pondered thus, however, there rose before him the shades of his father and mother, those sad spirits that seemed to wander through the deserted rooms lamenting and entreating him to reconcile them in himself, as soon as he should find peace. What was he to do,--deny their prayer, and remain weeping with them, or go yonder in search of the cure which might at last lull them to sleep and bring them happiness in death by the force of his own happiness in life? At last a morning came when it seemed to him that his father enjoined him with a smile to betake himself yonder, while his mother consented with a glance of her big soft eyes, in which her sorrow at having made so bad a priest of him yielded to her desire to restore him to the life of our common humanity.

Pierre did not argue with himself that day: he took a cab and gave Guillaume's address to the driver for fear lest he should be overcome on the way and wish to turn back. And when he again found himself, as in a dream, in the large work-shop, where Guillaume and the young men welcomed him in a delicately affectionate way, he witnessed an unexpected scene which both impressed and relieved him.

Marie, who had scarcely nodded to him as he entered, sat there with a pale and frowning face. And Mere-Grand, who was also grave, said, after glancing at her: "You must excuse her, Monsieur l'Abbe; but she isn't reasonable. She is in a temper with all five of us."

Guillaume began to laugh. "Ah! she's so stubborn!" he exclaimed. "You can have no idea, Pierre, of what goes on in that little head of hers when anybody says or does anything contrary to her ideas of justice. Such absolute and lofty ideas they are, that they can descend to no compromise. For instance, we were talking of that recent affair of a father who was found guilty on his son's evidence; and she maintained that the son had only done what was right in giving evidence against his

father, and that one ought invariably to tell the truth, no matter what might happen. What a terrible public prosecutor she would make, eh?"

Thereupon Marie, exasperated by Pierre's smile, which seemingly indicated that he also thought her in the wrong, flew into quite a passion: "You are cruel, Guillaume!" she cried; "I won't be laughed at like this."

"But you are losing your senses, my dear," exclaimed Francois, while Thomas and Antoine again grew merry. "We were only urging a question of humanity, father and I, for we respect and love justice as much as you do."

"There's no question of humanity, but simply one of justice. What is just and right is just and right, and you cannot alter it."

Then, as Guillaume made a further attempt to state his views and win her over to them, she rose trembling, in such a passion that she could scarcely stammer: "No, no, you are all too cruel, you only want to grieve me. I prefer to go up into my own room."

At this Mere-Grand vainly sought to restrain her. "My child, my child!" said she, "reflect a moment; this is very wrong, you will deeply regret it."

"No, no; you are not just, and I suffer too much."

Then she wildly rushed upstairs to her room overhead.

Consternation followed. Scenes of a similar character had occasionally occurred before, but there had never been so serious a one. Guillaume immediately admitted that he had done wrong in laughing at her, for she could not bear irony. Then he told Pierre that in her childhood and youth she had been subject to terrible attacks of passion whenever she witnessed or heard of any act of injustice. As she herself explained, these attacks would come upon her with irresistible force, transporting her to such a point that she would sometimes fall upon the floor and rave. Even nowadays she proved quarrelsome and obstinate whenever certain subjects were touched upon. And she afterwards blushed for it all, fully conscious that others must think her unbearable.

Indeed, a quarter of an hour later, she came downstairs again of her own accord, and bravely acknowledged her fault. "Wasn't it ridiculous of me?" she said. "To think I accuse others of being unkind when I behave like that! Monsieur l'Abbe must have a very bad opinion of me." Then, after kissing Mere-Grand, she added: "You'll forgive me, won't you? Oh! Francois may laugh now, and so may Thomas and Antoine. They are quite right, our differences are merely laughing matters."

"My poor Marie," replied Guillaume, in a tone of deep affection. "You see what it is to surrender oneself to the absolute. If you are so healthy and reasonable it's because you regard almost everything from the relative point of view, and only ask life for such gifts as it can bestow. But when your absolute ideas of justice come upon you, you lose

both equilibrium and reason. At the same time, I must say that we are all liable to err in much the same manner."

Marie, who was still very flushed, thereupon answered in a jesting way: "Well, it at least proves that I'm not perfect."

"Oh, certainly! And so much the better," said Guillaume, "for it makes me love you the more."

This was a sentiment which Pierre himself would willingly have re-echoed. The scene had deeply stirred him. Had not his own frightful torments originated with his desire for the absolute both in things and beings? He had sought faith in its entirety, and despair had thrown him into complete negation. Again, was there not some evil desire for the absolute and some affectation of pride and voluntary blindness in the haughty bearing which he had retained amidst the downfall of his belief, the saintly reputation which he had accepted when he possessed no faith at all? On hearing his brother praise Marie, because she only asked life for such things as it could give, it had seemed to him that this was advice for himself. It was as if a refreshing breath of nature had passed before his face. At the same time his feelings in this respect were still vague, and the only well-defined pleasure that he experienced came from the young woman's fit of anger, that error of hers which brought her nearer to him, by lowering her in some degree from her pedestal of serene perfection. It was, perhaps, that seeming perfection which had made him suffer; however, he was as yet unable to analyse his feelings. That day, for the first time, he chatted with her for a little while, and when he went off he thought her very good-hearted and very human.

Two days later he again came to spend the afternoon in the large sunlit work-shop overlooking Paris. Ever since he had become conscious of the idle life he was leading, he had felt very bored when he was alone, and only found relief among that gay, hardworking family. His brother scolded him for not having come to /dejeuner/, and he promised to do so on the morrow. By the time a week had elapsed, none of the discomfort and covert hostility which had prevailed between him and Marie remained: they met and chatted on a footing of good fellowship. Although he was a priest, she was in no wise embarrassed by his presence. With her quiet atheism, indeed, she had never imagined that a priest could be different from other men. Thus her sisterly cordiality both astonished and delighted Pierre. It was as if he wore the same garments and held the same ideas as his big nephews, as if there were nothing whatever to distinguish him from other men. He was still more surprised, however, by Marie's silence on all religious questions. She seemed to live on quietly and happily, without a thought of what might be beyond life, that terrifying realm of mystery, which to him had brought such agony of mind.

Now that he came every two or three days to Montmartre she noticed that he was suffering. What could be the matter with him, she wondered. When she questioned him in a friendly manner and only elicited evasive replies, she guessed that he was ashamed of his sufferings, and that they were aggravated, rendered well-nigh incurable, by the very secrecy in which he buried them. Thereupon womanly compassion awoke within her, and

she felt increasing affection for that tall, pale fellow with feverish eyes, who was consumed by grievous torments which he would confess to none. No doubt she questioned Guillaume respecting her brother's sadness, and he must have confided some of the truth to her in order that she might help him to extricate Pierre from his sufferings, and give him back some taste for life. The poor fellow always seemed so happy when she treated him like a friend, a brother!

At last, one evening, on seeing his eyes full of tears as he gazed upon the dismal twilight falling over Paris, she herself pressed him to confide his trouble to her. And thereupon he suddenly spoke out, confessing all his torture and the horrible void which the loss of faith had left within him. Ah! to be unable to believe, to be unable to love, to be nothing but ashes, to know of nothing certain by which he might replace the faith that had fled from him! She listened in stupefaction. Why, he must be mad! And she plainly told him so, such was her astonishment and revolt at hearing such a desperate cry of wretchedness. To despair, indeed, and believe in nothing and love nothing, simply because a religious hypothesis had crumbled! And this, too, when the whole, vast world was spread before one, life with the duty of living it, creatures and things to be loved and succoured, without counting the universal labour, the task which one and all came to accomplish! Assuredly he must be mad, mad with the gloomiest madness; still she vowed she would cure him.

From that time forward she felt the most compassionate affection for this extraordinary young man, who had first embarrassed and afterwards astonished her. She showed herself very gentle and gay with him; she looked after him with the greatest skill and delicacy of heart and mind. There had been certain similar features in their childhood; each had been reared in the strictest religious views by a pious mother. But afterwards how different had been their fates! Whilst he was struggling with his doubts, bound by his priestly vows, she had grown up at the Lycee Fenelon, where her father had placed her as soon as her mother died; and there, far removed from all practice of religion, she had gradually reached total forgetfulness of her early religious views. It was a constant source of surprise for him to find that she had thus escaped all distress of mind at the thought of what might come after death, whereas that same thought had so deeply tortured him. When they chatted together and he expressed his astonishment at it, she frankly laughed, saying that she had never felt any fear of hell, for she was certain that no hell existed. And she added that she lived in all quietude, without hope of going to any heaven, her one thought being to comply in a reasonable way with the requirements and necessities of earthly life. It was, perhaps, in some measure a matter of temperament with her; but it was also a matter of education. Yet, whatever that education had been, whatever knowledge she had acquired, she had remained very womanly and very loving. There was nothing stern or masculine about her.

"Ah, my friend," she said one day to Pierre, "if you only knew how easy it is for me to remain happy so long as I see those I love free from any excessive suffering. For my own part I can always adapt myself to life. I work and content myself no matter what may happen. Sorrow has only come

to me from others, for I can't help wishing that everybody should be fairly happy, and there are some who won't. . . . I was for a long time very poor, but I remained gay. I wish for nothing, except for things that can't be purchased. Still, want is the great abomination which distresses me. I can understand that you should have felt everything crumbling when charity appeared to you so insufficient a remedy as to be contemptible. Yet it does bring relief; and, moreover, it is so sweet to be able to give. Some day, too, by dint of reason and toil, by the good and efficient working of life itself, the reign of justice will surely come. But now it's I that am preaching! Oh! I have little taste for it! It would be ridiculous for me to try to heal you with big phrases. All the same, I should like to cure you of your gloomy sufferings. To do so, all that I ask of you is to spend as much time as you can with us. You know that this is Guillaume's greatest desire. We will all love you so well, you will see us all so affectionately united, and so gay over our common work, that you will come back to truth by joining us in the school of our good mother nature. You must live and work, and love and hope."

Pierre smiled as he listened. He now came to Montmartre nearly every day. She was so nice and affectionate when she preached to him in that way with a pretty assumption of wisdom. As she had said too, life was so delightful in that big workroom; it was so pleasant to be all together, and to labour in common at the same work of health and truth. Ashamed as Pierre was of doing nothing, anxious as he was to occupy his mind and fingers, he had first taken an interest in Antoine's engraving, asking why he should not try something of the kind himself. However, he felt that he lacked the necessary gift for art. Then, too, he recoiled from Francois' purely intellectual labour, for he himself had scarcely emerged from the harrowing study of conflicting texts. Thus he was more inclined for manual toil like that of Thomas. In mechanics he found precision and clearness such as might help to quench his thirst for certainty. So he placed himself at the young man's orders, pulled his bellows and held pieces of mechanism for him. He also sometimes served as assistant to Guillaume, tying a large blue apron over his cassock in order to help in the experiments. From that time he formed part of the work-shop, which simply counted a worker the more.

One afternoon early in April, when they were all busily engaged there, Marie, who sat embroidering at the table in front of Mere-Grand, raised her eyes to the window and suddenly burst into a cry of admiration: "Oh! look at Paris under that rain of sunlight!"

Pierre drew near; the play of light was much the same as that which he had witnessed at his first visit. The sun, sinking behind some slight purple clouds, was throwing down a hail of rays and sparks which on all sides rebounded and leapt over the endless stretch of roofs. It might have been thought that some great sower, hidden amidst the glory of the planet, was scattering handfuls of golden grain from one horizon to the other.

Pierre, at sight of it, put his fancy into words: "It is the sun sowing Paris with grain for a future harvest," said he. "See how the expanse looks like ploughed land; the brownish houses are like soil turned up,

and the streets are deep and straight like furrows."

"Yes, yes, that's true," exclaimed Marie gaily. "The sun is sowing Paris with grain. See how it casts the seed of light and health right away to the distant suburbs! And yet, how singular! The rich districts on the west seem steeped in a ruddy mist, whilst the good seed falls in golden dust over the left bank and the populous districts eastward. It is there, is it not, that the crop will spring up?"

They had all drawn near, and were smiling at the symbol. As Marie had said, it seemed indeed that while the sun slowly sank behind the lacework of clouds, the sower of eternal life scattered his flaming seed with a rhythmical swing of the arm, ever selecting the districts of toil and effort. One dazzling handful of grain fell over yonder on the district of the schools; and then yet another rained down to fertilise the district of the factories and work-shops.

"Ah! well," said Guillaume gaily. "May the crop soon sprout from the good ground of our great Paris, which has been turned up by so many revolutions, and enriched by the blood of so many workers! It is the only ground in the world where Ideas can germinate and bloom. Yes, yes, Pierre is quite right, it is the sun sowing Paris with the seed of the future world, which can sprout only up here!"

Then Thomas, Francois and Antoine, who stood behind their father in a row, nodded as if to say that this was also their own conviction; whilst Mere-Grand gazed afar with dreamy eyes as though she could already behold the splendid future.

"Ah! but it is only a dream; centuries must elapse. We shall never see it!" murmured Pierre with a quiver.

"But others will!" cried Marie. "And does not that suffice?"

Those lofty words stirred Pierre to the depths of his being. And all at once there came to him the memory of another Marie*--the adorable Marie of his youth, that Marie de Guersaint who had been cured at Lourdes, and the loss of whom had left such a void in his heart. Was that new Marie who stood there smiling at him, so tranquil and so charming in her strength, destined to heal that old-time wound? He felt that he was beginning to live again since she had become his friend.

* The heroine of M. Zola's "Lourdes."

Meantime, there before them, the glorious sun, with the sweep of its rays, was scattering living golden dust over Paris, still and ever sowing the great future harvest of justice and of truth.

II

TOWARDS LIFE

ONE evening, at the close of a good day's work, Pierre, who was helping Thomas, suddenly caught his foot in the skirt of his cassock and narrowly escaped falling. At this, Marie, after raising a faint cry of anxiety, exclaimed: "Why don't you take it off?"

There was no malice in her inquiry. She simply looked upon the priestly robe as something too heavy and cumbersome, particularly when one had certain work to perform. Nevertheless, her words deeply impressed Pierre, and he could not forget them. When he was at home in the evening and repeated them to himself they gradually threw him into feverish agitation. Why, indeed, had he not divested himself of that cassock, which weighed so heavily and painfully on his shoulders? Then a frightful struggle began within him, and he spent a terrible, sleepless night, again a prey to all his former torments.

At first sight it seemed a very simple matter that he should cast his priestly gown aside, for had he not ceased to discharge any priestly office? He had not said mass for some time past, and this surely meant renunciation of the priesthood. Nevertheless, so long as he retained his gown it was possible that he might some day say mass again, whereas if he cast it aside he would, as it were, strip himself, quit the priesthood entirely, without possibility of return. It was a terrible step to take, one that would prove irrevocable; and thus he paced his room for hours, in great anguish of mind.

He had formerly indulged in a superb dream. Whilst believing nothing himself he had resolved to watch, in all loyalty, over the belief of others. He would not so lower himself as to forswear his vows, he would be no base renegade, but however great the torments of the void he felt within him he would remain the minister of man's illusions respecting the Divinity. And it was by reason of his conduct in this respect that he had ended by being venerated as a saint--he who denied everything, who had become a mere empty sepulchre. For a long time his falsehood had never disturbed him, but it now brought him acute suffering. It seemed to him that he would be acting in the vilest manner if he delayed placing his life in accord with his opinions. The thought of it all quite rent his heart.

The question was a very clear one. By what right did he remain the minister of a religion in which he no longer believed? Did not elementary honesty require that he should quit a Church in which he denied the presence of the Divinity? He regarded the dogmas of that Church as puerile errors, and yet he persisted in teaching them as if they were eternal truths. Base work it was, that alarmed his conscience. He vainly sought the feverish glow of charity and martyrdom which had led him to offer himself as a sacrifice, willing to suffer all the torture of doubt and to find his own life lost and ravaged, provided that he might yet afford the relief of hope to the lowly. Truth and nature, no doubt, had already regained too much ascendancy over him for those feelings to return. The thought of such a lying apostolate now wounded him; he no longer had the hypocritical courage to call the Divinity down upon the believers kneeling before him, when he was convinced that the Divinity

would not descend. Thus all the past was swept away; there remained nothing of the sublime pastoral part he would once have liked to play, that supreme gift of himself which lay in stubborn adherence to the rules of the Church, and such devotion to faith as to endure in silence the torture of having lost it.

What must Marie think of his prolonged falsehood, he wondered, and thereupon he seemed to hear her words again: "Why not take your cassock off?" His conscience bled as if those words were a stab. What contempt must she not feel for him, she who was so upright, so high-minded? Every scattered blame, every covert criticism directed against his conduct, seemed to find embodiment in her. It now sufficed that she should condemn him, and he at once felt guilty. At the same time she had never voiced her disapproval to him, in all probability because she did not think she had any right to intervene in a struggle of conscience. The superb calmness and healthiness which she displayed still astonished him. He himself was ever haunted and tortured by thoughts of the unknown, of what the morrow of death might have in store for one; but although he had studied and watched her for days together, he had never seen her give a sign of doubt or distress. This exemption from such sufferings as his own was due, said she, to the fact that she gave all her gaiety, all her energy, all her sense of duty, to the task of living, in such wise that life itself proved a sufficiency, and no time was left for mere fancies to terrify and stultify her. Well, then, since she with her air of quiet strength had asked him why he did not take off his cassock, he would take it off--yes, he would divest himself of that robe which seemed to burn and weigh him down.

He fancied himself calmed by this decision, and towards morning threw himself upon his bed; but all at once a stifling sensation, a renewal of his abominable anguish, brought him to his feet again. No, no, he could not divest himself of that gown which clung so tightly to his flesh. His skin would come away with his cloth, his whole being would be lacerated! Is not the mark of priesthood an indelible one, does it not brand the priest for ever, and differentiate him from the flock? Even should he tear off his gown with his skin, he would remain a priest, an object of scandal and shame, awkward and impotent, shut off from the life of other men. And so why tear it off, since he would still and ever remain in prison, and a fruitful life of work in the broad sunlight was no longer within his reach? He, indeed, fancied himself irremediably stricken with impotence. Thus he was unable to come to any decision, and when he returned to Montmartre two days later he had again relapsed into a state of torment.

Feverishness, moreover, had come upon the happy home. Guillaume was becoming more and more annoyed about Salvat's affair, not a day elapsing without the newspapers fanning his irritation. He had at first been deeply touched by the dignified and reticent bearing of Salvat, who had declared that he had no accomplices whatever. Of course the inquiry into the crime was what is called a secret one; but magistrate Amadieu, to whom it had been entrusted, conducted it in a very noisy way. The newspapers, which he in some degree took into his confidence, were full of articles and paragraphs about him and his interviews with the

prisoner. Thanks to Salvat's quiet admissions, Amadieu had been able to retrace the history of the crime hour by hour, his only remaining doubts having reference to the nature of the powder which had been employed, and the making of the bomb itself. It might after all be true that Salvat had loaded the bomb at a friend's, as he indeed asserted was the case; but he must be lying when he added that the only explosive used was dynamite, derived from some stolen cartridges, for all the experts now declared that dynamite would never have produced such effects as those which had been witnessed. This, then, was the mysterious point which protracted the investigations. And day by day the newspapers profited by it to circulate the wildest stories under sensational headings, which were specially devised for the purpose of sending up their sales.

It was all the nonsense contained in these stories that fanned Guillaume's irritation. In spite of his contempt for Sagnier he could not keep from buying the "Voix du Peuple." Quivering with indignation, growing more and more exasperated, he was somehow attracted by the mire which he found in that scurrilous journal. Moreover, the other newspapers, including even the "Globe," which was usually so dignified, published all sorts of statements for which no proof could be supplied, and drew from them remarks and conclusions which, though couched in milder language than Sagnier's, were none the less abominably unjust. It seemed indeed as if the whole press had set itself the task of covering Salvat with mud, so as to be able to vilify Anarchism generally. According to the journalists the prisoner's life had simply been one long abomination. He had already earned his living by thievery in his childhood at the time when he had roamed the streets, an unhappy, forsaken vagrant; and later on he had proved a bad soldier and a bad worker. He had been punished for insubordination whilst he was in the army, and he had been dismissed from a dozen work-shops because he incessantly disturbed them by his Anarchical propaganda. Later still, he had fled his country and led a suspicious life of adventure in America, where, it was alleged, he must have committed all sorts of unknown crimes. Moreover there was his horrible immorality, his connection with his sister-in-law, that Madame Theodore who had taken charge of his forsaken child in his absence, and with whom he had cohabited since his return to France. In this wise Salvat's failings and transgressions were pitilessly denounced and magnified without any mention of the causes which had induced them, or of the excuses which lay in the unhappy man's degrading environment. And so Guillaume's feelings of humanity and justice revolted, for he knew the real Salvat,--a man of tender heart and dreamy mind, so liable to be impassioned by fancies,--a man cast into life when a child without weapon of defence, ever trodden down or thrust aside, then gradually exasperated by the perpetual onslaughts of want, and at last dreaming of reviving the golden age by destroying the old, corrupt world.

Unfortunately for Salvat, everything had gone against him since he had been shut up in strict confinement, at the mercy of the ambitious and worldly Amadieu. Guillaume had learnt from his son, Thomas, that the prisoner could count on no support whatever among his former mates at the Grandidier works. These works were becoming prosperous once more, thanks to their steady output of bicycles; and it was said that Grandidier was

only waiting for Thomas to perfect his little motor, in order to start the manufacture of motor-cars on a large scale. However, the success which he was now for the first time achieving, and which scarcely repaid him for all his years of toil and battle, had in certain respects rendered him prudent and even severe. He did not wish any suspicion to be cast upon his business through the unpleasant affair of his former workman Salvat, and so he had dismissed such of his workmen as held Anarchist views. If he had kept the two Toussaints, one of whom was the prisoner's brother-in-law, while the other was suspected of sympathy with him, this was because they had belonged to the works for a score of years, and he did not like to cast them adrift. Moreover, Toussaint, the father, had declared that if he were called as a witness for the defence, he should simply give such particulars of Salvat's career as related to the prisoner's marriage with his sister.

One evening when Thomas came home from the works, to which he returned every now and then in order to try his little motor, he related that he had that day seen Madame Grandidier, the poor young woman who had become insane through an attack of puerperal fever following upon the death of a child. Although most frightful attacks of madness occasionally came over her, and although life beside her was extremely painful, even during the intervals when she remained downcast and gentle as a child, her husband had never been willing to send her to an asylum. He kept her with him in a pavilion near the works, and as a rule the shutters of the windows overlooking the yard remained closed. Thus Thomas had been greatly surprised to see one of these windows open, and the young woman appear at it amidst the bright sunshine of that early spring. True, she only remained there for a moment, vision-like, fair and pretty, with smiling face; for a servant who suddenly drew near closed the window, and the pavilion then again sank into lifeless silence. At the same time it was reported among the men employed at the works that the poor creature had not experienced an attack for well-nigh a month past, and that this was the reason why the "governor" looked so strong and pleased, and worked so vigorously to help on the increasing prosperity of his business.

"He isn't a bad fellow," added Thomas, "but with the terrible competition that he has to encounter, he is bent on keeping his men under control. Nowadays, says he, when so many capitalists and wage earners seem bent on exterminating one another, the latter--if they don't want to starve--ought to be well pleased when capital falls into the hands of an active, fair-minded man. . . . If he shows no pity for Salvat, it is because he really believes in the necessity of an example."

That same day Thomas, after leaving the works and while threading his way through the toilsome hive-like Marcadet district, had overtaken Madame Theodore and little Celine, who were wandering on in great distress. It appeared that they had just called upon Toussaint, who had been unable to lend them even such a trifle as ten sous. Since Salvat's arrest, the woman and the child had been forsaken and suspected by one and all. Driven forth from their wretched lodging, they were without food and wandered hither and thither dependent on chance alms. Never had greater want and misery fallen on defenceless creatures.

"I told them to come up here, father," said Thomas, "for I thought that one might pay their landlord a month's rent, so that they might go home again. . . . Ah! there's somebody coming now--it's they, no doubt."

Guillaume had felt angry with himself whilst listening to his son, for he had not thought of the poor creatures. It was the old story: the man disappears, and the woman and the child find themselves in the streets, starving. Whenever Justice strikes a man her blow travels beyond him, fells innocent beings and kills them.

Madame Theodore came in, humble and timid, scared like a luckless creature whom life never wearies of persecuting. She was becoming almost blind, and little Celine had to lead her. The girl's fair, thin face wore its wonted expression of shrewd intelligence, and even now, however woeful her rags, it was occasionally brightened by a childish smile.

Pierre and Marie, who were both there, felt extremely touched. Near them was Madame Mathis, young Victor's mother, who had come to help Mere-Grand with the mending of some house-linen. She went out by the day in this fashion among a few families, and was thus enabled to give her son an occasional franc or two. Guillaume alone questioned Madame Theodore.

"Ah! monsieur," she stammered, "who could ever have thought Salvat capable of such a thing, he who's so good and so humane? Still it's true, since he himself has admitted it to the magistrate. . . . For my part I told everybody that he was in Belgium. I wasn't quite sure of it, still I'm glad that he didn't come back to see us; for if he had been arrested at our place I should have lost my senses. . . . Well, now that they have him, they'll sentence him to death, that's certain."

At this Celine, who had been looking around her with an air of interest, piteously exclaimed: "Oh! no, oh! no, mamma, they won't hurt him!"

Big tears appeared in the child's eyes as she raised this cry. Guillaume kissed her, and then went on questioning Madame Theodore.

"Well, monsieur," she answered, "the child's not old or big enough to work as yet, and my eyes are done for, people won't even take me as a charwoman. And so it's simple enough, we starve. . . . Oh! of course I'm not without relations; I have a sister who married very well. Her husband is a clerk, Monsieur Chretiennot, perhaps you know him. Unfortunately he's rather proud, and as I don't want any scenes between him and my sister, I no longer go to see her. Besides, she's in despair just now, for she's expecting another baby, which is a terrible blow for a small household, when one already has two girls. . . . That's why the only person I can apply to is my brother Toussaint. His wife isn't a bad sort by any means, but she's no longer the same since she's been living in fear of her husband having another attack. The first one carried off all her savings, and what would become of her if Toussaint should remain on her hands, paralysed? Besides, she's threatened with another burden, for, as you may know, her son Charles got keeping company with a servant at a wine shop, who of course ran away after she had a baby, which she left him to see to. So one can understand that the Toussaints themselves are

hard put. I don't complain of them. They've already lent me a little money, and of course they can't go on lending for ever."

She continued talking in this spiritless, resigned way, complaining only on account of Celine; for, said she, it was enough to make one's heart break to see such an intelligent child obliged to tramp the streets after getting on so well at the Communal School. She could feel too that everybody now kept aloof from them on account of Salvat. The Toussaints didn't want to be compromised in any such business. There was only Charles, who had said that he could well understand a man losing his head and trying to blow up the /bourgeois/, because they really treated the workers in a blackguard way.

"For my part, monsieur," added Madame Theodore, "I say nothing, for I'm only a woman. All the same, though, if you'd like to know what I think, well, I think that it would have been better if Salvat hadn't done what he did, for we two, the girl and I, are the real ones to suffer from it. Ah! I can't get the idea into my head, that the little one should be the daughter of a man condemned to death."

Once more Celine interrupted her, flinging her arms around her neck: "Oh! mamma, oh! mamma, don't say that, I beg you! It can't be true, it grieves me too much!"

At this Pierre and Marie exchanged compassionate glances, while Mere-Grand rose from her chair, in order to go upstairs and search her wardrobes for some articles of clothing which might be of use to the two poor creatures. Guillaume, who, for his part, had been moved to tears, and felt full of revolt against the social system which rendered such distress possible, slipped some alms into the child's little hand, and promised Madame Theodore that he would see her landlord so as to get her back her room.

"Ah! Monsieur Froment!" replied the unfortunate woman. "Salvat was quite right when he said you were a real good man! And as you employed him here for a few days you know too that he isn't a wicked one. . . . Now that he's been put in prison everybody calls him a brigand, and it breaks my heart to hear them." Then, turning towards Madame Mathis, who had continued sewing in discreet silence, like a respectable woman whom none of these things could concern, she went on: "I know you, madame, but I'm better acquainted with your son, Monsieur Victor, who has often come to chat at our place. Oh! you needn't be afraid, I shan't say it, I shall never compromise anybody; but if Monsieur Victor were free to speak, he'd be the man to explain Salvat's ideas properly."

Madame Mathis looked at her in stupefaction. Ignorant as she was of her son's real life and views, she experienced a vague dread at the idea of any connection between him and Salvat's family. Moreover, she refused to believe it possible. "Oh! you must be mistaken," she said. "Victor told me that he now seldom came to Montmartre, as he was always going about in search of work."

By the anxious quiver of the widow's voice, Madame Theodore understood

that she ought not to have mixed her up in her troubles; and so in all humility she at once beat a retreat: "I beg your pardon, madame, I didn't think I should hurt your feelings. Perhaps, too, I'm mistaken, as you say."

Madame Mathis had again turned to her sewing as to the solitude in which she lived, that nook of decent misery where she dwelt without companionship and almost unknown, with scarcely sufficient bread to eat. Ah! that dear son of hers, whom she loved so well; however much he might neglect her, she had placed her only remaining hope in him: he was her last dream, and would some day lavish all kinds of happiness upon her!

At that moment Mere-Grand came downstairs again, laden with a bundle of linen and woollen clothing, and Madame Theodore and little Celine withdrew while pouring forth their thanks. For a long time after they had gone Guillaume, unable to resume work, continued walking to and fro in silence, with a frown upon his face.

When Pierre, still hesitating and still tortured by conflicting feelings, returned to Montmartre on the following day he witnessed with much surprise a visit of a very different kind. There was a sudden gust of wind, a whirl of skirts and a ring of laughter as little Princess Rosemonde swept in, followed by young Hyacinthe Duvillard, who, on his side, retained a very frigid bearing.

"It's I, my dear master," exclaimed the Princess. "I promised you a visit, you remember, for I am such a great admirer of your genius. And our young friend here has been kind enough to bring me. We have only just returned from Norway, and my very first visit is for you."

She turned as she spoke, and bowed in an easy and gracious way to Pierre and Marie, Francois and Antoine, who were also there. Then she resumed: "Oh! my dear master, you have no idea how beautifully virginal Norway is! We all ought to go and drink at that new source of the Ideal, and we should return purified, rejuvenated and capable of great renunciations!"

As a matter of fact she had been well-nigh bored to death there. To make one's honeymoon journey to the land of the ice and snow, instead of to Italy, the hot land of the sun, was doubtless a very refined idea, which showed that no base materialism formed part of one's affections. It was the soul alone that travelled, and naturally it was fit that only kisses of the soul should be exchanged on the journey. Unfortunately, however, Hyacinthe had carried his symbolism so far as to exasperate Rosemonde, and on one occasion they had come to blows over it, and then to tears when this lover's quarrel had ended as many such quarrels do. Briefly, they had no longer deemed themselves pure enough for the companionship of the swans and the lakes of dreamland, and had therefore taken the first steamer that was sailing for France.

As it was altogether unnecessary to confess to everybody what a failure their journey had proved, the Princess abruptly brought her rapturous references to Norway to an end, and then explained: "By the way, do you know what I found awaiting me on my return? Why, I found my house

pillaged, oh! completely pillaged! And in such a filthy condition, too!
We at once recognised the mark of the beast, and thought of Bergaz's
young friends."

Already on the previous day Guillaume had read in the newspapers that a band of young Anarchists had entered the Princess's little house by breaking a basement window. She had left it quite deserted, unprotected even by a caretaker; and the robbers had not merely removed everything from the premises--including even the larger articles of furniture, but had lived there for a couple of days, bringing provisions in from outside, drinking all the wine in the cellars, and leaving every room in a most filthy and disgusting condition. On discovering all this, Rosemonde had immediately remembered the evening she had spent at the Chamber of Horrors in the company of Bergaz and his acolytes, Rossi and Sanfaute, who had heard her speak of her intended trip to Norway. The two young men had therefore been arrested, but Bergaz had so far escaped. The Princess was not greatly astonished by it all, for she had already been warned of the presence of dangerous characters among the mixed cosmopolitan set with which she associated. Janzen had told her in confidence of a number of villanous affairs which were attributed to Bergaz and his band. And now the Anarchist leader openly declared that Bergaz had sold himself to the police like Raphanel; and that the burglary at the Princess's residence had been planned by the police officials, who thereby hoped to cover the Anarchist cause with mire. If proof was wanted of this, added Janzen, it could be found in the fact that the police had allowed Bergaz to escape.

"I fancied that the newspapers might have exaggerated matters," said Guillaume, when the Princess had finished her story. "They are inventing such abominable things just now, in order to blacken the case of that poor devil Salvat."

"Oh! they've exaggerated nothing!" Rosemonde gaily rejoined. "As a matter of fact they have omitted a number of particulars which were too filthy for publication. . . . For my part, I've merely had to go to an hotel. I'm very comfortable there; I was beginning to feel bored in that house of mine. . . . All the same, however, Anarchism is hardly a clean business, and I no longer like to say that I have any connection with it."

She again laughed, and then passed to another subject, asking Guillaume to tell her of his most recent researches, in order, no doubt, that she might show she knew enough chemistry to understand him. He had been rendered thoughtful, however, by the story of Bergaz and the burglary, and would only answer her in a general way.

Meantime, Hyacinthe was renewing his acquaintance with his school-fellows, Francois and Antoine. He had accompanied the Princess to Montmartre against his own inclinations; but since she had taken to whipping him he had become afraid of her. The chemist's little home filled him with disdain, particularly as the chemist was a man of questionable reputation. Moreover, he thought it a duty to insist on his own superiority in the presence of those old school-fellows of his, whom

he found toiling away in the common rut, like other people.

"Ah! yes," said he to Francois, who was taking notes from a book spread open before him, "you are at the Ecole Normale, I believe, and are preparing for your licentiate. Well, for my part, you know, the idea of being tied to anything horrifies me. I become quite stupid when there's any question of examination or competition. The only possible road for one to follow is that of the Infinite. And between ourselves what dupery there is in science, how it narrows our horizon! It's just as well to remain a child with eyes gazing into the invisible. A child knows more than all your learned men."

Francois, who occasionally indulged in irony, pretended to share his opinion. "No doubt, no doubt," said he, "but one must have a natural disposition to remain a child. For my part, unhappily, I'm consumed by a desire to learn and know. It's deplorable, as I'm well aware, but I pass my days racking my brain over books. . . . I shall never know very much, that's certain; and perhaps that's the reason why I'm ever striving to learn a little more. You must at all events grant that work, like idleness, is a means of passing life, though of course it is a less elegant and aesthetic one."

"Less aesthetic, precisely," rejoined Hyacinthe. "Beauty lies solely in the unexpressed, and life is simply degraded when one introduces anything material into it."

Simpleton though he was in spite of the enormity of his pretensions, he doubtless detected that Francois had been speaking ironically. So he turned to Antoine, who had remained seated in front of a block he was engraving. It was the one which represented Lise reading in her garden, for he was ever taking it in hand again and touching it up in his desire to emphasise his indication of the girl's awakening to intelligence and life.

"So you engrave, I see," said Hyacinthe. "Well, since I renounced versification--a little poem I had begun on the End of Woman--because words seemed to me so gross and cumbersome, mere paving-stones as it were, fit for labourers, I myself have had some idea of trying drawing, and perhaps engraving too. But what drawing can portray the mystery which lies beyond life, the only sphere that has any real existence and importance for us? With what pencil and on what kind of plate could one depict it? We should need something impalpable, something unheard of, which would merely suggest the essence of things and beings."

"But it's only by material means," Antoine somewhat roughly replied, "that art can render the essence of things and beings, that is, their full significance as we understand it. To transcribe life is my great passion; and briefly life is the only mystery that there is in things and beings. When it seems to me that an engraving of mine lives, I'm well pleased, for I feel that I have created."

Hyacinthe pouted by way of expressing his contempt of all fruitfulness. Any fool might beget offspring. It was the sexless idea, existing by

itself, that was rare and exquisite. He tried to explain this, but became confused, and fell back on the conviction which he had brought back from Norway, that literature and art were done for in France, killed by baseness and excess of production.

"It's evident!" said Francois gaily by way of conclusion. "To do nothing already shows that one has some talent!"

Meantime, Pierre and Marie listened and gazed around them, somewhat embarrassed by this strange visit which had set the usually grave and peaceful workroom topsy-turvy. The little Princess, though, evinced much amiability, and on drawing near to Marie admired the wonderful delicacy of some embroidery she was finishing. Before leaving, moreover, Rosemonde insisted upon Guillaume inscribing his autograph in an album which Hyacinthe had to fetch from her carriage. The young man obeyed her with evident boredom. It could be seen that they were already weary of one another. Pending a fresh caprice, however, it amused Rosemonde to terrorize her sorry victim. When she at length led him away, after declaring to Guillaume that she should always regard that visit as a memorable incident in her life, she made the whole household smile by saying: "Oh! so your sons knew Hyacinthe at college. He's a good-natured little fellow, isn't he? and he would really be quite nice if he would only behave like other people."

That same day Janzen and Bache came to spend the evening with Guillaume. Once a week they now met at Montmartre, as they had formerly done at Neuilly. Pierre, on these occasions, went home very late, for as soon as Mere-Grand, Marie, and Guillaume's sons had retired for the night, there were endless chats in the workroom, whence Paris could be seen spangled with thousands of gas lights. Another visitor at these times was Theophile Morin, but he did not arrive before ten o'clock, as he was detained by the work of correcting his pupils' exercises or some other wearisome labour pertaining to his profession.

As soon as Guillaume had told the others of the Princess's visit that afternoon, Janzen hastily exclaimed: "But she's mad, you know. When I first met her I thought for a moment that I might perhaps utilise her for the cause. She seemed so thoroughly convinced and bold! But I soon found that she was the craziest of women, and simply hungered for new emotions!"

Janzen was at last emerging from his wonted frigidity and mysteriousness. His cheeks were quite flushed. In all probability he had suffered from his rupture with the woman whom he had once called 'the Queen of the Anarchists,' and whose fortune and extensive circle of acquaintance had seemed to him such powerful weapons of propaganda.

"You know," said he, when he had calmed down, "it was the police who had her house pillaged and turned into a pigstye. Yes, in view of Salvat's trial, which is now near at hand, the idea was to damn Anarchism beyond possibility of even the faintest sympathy on the part of the /bourgeois/."

"Yes, she told me so," replied Guillaume, who had become attentive. "But I scarcely credit the story. If Bergaz had merely acted under such influence as you suggest, he would have been arrested with the others, just as Raphanel was taken with those whom he betrayed. Besides, I know something of Bergaz; he's a freebooter." Guillaume made a sorrowful gesture, and then in a saddened voice continued: "Oh, I can understand all claims and all legitimate reprisals. But theft, cynical theft for the purpose of profit and enjoyment, is beyond me! It lowers my hope of a better and more equitable form of society. Yes, that burglary at the Princess's house has greatly distressed me."

An enigmatical smile, sharp like a knife, again played over Janzen's lips. "Oh! it's a matter of heredity with you!" said he. "The centuries of education and belief that lie behind you compel you to protest. All the same, however, when people won't make restoration, things must be taken from them. What worries me is that Bergaz should have sold himself just now. The public prosecutor will use that farcical burglary as a crushing argument when he asks the jury for Salvat's head."

Such was Janzen's hatred of the police that he stubbornly clung to his version of the affair. Perhaps, too, he had quarrelled with Bergaz, with whom he had at one time freely associated.

Guillaume, who understood that all discussion would be useless, contented himself with replying: "Ah! yes, Salvat! Everything is against that unhappy fellow, he is certain to be condemned. But you can't know, my friends, what a passion that affair of his puts me into. All my ideas of truth and justice revolt at the thought of it. He's a madman certainly; but there are so many excuses to be urged for him. At bottom he is simply a martyr who has followed the wrong track. And yet he has become the scapegoat, laden with the crimes of the whole nation, condemned to pay for one and all!"

Bache and Morin nodded without replying. They both professed horror of Anarchism; while Morin, forgetting that the word if not the thing dated from his first master Proudhon, clung to his Comtist doctrines, in the conviction that science alone would ensure the happiness and pacification of the nations. Bache, for his part, old mystical humanitarian that he was, claimed that the only solution would come from Fourier, who by decreeing an alliance of talent, labour and capital, had mapped out the future in a decisive manner. Nevertheless, both Bache and Morin were so discontented with the slow-paced /bourgeoise/ Republic of the present day, and so hurt by the thought that everything was going from bad to worse through the flouting of their own particular ideas, that they were quite willing to wax indignant at the manner in which the conflicting parties of the time were striving to make use of Salvat in order to retain or acquire power.

"When one thinks," said Bache, "that this ministerial crisis of theirs has now been lasting for nearly three weeks! Every appetite is openly displayed, it's a most disgusting sight! Did you see in the papers this morning that the President has again been obliged to summon Vignon to the Elysee?"

"Oh! the papers," muttered Morin in his weary way, "I no longer read them! What's the use of doing so? They are so badly written, and they all lie!"

As Bache had said, the ministerial crisis was still dragging on. The President of the Republic, taking as his guide the debate in the Chamber of Deputies, by which the Barroux administration had been overthrown, had very properly sent for Vignon, the victor on that occasion, and entrusted him with the formation of a new ministry. It had seemed that this would be an easy task, susceptible of accomplishment in two or three days at the utmost, for the names of the friends whom the young leader of the Radical party would bring to power with him had been freely mentioned for months past. But all sorts of difficulties had suddenly arisen. For ten days or so Vignon had struggled on amidst inextricable obstacles. Then, disheartened and disgusted, fearing, too, that he might use himself up and shut off the future if he persisted in his endeavours, he had been obliged to tell the President that he renounced the task. Forthwith the President had summoned other deputies, and questioned them until he had found one brave enough to make an attempt on his own account; whereupon incidents similar to those which had marked Vignon's endeavours had once more occurred. At the outset a list was drawn up with every prospect of being ratified within a few hours, but all at once hesitation arose, some pulled one way, some another; every effort was slowly paralysed till absolute failure resulted. It seemed as though the mysterious manoeuvres which had hampered Vignon had begun again; it was as if some band of invisible plotters was, for some unknown purpose, doing its utmost to wreck every combination. A thousand hindrances arose with increasing force from every side--jealousy, dislike, and even betrayal were secretly prompted by expert agents, who employed every form of pressure, whether threats or promises, besides fanning and casting rival passions and interests into collision. Thus the President, greatly embarrassed by this posture of affairs, had again found it necessary to summon Vignon, who, after reflection and negotiation, now had an almost complete list in his pocket, and seemed likely to perfect a new administration within the next forty-eight hours.

"Still it isn't settled," resumed Bache. "Well-informed people assert that Vignon will fail again as he did the first time. For my part I can't get rid of the idea that Duvillard's gang is pulling the strings, though for whose benefit is a mystery. You may be quite sure, however, that its chief purpose is to stifle the African Railways affair. If Monferrand were not so badly compromised I should almost suspect some trick on his part. Have you noticed that the 'Globe,' after throwing Barroux overboard in all haste, now refers to Monferrand every day with the most respectful sympathy? That's a grave sign; for it isn't Fonseca's habit to show any solicitude for the vanquished. But what can one expect from that wretched Chamber! The only point certain is that something dirty is being plotted there."

"And that big dunderhead Mege who works for every party except his own!" exclaimed Morin; "what a dupe he is with that idea that he need merely overthrow first one cabinet and then another, in order to become the

leader of one himself!"

The mention of Mege brought them all to agreement, for they unanimously hated him. Bache, although his views coincided on many points with those of the apostle of State Collectivism, judged each of his speeches, each of his actions, with pitiless severity. Janzen, for his part, treated the Collectivist leader as a mere reactionary /bourgeois/, who ought to be swept away one of the first. This hatred of Mege was indeed the common passion of Guillaume's friends. They could occasionally show some justice for men who in no wise shared their ideas; but in their estimation it was an unpardonable crime for anybody to hold much the same views as themselves, without being absolutely in agreement with them on every possible point.

Their discussion continued, their various theories mingling or clashing till they passed from politics to the press, and grew excited over the denunciations which poured each morning from Sagnier's newspaper, like filth from the mouth of a sewer. Thereupon Guillaume, who had become absorbed in reverie while pacing to and fro according to his habit, suddenly exclaimed: "Ah! what dirty work it is that Sagnier does! Before long there won't be a single person, a single thing left on which he hasn't vomited! You think he's on your side, and suddenly he splashes you with mire! . . . By the way, he related yesterday that skeleton keys and stolen purses were found on Salvat when he was arrested in the Bois de Boulogne! It's always Salvat! He's the inexhaustible subject for articles. The mere mention of him suffices to send up a paper's sales! The bribe-takers of the African Railways shout 'Salvat!' to create a diversion. And the battles which wreck ministers are waged round his name. One and all set upon him and make use of him and beat him down!"

With that cry of revolt and compassion, the friends separated for the night. Pierre, who sat near the open window, overlooking the sparkling immensity of Paris, had listened to the others without speaking a word. He had once more been mastered by his doubts, the terrible struggle of his heart and mind; and no solution, no appeasement had come to him from all the contradictory views he had heard--the views of men who only united in predicting the disappearance of the old world, and could make no joint brotherly effort to rear the future world of truth and justice. In that vast city of Paris stretching below him, spangled with stars, glittering like the sky of a summer's night, Pierre also found a great enigma. It was like chaos, like a dim expanse of ashes dotted with sparks whence the coming aurora would arise. What future was being forged there, he wondered, what decisive word of salvation and happiness would come with the dawn, and wing its flight to every point of the horizon?

When Pierre, in his turn, was about to retire, Guillaume laid his hands upon his shoulders, and with much emotion gave him a long look. "Ah! my poor fellow," said he, "you've been suffering too for some days past, I have noticed it. But you are the master of your sufferings, for the struggle you have to overcome is simply in yourself, and you can subdue it; whereas one cannot subdue the world, when it is the world, its cruelty and injustice that make one suffer! Good night, be brave, act as your reason tells you, even if it makes you weep, and you will find peace

surely enough."

Later on, when Pierre again found himself alone in his little house at Neuilly, where none now visited him save the shades of his father and mother, he was long kept awake by a supreme internal combat. He had never before felt so disgusted with the falsehood of his life, that cassock which he had persisted in wearing, though he was a priest in name only. Perhaps it was all that he had beheld and heard at his brother's, the want and wretchedness of some, the wild, futile agitation of others, the need of improvement among mankind which remained paramount amidst every contradiction and form of weakness, that had made him more deeply conscious of the necessity of living in loyal and normal fashion in the broad daylight. He could no longer think of his former dream of leading the solitary life of a saintly priest when he was nothing of the kind, without a shiver of shame at having lied so long. And now it was quite decided, he would lie no longer, not even from feelings of compassion in order that others might retain their religious illusions. And yet how painful it was to have to divest himself of that gown which seemed to cling to his skin, and how heartrending the thought that if he did remove it he would be skinless, lacerated, infirm, unable, do what he might, to become like other men!

It was this recurring thought which again tortured him throughout that terrible night. Would life yet allow him to enter its fold? Had he not been branded with a mark which for ever condemned him to dwell apart? He thought he could feel his priestly vows burning his very flesh like red-hot iron. What use would it be for him to dress as men dress, if in reality he was never to be a man? He had hitherto lived in such a quivering state, in a sphere of renunciation and dreams! To know manhood never, to be too late for it, that thought filled him with terror. And when at last he made up his mind to fling aside his cassock, he did so from a simple sense of rectitude, for all his anguish remained.

When he returned to Montmartre on the following day, he wore a jacket and trousers of a dark colour. Neither an exclamation nor a glance that might have embarrassed him came from Mere-Grand or the three young men. Was not the change a natural one? They greeted him therefore in the quiet way that was usual with them; perhaps, with some increase of affection, as if to set him the more at his ease. Guillaume, however, ventured to smile good-naturedly. In that change he detected his own work. Cure was coming, as he had hoped it would come, by him and in his own home, amid the full sunlight, the life which ever streamed in through yonder window.

Marie, who on her side raised her eyes and looked at Pierre, knew nothing of the sufferings which he had endured through her simple and logical inquiry: "Why not take your cassock off?" She merely felt that by removing it he would be more at ease for his work.

"Oh, Pierre, just come and look!" she suddenly exclaimed. "I have been amusing myself with watching all the smoke which the wind is laying yonder over Paris. One might take it to be a huge fleet of ships shining in the sunlight. Yes, yes, golden ships, thousands of golden ships, setting forth from the ocean of Paris to enlighten and pacify the world!"

THE DAWN OF LOVE

A COUPLE of days afterwards, when Pierre was already growing accustomed to his new attire, and no longer gave it a thought, it so happened that on reaching Montmartre he encountered Abbe Rose outside the basilica of the Sacred Heart. The old priest, who at first was quite thunderstruck and scarcely able to recognise him, ended by taking hold of his hands and giving him a long look. Then with his eyes full of tears he exclaimed: "Oh! my son, so you have fallen into the awful state I feared! I never mentioned it, but I felt that God had withdrawn from you. Ah! nothing could wound my heart so cruelly as this."

Then, still trembling, he began to lead Pierre away as if to hide such a scandal from the few people who passed by; and at last, his strength failing him, he sank upon a heap of bricks lying on the grass of one of the adjoining work-yards.

The sincere grief which his old and affectionate friend displayed upset Pierre far more than any angry reproaches or curses would have done. Tears had come to his own eyes, so acute was the suffering he experienced at this meeting, which he ought, however, to have foreseen. There was yet another wrenching, and one which made the best of their blood flow, in that rupture between Pierre and the saintly man whose charitable dreams and hopes of salvation he had so long shared. There had been so many divine illusions, so many struggles for the relief of the masses, so much renunciation and forgiveness practised in common between them in their desire to hasten the harvest of the future! And now they were parting; he, Pierre, still young in years, was returning to life, leaving his aged companion to his vain waiting and his dreams.

In his turn, taking hold of Abbe Rose's hands, he gave expression to his sorrow. "Ah, my friend, my father," said he, "it is you alone that I regret losing, now that I am leaving my frightful torments behind. I thought that I was cured of them, but it has been sufficient for me to meet you, and my heart is rent again. . . . Don't weep for me, I pray you, don't reproach me for what I have done. It was necessary that I should do it. If I had consulted you, you would yourself have told me that it was better to renounce the priesthood than to remain a priest without faith or honour."

"Yes, yes," Abbe Rose gently responded, "you no longer had any faith left. I suspected it. And your rigidity and saintliness of life, in which I detected such great despair, made me anxious for you. How many hours did I not spend at times in striving to calm you! And you must listen to me again, you must still let me save you. I am not a sufficiently learned theologian to lead you back by discussing texts and dogmas; but in the name of Charity, my child, yes, in the name of Charity alone, reflect and take up your task of consolation and hope once more."

Pierre had sat down beside Abbe Rose, in that deserted nook, at the very foot of the basilica. "Charity! charity!" he replied in passionate accents; "why, it is its nothingness and bankruptcy that have killed the priest there was in me. How can you believe that benevolence is sufficient, when you have spent your whole life in practising it without any other result than that of seeing want perpetuated and even increased, and without any possibility of naming the day when such abomination shall cease? . . . You think of the reward after death, do you not? The justice that is to reign in heaven? But that is not justice, it is dupery--dupery that has brought the world nothing but suffering for centuries past."

Then he reminded the old priest of their life in the Charonne district, when they had gone about together succouring children in the streets and parents in their hovels; the whole of those admirable efforts which, so far as Abbe Rose was concerned, had simply ended in blame from his superiors, and removal from proximity to his poor, under penalty of more severe punishment should he persist in compromising religion by the practice of blind benevolence without reason or object. And now, was he not, so to say, submerged beneath the ever-rising tide of want, aware that he would never, never be able to give enough even should he dispose of millions, and that he could only prolong the agony of the poor, who, even should they eat today, would starve again on the morrow? Thus he was powerless. The wound which he tried to dress and heal, immediately reopened and spread, in such wise that all society would at last be stricken and carried off by it.

Quivering as he listened, and slowly shaking his white head, the old priest ended by replying: "that does that matter, my child? what does that matter? One must give, always give, give in spite of everything! There is no other joy on earth. . . . If dogmas worry you, content yourself with the Gospel, and even of that retain merely the promise of salvation through charity."

But at this Pierre's feelings revolted. He forgot that he was speaking to one of simple mind, who was all love and nothing else, and could therefore not follow him. "The trial has been made," he answered, "human salvation cannot be effected by charity, nothing but justice can accomplish it. That is the gathering cry which is going up from every nation. For nearly two thousand years now the Gospel has proved a failure. There has been no redemption; the sufferings of mankind are every whit as great and unjust as they were when Jesus came. And thus the Gospel is now but an abolished code, from which society can only draw things that are troublous and hurtful. Men must free themselves from it."

This was his final conviction. How strange the idea, thought he, of choosing as the world's social legislator one who lived, as Jesus lived, amidst a social system absolutely different from that of nowadays. The age was different, the very world was different. And if it were merely a question of retaining only such of the moral teaching of Jesus as seemed human and eternal, was there not again a danger in applying immutable principles to the society of every age? No society could live under the strict law of the Gospel. Was not all order, all labour, all life

destroyed by the teaching of Jesus? Did He not deny woman, the earth, eternal nature and the eternal fruitfulness of things and beings? Moreover, Catholicism had reared upon His primitive teaching such a frightful edifice of terror and oppression. The theory of original sin, that terrible heredity reviving with each creature born into the world, made no allowance as Science does for the corrective influences of education, circumstances and environment. There could be no more pessimist conception of man than this one which devotes him to the Devil from the instant of his birth, and pictures him as struggling against himself until the instant of his death. An impossible and absurd struggle, for it is a question of changing man in his entirety, killing the flesh, killing reason, destroying some guilty energy in each and every passion, and of pursuing the Devil to the very depths of the waters, mountains and forests, there to annihilate him with the very sap of the world. If this theory is accepted the world is but sin, a mere Hell of temptation and suffering, through which one must pass in order to merit Heaven. Ah! what an admirable instrument for absolute despotism is that religion of death, which the principle of charity alone has enabled men to tolerate, but which the need of justice will perforce sweep away. The poor man, who is the wretched dupe of it all, no longer believes in Paradise, but requires that each and all should be rewarded according to their deserts upon this earth; and thus eternal life becomes the good goddess, and desire and labour the very laws of the world, while the fruitfulness of woman is again honoured, and the idiotic nightmare of Hell is replaced by glorious Nature whose travail knows no end. Leaning upon modern Science, clear Latin reason sweeps away the ancient Semitic conception of the Gospel.

"For eighteen hundred years," concluded Pierre, "Christianity has been hampering the march of mankind towards truth and justice. And mankind will only resume its evolution on the day when it abolishes Christianity, and places the Gospel among the works of the wise, without taking it any longer as its absolute and final law."

But Abbe Rose raised his trembling hands: "Be quiet, be quiet, my child!" he cried; "you are blaspheming! I knew that doubt distracted you; but I thought you so patient, so able to bear suffering, that I relied on your spirit of renunciation and resignation. What can have happened to make you leave the Church in this abrupt and violent fashion? I no longer recognise you. Sudden passion has sprung up in you, an invincible force seems to carry you away. What is it? Who has changed you, tell me?"

Pierre listened in astonishment. "No," said he, "I assure you, I am such as you have known me, and in all this there is but an inevitable result and finish. Who could have influenced me, since nobody has entered my life? What new feeling could transform me, since I find none in me? I am the same as before, the same assuredly."

Still there was a touch of hesitation in his voice. Was it really true that there had been no change within him? He again questioned himself, and there came no clear answer; decidedly, he would find nothing. It was all but a delightful awakening, an overpowering desire for life, a longing to open his arms widely enough to embrace everyone and

everything indeed, a breeze of joy seemed to raise him from the ground and carry him along.

Although Abbe Rose was too innocent of heart to understand things clearly, he again shook his head and thought of the snares which the Devil is ever setting for men. He was quite overwhelmed by Pierre's defection. Continuing his efforts to win him back, he made the mistake of advising him to consult Monseigneur Martha, for he hoped that a prelate of such high authority would find the words necessary to restore him to his faith. Pierre, however, boldly replied that if he was leaving the Church it was partly because it comprised such a man as Martha, such an artisan of deception and despotism, one who turned religion into corrupt diplomacy, and dreamt of winning men back to God by dint of ruses. Thereupon Abbe Rose, rising to his feet, could find no other argument in his despair than that of pointing to the basilica which stood beside them, square, huge and massive, and still waiting for its dome.

"That is God's abode, my child," said he, "the edifice of expiation and triumph, of penitence and forgiveness. You have said mass in it, and now you are leaving it sacrilegiously and forswearing yourself!"

But Pierre also had risen; and buoyed up by a sudden rush of health and strength he answered: "No, no! I am leaving it willingly, as one leaves a dark vault, to return into the open air and the broad sunlight. God does not dwell there; the only purpose of that huge edifice is to defy reason, truth and justice; it has been erected on the highest spot that could be found, like a citadel of error that dominates, insults and threatens Paris!"

Then seeing that the old priest's eyes were again filling with tears, and feeling on his own side so pained by their rupture that he began to sob, Pierre wished to go away. "Farewell! farewell!" he stammered.

But Abbe Rose caught him in his arms and kissed him, as if he were a rebellious son who yet had remained the dearest. "No, not farewell, not farewell, my child," he answered; "say rather till we meet again. Promise me that we shall see each other again, at least among those who starve and weep. It is all very well for you to think that charity has become bankrupt, but shall we not always love one another in loving our poor?"

Then they parted.

On becoming the companion of his three big nephews, Pierre had in a few lessons learnt from them how to ride a bicycle, in order that he might occasionally accompany them on their morning excursions. He went twice with them and Marie along the somewhat roughly paved roads in the direction of the Lake of Enghien. Then one morning when the young woman had promised to take him and Antoine as far as the forest of Saint-Germain, it was found at the last moment that Antoine could not come. Marie was already dressed in a chemisette of fawn-coloured silk, and a little jacket and "rationals" of black serge, and it was such a warm, bright April day that she was not inclined to renounce her trip.

"Well, so much the worse!" she gaily said to Pierre, "I shall take you with me, there will only be the pair of us. I really want you to see how delightful it is to bowl over a good road between the beautiful trees."

However, as Pierre was not yet a very expert rider, they decided that they would take the train as far as Maisons-Laffitte, whence they would proceed on their bicycles to the forest, cross it in the direction of Saint-Germain, and afterwards return to Paris by train.

"You will be here for /dejeuner/, won't you?" asked Guillaume, whom this freak amused, and who looked with a smile at his brother. The latter, like Marie, was in black: jacket, breeches and stockings all of the same hue.

"Oh, certainly!" replied Marie. "It's now barely eight o'clock, so we have plenty of time. Still you need not wait for us, you know, we shall always find our way back."

It was a delightful morning. When they started, Pierre could fancy himself with a friend of his own sex, so that this trip together through the warm sunlight seemed quite natural. Doubtless their costumes, which were so much alike, conduced to the gay brotherly feeling he experienced. But beyond all this there was the healthfulness of the open air, the delight which exercise brings, the pleasure of roaming in all freedom through the midst of nature.

On taking the train they found themselves alone in a compartment, and Marie once more began to talk of her college days. "Ah! you've no idea," said she, "what fine games at baseball we used to have at Fenelon! We used to tie up our skirts with string so as to run the better, for we were not allowed to wear rationals like I'm wearing now. And there were shrieks, and rushes, and pushes, till our hair waved about and we were quite red with exercise and excitement. Still that didn't prevent us from working in the class-rooms. On the contrary! Directly we were at study we fought again, each striving to learn the most and reach the top of the class!"

She laughed gaily as she thus recalled her school life, and Pierre glanced at her with candid admiration, so pink and healthy did she look under her little hat of black felt, which a long silver pin kept in position. Her fine dark hair was caught up behind, showing her neck, which looked as fresh and delicate as a child's. And never before had she seemed to him so supple and so strong.

"Ah," she continued in a jesting way, "there is nothing like rationals, you know! To think that some women are foolish and obstinate enough to wear skirts when they go out cycling!"

Then, as he declared--just by way of speaking the truth, and without the faintest idea of gallantry--that she looked very nice indeed in her costume, she responded: "Oh! I don't count. I'm not a beauty. I simply enjoy good health. . . . But can you understand it? To think that women have an unique opportunity of putting themselves at their ease, and

releasing their limbs from prison, and yet they won't do so! If they think that they look the prettier in short skirts like schoolgirls they are vastly mistaken! And as for any question of modesty, well, it seems to me that it is infinitely less objectionable for women to wear rationals than to bare their bosoms at balls and theatres and dinners as society ladies do." Then, with a gesture of girlish impulsiveness, she added: "Besides, does one think of such things when one's rolling along? . . . Yes, rationals are the only things, skirts are rank heresy!"

In her turn, she was now looking at him, and was struck by the extraordinary change which had come over him since the day when he had first appeared to her, so sombre in his long cassock, with his face emaciated, livid, almost distorted by anguish. It was like a resurrection, for now his countenance was bright, his lofty brow had all the serenity of hope, while his eyes and lips once more showed some of the confident tenderness which sprang from his everlasting thirst for love, self-bestowal and life. All mark of the priesthood had already left him, save that where he had been tonsured his hair still remained rather short.

"Why are you looking at me?" he asked.

"I was noticing how much good has been done you by work and the open air," she frankly answered; "I much prefer you as you are. You used to look so poorly. I thought you really ill."

"So I was," said he.

The train, however, was now stopping at Maisons-Laffitte. They alighted from it, and at once took the road to the forest. This road rises gently till it reaches the Maisons gate, and on market days it is often crowded with carts.

"I shall go first, eh?" said Marie gaily, "for vehicles still alarm you."

Thereupon she started ahead, but every now and again she turned with a smile to see if he were following her. And every time they overtook and passed a cart she spoke to him of the merits of their machines, which both came from the Grandidier works. They were "Lisettes," examples of those popular bicycles which Thomas had helped to perfect, and which the Bon Marche now sold in large numbers for 250 francs apiece. Perhaps they were rather heavy in appearance, but on the other hand their strength was beyond question. They were just the machines for a long journey, so Marie declared.

"Ah! here's the forest," she at last exclaimed. "We have now reached the end of the rise; and you will see what splendid avenues there are. One can bowl along them as on a velvet carpet."

Pierre had already joined her, and they rode on side by side along the broad straight avenue fringed with magnificent trees.

"I am all right now," said Pierre; "your pupil will end by doing you

honour, I hope."

"Oh! I've no doubt of it. You already have a very good seat, and before long you'll leave me behind, for a woman is never a man's equal in a matter like this. At the same time, however, what a capital education cycling is for women!"

In what way?"

"Oh! I've certain ideas of my own on the subject; and if ever I have a daughter I shall put her on a bicycle as soon as she's ten years old, just to teach her how to conduct herself in life."

"Education by experience, eh?"

"Yes, why not? Look at the big girls who are brought up hanging to their mothers' apron strings. Their parents frighten them with everything, they are allowed no initiative, no exercise of judgment or decision, so that at times they hardly know how to cross a street, to such a degree does the traffic alarm them. Well, I say that a girl ought to be set on a bicycle in her childhood, and allowed to follow the roads. She will then learn to open her eyes, to look out for stones and avoid them, and to turn in the right direction at every bend or crossway. If a vehicle comes up at a gallop or any other danger presents itself, she'll have to make up her mind on the instant, and steer her course firmly and properly if she does not wish to lose a limb. Briefly, doesn't all this supply proper apprenticeship for one's will, and teach one how to conduct and defend oneself?"

Pierre had begun to laugh. "You will all be too healthy," he remarked.

"Oh, one must be healthy if one wants to be happy. But what I wish to convey is that those who learn to avoid stones and to turn properly along the highways will know how to overcome difficulties, and take the best decisions in after life. The whole of education lies in knowledge and energy."

"So women are to be emancipated by cycling?"

"Well, why not? It may seem a droll idea; but see what progress has been made already. By wearing rationals women free their limbs from prison; then the facilities which cycling affords people for going out together tend to greater intercourse and equality between the sexes; the wife and the children can follow the husband everywhere, and friends like ourselves are at liberty to roam hither and thither without astonishing anybody. In this lies the greatest advantage of all: one takes a bath of air and sunshine, one goes back to nature, to the earth, our common mother, from whom one derives fresh strength and gaiety of heart! Just look how delightful this forest is. And how healthful the breeze that inflates our lungs! Yes, it all purifies, calms and encourages one."

The forest, which was quite deserted on week days, stretched out in quietude on either hand, with sunlight filtering between its deep bands

of trees. At that hour the rays only illumined one side of the avenue, there gilding the lofty drapery of verdure; on the other, the shady side, the greenery seemed almost black. It was truly delightful to skim, swallow-like, over that royal avenue in the fresh atmosphere, amidst the waving of grass and foliage, whose powerful scent swept against one's face. Pierre and Marie scarcely touched the soil: it was as if wings had come to them, and were carrying them on with a regular flight, through alternate patches of shade and sunshine, and all the scattered vitality of the far-reaching, quivering forest, with its mosses, its sources, its animal and its insect life.

Marie would not stop when they reached the crossway of the Croix de Noailles, a spot where people congregate on Sundays, for she was acquainted with secluded nooks which were far more charming resting-places. When they reached the slope going down towards Poissy, she roused Pierre, and they let their machines rush on. Then came all the joyous intoxication of speed, the rapturous feeling of darting along breathlessly while the grey road flees beneath one, and the trees on either hand turn like the opening folds of a fan. The breeze blows tempestuously, and one fancies that one is journeying yonder towards the horizon, the infinite, which ever and ever recedes. It is like boundless hope, delivery from every shackle, absolute freedom of motion through space. And nothing can inspirit one more gloriously--one's heart leaps as if one were in the very heavens.

"We are not going to Poissy, you know!" Marie suddenly cried; "we have to turn to the left."

They took the road from Acheres to the Loges, which ascends and contracts, thus bringing one closer together in the shade. Gradually slowing down, they began to exert themselves in order to make their way up the incline. This road was not so good as the others, it had been gullied by the recent heavy rains, and sand and gravel lay about. But then is there not even a pleasure in effort?

"You will get used to it," said Marie to Pierre; "it's amusing to overcome obstacles. For my part I don't like roads which are invariably smooth. A little ascent which does not try one's limbs too much rouses and inspirits one. And it is so agreeable to find oneself strong, and able to go on and on in spite of rain, or wind, or hills."

Her bright humour and courage quite charmed Pierre. "And so," said he, "we are off for a journey round France?"

"No, no, we've arrived. You won't dislike a little rest, eh? And now, tell me, wasn't it worth our while to come on here and rest in such a nice fresh, quiet spot."

She nimbly sprang off her machine and, bidding him follow her, turned into a path, along which she went some fifty paces. They placed their bicycles against some trees, and then found themselves in a little clearing, the most exquisite, leafy nest that one could dream of. The forest here assumed an aspect of secluded sovereign beauty. The

springtide had endowed it with youth, the foliage was light and virginal, like delicate green lace flecked with gold by the sun-rays. And from the herbage and the surrounding thickets arose a breath of life, laden with all the powerful aroma of the earth.

"It's not too warm as yet, fortunately," exclaimed Marie, as she seated herself at the foot of a young oak-tree, against which she leant. "In July ladies get rather red by the time they reach this spot, and all the powder comes off their faces. However, one can't always be beautiful."

"Well, I'm not cold by any means," replied Pierre, as he sat at her feet wiping his forehead.

She laughed, and answered that she had never before seen him with such a colour. Then they began to talk like children, like two young friends, finding a source of gaiety in the most puerile things. She was somewhat anxious about his health, however, and would not allow him to remain in the cool shade, as he felt so very warm. In order to tranquillise her, he had to change his place and seat himself with his back to the sun. Then a little later he saved her from a large black spider, which had caught itself in the wavy hair on the nape of her neck. At this all her womanly nature reappeared, and she shrieked with terror. "How stupid it was to be afraid of a spider!" she exclaimed a moment afterwards; yet, in spite of her efforts to master herself, she remained pale and trembling.

Silence at last fell between them, and they looked at one another with a smile. In the midst of that delicate greenery they felt drawn together by frank affection--the affection of brother and sister, so it seemed to them. It made Marie very happy to think that she had taken an interest in Pierre, and that his return to health was largely her own work. However, their eyes never fell, their hands never met, even as they sat there toying with the grass, for they were as pure, as unconscious of all evil, as were the lofty oaks around them.

At last Marie noticed that time was flying. "You know that they expect us back to lunch," she exclaimed. "We ought to be off."

Thereupon they rose, wheeled their bicycles back to the highway, and starting off again at a good pace passed the Loges and reached Saint-Germain by the fine avenue which conducts to the chateau. It charmed them to take their course again side by side, like birds of equal flight. Their little bells jingled, their chains rustled lightly, and a fresh breeze swept past them as they resumed their talk, quite at ease, and so linked together by friendship that they seemed far removed from all the rest of the world.

They took the train from Saint-Germain to Paris, and on the journey Pierre suddenly noticed that Marie's cheeks were purpling. There were two ladies with them in the compartment.

"Ah!" said he, "so you feel warm in your turn now?"

But she protested the contrary, her face glowing more and more brightly

as she spoke, as if some sudden feeling of shame quite upset her. "No, I'm not warm," said she; "just feel my hands. . . . But how ridiculous it is to blush like this without any reason for it!"

He understood her. This was one of those involuntary blushing fits which so distressed her, and which, as Mere-Grand had remarked, brought her heart to her very cheeks. There was no cause for it, as she herself said. After slumbering in all innocence in the solitude of the forest her heart had begun to beat, despite herself.

Meantime, over yonder at Montmartre, Guillaume had spent his morning in preparing some of that mysterious powder, the cartridges of which he concealed upstairs in Mere-Grand's bedroom. Great danger attended this manufacture. The slightest forgetfulness while he was manipulating the ingredients, any delay, too, in turning off a tap, might lead to a terrible explosion, which would annihilate the building and all who might be in it. For this reason he preferred to work when he was alone, so that on the one hand there might be no danger for others, and on the other less likelihood of his own attention being diverted from his task. That morning, as it happened, his three sons were working in the room, and Mere-Grand sat sewing near the furnace. Truth to tell, she did not count, for she scarcely ever left her place, feeling quite at ease there, however great might be the peril. Indeed, she had become so well acquainted with the various phases of Guillaume's delicate operations, and their terrible possibilities, that she would occasionally give him a helping hand.

That morning, as she sat there mending some house linen,--her eyesight still being so keen that in spite of her seventy years she wore no spectacles,--she now and again glanced at Guillaume as if to make sure that he forgot nothing. Then feeling satisfied, she would once more bend over her work. She remained very strong and active. Her hair was only just turning white, and she had kept all her teeth, while her face still looked refined, though it was slowly withering with age and had acquired an expression of some severity. As a rule she was a woman of few words; her life was one of activity and good management. When she opened her lips it was usually to give advice, to counsel reason, energy and courage. For some time past she had been growing more taciturn than ever, as if all her attention were claimed by the household matters which were in her sole charge; still, her fine eyes would rest thoughtfully on those about her, on the three young men, and on Guillaume, Marie and Pierre, who all obeyed her as if she were their acknowledged queen. If she looked at them in that pensive way, was it that she foresaw certain changes, and noticed certain incidents of which the others remained unconscious? Perhaps so. At all events she became even graver, and more attentive than in the past. It was as if she were waiting for some hour to strike when all her wisdom and authority would be required.

"Be careful, Guillaume," she at last remarked, as she once more looked up from her sewing. "You seem absent-minded this morning. Is anything worrying you?"

He glanced at her with a smile. "No, nothing, I assure you," he replied.

"But I was thinking of our dear Marie, who was so glad to go off to the forest in this bright sunshine."

Antoine, who heard the remark, raised his head, while his brothers remained absorbed in their work. "What a pity it is that I had this block to finish," said he; "I would willingly have gone with her."

"Oh, no matter," his father quietly rejoined. "Pierre is with her, and he is very cautious."

For another moment Mere-Grand continued scrutinising Guillaume; then she once more reverted to her sewing.

If she exercised such sway over the home and all its inmates, it was by reason of her long devotion, her intelligence, and the kindness with which she ruled. Uninfluenced by any religious faith, and disregarding all social conventionalities, her guiding principle in everything was the theory of human justice which she had arrived at after suffering so grievously from the injustice that had killed her husband. She put her views into practice with wonderful courage, knowing nothing of any prejudices, but accomplishing her duty, such as she understood it, to the very end. And in the same way as she had first devoted herself to her husband, and next to her daughter Marguerite, so at present she devoted herself to Guillaume and his sons. Pierre, whom she had first studied with some anxiety, had now, too, become a member of her family, a dweller in the little realm of happiness which she ruled. She had doubtless found him worthy of admission into it, though she did not reveal the reason why. After days and days of silence she had simply said, one evening, to Guillaume, that he had done well in bringing his brother to live among them.

Time flew by as she sat sewing and thinking. Towards noon Guillaume, who was still at work, suddenly remarked to her: "As Marie and Pierre haven't come back, we had better let the lunch wait a little while. Besides, I should like to finish what I'm about."

Another quarter of an hour then elapsed. Finally, the three young men rose from their work, and went to wash their hands at a tap in the garden.

"Marie is very late," now remarked Mere-Grand. "We must hope that nothing has happened to her."

"Oh! she rides so well," replied Guillaume. "I'm more anxious on account of Pierre."

At this the old lady again fixed her eyes on him, and said: "But Marie will have guided Pierre; they already ride very well together."

"No doubt; still I should be better pleased if they were back home."

Then all at once, fancying that he heard the ring of a bicycle bell, he called out: "There they are!" And forgetting everything else in his

satisfaction, he quitted his furnace and hastened into the garden in order to meet them.

Mere-Grand, left to herself, quietly continued sewing, without a thought that the manufacture of Guillaume's powder was drawing to an end in an apparatus near her. A couple of minutes later, however, when Guillaume came back, saying that he had made a mistake, his eyes suddenly rested on his furnace, and he turned quite livid. Brief as had been his absence the exact moment when it was necessary to turn off a tap in order that no danger might attend the preparation of his powder had already gone by; and now, unless someone should dare to approach that terrible tap, and boldly turn it, a fearful explosion might take place. Doubtless it was too late already, and whoever might have the bravery to attempt the feat would be blown to pieces.

Guillaume himself had often run a similar risk of death with perfect composure. But on this occasion he remained as if rooted to the floor, unable to take a step, paralysed by the dread of annihilation. He shuddered and stammered in momentary expectation of a catastrophe which would hurl the work-shop to the heavens.

"Mere-Grand, Mere-Grand," he stammered. "The apparatus, the tap . . . it is all over, all over!"

The old woman had raised her head without as yet understanding him. "Eh, what?" said she; "what is the matter with you?" Then, on seeing how distorted were his features, how he recoiled as if mad with terror, she glanced at the furnace and realised the danger. "Well, but it's simple enough," said she; "it's only necessary to turn off the tap, eh?"

Thereupon, without any semblance of haste, in the most easy and natural manner possible, she deposited her needlework on a little table, rose from her chair, and turned off the tap with a light but firm hand. "There! it's done," said she. "But why didn't you do it yourself, my friend?"

He had watched her in bewilderment, chilled to the bones, as if touched by the hand of death. And when some colour at last returned to his cheeks, and he found himself still alive in front of the apparatus whence no harm could now come, he heaved a deep sigh and again shuddered. "Why did I not turn it off?" he repeated. "It was because I felt afraid."

At that very moment Marie and Pierre came into the work-shop all chatter and laughter, delighted with their excursion, and bringing with them the bright joyousness of the sunlight. The three brothers, Thomas, Francis and Antoine, were jesting with them, and trying to make them confess that Pierre had at least fought a battle with a cow on the high road, and ridden into a cornfield. All at once, however, they became quite anxious, for they noticed that their father looked terribly upset.

"My lads," said he, "I've just been a coward. Ah! it's a curious feeling, I had never experienced it before."

Thereupon he recounted his fears of an accident, and how quietly Mere-Grand had saved them all from certain death. She waved her hand, however, as if to say that there was nothing particularly heroic in turning off a tap. The young men's eyes nevertheless filled with tears, and one after the other they went to kiss her with a fervour instinct with all the gratitude and worship they felt for her. She had been devoting herself to them ever since their infancy, she had now just given them a new lease of life. Marie also threw herself into her arms, kissing her with gratitude and emotion. Mere-Grand herself was the only one who did not shed tears. She strove to calm them, begging them to exaggerate nothing and to remain sensible.

"Well, you must at all events let me kiss you as the others have done," Guillaume said to her, as he recovered his self-possession. "I at least owe you that. And Pierre, too, shall kiss you, for you are now as good for him as you have always been for us."

At table, when it was at last possible for them to lunch, he reverted to that attack of fear which had left him both surprised and ashamed. He who for years had never once thought of death had for some time past found ideas of caution in his mind. On two occasions recently he had shuddered at the possibility of a catastrophe. How was it that a longing for life had come to him in his decline? Why was it that he now wished to live? At last with a touch of tender affection in his gaiety, he remarked: "Do you know, Marie, I think it is my thoughts of you that make me a coward. If I've lost my bravery it's because I risk something precious when any danger arises. Happiness has been entrusted to my charge. Just now when I fancied that we were all going to die, I thought I could see you, and my fear of losing you froze and paralysed me."

Marie indulged in a pretty laugh. Allusions to her coming marriage were seldom made; however, she invariably greeted them with an air of happy affection.

"Another six weeks!" she simply said.

Thereupon Mere-Grand, who had been looking at them, turned her eyes towards Pierre. He, however, like the others was listening with a smile.

"That's true," said the old lady, "you are to be married in six weeks' time. So I did right to prevent the house from being blown up."

At this the young men made merry; and the repast came to an end in very joyous fashion.

During the afternoon, however, Pierre's heart gradually grew heavy. Marie's words constantly returned to him: "Another six weeks!" Yes, it was indeed true, she would then be married. But it seemed to him that he had never previously known it, never for a moment thought of it. And later on, in the evening, when he was alone in his room at Neuilly, his heart-pain became intolerable. Those words tortured him. Why was it that they had not caused him any suffering when they were spoken, why had he greeted them with a smile? And why had such cruel anguish slowly

followed? All at once an idea sprang up in his mind, and became an overwhelming certainty. He loved Marie, he loved her as a lover, with a love so intense that he might die from it.

With this sudden consciousness of his passion everything became clear and plain. He had been going perforce towards that love ever since he had first met Marie. The emotion into which the young woman had originally thrown him had seemed to him a feeling of repulsion, but afterwards he had been slowly conquered, all his torments and struggles ending in this love for her. It was indeed through her that he had at last found quietude. And the delightful morning which he had spent with her that day, appeared to him like a betrothal morning, in the depths of the happy forest. Nature had resumed her sway over him, delivered him from his sufferings, made him strong and healthy once more, and given him to the woman he adored. The quiver he had experienced, the happiness he had felt, his communion with the trees, the heavens, and every living creature--all those things which he had been unable to explain, now acquired a clear meaning which transported him. In Marie alone lay his cure, his hope, his conviction that he would be born anew and at last find happiness. In her company he had already forgotten all those distressing problems which had formerly haunted him and bowed him down. For a week past he had not once thought of death, which had so long been the companion of his every hour. All the conflict of faith and doubt, the distress roused by the idea of nihility, the anger he had felt at the unjust sufferings of mankind, had been swept away by her fresh cool hands. She was so healthy herself, so glad to live, that she had imparted a taste for life even to him. Yes, it was simply that: she was making him a man, a worker, a lover once more.

Then he suddenly remembered Abbe Rose and his painful conversation with that saintly man. The old priest, whose heart was so ingenuous, and who knew nothing of love and passion, was nevertheless the only one who had understood the truth. He had told Pierre that he was changed, that there was another man in him. And he, Pierre, had foolishly and stubbornly declared that he was the same as he had always been; whereas Marie had already transformed him, bringing all nature back to his breast--all nature, with its sunlit countrysides, its fructifying breezes, and its vast heavens, whose glow ripens its crops. That indeed was why he had felt so exasperated with Catholicism, that religion of death; that was why he had shouted that the Gospel was useless, and that the world awaited another law--a law of terrestrial happiness, human justice and living love and fruitfulness!

Ah, but Guillaume? Then a vision of his brother rose before Pierre, that brother who loved him so fondly, and who had carried him to his home of toil, quietude and affection, in order to cure him of his sufferings. If he knew Marie it was simply because Guillaume had chosen that he should know her. And again Marie's words recurred to him: "Another six weeks!" Yes, in six weeks his brother would marry the young woman. This thought was like a stab in Pierre's heart. Still, he did not for one moment hesitate: if he must die of his love, he would die of it, but none should ever know it, he would conquer himself, he would flee to the ends of the earth should he ever feel the faintest cowardice. Rather than bring a

moment's pain to that brother who had striven to resuscitate him, who was the artisan of the passion now consuming him, who had given him his whole heart and all he had--he would condemn himself to perpetual torture. And indeed, torture was coming back; for in losing Marie he could but sink into the distress born of the consciousness of his nothingness. As he lay in bed, unable to sleep, he already experienced a return of his abominable torments--the negation of everything, the feeling that everything was useless, that the world had no significance, and that life was only worthy of being cursed and denied. And then the shudder born of the thought of death returned to him. Ah! to die, to die without even having lived!

The struggle was a frightful one. Until daybreak he sobbed in martyrdom. Why had he taken off his cassock? He had done so at a word from Marie; and now another word from her gave him the despairing idea of donning it once more. One could not escape from so fast a prison. That black gown still clung to his skin. He fancied that he had divested himself of it, and yet it was still weighing on his shoulders, and his wisest course would be to bury himself in it for ever. By donning it again he would at least wear mourning for his manhood.

All at once, however, a fresh thought upset him. Why should he struggle in that fashion? Marie did not love him. There had been nothing between them to indicate that she cared for him otherwise than as a charming, tender-hearted sister. It was Guillaume that she loved, no doubt. Then he pressed his face to his pillow to stifle his sobs, and once more swore that he would conquer himself and turn a smiling face upon their happiness.

IV

TRIAL AND SENTENCE

HAVING returned to Montmartre on the morrow Pierre suffered so grievously that he did not show himself there on the two following days. He preferred to remain at home where there was nobody to notice his feverishness. On the third morning, however, whilst he was still in bed, strengthless and full of despair, he was both surprised and embarrassed by a visit from Guillaume.

"I must needs come to you," said the latter, "since you forsake us. I've come to fetch you to attend Salvat's trial, which takes place to-day. I had no end of trouble to secure two places. Come, get up, we'll have /dejeuner/ in town, so as to reach the court early."

Then, while Pierre was hastily dressing, Guillaume, who on his side seemed thoughtful and worried that morning, began to question him: "Have you anything to reproach us with?" he asked.

"No, nothing. What an idea!" was Pierre's reply.

"Then why have you been staying away? We had got into the habit of seeing you every day, but all at once you disappear."

Pierre vainly sought a falsehood, and all his composure fled. "I had some work to do here," said he, "and then, too, my gloomy ideas came back to me, and I didn't want to go and sadden you all."

At this Guillaume hastily waved his hand. "If you fancy that your absence enlivens us you're mistaken," he replied. "Marie, who is usually so well and happy, had such a bad headache on the day before yesterday that she was obliged to keep her room. And she was ill at ease and nervous and silent again yesterday. We spent a very unpleasant day."

As he spoke Guillaume looked Pierre well in the face, his frank loyal eyes clearly revealing the suspicions which had come to him, but which he would not express in words.

Pierre, quite dismayed by the news of Marie's indisposition, and frightened by the idea of betraying his secret, thereupon managed to tell a lie. "Yes, she wasn't very well on the day when we went cycling," he quietly responded. "But I assure you that I have had a lot to do here. When you came in just now I was about to get up and go to your house as usual."

Guillaume kept his eyes on him for a moment longer. Then, either believing him or deciding to postpone his search for the truth to some future time, he began speaking affectionately on other subjects. With his keen brotherly love, however, there was blended such a quiver of impending distress, of unconfessed sorrow, which possibly he did not yet realise, that Pierre in his turn began to question him. "And you," said he, "are you ill? You seem to me to have lost your usual serenity."

"I? Oh! I'm not ill. Only I can't very well retain my composure; Salvat's affair distresses me exceedingly, as you must know. They will all end by driving me mad with the monstrous injustice they show towards that unhappy fellow."

Thenceforward Guillaume went on talking of Salvat in a stubborn passionate way, as if he wished to find an explanation of all his pain and unrest in that affair. While he and Pierre were partaking of /dejeuner/ at a little restaurant on the Boulevard du Palais he related how deeply touched he was by the silence which Salvat had preserved with regard both to the nature of the explosive employed in the bomb and the few days' work which he had once done at his house. It was, thanks to this silence, that he, Guillaume, had not been worried or even summoned as a witness. Then, in his emotion, he reverted to his invention, that formidable engine which would ensure omnipotence to France, as the great initiatory and liberative power of the world. The results of the researches which had occupied him for ten years past were now out of danger and in all readiness, so that if occasion required they might at once be delivered to the French government. And, apart from certain scruples which came to him at the thought of the unworthiness of French financial and political society; he was simply delaying any further steps

in the matter until his marriage with Marie, in order that he might associate her with the gift of universal peace which he imagined he was about to bestow upon the world.

It was through Bertheroy and with great difficulty that Guillaume had managed to secure two seats in court for Salvat's trial. When he and Pierre presented themselves for admission at eleven o'clock, they fancied that they would never be able to enter. The large gates of the Palace of Justice were kept closed, several passages were fenced off, and terror seemed to reign in the deserted building, as if indeed the judges feared some sudden invasion of bomb-laden Anarchists. Each door and barrier, too, was guarded by soldiers, with whom the brothers had to parley. When they at last entered the Assize Court they found it already crowded with people, who were apparently quite willing to suffocate there for an hour before the arrival of the judges, and to remain motionless for some seven or eight hours afterwards, since it was reported that the authorities wished to get the case over in a single sitting. In the small space allotted to the standing public there was a serried mass of sightseers who had come up from the streets, a few companions and friends of Salvat having managed to slip in among them. In the other compartment, where witnesses are generally huddled together on oak benches, were those spectators who had been allowed admittance by favour, and these were so numerous and so closely packed that here and there they almost sat upon one another's knees. Then, in the well of the court and behind the bench, were rows of chairs set out as for some theatrical performance, and occupied by privileged members of society, politicians, leading journalists, and ladies. And meantime a number of gowned advocates sought refuge wherever chance offered, crowding into every vacant spot, every available corner.

Pierre had never before visited the Assize Court, and its appearance surprised him. He had expected much pomp and majesty, whereas this temple of human justice seemed to him small and dismal and of doubtful cleanliness. The bench was so low that he could scarcely see the armchairs of the presiding judge and his two assessors. Then he was struck by the profusion of old oak panels, balustrades and benches, which helped to darken the apartment, whose wall hangings were of olive green, while a further display of oak panelling appeared on the ceiling above. From the seven narrow and high-set windows with scanty little white curtains there fell a pale light which sharply divided the court. On one hand one saw the dock and the defending counsel's seat steeped in frigid light, while, on the other, was the little, isolated jury box in the shade. This contrast seemed symbolical of justice, impersonal and uncertain, face to face with the accused, whom the light stripped bare, probed as it were to his very soul. Then, through a kind of grey mist above the bench, in the depths of the stern and gloomy scene, one could vaguely distinguish the heavy painting of "Christ Crucified." A white bust of the Republic alone showed forth clearly against the dark wall above the dock where Salvat would presently appear. The only remaining seats that Guillaume and Pierre could find were on the last bench of the witnesses' compartment, against the partition which separated the latter from the space allotted to the standing public. Just as Guillaume was seating himself, he saw among the latter little Victor Mathis, who stood

there with his elbows leaning on the partition, while his chin rested on his crossed hands. The young man's eyes were glowing in his pale face with thin, compressed lips. Although they recognised one another, Victor did not move, and Guillaume on his side understood that it was not safe to exchange greetings in such a place. From that moment, however, he remained conscious that Victor was there, just above him, never stirring, but waiting silently, fiercely and with flaming eyes, for what was going to happen.

Pierre, meantime, had recognised that most amiable deputy Duthil, and little Princess Rosemonde, seated just in front of him. Amidst the hubbub of the throng which chatted and laughed to while away the time, their voices were the gayest to be heard, and plainly showed how delighted they were to find themselves at a spectacle to which so many desired admittance. Duthil was explaining all the arrangements to Rosemonde, telling her to whom or to what purpose each bench and wooden box was allotted: there was the jury-box, the prisoner's dock, the seats assigned to counsel for the defence, the public prosecutor, and the clerk of the court, without forgetting the table on which material evidence was deposited and the bar to which witnesses were summoned. There was nobody as yet in any of these places; one merely saw an attendant giving a last look round, and advocates passing rapidly. One might indeed have thought oneself in a theatre, the stage of which remained deserted, while the spectators crowded the auditorium waiting for the play to begin. To fill up the interval the little Princess ended by looking about her for persons of her acquaintance among the close-pressed crowd of sight-seers whose eager faces were already reddening.

"Oh! isn't that Monsieur Fongue over there behind the bench, near that stout lady in yellow?" she exclaimed. "Our friend General de Bozonnet is on the other side, I see. But isn't Baron Duvillard here?"

"Oh! no," replied Duthil; "he could hardly come; it would look as if he were here to ask for vengeance." Then, in his turn questioning Rosemonde, the deputy went on: "Do you happen to have quarrelled with your handsome friend Hyacinthe? Is that the reason why you've given me the pleasure of acting as your escort to-day?"

With a slight shrug of her shoulders, the Princess replied that poets were beginning to bore her. A fresh caprice, indeed, was drawing her into politics. For a week past she had found amusement in the surroundings of the ministerial crisis, into which the young deputy for Angouleme had initiated her. "They are all a little bit crazy at the Duvillards', my dear fellow," said she. "It's decided, you know, that Gerard is to marry Camille. The Baroness has resigned herself to it, and I've heard from a most reliable quarter that Madame de Quinsac, the young man's mother, has given her consent."

At this Duthil became quite merry. He also seemed to be well informed on the subject. "Yes, yes, I know," said he. "The wedding is to take place shortly, at the Madeleine. It will be a magnificent affair, no doubt. And after all, what would you have? There couldn't be a better finish to the affair. The Baroness is really kindness personified, and I said all along

that she would sacrifice herself in order to ensure the happiness of her daughter and Gerard. In point of fact that marriage will settle everything, put everything in proper order again."

"And what does the Baron say?" asked Rosemonde.

"The Baron? Why, he's delighted," replied Duthil in a bantering way. "You read no doubt this morning that Dauvergne is given the department of Public Instruction in the new Ministry. This means that Silviane's engagement at the Comedie is a certainty. Dauvergne was chosen simply on that account."

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by little Massot, who, after a dispute with one of the ushers some distance away, had perceived a vacant place by the side of the Princess. He thereupon made her a questioning sign, and she beckoned to him to approach.

"Ah!" said he, as he installed himself beside her, "I have not got here without trouble. One's crushed to death on the press bench, and I've an article to write. You are the kindest of women, Princess, to make a little room for your faithful admirer, myself." Then, after shaking hands with Duthil, he continued without any transition: "And so there's a new ministry at last, Monsieur le Depute. You have all taken your time about it, but it's really a very fine ministry, which everybody regards with surprise and admiration."

The decrees appointing the new ministers had appeared in the "Journal Officiel" that very morning. After a long deadlock, after Vignon had for the second time seen his plans fail through ever-recurring obstacles, Monferrand, as a last resource, had suddenly been summoned to the Elysee, and in four-and-twenty hours he had found the colleagues he wanted and secured the acceptance of his list, in such wise that he now triumphantly re-ascended to power after falling from it with Barroux in such wretched fashion. He had also chosen a new post for himself, relinquishing the department of the Interior for that of Finances, with the Presidency of the Council, which had long been his secret ambition. His stealthy labour, the masterly fashion in which he had saved himself while others sank, now appeared in its full beauty. First had come Salvat's arrest, and the use he had made of it, then the wonderful subterranean campaign which he had carried on against Vignon, the thousand obstacles which he had twice set across his path, and finally the sudden /denouement/ with that list he held in readiness, that formation of a ministry in a single day as soon as his services were solicited.

"It is fine work, I must compliment you on it," added little Massot by way of a jest.

"But I've had nothing to do with it," Duthil modestly replied.

"Nothing to do with it! Oh! yes you have, my dear sir, everybody says so."

The deputy felt flattered and smiled, while the other rattled on with his

insinuations, which were put in such a humorous way that nothing he said could be resented. He talked of Monferrand's followers who had so powerfully helped him on to victory. How heartily had Fonsegue finished off his old friend Barroux in the "Globe"! Every morning for a month past the paper had published an article belabouring Barroux, annihilating Vignon, and preparing the public for the return of a saviour of society who was not named. Then, too, Duvillard's millions had waged a secret warfare, all the Baron's numerous creatures had fought like an army for the good cause. Duthil himself had played the pipe and beaten the drum, while Chaigneux resigned himself to the baser duties which others would not undertake. And so the triumphant Monferrand would certainly begin by stifling that scandalous and embarrassing affair of the African Railways, and appointing a Committee of Inquiry to bury it.

By this time Duthil had assumed an important air. "Well, my dear fellow," said he, "at serious moments when society is in peril, certain strong-handed men, real men of government, become absolutely necessary. Monferrand had no need of our friendship, his presence in office was imperiously required by the situation. His hand is the only one that can save us!"

"I know," replied Massot scoffingly. "I've even been told that if everything was settled straight off so that the decrees might be published this morning, it was in order to instil confidence into the judges and jurymen here, in such wise that knowing Monferrand's fist to be behind them they would have the courage to pronounce sentence of death this evening."

"Well, public safety requires a sentence of death, and those who have to ensure that safety must not be left ignorant of the fact that the government is with them, and will know how to protect them, if need be."

At this moment a merry laugh from the Princess broke in upon the conversation. "Oh! just look over there!" said she; "isn't that Silviane who has just sat down beside Monsieur Fonsegue?"

"The Silviane ministry!" muttered Massot in a jesting way. "Well, there will be no boredom at Dauvergne's if he ingratiates himself with actresses."

Guillaume and Pierre heard this chatter, however little they cared to listen to it. Such a deluge of society tittle-tattle and political indiscretion brought the former a keen heart-pang. So Salvat was sentenced to death even before he had appeared in court. He was to pay for the transgressions of one and all, his crime was simply a favourable opportunity for the triumph of a band of ambitious people bent on power and enjoyment! Ah! what terrible social rottenness there was in it all; money corrupting one and another, families sinking to filth, politics turned into a mere treacherous struggle between individuals, and power becoming the prey of the crafty and the impudent! Must not everything surely crumble? Was not this solemn assize of human justice a derisive parody, since all that one found there was an assembly of happy and privileged people defending the shaky edifice which sheltered them, and

making use of all the forces they yet retained, to crush a fly--that unhappy devil of uncertain sanity who had been led to that court by his violent and cloudy dream of another, superior and avenging justice?

Such were Guillaume's thoughts, when all at once everybody around him started. Noon was now striking, and the jurymen trooped into court in straggling fashion and took their seats in their box. Among them one saw fat fellows clad in their Sunday best and with the faces of simpletons, and thin fellows who had bright eyes and sly expressions. Some of them were bearded and some were bald. However, they all remained rather indistinct, as their side of the court was steeped in shade. After them came the judges, headed by M. de Larombiere, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Appeal Court, who in assuming the perilous honour of conducting the trial had sought to increase the majesty of his long, slender, white face, which looked the more austere as both his assessors, one dark and the other fair, had highly coloured countenances. The public prosecutor's seat was already occupied by one of the most skilful of the advocates-general, M. Lehmann, a broad-shouldered Alsatian Israelite, with cunning eyes, whose presence showed that the case was deemed exceptionally important. At last, amidst the heavy tread of gendarmes, Salvat was brought in, at once rousing such ardent curiosity that all the spectators rose to look at him. He still wore the cap and loose overcoat procured for him by Victor Mathis, and everybody was surprised to see his emaciated, sorrowful, gentle face, crowned by scanty reddish hair, which was turning grey. His soft, glowing, dreamy blue eyes glanced around, and he smiled at someone whom he recognised, probably Victor, but perhaps Guillaume. After that he remained quite motionless.

The presiding judge waited for silence to fall, and then came the formalities which attend the opening of a court of law, followed by the perusal of the lengthy indictment, which a subordinate official read in a shrill voice. The scene had now changed, and the spectators listened wearily and somewhat impatiently, as, for weeks past, the newspapers had related all that the indictment set forth. At present not a corner of the court remained unoccupied, there was scarcely space enough for the witnesses to stand in front of the bench. The closely packed throng was one of divers hues, the light gowns of ladies alternating with the black gowns of advocates, while the red robes of the judges disappeared from view, the bench being so low that the presiding judge's long face scarcely rose above the sea of heads. Many of those present became interested in the jurors, and strove to scrutinise their shadowy countenances. Others, who did not take their eyes off the prisoner, marvelled at his apparent weariness and indifference, which were so great that he scarcely answered the whispered questions of his counsel, a young advocate with a wide-awake look, who was nervously awaiting the opportunity to achieve fame. Most curiosity, however, centred in the table set apart for the material evidence. Here were to be seen all sorts of fragments, some of the woodwork torn away from the carriage-door of the Duvillard mansion, some plaster that had fallen from the ceiling, a paving-stone which the violence of the explosion had split in halves, and other blackened remnants. The more moving sights, however, were the milliner's bonnet-box, which had remained uninjured, and a glass jar in which something white and vague was preserved in spirits of wine. This

was one of the poor errand girl's little hands, which had been severed at the wrist. The authorities had been unable to place her poor ripped body on the table, and so they had brought that hand!

At last Salvat rose, and the presiding judge began to interrogate him. The contrast in the aspect of the court then acquired tragic force: in the shrouding shade upon one hand were the jurors, their minds already made up beneath the pressure of public terror, while in the full, vivid light on the other side was the prisoner, alone and woeful, charged with all the crimes of his race. Four gendarmes watched over him. He was addressed by M. de Larombiere in a tone of contempt and disgust. The judge was not deficient in rectitude; he was indeed one of the last representatives of the old, scrupulous, upright French magistracy; but he understood nothing of the new times, and he treated prisoners with the severity of a Biblical Jehovah. Moreover, the infirmity which was the worry of his life, the childish lisp which, in his opinion, had alone prevented him from shining as a public prosecutor, made him ferociously ill-tempered, incapable of any intelligent indulgence. There were smiles, which he divined, as soon as he raised his sharp, shrill little voice, to ask his first questions. That droll voice of his took away whatever majesty might have remained attached to these proceedings, in which a man's life was being fought for in a hall full of inquisitive, stifling and perspiring folks, who fanned themselves and jested. Salvat answered the judge's earlier questions with his wonted weariness and politeness. While the judge did everything to vilify him, harshly reproaching him with his wretched childhood and youth, magnifying every stain and every transgression in his career, referring to the promiscuity of his life between Madame Theodore and little Celine as something bestial, he, the prisoner, quietly said yes or no, like a man who has nothing to hide and accepts the full responsibility of his actions. He had already made a complete confession of his crime, and he calmly repeated it without changing a word. He explained that if he had deposited his bomb at the entrance of the Duvillard mansion it was to give his deed its true significance, that of summoning the wealthy, the money-mongers who had so scandalously enriched themselves by dint of theft and falsehood, to restore that part of the common wealth which they had appropriated, to the poor, the working classes, their children and their wives, who perished of starvation. It was only at this moment that he grew excited; all the misery that he had endured or witnessed rose to his clouded, semi-educated brain, in which claims and theories and exasperated ideas of absolute justice and universal happiness had gathered confusedly. And from that moment he appeared such as he really was, a sentimentalist, a dreamer transported by suffering, proud and stubborn, and bent on changing the world in accordance with his sectarian logic.

"But you fled!" cried the judge in a voice such as would have befitted a grasshopper. "You must not say that you gave your life to your cause and were ready for martyrdom!"

Salvat's most poignant regret was that he had yielded in the Bois de Boulogne to the dismay and rage which come upon a tracked and hunted man and impel him to do all he can to escape capture. And on being thus taunted by the judge he became quite angry. "I don't fear death, you'll

see that," he replied. "If all had the same courage as I have, your rotten society would be swept away to-morrow, and happiness would at last dawn."

Then the interrogatory dealt at great length with the composition and manufacture of the bomb. The judge, rightly enough, pointed out that this was the only obscure point of the affair. "And so," he remarked, "you persist in saying that dynamite was the explosive you employed? Well, you will presently hear the experts, who, it is true, differ on certain points, but are all of opinion that you employed some other explosive, though they cannot say precisely what it was. Why not speak out on the point, as you glory in saying everything?"

Salvat, however, had suddenly calmed down, giving only cautious monosyllabic replies. "Well, seek for whatever you like if you don't believe me," he now answered. "I made my bomb by myself, and under circumstances which I've already related a score of times. You surely don't expect me to reveal names and compromise comrades?"

From this declaration he would not depart. It was only towards the end of the interrogatory that irresistible emotion overcame him on the judge again referring to the unhappy victim of his crime, the little errand girl, so pretty and fair and gentle, whom ferocious destiny had brought to the spot to meet such an awful death. "It was one of your own class whom you struck," said M. de Larombiere; "your victim was a work girl, a poor child who, with the few pence she earned, helped to support her aged grandmother."

Salvat's voice became very husky as he answered: "That's really the only thing I regret. . . . My bomb certainly wasn't meant for her; and may all the workers, all the starvelings, remember that she gave her blood as I'm going to give mine!"

In this wise the interrogatory ended amidst profound agitation. Pierre had felt Guillaume shuddering beside him, whilst the prisoner quietly and obstinately refused to say a word respecting the explosive that had been employed, preferring as he did to assume full responsibility for the deed which was about to cost him his life. Moreover, Guillaume, on turning round, in compliance with an irresistible impulse, had perceived Victor Mathis still motionless behind him: his elbows ever leaning on the rail of the partition, and his chin still resting on his hands, whilst he listened with silent, concentrated passion. His face had become yet paler than before, and his eyes glowed as with an avenging fire, whose flames would never more be extinguished.

The interrogatory of the prisoner was followed by a brief commotion in court.

"That Salvat looks quite nice, he has such soft eyes," declared the Princess, whom the proceedings greatly amused. "Oh! don't speak ill of him, my dear deputy. You know that I have Anarchist ideas myself."

"I speak no ill of him," gaily replied Duthil. "Nor has our friend

Amadiou any right to speak ill of him. For you know that this affair has set Amadiou on a pinnacle. He was never before talked about to such an extent as he is now; and he delights in being talked about, you know! He has become quite a social celebrity, the most illustrious of our investigating magistrates, and will soon be able to do or become whatever he pleases."

Then Massot, with his sarcastic impudence, summed up the situation. "When Anarchism flourishes, everything flourishes, eh? That bomb has helped on the affairs of a good many fine fellows that I know. Do you think that my governor Fongue, who's so attentive to Silviane yonder, complains of it? And doesn't Sagnier, who's spreading himself out behind the presiding judge, and whose proper place would be between the four gendarmes--doesn't he owe a debt to Salvat for all the abominable advertisements he has been able to give his paper by using the wretched fellow's back as a big drum? And I need not mention the politicians or the financiers or all those who fish in troubled waters."

"But I say," interrupted Duthil, "it seems to me that you yourself made good use of the affair. Your interview with the little girl Celine brought you in a pot of money."

Massot, as it happened, had been struck with the idea of ferreting out Madame Theodore and the child, and of relating his visit to them in the "Globe," with an abundance of curious and touching particulars. The article had met with prodigious success, Celine's pretty answers respecting her imprisoned father having such an effect on ladies with sensitive hearts that they had driven to Montmartre in their carriages in order to see the two poor creatures. Thus alms had come to them from all sides; and strangely enough the very people who demanded the father's head were the most eager to sympathise with the child.

"Well, I don't complain of my little profits," said the journalist in answer to Duthil. "We all earn what we can, you know."

At this moment Rosemonde, while glancing round her, recognised Guillaume and Pierre, but she was so amazed to see the latter in ordinary civilian garb that she did not dare to speak to him. Leaning forward she acquainted Duthil and Massot with her surprise, and they both turned round to look. From motives of discretion, however, they pretended that they did not recognise the Froments.

The heat in court was now becoming quite unbearable, and one lady had already fainted. At last the presiding judge again raised his lisping voice, and managed to restore silence. Salvat, who had remained standing, now held a few sheets of paper, and with some difficulty he made the judge understand that he desired to complete his interrogatory by reading a declaration, which he had drawn up in prison, and in which he explained his reasons for his crime. For a moment M. de Larombiere hesitated, all surprise and indignation at such a request; but he was aware that he could not legally impose silence on the prisoner, and so he signified his consent with a gesture of mingled irritation and disdain. Thereupon Salvat began his perusal much after the fashion of a schoolboy, hemming

and hawing here and there, occasionally becoming confused, and then bringing out certain words with wonderful emphasis, which evidently pleased him. This declaration of his was the usual cry of suffering and revolt already raised by so many disinherited ones. It referred to all the frightful want of the lower spheres; the toiler unable to find a livelihood in his toil; a whole class, the most numerous and worthy of the classes, dying of starvation; whilst, on the other hand, were the privileged ones, gorged with wealth, and wallowing in satiety, yet refusing to part with even the crumbs from their tables, determined as they were to restore nothing whatever of the wealth which they had stolen. And so it became necessary to take everything away from them, to rouse them from their egotism by terrible warnings, and to proclaim to them even with the crash of bombs that the day of justice had come. The unhappy man spoke that word "justice" in a ringing voice which seemed to fill the whole court. But the emotion of those who heard him reached its highest pitch when, after declaring that he laid down his life for the cause, and expected nothing but a verdict of death from the jury, he added, as if prophetically, that his blood would assuredly give birth to other martyrs. They might send him to the scaffold, said he, but he knew that his example would bear fruit. After him would come another avenger, and yet another, and others still, until the old and rotten social system should have crumbled away so as to make room for the society of justice and happiness of which he was one of the apostles.

The presiding judge, in his impatience and agitation, twice endeavoured to interrupt Salvat. But the other read on and on with the imperturbable conscientiousness of one who fears that he may not give proper utterance to his most important words. He must have been thinking of that perusal ever since he had been in prison. It was the decisive act of his suicide, the act by which he proclaimed that he gave his life for the glory of dying in the cause of mankind. And when he had finished he sat down between the gendarmes with glowing eyes and flushed cheeks, as if he inwardly experienced some deep joy.

To destroy the effect which the declaration had produced--a commingling of fear and compassion--the judge at once wished to proceed with the hearing of the witnesses. Of these there was an interminable procession; though little interest attached to their evidence, for none of them had any revelations to make. Most attention perhaps was paid to the measured statements of Grandidier, who had been obliged to dismiss Salvat from his employ on account of the Anarchist propaganda he had carried on. Then the prisoner's brother-in-law, Toussaint, the mechanic, also seemed a very worthy fellow if one might judge him by the manner in which he strove to put things favourably for Salvat, without in any way departing from the truth. After Toussaint's evidence considerable time was taken up by the discussions between the experts, who disagreed in public as much as they had disagreed in their reports. Although they were all of opinion that dynamite could not have been the explosive employed in the bomb, they indulged in the most extraordinary and contradictory suppositions as to this explosive's real nature. Eventually a written opinion given by the illustrious /savant/ Bertheroy was read; and this, after clearly setting forth the known facts, concluded that one found oneself in presence of a new explosive of prodigious power, the formula of which he himself was

unable to specify.

Then detective Mondesir and commissary Dupot came in turn to relate the various phases of the man hunt in the Bois de Boulogne. In Mondesir centred all the gaiety of the proceedings, thanks to the guardroom sallies with which he enlivened his narrative. And in like way the greatest grief, a perfect shudder of revolt and compassion, was roused by the errand girl's grandmother, a poor, bent, withered old woman, whom the prosecution had cruelly constrained to attend the court, and who wept and looked quite dismayed, unable as she was to understand what was wanted of her. When she had withdrawn, the only remaining witnesses were those for the defence, a procession of foremen and comrades, who all declared that they had known Salvat as a very worthy fellow, an intelligent and zealous workman, who did not drink, but was extremely fond of his daughter, and incapable of an act of dishonesty or cruelty.

It was already four o'clock when the evidence of the witnesses came to an end. The atmosphere in court was now quite stifling, feverish fatigue flushed every face, and a kind of ruddy dust obscured the waning light which fell from the windows. Women were fanning themselves and men were mopping their foreheads. However, the passion roused by the scene still brought a glow of cruel delight to every eye. And no one stirred.

"Ah!" sighed Rosemonde all at once, "to think that I hoped to drink a cup of tea at a friend's at five o'clock. I shall die of thirst and starvation here."

"We shall certainly be kept till seven," replied Massot. "I can't offer to go and fetch you a roll, for I shouldn't be readmitted."

Then Duthil, who had not ceased shrugging his shoulders while Salvat read his declaration, exclaimed: "What childish things he said, didn't he? And to think that the fool is going to die for all that! Rich and poor, indeed! Why, there will always be rich and poor. And it's equally certain that when a man is poor his one great desire is to become rich. If that fellow is in the dock to-day it's simply because he failed to make money."

While the others were thus conversing, Pierre for his part was feeling extremely anxious about his brother, who sat beside him in silence, pale and utterly upset. Pierre sought his hand and covertly pressed it. Then in a low voice he inquired: "Do you feel ill? Shall we go away?"

Guillaume answered him by discreetly and affectionately returning his handshake. He was all right, he would remain till the end, however much he might be stirred by exasperation.

It was now Monsieur Lehmann, the public prosecutor, who rose to address the court. He had a large, stern mouth, and was squarely built, with a stubborn Jewish face. Nevertheless he was known to be a man of dexterous, supple nature, one who had a foot in every political camp, and invariably contrived to be on good terms with the powers that were. This explained his rapid rise in life, and the constant favour he enjoyed. In the very

first words he spoke he alluded to the new ministry gazetted that morning, referring pointedly to the strong-handed man who had undertaken the task of reassuring peaceable citizens and making evil-doers tremble. Then he fell upon the wretched Salvat with extraordinary vehemence, recounting the whole of his life, and exhibiting him as a bandit expressly born for the perpetration of crime, a monster who was bound to end by committing some abominable and cowardly outrage. Next he flagellated Anarchism and its partisans. The Anarchists were a mere herd of vagabonds and thieves, said he. That had been shown by the recent robbery at the Princess de Harn's house. The ignoble gang that had been arrested for that affair had given the apostles of the Anarchist doctrine as their references! And that was what the application of Anarchist theories resulted in--burglary and filth, pending a favourable hour for wholesale pillage and murder! For nearly a couple of hours the public prosecutor continued in this fashion, throwing truth and logic to the winds, and exclusively striving to alarm his hearers. He made all possible use of the terror which had reigned in Paris, and figuratively brandished the corpse of the poor little victim, the pretty errand girl, as if it were a blood-red flag, before pointing to the pale hand, preserved in spirits of wine, with a gesture of compassionate horror which sent a shudder through his audience. And he ended, as he had begun, by inspiring the jurors, and telling them that they might fearlessly do their duty now that those at the head of the State were firmly resolved to give no heed to threats.

Then the young advocate entrusted with the defence in his turn spoke. And he really said what there was to say with great clearness and precision. He was of a different school from that of the public prosecutor: his eloquence was very simple and smooth, his only passion seemed to be zeal for truth. Moreover, it was sufficient for him to show Salvat's career in its proper light, to depict him pursued by social fatalities since his childhood, and to explain the final action of his career by all that he had suffered and all that had sprung up in his dreamy brain. Was not his crime the crime of one and all? Who was there that did not feel, if only in a small degree, responsible for that bomb which a penniless, starving workman had deposited on the threshold of a wealthy man's abode--a wealthy man whose name bespoke the injustice of the social system: so much enjoyment on the one hand and so much privation on the other! If one of us happened to lose his head, and felt impelled to hasten the advent of happiness by violence in such troublous times, when so many burning problems claimed solution, ought he to be deprived of his life in the name of justice, when none could swear that they had not in some measure contributed to his madness? Following up this question, Salvat's counsel dwelt at length on the period that witnessed the crime, a period of so many scandals and collapses, when the old world was giving birth to a new one amidst the most terrible struggles and pangs. And he concluded by begging the jury to show themselves humane, to resist all passion and terror, and to pacify the rival classes by a wise verdict, instead of prolonging social warfare by giving the starvelings yet another martyr to avenge.

It was past six o'clock when M. de Larombiere began to sum up in a partial and flowery fashion, in which one detected how grieved and angry

he was at having such a shrill little voice. Then the judges and the jurors withdrew, and the prisoner was led away, leaving the spectators waiting amidst an uproar of feverish impatience. Some more ladies had fainted, and it had even been necessary to carry out a gentleman who had been overcome by the cruel heat. However, the others stubbornly remained there, not one of them quitting his place.

"Ah! it won't take long now," said Massot. "The jurors brought their verdict all ready in their pockets. I was looking at them while that little advocate was telling them such sensible things. They all looked as if they were comfortably asleep in the gloom."

Then Duthil turned to the Princess and asked her, "Are you still hungry?"

"Oh! I'm starving," she replied. "I shall never be able to wait till I get home. You will have to take me to eat a biscuit somewhere. . . . All the same, however, it's very exciting to see a man's life staked on a yes or a no."

Meantime Pierre, finding Guillaume still more feverish and grieved, had once again taken hold of his hand. Neither of them spoke, so great was the distress that they experienced for many reasons which they themselves could not have precisely defined. It seemed to them, however, that all human misery--inclusive of their own, the affections, the hopes, the griefs which brought them suffering--was sobbing and quivering in that buzzing hall. Twilight had gradually fallen there, but as the end was now so near it had doubtless been thought unnecessary to light the chandeliers. And thus large vague shadows, dimming and shrouding the serried throng, now hovered about in the last gleams of the day. The ladies in light gowns yonder, behind the bench, looked like pale phantoms with all-devouring eyes, whilst the numerous groups of black-robed advocates formed large sombre patches which gradually spread everywhere. The greyish painting of the Christ had already vanished, and on the walls one only saw the glaring white bust of the Republic, which resembled some frigid death's head starting forth from the darkness.

"Ah!" Massot once more exclaimed, "I knew that it wouldn't take long!"

Indeed, the jurors were returning after less than a quarter of an hour's absence. Then the judges likewise came back and took their seats. Increased emotion stirred the throng, a great gust seemed to sweep through the court, a gust of anxiety, which made every head sway. Some people had risen to their feet, and others gave vent to involuntary exclamations. The foreman of the jury, a gentleman with a broad red face, had to wait a moment before speaking. At last in a sharp but somewhat sputtering voice he declared: "On my honour and my conscience, before God and before man, the verdict of the jury is: on the question of Murder, yes, by a majority of votes."*

* English readers may be reminded that in France the verdict of a majority of the jury suffices for conviction or acquittal. If the jury is evenly divided the prisoner is acquitted.--Trans.

The night had almost completely fallen when Salvat was once more brought in. In front of the jurors, who faded away in the gloom, he stood forth, erect, with a last ray from the windows lighting up his face. The judges themselves almost disappeared from view, their red robes seemed to have turned black. And how phantom-like looked the prisoner's emaciated face as he stood there listening, with dreamy eyes, while the clerk of the court read the verdict to him.

When silence fell and no mention was made of extenuating circumstances, he understood everything. His face, which had retained a childish expression, suddenly brightened. "That means death. Thank you, gentlemen," he said.

Then he turned towards the public, and amidst the growing darkness searched for the friendly faces which he knew were there; and this time Guillaume became fully conscious that he had recognised him, and was again expressing affectionate and grateful thanks for the crust he had received from him on a day of want. He must have also bidden farewell to Victor Mathis, for as Guillaume glanced at the young man, who had not moved, he saw that his eyes were staring wildly, and that a terrible expression rested on his lips.

As for the rest of the proceedings, the last questions addressed to the jury and the counsel, the deliberations of the judges and the delivery of sentence--these were all lost amidst the buzzing and surging of the crowd. A little compassion was unconsciously manifested; and some stupor was mingled with the satisfaction that greeted the sentence of death.

No sooner had Salvat been condemned, however, than he drew himself up to his full height, and as the guards led him away he shouted in a stentorian voice: "Long live Anarchy!"

Nobody seemed angered by the cry. The crowd went off quietly, as if weariness had lulled all its passions. The proceedings had really lasted too long and fatigued one too much. It was quite pleasant to inhale the fresh air on emerging from such a nightmare.

In the large waiting hall, Pierre and Guillaume passed Duthil and the Princess, whom General de Bozonnet had stopped while chatting with Fonseca. All four of them were talking in very loud voices, complaining of the heat and their hunger, and agreeing that the affair had not been a particularly interesting one. Yet, all was well that ended well. As Fonseca remarked, the condemnation of Salvat to death was a political and social necessity.

When Pierre and Guillaume reached the Pont Neuf, the latter for a moment rested his elbows on the parapet of the bridge. His brother, standing beside him, also gazed at the grey waters of the Seine, which here and there were fired by the reflections of the gas lamps. A fresh breeze ascended from the river; it was the delightful hour when night steals gently over resting Paris. Then, as the brothers stood there breathing that atmosphere which usually brings relief and comfort, Pierre on his side again became conscious of his heart-wound, and remembered his

promise to return to Montmartre, a promise that he must keep in spite of the torture there awaiting him; whilst Guillaume on the other hand experienced a revival of the suspicion and disquietude that had come to him on seeing Marie so feverish, changed as it were by some new feeling, of which she herself was ignorant. Were further sufferings, struggles, and obstacles to happiness yet in store for those brothers who loved one another so dearly? At all events their hearts bled once more with all the sorrow into which they had been cast by the scene they had just witnessed: that assize of justice at which a wretched man had been condemned to pay with his head for the crimes of one and all.

Then, as they turned along the quay, Guillaume recognised young Victor going off alone in the gloom, just in front of them. The chemist stopped him and spoke to him of his mother. But the young man did not hear; his thin lips parted, and in a voice as trenchant as a knife-thrust he exclaimed: "Ah! so it's blood they want. Well, they may cut off his head, but he will be avenged!"

V

SACRIFICE

THE days which followed Salvat's trial seemed gloomy ones up yonder in Guillaume's workroom, which was usually so bright and gay. Sadness and silence filled the place. The three young men were no longer there. Thomas betook himself to the Grandidier works early every morning in order to perfect his little motor; Francois was so busy preparing for his examination that he scarcely left the Ecole Normale; while Antoine was doing some work at Jahan's, where he delighted to linger and watch his little friend Lise awakening to life. Thus Guillaume's sole companion was Mere-Grand, who sat near the window busy with her needlework; for Marie was ever going about the house, and only stayed in the workroom for any length of time when Pierre happened to be there.

Guillaume's gloom was generally attributed to the feelings of anger and revolt into which the condemnation of Salvat had thrown him. He had flown into a passion on his return from the Palace of Justice, declaring that the execution of the unhappy man would simply be social murder, deliberate provocation of class warfare. And the others had bowed on hearing that pain-fraught violent cry, without attempting to discuss the point. Guillaume's sons respectfully left him to the thoughts which kept him silent for hours, with his face pale and a dreamy expression in his eyes. His chemical furnace remained unlighted, and his only occupation from morn till night was to examine the plans and documents connected with his invention, that new explosive and that terrible engine of war, which he had so long dreamt of presenting to France in order that she might impose the reign of truth and justice upon all the nations. However, during the long hours which he spent before the papers scattered over his table, often without seeing them, for his eyes wandered far away, a multitude of vague thoughts came to him--doubts respecting the wisdom of his project, and fears lest his desire to pacify the nations

should simply throw them into an endless war of extermination. Although he really believed that great city of Paris to be the world's brain, entrusted with the task of preparing the future, he could not disguise from himself that with all its folly and shame and injustice it still presented a shocking spectacle. Was it really ripe enough for the work of human salvation which he thought of entrusting to it? Then, on trying to re-peruse his notes and verify his formulas, he only recovered his former energetic determination on thinking of his marriage, whereupon the idea came to him that it was now too late for him to upset his life by changing such long-settled plans.

His marriage! Was it not the thought of this which haunted Guillaume and disturbed him far more powerfully than his scientific work or his humanitarian passion? Beneath all the worries that he acknowledged, there was another which he did not confess even to himself, and which filled him with anguish. He repeated day by day that he would reveal his invention to the Minister of War as soon as he should be married to Marie, whom he wished to associate with his glory. Married to Marie! Each time he thought of it, burning fever and secret disquietude came over him. If he now remained so silent and had lost his quiet cheerfulness, it was because he had felt new life, as it were, emanating from her. She was certainly no longer the same woman as formerly; she was becoming more and more changed and distant. He had watched her and Pierre when the latter happened to be there, which was now but seldom. He, too, appeared embarrassed, and different from what he had been. On the days when he came, however, Marie seemed transformed; it was as if new life animated the house. Certainly the intercourse between her and Pierre was quite innocent, sisterly on the one hand, brotherly on the other. They simply seemed to be a pair of good friends. And yet a radiance, a vibration, emanated from them, something more subtle even than a sun-ray or a perfume. After the lapse of a few days Guillaume found himself unable to doubt the truth any longer. And his heart bled, he was utterly upset by it. He had not found them in fault in any way, but he was convinced that these two children, as he so paternally called them, really adored one another.

One lovely morning when he happened to be alone with Mere-Grand, face to face with sunlit Paris, he fell into a yet more dolorous reverie than usual. He seemed to be gazing fixedly at the old lady, as, seated in her usual place, she continued sewing with an air of queenly serenity. Perhaps, however, he did not see her. For her part she occasionally raised her eyes and glanced at him, as if expecting a confession which did not come. At last, finding such silence unbearable, she made up her mind to address him: "What has been the matter with you, Guillaume, for some time past? Why don't you tell me what you have to tell me?"

He descended from the clouds, as it were, and answered in astonishment: "What I have to tell you?"

"Yes, I know it as well as you do, and I thought you would speak to me of it, since it pleases you to do nothing here without consulting me."

At this he turned very pale and shuddered. So he had not been mistaken in

the matter, even Mere-Grand knew all about it. To talk of it, however, was to give shape to his suspicions, to transform what, hitherto, might merely have been a fancy on his part into something real and definite.

"It was inevitable, my dear son," said Mere-Grand. "I foresaw it from the outset. And if I did not warn you of it, it was because I believed in some deep design on your part. Since I have seen you suffering, however, I have realised that I was mistaken." Then, as he still looked at her quivering and distracted, she continued: "Yes, I fancied that you might have wished it, that in bringing your brother here you wished to know if Marie loved you otherwise than as a father. There was good reason for testing her--for instance, the great difference between your ages, for your life is drawing to a close, whilst hers is only beginning. And I need not mention the question of your work, the mission which I have always dreamt of for you."

Thereupon, with his hands raised in prayerful fashion, Guillaume drew near to the old lady and exclaimed: "Oh! speak out clearly, tell me what you think. I don't understand, my poor heart is so lacerated; and yet I should so much like to know everything, so as to be able to act and take a decision. To think that you whom I love, you whom I venerate as much as if you were my real mother, you whose profound good sense I know so well that I have always followed your advice--to think that you should have foreseen this frightful thing and have allowed it to happen at the risk of its killing me! . . . Why have you done so, tell me, why?"

Mere-Grand was not fond of talking. Absolute mistress of the house as she was, managing everything, accountable to nobody for her actions, she never gave expression to all that she thought or all that she desired. Indeed, there was no occasion for it, as Guillaume, like the children, relied upon her completely, with full confidence in her wisdom. And her somewhat enigmatical ways even helped to raise her in their estimation.

"What is the use of words, when things themselves speak?" she now gently answered, while still plying her needle. "It is quite true that I approved of the plan of a marriage between you and Marie, for I saw that it was necessary that she should be married if she was to stay here. And then, too, there were many other reasons which I needn't speak of. However, Pierre's arrival here has changed everything, and placed things in their natural order. Is not that preferable?"

He still lacked the courage to understand her. "Preferable! When I'm in agony? When my life is wrecked?"

Thereupon she rose and came to him, tall and rigid in her thin black gown, and with an expression of austerity and energy on her pale face. "My son," she said, "you know that I love you, and that I wish you to be very noble and lofty. Only the other morning, you had an attack of fright, the house narrowly escaped being blown up. Then, for some days now you have been sitting over those documents and plans in an absent-minded, distracted state, like a man who feels weak, and doubts, and no longer knows his way. Believe me, you are following a dangerous path; it is better that Pierre should marry Marie, both for their sakes

and for your own."

"For my sake? No, no! What will become of me!"

"You will calm yourself and reflect, my son. You have such serious duties before you. You are on the eve of making your invention known. It seems to me that something has bedimmed your sight, and that you will perhaps act wrongly in this respect, through failing to take due account of the problem before you. Perhaps there is something better to be done. . . . At all events, suffer if it be necessary, but remain faithful to your ideal."

Then, quitting him with a maternal smile, she sought to soften her somewhat stern words by adding: "You have compelled me to speak unnecessarily, for I am quite at ease; with your superior mind, whatever be in question, you can but do the one right thing that none other would do."

On finding himself alone Guillaume fell into feverish uncertainty. What was the meaning of Mere-Grand's enigmatical words? He knew that she was on the side of whatever might be good, natural, and necessary. But she seemed to be urging him to some lofty heroism; and indeed what she had said threw a ray of light upon the unrest which had come to him in connection with his old plan of going to confide his secret to some Minister of War or other, whatever one might happen to be in office at the time. Growing hesitation and repugnance stirred him as he fancied he could again hear her saying that perhaps there might be some better course, that would require search and reflection. But all at once a vision of Marie rose before him, and his heart was rent by the thought that he was asked to renounce her. To lose her, to give her to another! No, no, that was beyond his strength. He would never have the frightful courage that was needed to pass by the last promised raptures of love with disdain!

For a couple of days Guillaume struggled on. He seemed to be again living the six years which the young woman had already spent beside him in that happy little house. She had been at first like an adopted daughter there; and later on, when the idea of their marriage had sprung up, he had viewed it with quiet delight in the hope that it would ensure the happiness of all around him. If he had previously abstained from marrying again it was from the fear of placing a strange mother over his children; and if he yielded to the charm of loving yet once more, and no longer leading a solitary life, it was because he had found at his very hearth one of such sensible views, who, in the flower of youth, was willing to become his wife despite the difference in their ages. Then months had gone by, and serious occurrences had compelled them to postpone the wedding, though without undue suffering on his part. Indeed, the certainty that she was waiting for him had sufficed him, for his life of hard work had rendered him patient. Now, however, all at once, at the threat of losing her, his hitherto tranquil heart ached and bled. He would never have thought the tie so close a one. But he was now almost fifty, and it was as if love and woman were being wrenched away from him, the last woman that he could love and desire, one too who was the more

desirable, as she was the incarnation of youth from which he must ever be severed, should he indeed lose her. Passionate desire, mingled with rage, flared up within him at the thought that someone should have come to take her from him.

One night, alone in his room, he suffered perfect martyrdom. In order that he might not rouse the house he buried his face in his pillow so as to stifle his sobs. After all, it was a simple matter; Marie had given him her promise, and he would compel her to keep it. She would be his, and his alone, and none would be able to steal her from him. Then, however, there rose before him a vision of his brother, the long-forgotten one, whom, from feelings of affection, he had compelled to join his family. But his sufferings were now so acute that he would have driven that brother away had he been before him. He was enraged, maddened, by the thought of him. His brother--his little brother! So all their love was over; hatred and violence were about to poison their lives. For hours Guillaume continued complaining deliriously, and seeking how he might so rid himself of Pierre that what had happened should be blotted out. Now and again, when he recovered self-control, he marvelled at the tempest within him; for was he not a /savant/ guided by lofty reason, a toiler to whom long experience had brought serenity? But the truth was that this tempest had not sprung up in his mind, it was raging in the child-like soul that he had retained, the nook of affection and dreaminess which remained within him side by side with his principles of pitiless logic and his belief in proven phenomena only. His very genius came from the duality of his nature: behind the chemist was a social dreamer, hungering for justice and capable of the greatest love. And now passion was transporting him, and he was weeping for the loss of Marie as he would have wept over the downfall of that dream of his, the destruction of war /by/ war, that scheme for the salvation of mankind at which he had been working for ten years past.

At last, amidst his weariness, a sudden resolution calmed him. He began to feel ashamed of despairing in this wise when he had no certain grounds to go upon. He must know everything, he would question the young woman; she was loyal enough to answer him frankly. Was not this a solution worthy of them both? An explanation in all sincerity, after which they would be able to take a decision. Then he fell asleep; and, tired though he felt when he rose in the morning, he was calmer. It was as if some secret work had gone on in his heart during his few hours of repose after that terrible storm.

As it happened Marie was very gay that morning. On the previous day she had gone with Pierre and Antoine on a cycling excursion over frightful roads in the direction of Montmorency, whence they had returned in a state of mingled anger and delight. When Guillaume stopped her in the little garden, he found her humming a song while returning bare-armed from the scullery, where some washing was going on.

"Do you want to speak to me?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear child, it's necessary for us to talk of some serious matters."

She at once understood that their marriage was in question, and became grave. She had formerly consented to that marriage because she regarded it as the only sensible course she could take, and this with full knowledge of the duties which she would assume. No doubt her husband would be some twenty years older than herself, but this circumstance was one of somewhat frequent occurrence, and as a rule such marriages turned out well, rather than otherwise. Moreover, she was in love with nobody, and was free to consent. And she had consented with an impulse of gratitude and affection which seemed so sweet that she thought it the sweetness of love itself. Everybody around her, too, appeared so pleased at the prospect of this marriage, which would draw the family yet more closely together. And, on her side, she had been as it were intoxicated by the idea of making others happy.

"What is the matter?" she now asked Guillaume in a somewhat anxious voice. "No bad news, I hope?"

"No, no," he answered. "I've simply something to say to you."

Then he led her under the plum-trees to the only green nook left in the garden. An old worm-eaten bench still stood there against the lilac-bushes. And in front of them Paris spread out its sea of roofs, looking light and fresh in the morning sunlight.

They both sat down. But at the moment of speaking and questioning Marie, Guillaume experienced sudden embarrassment, while his heart beat violently at seeing her beside him, so young and adorable with her bare arms.

"Our wedding-day is drawing near," he ended by saying. And then as she turned somewhat pale, perhaps unconsciously, he himself suddenly felt cold. Had not her lips twitched as if with pain? Had not a shadow passed over her fresh, clear eyes?

"Oh! we still have some time before us," she replied.

Then, slowly and very affectionately, he resumed: "No doubt; still it is necessary to attend to the formalities. And it is as well, perhaps, that I should speak of those worries to-day, so that I may not have to bother you about them again."

Then he gently went on telling her all that would have to be done, keeping his eyes on her whilst he spoke, watching for such signs of emotion as the thought of her promise's early fulfilment might bring to her face. She sat there in silence, with her hands on her lap, and her features quite still, thus giving no certain sign of any regret or trouble. Still she seemed rather dejected, compliant, as it were, but in no wise joyous.

"You say nothing, my dear Marie," Guillaume at last exclaimed. "Does anything of all this displease you?"

"Displease me? Oh, no!"

"You must speak out frankly, if it does, you know. We will wait a little longer if you have any personal reasons for wishing to postpone the date again."

"But I've no reasons, my friend. What reasons could I have? I leave you quite free to settle everything as you yourself may desire."

Silence fell. While answering, she had looked him frankly in the face; but a little quiver stirred her lips, and gloom, for which she could not account, seemed to rise and darken her face, usually as bright and gay as spring water. In former times would she not have laughed and sung at the mere announcement of that coming wedding?

Then Guillaume, with an effort which made his voice tremble, dared to speak out: "You must forgive me for asking you a question, my dear Marie. There is still time for you to cancel your promise. Are you quite certain that you love me?"

At this she looked at him in genuine stupefaction, utterly failing to understand what he could be aiming at. And--as she seemed to be deferring her reply, he added: "Consult your heart. Is it really your old friend or is it another that you love?"

"I? I, Guillaume? Why do you say that to me? What can I have done to give you occasion to say such a thing!"

All her frank nature revolted as she spoke, and her beautiful eyes, glowing with sincerity, gazed fixedly on his.

"I love Pierre! I do, I? . . . Well, yes, I love him, as I love you all; I love him because he has become one of us, because he shares our life and our joys! I'm happy when he's here, certainly; and I should like him to be always here. I'm always pleased to see him and hear him and go out with him. I was very much grieved recently when he seemed to be relapsing into his gloomy ideas. But all that is natural, is it not? And I think that I have only done what you desired I should do, and I cannot understand how my affection for Pierre can in any way exercise an influence respecting our marriage."

These words, in her estimation, ought to have convinced Guillaume that she was not in love with his brother; but in lieu thereof they brought him painful enlightenment by the very ardour with which she denied the love imputed to her.

"But you unfortunate girl!" he cried. "You are betraying yourself without knowing it. . . . It is quite certain you do not love me, you love my brother!"

He had caught hold of her wrists and was pressing them with despairing affection as if to compel her to read her heart. And she continued struggling. A most loving and tragic contest went on between them, he

seeking to convince her by the evidence of facts, and she resisting him, stubbornly refusing to open her eyes. In vain did he recount what had happened since the first day, explaining the feelings which had followed one upon another in her heart and mind: first covert hostility, next curiosity regarding that extraordinary young priest, and then sympathy and affection when she had found him so wretched and had gradually cured him of his sufferings. They were both young and mother Nature had done the rest. However, at each fresh proof and certainty which he put before her, Marie only experienced growing emotion, trembling at last from head to foot, but still unwilling to question herself.

"No, no," said she, "I do not love him. If I loved him I should know it and would acknowledge it to you; for you are well aware that I cannot tell an untruth."

Guillaume, however, had the cruelty to insist on the point, like some heroic surgeon cutting into his own flesh even more than into that of others, in order that the truth might appear and everyone be saved. "Marie," said he, "it is not I whom you love. All that you feel for me is respect and gratitude and daughterly affection. Remember what your feelings were at the time when our marriage was decided upon. You were then in love with nobody, and you accepted the offer like a sensible girl, feeling certain that I should render you happy, and that the union was a right and satisfactory one. . . . But since then my brother has come here; love has sprung up in your heart in quite a natural way; and it is Pierre, Pierre alone, whom you love as a lover and a husband should be loved."

Exhausted though she was, utterly distracted, too, by the light which, despite herself, was dawning within her, Marie still stubbornly and desperately protested.

"But why do you struggle like this against the truth, my child?" said Guillaume; "I do not reproach you. It was I who chose that this should happen, like the old madman I am. What was bound to come has come, and doubtless it is for the best. I only wanted to learn the truth from you in order that I might take a decision and act uprightly."

These words vanquished her, and her tears gushed forth. It seemed as though something had been rent asunder within her; and she felt quite overcome, as if by the weight of a new truth of which she had hitherto been ignorant. "Ah! it was cruel of you," she said, "to do me such violence so as to make me read my heart. I swear to you again that I did not know I loved Pierre in the way you say. But you have opened my heart, and roused what was quietly slumbering in it. . . . And it is true, I do love Pierre, I love him now as you have said. And so here we are, all three of us supremely wretched through your doing!"

She sobbed, and with a sudden feeling of modesty freed her wrists from his grasp. He noticed, however, that no blush rose to her face. Truth to tell, her virginal loyalty was not in question; she had no cause to reproach herself with any betrayal; it was he alone, perforce, who had awakened her to love. For a moment they looked at one another through

their tears: she so strong and healthy, her bosom heaving at each heart-beat, and her white arms--arms that could both charm and sustain--bare almost to her shoulders; and he still vigorous, with his thick fleece of white hair and his black moustaches, which gave his countenance such an expression of energetic youth. But it was all over, the irreparable had swept by, and utterly changed their lives.

"Marie," he nobly said, "you do not love me, I give you back your promise."

But with equal nobility she refused to take it back. "Never will I do so," she replied. "I gave it to you frankly, freely and joyfully, and my affection and admiration for you have never changed."

Nevertheless, with more firmness in his hitherto broken voice, Guillaume retorted: "You love Pierre, and it is Pierre whom you ought to marry."

"No," she again insisted, "I belong to you. A tie which years have tightened cannot be undone in an hour. Once again, if I love Pierre I swear to you that I was ignorant of it this morning. And let us leave the matter as it is; do not torture me any more, it would be too cruel of you."

Then, quivering like a woman who suddenly perceives that she is bare, in a stranger's presence, she hastily pulled down her sleeves, and even drew them over her hands as if to leave naught of her person visible. And afterwards she rose and walked away without adding a single word.

Guillaume remained alone on the bench in that leafy corner, in front of Paris, to which the light morning sunshine lent the aspect of some quivering, soaring city of dreamland. A great weight oppressed him, and it seemed to him as if he would never be able to rise from the seat. That which brought him most suffering was Marie's assurance that she had till that morning been ignorant of the fact that she was in love with Pierre. She had been ignorant of it, and it was he, Guillaume, who had brought it to her knowledge, compelled her to confess it! He had now firmly planted it in her heart, and perhaps increased it by revealing it to her. Ah! how cruel the thought--to be the artisan of one's own torment! Of one thing he was now quite certain: there would be no more love in his life. At the idea of this, his poor, loving heart sank and bled. And yet amidst the disaster, amidst his grief at realising that he was an old man, and that renunciation was imperative, he experienced a bitter joy at having brought the truth to light. This was very harsh consolation, fit only for one of heroic soul, yet he found lofty satisfaction in it, and from that moment the thought of sacrifice imposed itself upon him with extraordinary force. He must marry his children; there lay the path of duty, the only wise and just course, the only certain means of ensuring the happiness of the household. And when his revolting heart yet leapt and shrieked with anguish, he carried his vigorous hands to his chest in order to still it.

On the morrow came the supreme explanation between Guillaume and Pierre, not in the little garden, however, but in the spacious workroom. And here

again one beheld the vast panorama of Paris, a nation as it were at work, a huge vat in which the wine of the future was fermenting. Guillaume had arranged things so that he might be alone with his brother; and no sooner had the latter entered than he attacked him, going straight to the point without any of the precautions which he had previously taken with Marie.

"Haven't you something to say to me, Pierre?" he inquired. "Why won't you confide in me?"

The other immediately understood him, and began to tremble, unable to find a word, but confessing everything by the distracted, entreating expression of his face.

"You love Marie," continued Guillaume, "why did you not loyally come and tell me of your love?"

At this Pierre recovered self-possession and defended himself vehemently: "I love Marie, it's true, and I felt that I could not conceal it, that you yourself would notice it at last. But there was no occasion for me to tell you of it, for I was sure of myself, and would have fled rather than have allowed a single word to cross my lips. I suffered in silence and alone, and you cannot know how great my torture was! It is even cruel on your part to speak to me of it; for now I am absolutely compelled to leave you. . . . I have already, on several occasions, thought of doing so. If I have come back here, it was doubtless through weakness, but also on account of my affection for you all. And what mattered my presence here? Marie ran no risk. She does not love me."

"She does love you!" Guillaume answered. "I questioned her yesterday, and she had to confess that she loved you."

At this Pierre, utterly distracted, caught Guillaume by the shoulders and gazed into his eyes. "Oh! brother, brother! what is this you say? Why say a thing which would mean terrible misfortune for us all? Even if it were true, my grief would far exceed my joy, for I will not have you suffer. Marie belongs to you. To me she is as sacred as a sister. And if there be only my madness to part you, it will pass by, I shall know how to conquer it."

"Marie loves you," repeated Guillaume in his gentle, obstinate way. "I don't reproach you with anything. I well know that you have struggled, and have never betrayed yourself to her either by word or glance. Yesterday she herself was still ignorant that she loved you, and I had to open her eyes. . . . What would you have? I simply state a fact: she loves you."

This time Pierre, still quivering, made a gesture of mingled rapture and terror, as if some divine and long-desired blessing were falling upon him from heaven and crushing him beneath its weight.

"Well, then," he said, after a brief pause, "it is all over. . . . Let us kiss one another for the last time, and then I'll go."

"Go? Why? You must stay with us. Nothing could be more simple: you love Marie and she loves you. I give her to you."

A loud cry came from Pierre, who wildly raised his hands again with a gesture of fright and rapture. "You give me Marie?" he replied. "You, who adore her, who have been waiting for her for months? No, no, it would overcome me, it would terrify me, as if you gave me your very heart after tearing it from your breast. No, no! I will not accept your sacrifice!"

"But as it is only gratitude and affection that Marie feels for me," said Guillaume, "as it is you whom she really loves, am I to take a mean advantage of the engagements which she entered into unconsciously, and force her to a marriage when I know that she would never be wholly mine? Besides, I have made a mistake, it isn't I who give her to you, she has already given herself, and I do not consider that I have any right to prevent her from doing so."

"No, no! I will never accept, I will never bring such grief upon you. . . Kiss me, brother, and let me go."

Thereupon Guillaume caught hold of Pierre and compelled him to sit down by his side on an old sofa near the window. And he began to scold him almost angrily while still retaining a smile, in which suffering and kindness were blended. "Come," said he, "we are surely not going to fight over it. You won't force me to tie you up so as to keep you here? I know what I'm about. I thought it all over before I spoke to you. No doubt, I can't tell you that it gladdens me. I thought at first that I was going to die; I should have liked to hide myself in the very depths of the earth. And then, well, it was necessary to be reasonable, and I understood that things had arranged themselves for the best, in their natural order."

Pierre, unable to resist any further, had begun to weep with both hands raised to his face.

"Don't grieve, brother, either for yourself or for me," said Guillaume. "Do you remember the happy days we lately spent together at Neuilly after we had found one another again? All our old affection revived within us, and we remained for hours, hand in hand, recalling the past and loving one another. And what a terrible confession you made to me one night, the confession of your loss of faith, your torture, the void in which you were rolling! When I heard of it my one great wish was to cure you. I advised you to work, love, and believe in life, convinced as I was that life alone could restore you to peace and health. . . . And for that reason I afterwards brought you here. You fought against it, and it was I who forced you to come. I was so happy when I found that you again took an interest in life, and had once more become a man and a worker! I would have given some of my blood if necessary to complete your cure. . . . Well, it's done now, I have given you all I had, since Marie herself has become necessary to you, and she alone can save you."

Then as Pierre again attempted to protest, he resumed: "Don't deny it. It is so true indeed, that if she does not complete the work I have begun,

all my efforts will have been vain, you will fall back into your misery and negation, into all the torments of a spoilt life. She is necessary to you, I say. And do you think that I no longer know how to love you? Would you have me refuse you the very breath of life that will truly make you a man, after all my fervent wishes for your return to life? I have enough affection for you both to consent to your loving one another. . . . Besides, I repeat it, nature knows what she does. Instinct is a sure guide, it always tends to what is useful and trite. I should have been a sorry husband, and it is best that I should keep to my work as an old /savant/; whereas you are young and represent the future, all fruitful and happy life."

Pierre shuddered as he heard this, for his old fears returned to him. Had not the priesthood for ever cut him off from life, had not his long years of chaste celibacy robbed him of his manhood? "Fruitful and happy life!" he muttered, "ah! if you only knew how distressed I feel at the idea that I do not perhaps deserve the gift you so lovingly offer me! You are worth more than I am; you would have given her a larger heart, a firmer brain, and perhaps, too, you are really a younger man than myself. . . . There is still time, brother, keep her, if with you she is likely to be happier and more truly and completely loved. For my part I am full of doubts. Her happiness is the only thing of consequence. Let her belong to the one who will love her best!"

Indescribable emotion had now come over both men. As Guillaume heard his brother's broken words, the cry of a love that trembled at the thought of possible weakness, he did for a moment waver. With a dreadful heart-pang he stammered despairingly: "Ah! Marie, whom I love so much! Marie, whom I would have rendered so happy!"

At this Pierre could not restrain himself; he rose and cried: "Ah! you see that you love her still and cannot renounce her. . . . So let me go! let me go!"

But Guillaume had already caught him around the body, clasping him with an intensity of brotherly love which was increased by the renunciation he was resolved upon: "Stay!" said he. "It wasn't I that spoke, it was the other man that was in me, he who is about to die, who is already dead! By the memory of our mother and our father I swear to you that the sacrifice is consummated, and that if you two refuse to accept happiness from me you will but make me suffer."

For a moment the weeping men remained in one another's arms. They had often embraced before, but never had their hearts met and mingled as they did now. It was a delightful moment, which seemed an eternity. All the grief and misery of the world had disappeared from before them; there remained naught save their glowing love, whence sprang an eternity of love even as light comes from the sun. And that moment was compensation for all their past and future tears, whilst yonder, on the horizon before them, Paris still spread and rumbled, ever preparing the unknown future.

Just then Marie herself came in. And the rest proved very simple. Guillaume freed himself from his brother's clasp, led him forward and

compelled him and Marie to take each other by the hand. At first she made yet another gesture of refusal in her stubborn resolve that she would not take her promise back. But what could she say face to face with those two tearful men, whom she had found in one another's arms, mingling together in such close brotherliness? Did not those tears and that embrace sweep away all ordinary reasons, all such arguments as she held in reserve? Even the embarrassment of the situation disappeared, it seemed as if she had already had a long explanation with Pierre, and that he and she were of one mind to accept that gift of love which Guillaume offered them with so much heroism. A gust of the sublime passed through the room, and nothing could have appeared more natural to them than this extraordinary scene. Nevertheless, Marie remained silent, she dared not give her answer, but looked at them both with her big soft eyes, which, like their own, were full of tears.

And it was Guillaume who, with sudden inspiration, ran to the little staircase conducting to the rooms overhead, and called: "Mere-Grand! Mere-Grand! Come down at once, you are wanted."

Then, as soon as she was there, looking slim and pale in her black gown, and showing the wise air of a queen-mother whom all obeyed, he said: "Tell these two children that they can do nothing better than marry one another. Tell them that we have talked it over, you and I, and that it is your desire, your will that they should do so."

She quietly nodded her assent, and then said: "That is true, it will be by far the most sensible course."

Thereupon Marie flung herself into her arms, consenting, yielding to the superior forces, the powers of life, that had thus changed the course of her existence. Guillaume immediately desired that the date of the wedding should be fixed, and accommodation provided for the young couple in the rooms overhead. And as Pierre glanced at him with some remaining anxiety and spoke of travelling, for he feared that his wound was not yet healed, and that their presence might bring him suffering, Guillaume responded: "No, no, I mean to keep you. If I'm marrying you, it is to have you both here. Don't worry about me. I have so much work to do, I shall work."

In the evening when Thomas and Francois came home and learnt the news, they did not seem particularly surprised by it. They had doubtless felt that things would end like this. And they bowed to the /denouement/, not venturing to say a word, since it was their father himself who announced the decision which had been taken, with his usual air of composure. As for Antoine, who on his own side quivered with love for Lise, he gazed with doubting, anxious eyes at his father, who had thus had the courage to pluck out his heart. Could he really survive such a sacrifice, must it not kill him? Then Antoine kissed his father passionately, and the elder brothers in their turn embraced him with all their hearts. Guillaume smiled and his eyes became moist. After his victory over his horrible torments nothing could have been sweeter to him than the embraces of his three big sons.

There was, however, further emotion in store for him that evening. Just

as the daylight was departing, and he was sitting at his large table near the window, again checking and classifying the documents and plans connected with his invention, he was surprised to see his old master and friend Bertheroy enter the workroom. The illustrious chemist called on him in this fashion at long intervals, and Guillaume felt the honour thus conferred on him by this old man to whom eminence and fame had brought so many titles, offices and decorations. Moreover, Bertheroy, with his position as an official /savant/ and member of the Institute, showed some courage in thus venturing to call on one whom so-called respectable folks regarded with contumely. And on this occasion, Guillaume at once understood that it was some feeling of curiosity that had brought him. And so he was greatly embarrassed, for he hardly dared to remove the papers and plans which were lying on the table.

"Oh, don't be frightened," gaily exclaimed Bertheroy, who, despite his careless and abrupt ways, was really very shrewd. "I haven't come to pry into your secrets. . . . Leave your papers there, I promise you that I won't read anything."

Then, in all frankness, he turned the conversation on the subject of explosives, which he was still studying, he said, with passionate interest. He had made some new discoveries which he did not conceal. Incidentally, too, he spoke of the opinion he had given in Salvat's affair. His dream was to discover some explosive of great power, which one might attempt to domesticate and reduce to complete obedience. And with a smile he pointedly concluded: "I don't know where that madman found the formula of his powder. But if you should ever discover it, remember that the future perhaps lies in the employment of explosives as motive power."

Then, all at once, he added: "By the way, that fellow Salvat will be executed on the day after to-morrow. A friend of mine at the Ministry of Justice has just told me so."

Guillaume had hitherto listened to him with an air of mingled distrust and amusement. But this announcement of Salvat's execution stirred him to anger and revolt, though for some days past he had known it to be inevitable, in spite of the sympathy which the condemned man was now rousing in many quarters.

"It will be a murder!" he cried vehemently.

Bertheroy waved his hand: "What would you have?" he answered: "there's a social system and it defends itself when it is attacked. Besides, those Anarchists are really too foolish in imagining that they will transform the world with their squibs and crackers! In my opinion, you know, science is the only revolutionist. Science will not only bring us truth but justice also, if indeed justice ever be possible on this earth. And that is why I lead so calm a life and am so tolerant."

Once again Bertheroy appeared to Guillaume as a revolutionist, one who was convinced that he helped on the ruin of the ancient abominable society of today, with its dogmas and laws, even whilst he was working in

the depths of his laboratory. He was, however, too desirous of repose, and had too great a contempt for futilities to mingle with the events of the day, and he preferred to live in quietude, liberally paid and rewarded, and at peace with the government whatever it might be, whilst at the same time foreseeing and preparing for the formidable parturition of the future.

He waved his hand towards Paris, over which a sun of victory was setting, and then again spoke: "Do you hear the rumble? It is we who are the stokers, we who are ever flinging fresh fuel under the boiler. Science does not pause in her work for a single hour, and she is the artisan of Paris, which--let us hope it--will be the artisan of the future. All the rest is of no account."

But Guillaume was no longer listening to him. He was thinking of Salvat and the terrible engine of war he had invented, that engine which before long would shatter cities. And a new idea was dawning and growing in his mind. He had just freed himself of his last tie, he had created all the happiness he could create around him. Ah! to recover his courage, to be master of himself once more, and, at any rate, derive from the sacrifice of his heart the lofty delight of being free, of being able to lay down even his life, should he some day deem it necessary!

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