

ÉMILE ZOLA

THE THREE CITIES
TRILOGY: ROME,
VOLUME 2

ЭМИЛЬ ЗОЛЯ

**The Three Cities
Trilogy: Rome, Volume 2**

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Содержание

PART II	5
IV	5
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	20

Émile Zola

The Three Cities Trilogy: Rome, Volume 2

PART II

IV

ON the afternoon of that same day Pierre, having leisure before him, at once thought of beginning his peregrinations through Rome by a visit on which he had set his heart. Almost immediately after the publication of "New Rome" he had been deeply moved and interested by a letter addressed to him from the Eternal City by old Count Orlando Prada, the hero of Italian independence and reunion, who, although unacquainted with him, had written spontaneously after a first hasty perusal of his book. And the letter had been a flaming protest, a cry of the patriotic faith still young in the heart of that aged man, who accused him of having forgotten Italy and claimed Rome, the new Rome, for the country which was at last free and united. Correspondence had ensued, and the priest, while clinging to his dream of Neo-Catholicism saving the world, had from afar grown attached to the man who wrote to him with such glowing love of country and freedom. He had eventually informed him of his journey, and promised to call upon him. But the hospitality which he had accepted at the Boccanera mansion now seemed to him somewhat of an impediment; for after Benedetta's kindly, almost affectionate, greeting, he felt that he could not, on the very first day and with out warning her, sally forth to visit the father of the man from whom she had fled and from whom she now asked the Church to part her for ever. Moreover, old Orlando was actually living with his son in a little palazzo which the latter had erected at the farther end of the Via Venti Settembre.

Before venturing on any step Pierre resolved to confide in the Contessina herself; and this seemed the easier as Viscount Philibert de la Choue had told him that the young woman still retained a filial feeling, mingled with admiration, for the old hero. And indeed, at the very first words which he uttered after lunch, Benedetta promptly retorted: "But go, Monsieur l'Abbe, go at once! Old Orlando, you know, is one of our national glories – you must not be surprised to hear me call him by his Christian name. All Italy does so, from pure affection and gratitude. For my part I grew up among people who hated him, who likened him to Satan. It was only later that I learned to know him, and then I loved him, for he is certainly the most just and gentle man in the world."

She had begun to smile, but timid tears were moistening her eyes at the recollection, no doubt, of the year of suffering she had spent in her husband's house, where her only peaceful hours had been those passed with the old man. And in a lower and somewhat tremulous voice she added: "As you are going to see him, tell him from me that I still love him, and, whatever happens, shall never forget his goodness."

So Pierre set out, and whilst he was driving in a cab towards the Via Venti Settembre, he recalled to mind the heroic story of old Orlando's life which had been told him in Paris. It was like an epic poem, full of faith, bravery, and the disinterestedness of another age.

Born of a noble house of Milan, Count Orlando Prada had learnt to hate the foreigner at such an early age that, when scarcely fifteen, he already formed part of a secret society, one of the ramifications of the antique Carbonarism. This hatred of Austrian domination had been transmitted from father to son through long years, from the olden days of revolt against servitude, when the conspirators met by stealth in abandoned huts, deep in the recesses of the forests; and it was rendered the keener by the eternal dream of Italy delivered, restored to herself, transformed once more into a great sovereign nation, the worthy daughter of those who had conquered and ruled the world. Ah!

that land of whilom glory, that unhappy, dismembered, parcelled Italy, the prey of a crowd of petty tyrants, constantly invaded and appropriated by neighbouring nations – how superb and ardent was that dream to free her from such long opprobrium! To defeat the foreigner, drive out the despots, awaken the people from the base misery of slavery, to proclaim Italy free and Italy united – such was the passion which then inflamed the young with inextinguishable ardour, which made the youthful Orlando's heart leap with enthusiasm. He spent his early years consumed by holy indignation, proudly and impatiently longing for an opportunity to give his blood for his country, and to die for her if he could not deliver her.

Quivering under the yoke, wasting his time in sterile conspiracies, he was living in retirement in the old family residence at Milan, when, shortly after his marriage and his twenty-fifth birthday, tidings came to him of the flight of Pius IX and the Revolution of Rome.¹ And at once he quitted everything, wife and hearth, and hastened to Rome as if summoned thither by the call of destiny. This was the first time that he set out scouring the roads for the attainment of independence; and how frequently, yet again and again, was he to start upon fresh campaigns, never wearying, never disheartened! And now it was that he became acquainted with Mazzini, and for a moment was inflamed with enthusiasm for that mystical unitarian Republican. He himself indulged in an ardent dream of a Universal Republic, adopted the Mazzinian device, "/Dio e popolo/" (God and the people), and followed the procession which wended its way with great pomp through insurrectionary Rome. The time was one of vast hopes, one when people already felt a need of renovated religion, and looked to the coming of a humanitarian Christ who would redeem the world yet once again. But before long a man, a captain of the ancient days, Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose epic glory was dawning, made Orlando entirely his own, transformed him into a soldier whose sole cause was freedom and union. Orlando loved Garibaldi as though the latter were a demi-god, fought beside him in defence of Republican Rome, took part in the victory of Rieti over the Neapolitans, and followed the stubborn patriot in his retreat when he sought to succour Venice, compelled as he was to relinquish the Eternal City to the French army of General Oudinot, who came thither to reinstate Pius IX. And what an extraordinary and madly heroic adventure was that of Garibaldi and Venice! Venice, which Manin, another great patriot, a martyr, had again transformed into a republican city, and which for long months had been resisting the Austrians! And Garibaldi starts with a handful of men to deliver the city, charts thirteen fishing barks, loses eight in a naval engagement, is compelled to return to the Roman shores, and there in all wretchedness is bereft of his wife, Anita, whose eyes he closes before returning to America, where, once before, he had awaited the hour of insurrection. Ah! that land of Italy, which in those days rumbled from end to end with the internal fire of patriotism, where men of faith and courage arose in every city, where riots and insurrections burst forth on all sides like eruptions – it continued, in spite of every check, its invincible march to freedom!

Orlando returned to his young wife at Milan, and for two years lived there, almost in concealment, devoured by impatience for the glorious morrow which was so long in coming. Amidst his fever a gleam of happiness softened his heart; a son, Luigi, was born to him, but the birth killed the mother, and joy was turned into mourning. Then, unable to remain any longer at Milan, where he was spied upon, tracked by the police, suffering also too grievously from the foreign occupation, Orlando decided to realise the little fortune remaining to him, and to withdraw to Turin, where an aunt of his wife took charge of the child. Count di Cavour, like a great statesman, was then already seeking to bring about independence, preparing Piedmont for the decisive /role/ which it was destined to play. It was the time when King Victor Emmanuel evinced flattering cordiality towards all the refugees who came to him from every part of Italy, even those whom he knew to be Republicans, compromised and flying the consequences of popular insurrection. The rough, shrewd House of Savoy had long been

¹ It was on November 24, 1848, that the Pope fled to Gaeta, consequent upon the insurrection which had broken out nine days previously. – Trans.

dreaming of bringing about Italian unity to the profit of the Piedmontese monarchy, and Orlando well knew under what master he was taking service; but in him the Republican already went behind the patriot, and indeed he had begun to question the possibility of a united Republican Italy, placed under the protectorate of a liberal Pope, as Mazzini had at one time dreamed. Was that not indeed a chimera beyond realisation which would devour generation after generation if one obstinately continued to pursue it? For his part, he did not wish to die without having slept in Rome as one of the conquerors. Even if liberty was to be lost, he desired to see his country united and erect, returning once more to life in the full sunlight. And so it was with feverish happiness that he enlisted at the outset of the war of 1859; and his heart palpitated with such force as almost to rend his breast, when, after Magenta, he entered Milan with the French army – Milan which he had quitted eight years previously, like an exile, in despair. The treaty of Villafranca which followed Solferino proved a bitter deception: Venetia was not secured, Venice remained enthralled. Nevertheless the Milanese was conquered from the foe, and then Tuscany and the duchies of Parma and Modena voted for annexation. So, at all events, the nucleus of the Italian star was formed; the country had begun to build itself up afresh around victorious Piedmont.

Then, in the following year, Orlando plunged into epopoeia once more. Garibaldi had returned from his two sojourns in America, with the halo of a legend round him – paladin-like feats in the pampas of Uruguay, an extraordinary passage from Canton to Lima – and he had returned to take part in the war of 1859, forestalling the French army, overthrowing an Austrian marshal, and entering Como, Bergamo, and Brescia. And now, all at once, folks heard that he had landed at Marsala with only a thousand men – the Thousand of Marsala, the ever illustrious handful of braves! Orlando fought in the first rank, and Palermo after three days' resistance was carried. Becoming the dictator's favourite lieutenant, he helped him to organise a government, then crossed the straits with him, and was beside him on the triumphal entry into Naples, whose king had fled. There was mad audacity and valour at that time, an explosion of the inevitable; and all sorts of supernatural stories were current – Garibaldi invulnerable, protected better by his red shirt than by the strongest armour, Garibaldi routing opposing armies like an archangel, by merely brandishing his flaming sword! The Piedmontese on their side had defeated General Lamoricieri at Castelfidardo, and were invading the States of the Church. And Orlando was there when the dictator, abdicating power, signed the decree which annexed the Two Sicilies to the Crown of Italy; even as subsequently he took part in that forlorn attempt on Rome, when the rageful cry was "Rome or Death!" – an attempt which came to a tragic issue at Aspromonte, when the little army was dispersed by the Italian troops, and Garibaldi, wounded, was taken prisoner, and sent back to the solitude of his island of Caprera, where he became but a fisherman and a tiller of the rocky soil.²

Six years of waiting again went by, and Orlando still dwelt at Turin, even after Florence had been chosen as the new capital. The Senate had acclaimed Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy; and Italy was indeed almost built, it lacked only Rome and Venice. But the great battles seemed all over, the epic era was closed; Venice was to be won by defeat. Orlando took part in the unlucky battle of Custozza, where he received two wounds, full of furious grief at the thought that Austria should be triumphant. But at that same moment the latter, defeated at Sadowa, relinquished Venetia, and five months later Orlando satisfied his desire to be in Venice participating in the joy of triumph, when Victor Emmanuel made his entry amidst the frantic acclamations of the people. Rome alone remained to be won, and wild impatience urged all Italy towards the city; but friendly France had sworn to maintain the Pope, and this acted as a check. Then, for the third time, Garibaldi dreamt of renewing the feats of the old-world legends, and threw himself upon Rome like a soldier of fortune

² M. Zola's brief but glowing account of Garibaldi's glorious achievements has stirred many memories in my mind. My uncle, Frank Vizetelly, the war artist of the *Illustrated London News*, whose bones lie bleaching somewhere in the Soudan, was one of Garibaldi's constant companions throughout the memorable campaign of the Two Sicilies, and afterwards he went with him to Caprera. Later, in 1870, my brother, Edward Vizetelly, acted as orderly-officer to the general when he offered the help of his sword to France. – Trans.

illuminated by patriotism and free from every tie. And for the third time Orlando shared in that fine heroic madness destined to be vanquished at Mentana by the Pontifical Zouaves supported by a small French corps. Again wounded, he came back to Turin in almost a dying condition. But, though his spirit quivered, he had to resign himself; the situation seemed to have no outlet; only an upheaval of the nations could give Rome to Italy.

All at once the thunderclap of Sedan, of the downfall of France, resounded through the world; and then the road to Rome lay open, and Orlando, having returned to service in the regular army, was with the troops who took up position in the Campagna to ensure the safety of the Holy See, as was said in the letter which Victor Emmanuel wrote to Pius IX. There was, however, but the shadow of an engagement: General Kanzler's Pontifical Zouaves were compelled to fall back, and Orlando was one of the first to enter the city by the breach of the Porta Pia. Ah! that twentieth of September – that day when he experienced the greatest happiness of his life – a day of delirium, of complete triumph, which realised the dream of so many years of terrible contest, the dream for which he had sacrificed rest and fortune, and given both body and mind!

Then came more than ten happy years in conquered Rome – in Rome adored, flattered, treated with all tenderness, like a woman in whom one has placed one's entire hope. From her he awaited so much national vigour, such a marvellous resurrection of strength and glory for the endowment of the young nation. Old Republican, old insurrectional soldier that he was, he had been obliged to adhere to the monarchy, and accept a senatorship. But then did not Garibaldi himself – Garibaldi his divinity – likewise call upon the King and sit in parliament? Mazzini alone, rejecting all compromises, was unwilling to rest content with a united and independent Italy that was not Republican. Moreover, another consideration influenced Orlando, the future of his son Luigi, who had attained his eighteenth birthday shortly after the occupation of Rome. Though he, Orlando, could manage with the crumbs which remained of the fortune he had expended in his country's service, he dreamt of a splendid destiny for the child of his heart. Realising that the heroic age was over, he desired to make a great politician of him, a great administrator, a man who should be useful to the mighty nation of the morrow; and it was on this account that he had not rejected royal favour, the reward of long devotion, desiring, as he did, to be in a position to help, watch, and guide Luigi. Besides, was he himself so old, so used-up, as to be unable to assist in organisation, even as he had assisted in conquest? Struck by his son's quick intelligence in business matters, perhaps also instinctively divining that the battle would now continue on financial and economic grounds, he obtained him employment at the Ministry of Finances. And again he himself lived on, dreaming, still enthusiastically believing in a splendid future, overflowing with boundless hope, seeing Rome double her population, grow and spread with a wild vegetation of new districts, and once more, in his loving enraptured eyes, become the queen of the world.

But all at once came a thunderbolt. One morning, as he was going downstairs, Orlando was stricken with paralysis. Both his legs suddenly became lifeless, as heavy as lead. It was necessary to carry him up again, and never since had he set foot on the street pavement. At that time he had just completed his fifty-sixth year, and for fourteen years since he had remained in his arm-chair, as motionless as stone, he who had so impetuously trod every battlefield of Italy. It was a pitiful business, the collapse of a hero. And worst of all, from that room where he was for ever imprisoned, the old soldier beheld the slow crumbling of all his hopes, and fell into dismal melancholy, full of unacknowledged fear for the future. Now that the intoxication of action no longer dimmed his eyes, now that he spent his long and empty days in thought, his vision became clear. Italy, which he had desired to see so powerful, so triumphant in her unity, was acting madly, rushing to ruin, possibly to bankruptcy. Rome, which to him had ever been the one necessary capital, the city of unparalleled glory, requisite for the sovereign people of to-morrow, seemed unwilling to take upon herself the part of a great modern metropolis; heavy as a corpse she weighed with all her centuries on the bosom of the young nation. Moreover, his son Luigi distressed him. Rebellious to all guidance, the young

man had become one of the devouring offsprings of conquest, eager to despoil that Italy, that Rome, which his father seemed to have desired solely in order that he might pillage them and batten on them. Orlando had vainly opposed Luigi's departure from the ministry, his participation in the frantic speculations on land and house property to which the mad building of the new districts had given rise. But at the same time he loved his son, and was reduced to silence, especially now when everything had succeeded with Luigi, even his most risky financial ventures, such as the transformation of the Villa Montefiori into a perfect town – a colossal enterprise in which many of great wealth had been ruined, but whence he himself had emerged with millions. And it was in part for this reason that Orlando, sad and silent, had obstinately restricted himself to one small room on the third floor of the little palazzo erected by Luigi in the Via Venti Settembre – a room where he lived cloistered with a single servant, subsisting on his own scanty income, and accepting nothing but that modest hospitality from his son.

As Pierre reached that new Via Venti Settembre³ which climbs the side and summit of the Viminal hill, he was struck by the heavy sumptuousness of the new "palaces," which betokened among the moderns the same taste for the huge that marked the ancient Romans. In the warm afternoon glow, blent of purple and old gold, the broad, triumphant thoroughfare, with its endless rows of white house-fronts, bore witness to new Rome's proud hope of futurity and sovereign power. And Pierre fairly gasped when he beheld the Palazzo delle Finanze, or Treasury, a gigantic erection, a cyclopean cube with a profusion of columns, balconies, pediments, and sculptured work, to which the building mania had given birth in a day of immoderate pride. And on the other side of the street, a little higher up, before reaching the Villa Bonaparte, stood Count Prada's little palazzo.

After discharging his driver, Pierre for a moment remained somewhat embarrassed. The door was open, and he entered the vestibule; but, as at the mansion in the Via Giulia, no door porter or servant was to be seen. So he had to make up his mind to ascend the monumental stairs, which with their marble balustrades seemed to be copied, on a smaller scale, from those of the Palazzo Bocanera. And there was much the same cold bareness, tempered, however, by a carpet and red door-hangings, which contrasted vividly with the white stucco of the walls. The reception-rooms, sixteen feet high, were on the first floor, and as a door chanced to be ajar he caught a glimpse of two /salons/, one following the other, and both displaying quite modern richness, with a profusion of silk and velvet hangings, gilt furniture, and lofty mirrors reflecting a pompous assemblage of stands and tables. And still there was nobody, not a soul, in that seemingly forsaken abode, which exhaled nought of woman's presence. Indeed Pierre was on the point of going down again to ring, when a footman at last presented himself.

"Count Prada, if you please."

The servant silently surveyed the little priest, and seemed to understand. "The father or the son?" he asked.

"The father, Count Orlando Prada."

"Oh! that's on the third floor." And he condescended to add: "The little door on the right-hand side of the landing. Knock loudly if you wish to be admitted."

Pierre indeed had to knock twice, and then a little withered old man of military appearance, a former soldier who had remained in the Count's service, opened the door and apologised for the delay by saying that he had been attending to his master's legs. Immediately afterwards he announced the visitor, and the latter, after passing through a dim and narrow ante-room, was lost in amazement on finding himself in a relatively small chamber, extremely bare and bright, with wall-paper of a light hue studded with tiny blue flowers. Behind a screen was an iron bedstead, the soldier's pallet, and there was no other furniture than the arm-chair in which the cripple spent his days, with a table of black wood placed near him, and covered with books and papers, and two old straw-seated chairs

³ The name – Twentieth September Street – was given to the thoroughfare to commemorate the date of the occupation of Rome by Victor Emmanuel's army. – Trans.

which served for the accommodation of the infrequent visitors. A few planks, fixed to one of the walls, did duty as book-shelves. However, the broad, clear, curtainless window overlooked the most admirable panorama of Rome that could be desired.

Then the room disappeared from before Pierre's eyes, and with a sudden shock of deep emotion he only beheld old Orlando, the old blanched lion, still superb, broad, and tall. A forest of white hair crowned his powerful head, with its thick mouth, fleshy broken nose, and large, sparkling, black eyes. A long white beard streamed down with the vigour of youth, curling like that of an ancient god. By that leonine muzzle one divined what great passions had growled within; but all, carnal and intellectual alike, had erupted in patriotism, in wild bravery, and riotous love of independence. And the old stricken hero, his torso still erect, was fixed there on his straw-seated arm-chair, with lifeless legs buried beneath a black wrapper. Alone did his arms and hands live, and his face beam with strength and intelligence.

Orlando turned towards his servant, and gently said to him: "You can go away, Batista. Come back in a couple of hours." Then, looking Pierre full in the face, he exclaimed in a voice which was still sonorous despite his seventy years: "So it's you at last, my dear Monsieur Froment, and we shall be able to chat at our ease. There, take that chair, and sit down in front of me."

He had noticed the glance of surprise which the young priest had cast upon the bareness of the room, and he gaily added: "You will excuse me for receiving you in my cell. Yes, I live here like a monk, like an old invalided soldier, henceforth withdrawn from active life. My son long begged me to take one of the fine rooms downstairs. But what would have been the use of it? I have no needs, and I scarcely care for feather beds, for my old bones are accustomed to the hard ground. And then too I have such a fine view up here, all Rome presenting herself to me, now that I can no longer go to her."

With a wave of the hand towards the window he sought to hide the embarrassment, the slight flush which came to him each time that he thus excused his son; unwilling as he was to tell the true reason, the scruple of probity which had made him obstinately cling to his bare pauper's lodging.

"But it is very nice, the view is superb!" declared Pierre, in order to please him. "I am for my own part very glad to see you, very glad to be able to grasp your valiant hands, which accomplished so many great things."

Orlando made a fresh gesture, as though to sweep the past away. "Pooh! pooh! all that is dead and buried. Let us talk about you, my dear Monsieur Froment, you who are young and represent the present; and especially about your book, which represents the future! Ah! if you only knew how angry your book, your 'New Rome,' made me first of all."

He began to laugh, and took the book from off the table near him; then, tapping on its cover with his big, broad hand, he continued: "No, you cannot imagine with what starts of protest I read your book. The Pope, and again the Pope, and always the Pope! New Rome to be created by the Pope and for the Pope, to triumph thanks to the Pope, to be given to the Pope, and to fuse its glory in the glory of the Pope! But what about us? What about Italy? What about all the millions which we have spent in order to make Rome a great capital? Ah! only a Frenchman, and a Frenchman of Paris, could have written such a book! But let me tell you, my dear sir, if you are ignorant of it, that Rome has become the capital of the kingdom of Italy, that we here have King Humbert, and the Italian people, a whole nation which must be taken into account, and which means to keep Rome – glorious, resuscitated Rome – for itself!"

This juvenile ardour made Pierre laugh in turn. "Yes, yes," said he, "you wrote me that. Only what does it matter from my point of view? Italy is but one nation, a part of humanity, and I desire concord and fraternity among all the nations, mankind reconciled, believing, and happy. Of what consequence, then, is any particular form of government, monarchy or republic, of what consequence is any question of a united and independent country, if all mankind forms but one free people subsisting on truth and justice?"

To only one word of this enthusiastic outburst did Orlando pay attention. In a lower tone, and with a dreamy air, he resumed: "Ah! a republic. In my youth I ardently desired one. I fought for one; I conspired with Mazzini, a saintly man, a believer, who was shattered by collision with the absolute. And then, too, one had to bow to practical necessities; the most obstinate ended by submitting. And nowadays would a republic save us? In any case it would differ but little from our parliamentary monarchy. Just think of what goes on in France! And so why risk a revolution which would place power in the hands of the extreme revolutionists, the anarchists? We fear all that, and this explains our resignation. I know very well that a few think they can detect salvation in a republican federation, a reconstitution of all the former little states in so many republics, over which Rome would preside. The Vatican would gain largely by any such transformation; still one cannot say that it endeavours to bring it about; it simply regards the eventuality without disfavour. But it is a dream, a dream!"

At this Orlando's gaiety came back to him, with even a little gentle irony: "You don't know, I suppose, what it was that took my fancy in your book – for, in spite of all my protests, I have read it twice. Well, what pleased me was that Mazzini himself might almost have written it at one time. Yes! I found all my youth again in your pages, all the wild hope of my twenty-fifth year, the new religion of a humanitarian Christ, the pacification of the world effected by the Gospel! Are you aware that, long before your time, Mazzini desired the renovation of Christianity? He set dogma and discipline on one side and only retained morals. And it was new Rome, the Rome of the people, which he would have given as see to the universal Church, in which all the churches of the past were to be fused – Rome, the eternal and predestined city, the mother and queen, whose domination was to arise anew to ensure the definitive happiness of mankind! Is it not curious that all the present-day Neo-Catholicism, the vague, spiritualistic awakening, the evolution towards communion and Christian charity, with which some are making so much stir, should be simply a return of the mystical and humanitarian ideas of 1848? Alas! I saw all that, I believed and burned, and I know in what a fine mess those flights into the azure of mystery landed us! So it cannot be helped, I lack confidence."

Then, as Pierre on his side was growing impassioned and sought to reply, he stopped him: "No, let me finish. I only want to convince you how absolutely necessary it was that we should take Rome and make her the capital of Italy. Without Rome new Italy could not have existed; Rome represented the glory of ancient time; in her dust lay the sovereign power which we wished to re-establish; she brought strength, beauty, eternity to those who possessed her. Standing in the middle of our country, she was its heart, and must assuredly become its life as soon as she should be awakened from the long sleep of ruin. Ah! how we desired her, amidst victory and amidst defeat, through years and years of frightful impatience! For my part I loved her, and longed for her, far more than for any woman, with my blood burning, and in despair that I should be growing old. And when we possessed her, our folly was a desire to behold her huge, magnificent, and commanding all at once, the equal of the other great capitals of Europe – Berlin, Paris, and London. Look at her! she is still my only love, my only consolation now that I am virtually dead, with nothing alive in me but my eyes."

With the same gesture as before, he directed Pierre's attention to the window. Under the glowing sky Rome stretched out in its immensity, empurpled and gilded by the slanting sunrays. Across the horizon, far, far away, the trees of the Janiculum stretched a green girdle, of a limpid emerald hue, whilst the dome of St. Peter's, more to the left, showed palely blue, like a sapphire bedimmed by too bright a light. Then came the low town, the old ruddy city, baked as it were by centuries of burning summers, soft to the eye and beautiful with the deep life of the past, an unbounded chaos of roofs, gables, towers, /campanili/, and cupolas. But, in the foreground under the window, there was the new city – that which had been building for the last five and twenty years – huge blocks of masonry piled up side by side, still white with plaster, neither the sun nor history having as yet robed them in purple. And in particular the roofs of the colossal Palazzo delle Finanze had a disastrous effect, spreading out like far, bare steppes of cruel hideousness. And it was upon the desolation and abomination of all the newly erected piles that the eyes of the old soldier of conquest at last rested.

Silence ensued. Pierre felt the faint chill of hidden, unacknowledged sadness pass by, and courteously waited.

"I must beg your pardon for having interrupted you just now," resumed Orlando; "but it seems to me that we cannot talk about your book to any good purpose until you have seen and studied Rome closely. You only arrived yesterday, did you not? Well, stroll about the city, look at things, question people, and I think that many of your ideas will change. I shall particularly like to know your impression of the Vatican since you have come here solely to see the Pope and defend your book against the Index. Why should we discuss things to-day, if facts themselves are calculated to bring you to other views, far more readily than the finest speeches which I might make? It is understood, you will come to see me again, and we shall then know what we are talking about, and, maybe, agree together."

"Why certainly, you are too kind," replied Pierre. "I only came to-day to express my gratitude to you for having read my book so attentively, and to pay homage to one of the glories of Italy."

Orlando was not listening, but remained for a moment absorbed in thought, with his eyes still resting upon Rome. And overcome, despite himself, by secret disquietude, he resumed in a low voice as though making an involuntary confession: "We have gone too fast, no doubt. There were expenses of undeniable utility – the roads, ports, and railways. And it was necessary to arm the country also; I did not at first disapprove of the heavy military burden. But since then how crushing has been the war budget – a war which has never come, and the long wait for which has ruined us. Ah! I have always been the friend of France. I only reproach her with one thing, that she has failed to understand the position in which we were placed, the vital reasons which compelled us to ally ourselves with Germany. And then there are the thousand millions of /lire/⁴ swallowed up in Rome! That was the real madness; pride and enthusiasm led us astray. Old and solitary as I've been for many years now, given to deep reflection, I was one of the first to divine the pitfall, the frightful financial crisis, the deficit which would bring about the collapse of the nation. I shouted it from the housetops, to my son, to all who came near me; but what was the use? They didn't listen; they were mad, still buying and selling and building, with no thought but for gambling booms and bubbles. But you'll see, you'll see. And the worst is that we are not situated as you are; we haven't a reserve of men and money in a dense peasant population, whose thrifty savings are always at hand to fill up the gaps caused by big catastrophes. There is no social rise among our people as yet; fresh men don't spring up out of the lower classes to reinvigorate the national blood, as they constantly do in your country. And, besides, the people are poor; they have no stockings to empty. The misery is frightful, I must admit it. Those who have any money prefer to spend it in the towns in a petty way rather than to risk it in agricultural or manufacturing enterprise. Factories are but slowly built, and the land is almost everywhere tilled in the same primitive manner as it was two thousand years ago. And then, too, take Rome – Rome, which didn't make Italy, but which Italy made its capital to satisfy an ardent, overpowering desire – Rome, which is still but a splendid bit of scenery, picturing the glory of the centuries, and which, apart from its historical splendour, has only given us its degenerate papal population, swollen with ignorance and pride! Ah! I loved Rome too well, and I still love it too well to regret being now within its walls. But, good heavens! what insanity its acquisition brought us, what piles of money it has cost us, and how heavily and triumphantly it weighs us down! Look! look!"

He waved his hand as he spoke towards the livid roofs of the Palazzo delle Finanze, that vast and desolate steppe, as though he could see the harvest of glory all stripped off and bankruptcy appear with its fearful, threatening bareness. Restrained tears were dimming his eyes, and he looked superbly pitiful with his expression of baffled hope and grievous disquietude, with his huge white head, the muzzle of an old blanché lion henceforth powerless and caged in that bare, bright room, whose poverty-stricken aspect was instinct with so much pride that it seemed, as it were, a protest against

⁴ 40,000,000 pounds.

the monumental splendour of the whole surrounding district! So those were the purposes to which the conquest had been put! And to think that he was impotent, henceforth unable to give his blood and his soul as he had done in the days gone by.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed in a final outburst; "one gave everything, heart and brain, one's whole life indeed, so long as it was a question of making the country one and independent. But, now that the country is ours, just try to stir up enthusiasm for the reorganisation of its finances! There's no ideality in that! And this explains why, whilst the old ones are dying off, not a new man comes to the front among the young ones – "

All at once he stopped, looking somewhat embarrassed, yet smiling at his feverishness. "Excuse me," he said, "I'm off again, I'm incorrigible. But it's understood, we'll leave that subject alone, and you'll come back here, and we'll chat together when you've seen everything."

From that moment he showed himself extremely pleasant, and it was apparent to Pierre that he regretted having said so much, by the seductive affability and growing affection which he now displayed. He begged the young priest to prolong his sojourn, to abstain from all hasty judgments on Rome, and to rest convinced that, at bottom, Italy still loved France. And he was also very desirous that France should love Italy, and displayed genuine anxiety at the thought that perhaps she loved her no more. As at the Boccanera mansion, on the previous evening, Pierre realised that an attempt was being made to persuade him to admiration and affection. Like a susceptible woman with secret misgivings respecting the attractive power of her beauty, Italy was all anxiety with regard to the opinion of her visitors, and strove to win and retain their love.

However, Orlando again became impassioned when he learnt that Pierre was staying at the Boccanera mansion, and he made a gesture of extreme annoyance on hearing, at that very moment, a knock at the outer door. "Come in!" he called; but at the same time he detained Pierre, saying, "No, no, don't go yet; I wish to know – "

But a lady came in – a woman of over forty, short and extremely plump, and still attractive with her small features and pretty smile swamped in fat. She was a blonde, with green, limpid eyes; and, fairly well dressed in a sober, nicely fitting mignonette gown, she looked at once pleasant, modest, and shrewd.

"Ah! it's you, Stefana," said the old man, letting her kiss him.

"Yes, uncle, I was passing by and came up to see how you were getting on."

The visitor was the Signora Sacco, niece of Prada and a Neapolitan by birth, her mother having quitted Milan to marry a certain Pagani, a Neapolitan banker, who had afterwards failed. Subsequent to that disaster Stefana had married Sacco, then merely a petty post-office clerk. He, later on, wishing to revive his father-in-law's business, had launched into all sorts of terrible, complicated, suspicious affairs, which by unforeseen luck had ended in his election as a deputy. Since he had arrived in Rome, to conquer the city in his turn, his wife had been compelled to assist his devouring ambition by dressing well and opening a /salon/; and, although she was still a little awkward, she rendered him many real services, being very economical and prudent, a thorough good housewife, with all the sterling, substantial qualities of Northern Italy which she had inherited from her mother, and which showed conspicuously beside the turbulence and carelessness of her husband, in whom flared Southern Italy with its perpetual, rageful appetite.

Despite his contempt for Sacco, old Orlando had retained some affection for his niece, in whose veins flowed blood similar to his own. He thanked her for her kind inquiries, and then at once spoke of an announcement which he had read in the morning papers, for he suspected that the deputy had sent his wife to ascertain his opinion.

"Well, and that ministry?" he asked.

The Signora had seated herself and made no haste to reply, but glanced at the newspapers strewn over the table. "Oh! nothing is settled yet," she at last responded; "the newspapers spoke out too soon. The Prime Minister sent for Sacco, and they had a talk together. But Sacco hesitates a

good deal; he fears that he has no aptitude for the Department of Agriculture. Ah! if it were only the Finances – However, in any case, he would not have come to a decision without consulting you. What do you think of it, uncle?"

He interrupted her with a violent wave of the hand: "No, no, I won't mix myself up in such matters!"

To him the rapid success of that adventurer Sacco, that schemer and gambler who had always fished in troubled waters, was an abomination, the beginning of the end. His son Luigi certainly distressed him; but it was even worse to think that – whilst Luigi, with his great intelligence and many remaining fine qualities, was nothing at all – Sacco, on the other hand, Sacco, blunderhead and ever-famished battener that he was, had not merely slipped into parliament, but was now, it seemed, on the point of securing office! A little, swarthy, dry man he was, with big, round eyes, projecting cheekbones, and prominent chin. Ever dancing and chattering, he was gifted with a showy eloquence, all the force of which lay in his voice – a voice which at will became admirably powerful or gentle! And withal an insinuating man, profiting by every opportunity, wheedling and commanding by turn.

"You hear, Stefana," said Orlando; "tell your husband that the only advice I have to give him is to return to his clerkship at the post-office, where perhaps he may be of use."

What particularly filled the old soldier with indignation and despair was that such a man, a Sacco, should have fallen like a bandit on Rome – on that Rome whose conquest had cost so many noble efforts. And in his turn Sacco was conquering the city, was carrying it off from those who had won it by such hard toil, and was simply using it to satisfy his wild passion for power and its attendant enjoyments. Beneath his wheedling air there was the determination to devour everything. After the victory, while the spoil lay there, still warm, the wolves had come. It was the North that had made Italy, whereas the South, eager for the quarry, simply rushed upon the country, preyed upon it. And beneath the anger of the old stricken hero of Italian unity there was indeed all the growing antagonism of the North towards the South – the North industrious, economical, shrewd in politics, enlightened, full of all the great modern ideas, and the South ignorant and idle, bent on enjoying life immediately, amidst childish disorder in action, and an empty show of fine sonorous words.

Stefana had begun to smile in a placid way while glancing at Pierre, who had approached the window. "Oh, you say that, uncle," she responded; "but you love us well all the same, and more than once you have given me myself some good advice, for which I'm very thankful to you. For instance, there's that affair of Attilio's – "

She was alluding to her son, the lieutenant, and his love affair with Celia, the little Princess Buongiovanni, of which all the drawing-rooms, white and black alike, were talking.

"Attilio – that's another matter!" exclaimed Orlando. "He and you are both of the same blood as myself, and it's wonderful how I see myself again in that fine fellow. Yes, he is just the same as I was at his age, good-looking and brave and enthusiastic! I'm paying myself compliments, you see. But, really now, Attilio warms my heart, for he is the future, and brings me back some hope. Well, and what about his affair?"

"Oh! it gives us a lot of worry, uncle. I spoke to you about it before, but you shrugged your shoulders, saying that in matters of that kind all that the parents had to do was to let the lovers settle their affairs between them. Still, we don't want everybody to repeat that we are urging our son to get the little princess to elope with him, so that he may afterwards marry her money and title."

At this Orlando indulged in a frank outburst of gaiety: "That's a fine scruple! Was it your husband who instructed you to tell me of it? I know, however, that he affects some delicacy in this matter. For my own part, I believe myself to be as honest as he is, and I can only repeat that, if I had a son like yours, so straightforward and good, and candidly loving, I should let him marry whomsoever he pleased in his own way. The Buongiovanis – good heavens! the Buongiovanis – why, despite all their rank and lineage and the money they still possess, it will be a great honour for them to have a handsome young man with a noble heart as their son-in-law!"

Again did Stefana assume an expression of placid satisfaction. She had certainly only come there for approval. "Very well, uncle," she replied, "I'll repeat that to my husband, and he will pay great attention to it; for if you are severe towards him he holds you in perfect veneration. And as for that ministry – well, perhaps nothing will be done, Sacco will decide according to circumstances."

She rose and took her leave, kissing the old soldier very affectionately as on her arrival. And she complimented him on his good looks, declaring that she found him as handsome as ever, and making him smile by speaking of a lady who was still madly in love with him. Then, after acknowledging the young priest's silent salutation by a slight bow, she went off, once more wearing her modest and sensible air.

For a moment Orlando, with his eyes turned towards the door, remained silent, again sad, reflecting no doubt on all the difficult, equivocal present, so different from the glorious past. But all at once he turned to Pierre, who was still waiting. "And so, my friend," said he, "you are staying at the Palazzo Boccanera? Ah! what a grievous misfortune there has been on that side too!"

However, when the priest had told him of his conversation with Benedetta, and of her message that she still loved him and would never forget his goodness to her, no matter whatever happened, he appeared moved and his voice trembled: "Yes, she has a good heart, she has no spite. But what would you have? She did not love Luigi, and he was possibly violent. There is no mystery about the matter now, and I can speak to you freely, since to my great grief everybody knows what has happened."

Then Orlando abandoned himself to his recollections, and related how keen had been his delight on the eve of the marriage at the thought that so lovely a creature would become his daughter, and set some youth and charm around his invalid's arm-chair. He had always worshipped beauty, and would have had no other love than woman, if his country had not seized upon the best part of him. And Benedetta on her side loved him, revered him, constantly coming up to spend long hours with him, sharing his poor little room, which at those times became resplendent with all the divine grace that she brought with her. With her fresh breath near him, the pure scent she diffused, the caressing womanly tenderness with which she surrounded him, he lived anew. But, immediately afterwards, what a frightful drama and how his heart had bled at his inability to reconcile the husband and the wife! He could not possibly say that his son was in the wrong in desiring to be the loved and accepted spouse. At first indeed he had hoped to soften Benedetta, and throw her into Luigi's arms. But when she had confessed herself to him in tears, owning her old love for Dario, and her horror of belonging to another, he realised that she would never yield. And a whole year had then gone by; he had lived for a whole year imprisoned in his arm-chair, with that poignant drama progressing beneath him in those luxurious rooms whence no sound even reached his ears. How many times had he not listened, striving to hear, fearing atrocious quarrels, in despair at his inability to prove still useful by creating happiness. He knew nothing by his son, who kept his own counsel; he only learnt a few particulars from Benedetta at intervals when emotion left her defenceless; and that marriage in which he had for a moment espied the much-needed alliance between old and new Rome, that unconsummated marriage filled him with despair, as if it were indeed the defeat of every hope, the final collapse of the dream which had filled his life. And he himself had ended by desiring the divorce, so unbearable had become the suffering caused by such a situation.

"Ah! my friend!" he said to Pierre; "never before did I so well understand the fatality of certain antagonism, the possibility of working one's own misfortune and that of others, even when one has the most loving heart and upright mind!"

But at that moment the door again opened, and this time, without knocking, Count Luigi Prada came in. And after rapidly bowing to the visitor, who had risen, he gently took hold of his father's hands and felt them, as if fearing that they might be too warm or too cold.

"I've just arrived from Frascati, where I had to sleep," said he; "for the interruption of all that building gives me a lot of worry. And I'm told that you spent a bad night!"

"No, I assure you."

"Oh! I knew you wouldn't own it. But why will you persist in living up here without any comfort? All this isn't suited to your age. I should be so pleased if you would accept a more comfortable room where you might sleep better."

"No, no – I know that you love me well, my dear Luigi. But let me do as my old head tells me. That's the only way to make me happy."

Pierre was much struck by the ardent affection which sparkled in the eyes of the two men as they gazed at one another, face to face. This seemed to him very touching and beautiful, knowing as he did how many contrary ideas and actions, how many moral divergencies separated them. And he next took an interest in comparing them physically. Count Luigi Prada, shorter, more thick-set than his father, had, however, much the same strong energetic head, crowned with coarse black hair, and the same frank but somewhat stern eyes set in a face of clear complexion, barred by thick moustaches. But his mouth differed – a sensual, voracious mouth it was, with wolfish teeth – a mouth of prey made for nights of rapine, when the only question is to bite, and tear, and devour others. And for this reason, when some praised the frankness in his eyes, another would retort: "Yes, but I don't like his mouth." His feet were large, his hands plump and over-broad, but admirably cared for.

And Pierre marvelled at finding him such as he had anticipated. He knew enough of his story to picture in him a hero's son spoilt by conquest, eagerly devouring the harvest garnered by his father's glorious sword. And he particularly studied how the father's virtues had deflected and become transformed into vices in the son – the most noble qualities being perverted, heroic and disinterested energy lapsing into a ferocious appetite for possession, the man of battle leading to the man of booty, since the great gusts of enthusiasm no longer swept by, since men no longer fought, since they remained there resting, pillaging, and devouring amidst the heaped-up spoils. And the pity of it was that the old hero, the paralytic, motionless father beheld it all – beheld the degeneration of his son, the speculator and company promoter gorged with millions!

However, Orlando introduced Pierre. "This is Monsieur l'Abbe Pierre Froment, whom I spoke to you about," he said, "the author of the book which I gave you to read."

Luigi Prada showed himself very amiable, at once talking of home with an intelligent passion like one who wished to make the city a great modern capital. He had seen Paris transformed by the Second Empire; he had seen Berlin enlarged and embellished after the German victories; and, according to him, if Rome did not follow the movement, if it did not become the inhabitable capital of a great people, it was threatened with prompt death: either a crumbling museum or a renovated, resuscitated city – those were the alternatives.⁵

Greatly struck, almost gained over already, Pierre listened to this clever man, charmed with his firm, clear mind. He knew how skilfully Prada had manoeuvred in the affair of the Villa Montefiori, enriching himself when every one else was ruined, having doubtless foreseen the fatal catastrophe even while the gambling passion was maddening the entire nation. However, the young priest could already detect marks of weariness, precocious wrinkles and a fall of the lips, on that determined, energetic face, as though its possessor were growing tired of the continual struggle that he had to carry on amidst surrounding downfalls, the shock of which threatened to bring the most firmly established fortunes to the ground. It was said that Prada had recently had grave cause for anxiety; and indeed there was no longer any solidity to be found; everything might be swept away by the financial crisis which day by day was becoming more and more serious. In the case of Luigi, sturdy son though he was of Northern Italy, a sort of degeneration had set in, a slow rot, caused by the softening, perversive influence of Rome. He had there rushed upon the satisfaction of every appetite, and prolonged enjoyment was exhausting him. This, indeed, was one of the causes of the deep silent sadness of Orlando, who was

⁵ Personally I should have thought the example of Berlin a great deterrent. The enlargement and embellishment of the Prussian capital, after the war of 1870, was attended by far greater roguery and wholesale swindling than even the previous transformation of Paris. Thousands of people too were ruined, and instead of an increase of prosperity the result was the very reverse. – Trans.

compelled to witness the swift deterioration of his conquering race, whilst Sacco, the Italian of the South – served as it were by the climate, accustomed to the voluptuous atmosphere, the life of those sun-baked cities compounded of the dust of antiquity – bloomed there like the natural vegetation of a soil saturated with the crimes of history, and gradually grasped everything, both wealth and power.

As Orlando spoke of Stefana's visit to his son, Sacco's name was mentioned. Then, without another word, the two men exchanged a smile. A rumour was current that the Minister of Agriculture, lately deceased, would perhaps not be replaced immediately, and that another minister would take charge of the department pending the next session of the Chamber.

Next the Palazzo Boccanera was mentioned, and Pierre, his interest awakened, became more attentive. "Ah!" exclaimed Count Luigi, turning to him, "so you are staying in the Via Giulia? All the Rome of olden time sleeps there in the silence of forgetfulness."

With perfect ease he went on to speak of the Cardinal and even of Benedetta – "the Countess," as he called her. But, although he was careful to let no sign of anger escape him, the young priest could divine that he was secretly quivering, full of suffering and spite. In him the enthusiastic energy of his father appeared in a baser, degenerate form. Quitting the yet handsome Princess Flavia in his passion for Benedetta, her divinely beautiful niece, he had resolved to make the latter his own at any cost, determined to marry her, to struggle with her and overcome her, although he knew that she loved him not, and that he would almost certainly wreck his entire life. Rather than relinquish her, however, he would have set Rome on fire. And thus his hopeless suffering was now great indeed: this woman was but his wife in name, and so torturing was the thought of her disdain, that at times, however calm his outward demeanour, he was consumed by a jealous vindictive sensual madness that did not even recoil from the idea of crime.

"Monsieur l'Abbe is acquainted with the situation," sadly murmured old Orlando.

His son responded by a wave of the hand, as though to say that everybody was acquainted with it. "Ah! father," he added, "but for you I should never have consented to take part in those proceedings for annulling the marriage! The Countess would have found herself compelled to return here, and would not nowadays be deriding us with her lover, that cousin of hers, Dario!"

At this Orlando also waved his hand, as if in protest.

"Oh! it's a fact, father," continued Luigi. "Why did she flee from here if it wasn't to go and live with her lover? And indeed, in my opinion, it's scandalous that a Cardinal's palace should shelter such goings-on!"

This was the report which he spread abroad, the accusation which he everywhere levelled against his wife, of publicly carrying on a shameless *liaison*. In reality, however, he did not believe a word of it, being too well acquainted with Benedetta's firm rectitude, and her determination to belong to none but the man she loved, and to him only in marriage. However, in Prada's eyes such accusations were not only fair play but also very efficacious.

And now, although he turned pale with covert exasperation, and laughed a hard, vindictive, cruel laugh, he went on to speak in a bantering tone of the proceedings for annulling the marriage, and in particular of the plea put forward by Benedetta's advocate Morano. And at last his language became so free that Orlando, with a glance towards the priest, gently interposed: "Luigi! Luigi!"

"Yes, you are right, father, I'll say no more," thereupon added the young Count. "But it's really abominable and ridiculous. Lisbeth, you know, is highly amused at it."

Orlando again looked displeased, for when visitors were present he did not like his son to refer to the person whom he had just named. Lisbeth Kauffmann, very blonde and pink and merry, was barely thirty years of age, and belonged to the Roman foreign colony. For two years past she had been a widow, her husband having died at Rome whither he had come to nurse a complaint of the lungs. Thenceforward free, and sufficiently well off, she had remained in the city by taste, having a marked predilection for art, and painting a little, herself. In the Via Principe Amadeo, in the new Viminal district, she had purchased a little palazzo, and transformed a large apartment on its second floor into

a studio hung with old stuffs, and balmy in every season with the scent of flowers. The place was well known to tolerant and intellectual society. Lisbeth was there found in perpetual jubilation, clad in a long blouse, somewhat of a /gamine/ in her ways, trenchant too and often bold of speech, but nevertheless capital company, and as yet compromised with nobody but Prada. Their /liaison/ had begun some four months after his wife had left him, and now Lisbeth was near the time of becoming a mother. This she in no wise concealed, but displayed such candid tranquillity and happiness that her numerous acquaintances continued to visit her as if there were nothing in question, so facile and free indeed is the life of the great cosmopolitan continental cities. Under the circumstances which his wife's suit had created, Prada himself was not displeased at the turn which events had taken with regard to Lisbeth, but none the less his incurable wound still bled.

There could be no compensation for the bitterness of Benedetta's disdain, it was she for whom his heart burned, and he dreamt of one day wreaking on her a tragic punishment.

Pierre, knowing nothing of Lisbeth, failed to understand the allusions of Orlando and his son. But realising that there was some embarrassment between them, he sought to take countenance by picking from off the littered table a thick book which, to his surprise, he found to be a French educational work, one of those manuals for the /baccalaureat/,⁶ containing a digest of the knowledge which the official programmes require. It was but a humble, practical, elementary work, yet it necessarily dealt with all the mathematical, physical, chemical, and natural sciences, thus broadly outlining the intellectual conquests of the century, the present phase of human knowledge.

"Ah!" exclaimed Orlando, well pleased with the diversion, "you are looking at the book of my old friend Theophile Morin. He was one of the thousand of Marsala, you know, and helped us to conquer Sicily and Naples. A hero! But for more than thirty years now he has been living in France again, absorbed in the duties of his petty professorship, which hasn't made him at all rich. And so he lately published that book, which sells very well in France it seems; and it occurred to him that he might increase his modest profits on it by issuing translations, an Italian one among others. He and I have remained brothers, and thinking that my influence would prove decisive, he wishes to utilise it. But he is mistaken; I fear, alas! that I shall be unable to get anybody to take up his book."

At this Luigi Prada, who had again become very composed and amiable, shrugged his shoulders slightly, full as he was of the scepticism of his generation which desired to maintain things in their actual state so as to derive the greatest profit from them. "What would be the good of it?" he murmured; "there are too many books already!"

"No, no!" the old man passionately retorted, "there can never be too many books! We still and ever require fresh ones! It's by literature, not by the sword, that mankind will overcome falsehood and injustice and attain to the final peace of fraternity among the nations – Oh! you may smile; I know that you call these ideas my fancies of '48, the fancies of a greybeard, as people say in France. But it is none the less true that Italy is doomed, if the problem be not attacked from down below, if the people be not properly fashioned. And there is only one way to make a nation, to create men, and that is to educate them, to develop by educational means the immense lost force which now stagnates in ignorance and idleness. Yes, yes, Italy is made, but let us make an Italian nation. And give us more and more books, and let us ever go more and more forward into science and into light, if we wish to live and to be healthy, good, and strong!"

With his torso erect, with his powerful leonine muzzle flaming with the white brightness of his beard and hair, old Orlando looked superb. And in that simple, candid chamber, so touching with its intentional poverty, he raised his cry of hope with such intensity of feverish faith, that before the young priest's eyes there arose another figure – that of Cardinal Boccanera, erect and black save for his snow-white hair, and likewise glowing with heroic beauty in his crumbling palace whose gilded

⁶ The examination for the degree of bachelor, which degree is the necessary passport to all the liberal professions in France. M. Zola, by the way, failed to secure it, being ploughed for "insufficiency in literature"! – Trans.

ceilings threatened to fall about his head! Ah! the magnificent stubborn men of the past, the believers, the old men who still show themselves more virile, more ardent than the young! Those two represented the opposite poles of belief; they had not an idea, an affection in common, and in that ancient city of Rome, where all was being blown away in dust, they alone seemed to protest, indestructible, face to face like two parted brothers, standing motionless on either horizon. And to have seen them thus, one after the other, so great and grand, so lonely, so detached from ordinary life, was to fill one's day with a dream of eternity.

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