

PENGUIN  CLASSICS

VICTOR HUGO  
NOTRE-DAME OF PARIS  
TRANSLATED BY JOHN STURROCK

*Notre-Dame of Paris* was Hugo's first great novel; published in 1831, it has become the classic example of French romanticism – compelling, capricious and delightfully flamboyant.

But into the tragic tale of Quasimodo, his hunchback hero, and around the stories of La Esmeralda and Frollo, the demented archdeacon, Victor Hugo weaves a plot as skilful and as subtle as it is sensational. Literally and symbolically dominated by the glorious Gothic architecture of Notre-Dame, the city of Paris in 1482 comes to life in this novel in a way which is uniquely and enduringly epic.

The English reader will savour this fine translation by John Sturrock which captures both the Romantic quest for and Victor Hugo's achievement of completeness, comprehensiveness, greatness.

The cover shows a detail from *Le Pont de l'Archevêché et Notre-Dame avant la restauration de Viollet-le-Duc*, a nineteenth-century painting of the French School in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris (photo: Bulloz, Paris)

PENGUIN  
Literature

U.K. £8.99  
U.S.A. \$11.95  
CAN. \$17.99

ISBN 0-14-044353-3



9 780140 443530

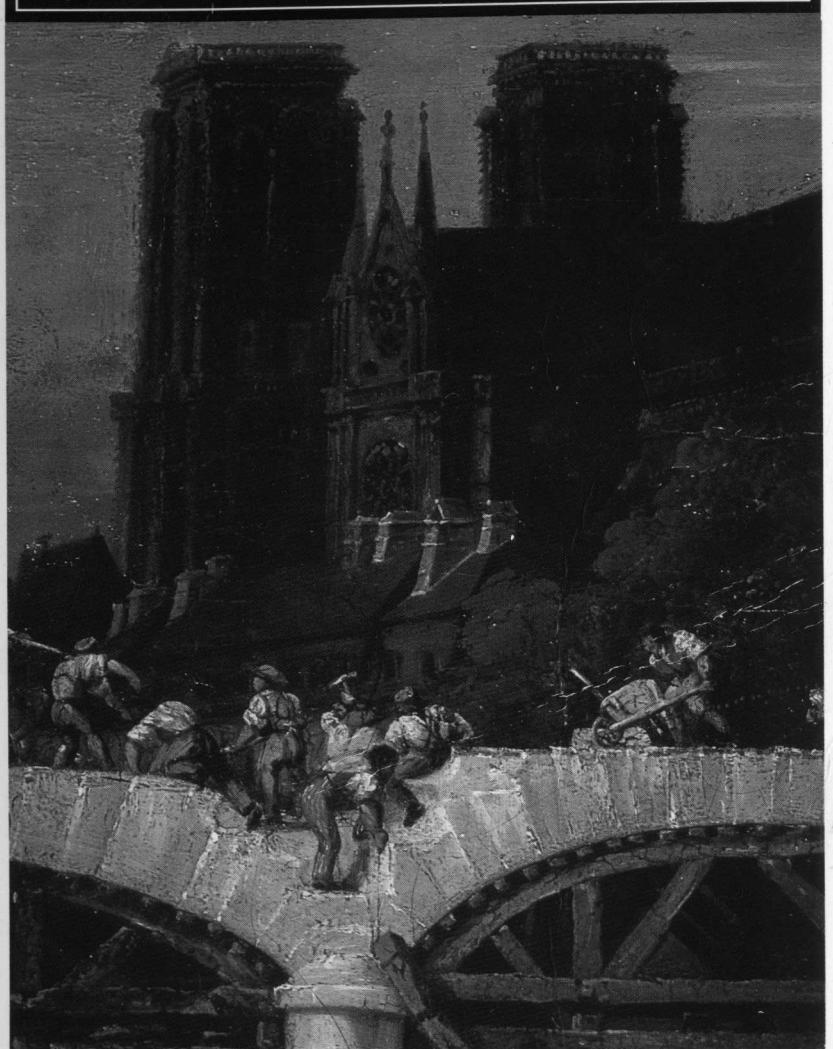


HUGO • NOTRE-DAME OF PARIS

ISBN 0-14-044353-3

PENGUIN  CLASSICS

VICTOR HUGO  
NOTRE-DAME OF PARIS



overcome great ones! A tooth triumphs over a body. The Nile rat kills the crocodile, the swordfish kills the whale, the book will kill the building!'

The curfew sounded in the cloister just as Doctor Jacques was repeating his everlasting refrain to his companion in a low voice: 'He's mad.' To which his companion this time answered: 'I believe he is.'

It was the time of day when no outsiders could remain in the cloister. The two visitors withdrew. 'Maitre,' said the Compère Tourangeau, as he took leave of the archdeacon, 'I like scholars and great minds, and I hold you in particular esteem. Come tomorrow to the Palace of the Tournelles and ask for the Abbot of Saint-Martin-de-Tours.'

The archdeacon went back to his room dumbfounded, having at last realized who the Compère Tourangeau was, and recalling this passage from the cartulary of Saint-Martin-de-Tours: *Abbas beati Martini, SCILICET REX FRANCIAE, est canonicus de consuetudine et habet parvam prebendam quam habet sanctus Venantius et debet sedere in sede thesaurarii.*<sup>1</sup>

From then on, so it was declared, the archdeacon frequently conferred with Louis XI when His Majesty came to Paris, and Dom Claude's influence eclipsed that of Olivier le Daim and Jacques Coictier who, as was his way, gave the king the rough edge of his tongue.

## TWO *This Will Kill That*

OUR female readers will forgive us if we pause for a moment in order to see what the thought might be that lay concealed beneath the archdeacon's enigmatic words: 'This will kill that. The book will kill the building.'

As we see it, this thought had two facets. Firstly, it was the thought of a priest. It was the alarm felt by the priesthood before a new agent: the printing-press. It was the terror and bewilderment felt by a man of the sanctuary before the luminous press of Guten-

<sup>1</sup>. 'The Abbot of Saint-Martin, to wit the King of France, is by custom a canon; he has the small prebend which Saint Venant has and should sit in the seat of the Treasurer.'

berg. It was the pulpit and the manuscript, the spoken and the written word, taking fright at the printed word; something like the stupor felt by a sparrow were it to see the angel legion unfold its six million wings. It was the cry of the prophet who already hears the restless surge of an emancipated mankind, who can see that future time when intelligence will undermine faith, opinion dethrone belief and the world shake off Rome. The prognosis of a philosopher who sees the human mind, volatilized by the press, evaporate from the theocratic receptacle. The terror of a soldier examining the bronze battering-ram and saying: 'The tower will give way.' It meant that one power was going to succeed another power. It meant: the press will kill the church.

But beneath this first and no doubt simpler thought, there was, in our opinion, a second, newer one, a corollary of the first less easily perceived but more easily challenged, an equally philosophical notion, no longer that of the priest alone but of the scientist and the artist too. This was the presentiment that as human ideas changed their form they would change their mode of expression, that the crucial idea of each generation would no longer be written in the same material or in the same way, that the book of stone, so solid and durable, would give way to the book of paper, which was more solid and durable still. Seen thus, the archdeacon's vague formula had a second meaning: it meant that one art was going to dethrone another art. It meant: printing will kill architecture.

In fact, from the origin of things up to and including the fifteenth century of the Christian era, architecture was the great book of mankind, man's chief form of expression in the various stages of his development, either as force or as intelligence.

When the memory of the first peoples felt itself to be overladen, when the human race's baggage-train of memories became so heavy and confused that language, volatile and unadorned, was in danger of losing it along the road, they were transcribed on to the ground in what was at once the most visible, durable and natural fashion. Each tradition was sealed beneath a monument.

The earliest monuments were simply quarters of rock which 'the iron had not touched', says Moses. Architecture began like any other form of writing. It was first of all an alphabet. A stone was set upright and it was a letter, and each letter was a hieroglyph, and on each hieroglyph a group of ideas rested, like the capital on a

column. Such was the way of the first peoples, everywhere at the same moment, across the whole surface of the globe. The 'raised stone' of the Celts is to be found in Asian Siberia and in the pampas of America.

Later on, they formed words. Stone was superimposed on stone, and these granite syllables were coupled together, the word tried out a few combinations. The Celtic dolmen and cromlech, the Etruscan tumulus, the Hebrew *galgal*, are words. Some of them, the tumulus especially, are proper nouns. Sometimes even, when they had plenty of stone and an extensive site, they wrote a sentence. The massive accumulation of Carnac is a complete formula in itself.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, they wrote books. Traditions had given birth to symbols, under which they vanished, like the trunk of a tree under its foliage; mankind had faith in all these symbols and they continued to grow, to multiply, to intersect, to become more and more complex; the early monuments were no longer adequate to contain them; they were swamped on every side; these monuments could barely express the primitive tradition which, like them, was bare, simple and earthbound. The symbol needed to expand into a building. Architecture thus evolved along with the human mind; it became a giant with a thousand heads and a thousand arms, and fixed all this vacillating symbolism in a form at once palpable, visible and eternal. While Daedalus, who is force, measured, and Orpheus, who is intelligence, sang, the pillar which is a letter, the arcade which is a syllable, the pyramid which is a word, simultaneously set in motion both by a law of geometry and a law of poetry, formed groups, they combined and amalgamated, they rose and fell, they were juxtaposed on the ground, and superimposed in the sky, until, at the dictate of the general idea of an epoch, they had written those marvellous books which were also marvellous buildings: the pagoda of Eklinga, the Ramesseum of Egypt, the Temple of Solomon.

The idea that engendered them, the word, was not only the foundation of all these buildings, it was also in their form. The Temple of Solomon, for instance, was not merely the binding of the sacred book, it was the sacred book itself. From each of its concentric ring-walls, the priests could read the word translated and made

<sup>1</sup>. Carnac is in south Brittany.

manifest to the eye, and could thus follow its transformations from sanctuary to sanctuary until, in its ultimate tabernacle, they could grasp it in its most concrete yet still architectural form: the ark. Thus the word was enclosed in the building, but its image was on the envelope like the human figure on the coffin of a mummy.

And not only the form of buildings but also the site chosen for them revealed the idea which they represented. According to whether the symbol to be expressed was a cheerful or a gloomy one, Greece would crown her mountains with a temple harmonious to the eye, while India disembowelled hers and carved them into those shapeless subterranean pagodas borne by gigantic rows of granite elephants.

Thus, during the world's first six thousand years, from the most immemorial Hindustan pagoda to the cathedral of Cologne, architecture was the great script of the human race. And so true is this, that not only every religious symbol but also every human thought has its own page and its own monument in this immense book.

Every civilization begins in theocracy and ends in democracy. This law, of liberty succeeding to unity, is inscribed in architecture. For, and on this we insist, you must not believe that masonry is capable only of erecting temples, of expressing myth and priestly symbolism, of transcribing the mysterious tablets of the law into hieroglyphs on its stone pages. Were that the case, since there comes a time in every human society when the sacred symbol is outworn and is obliterated by freedom of thought, when man eludes the priest, when the outcrop of systems and philosophies erodes the face of religion, then architecture would be incapable of reproducing this new state of the human mind; its sheets would be covered on the recto and blank on the verso, its work would be abridged, its book incomplete. But such is not the case.

As an example, let us take the Middle Ages, where we can see more clearly because they are closer to us. During their first phase, as theocracy organized Europe, as the Vatican rallied and re-ordered around itself the elements of a Rome formed from the Rome lying crumbled around the Capitol, as Christianity sifted through the debris of the earlier civilization for all the strata of society and built from its ruins a new, hierarchical universe, with the priesthood as its keystone, then it was that this mysterious Romanesque architecture, sister to the theocratic masonry of Egypt

and India, the unvarying emblem of pure Catholicism, the immutable hieroglyph of papal unity, was first heard, welling up amidst the chaos and later, under the impetus of Christianity and the hand of the barbarians, issuing forth from the wreckage of the dead architectures of Greece and Rome. The whole philosophy of the age, in fact, is inscribed in that sombre Romanesque style. In it you everywhere sense authority, unity, the impenetrable and the absolute, Gregory VII; everywhere the priest, never the man; everywhere the caste, never the people. But then came the Crusades. They were a great popular movement; and any great popular movement, whatever its cause or its object, always releases the spirit of liberty from its final precipitate. Innovations were on their way. The stormy age of the Jacqueries, the Pragueries and the Leagues dawned.<sup>1</sup> Authority was shaken, unity split in two. Feudalism demanded to share with theocracy, as it awaited the inevitable advent of the people, who would, as always, take the lion's share. *Quia nominor leo.*<sup>2</sup> Thus, the nobility broke through below the priesthood, the commons below the nobility. The face of Europe was changed. Well, the face of architecture was changed too! Like civilization, it turned the page, and the new spirit of the times found it ready to write at its dictation. It returned from the Crusades with the pointed arch, like the nations with liberty. Then, as Rome was gradually dismembered, Romanesque architecture died. The hieroglyph deserted the cathedral and went to emblazon the castle-keep, so as to lend prestige to feudalism. From now on, the cathedral itself, formerly so dogmatic an edifice, was invaded by the bourgeoisie, by the commons, by liberty; it escaped from the priest and came under the sway of the artist. The artist built to his own fancy. Farewell mystery, myth and law. Now it was fantasy and caprice. Provided the priest had his basilica and his altar, he had no further say. The four walls belonged to the artist. The book of architecture no longer belonged to the priesthood, to religion and to Rome; it belonged to the imagination, to poetry and to the people. Hence the rapid and innumerable transformations of an architecture only three centuries old, so striking after the stagnant immobility of Romanesque architecture, which was six or seven

1. The Jacqueries were peasant revolts in France, the most famous in 1358; the Praguerie was a revolt against Charles VII of France in 1440.

2. 'For my name is lion.'

centuries old. But architecture took giant strides. The genius and originality of the people performed the task the bishops had performed. Each race wrote, in passing, its line in the book; it struck out the old Romanesque hieroglyphs on the frontispieces of the cathedrals, and now the dogma was all but lost to view, except where it showed through the new symbolism laid on top of it. The people's drapery had very nearly obscured the religious bone-structure. And now architects took unimaginable liberties, even towards the Church. Monks and nuns coupled shamefully on capitals, as in the Hall of Chimneys in the Palais de Justice in Paris. The story of Noah was carved *in full*, as beneath the great portal of Bourges. A bacchic monk with asses' ears and glass in hand laughed a whole community to scorn, as above the lavabo in the Abbey of Bocherville. At that time, the thought that was inscribed in stone enjoyed a privilege entirely comparable to our present freedom of the press. This was the freedom of architecture.

That freedom went a long way. Sometimes a portal, a façade or an entire church would display a symbolic meaning utterly alien to the cult, or even hostile to the Church. William of Paris, as early as the thirteenth century, and Nicolas Flamel in the fifteenth, wrote such seditious pages. Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie was an entire anti-church.

At that time, thought was free only in this one mode, and so it was written out in full only in the books known as buildings. But for its architectural form, it would have found itself being burnt in the public squares by the hangman in its manuscript form, had it been rash enough to risk one. Church portal ideas would have witnessed the punishment of book ideas. Masonry being its one way of manifesting itself, thought hastened to it from every side. Hence the immense numbers of cathedrals which covered Europe, their total so prodigious that one can scarcely credit it even after verifying it. The material and intellectual forces of society all converged on the one point: architecture. In this way, on the pretext of building churches to God, that art grew to a magnificent stature.

Whoever was then born a poet became an architect. The genius distributed amongst the masses was everywhere compressed under feudalism, as if under a testudo of bronze shields; architecture was its one outlet, it was released through that art and its Iliads took the form of cathedrals. The other arts all submitted to the allegiance

and discipline of architecture. They were the workmen in the great work. In his own person, the architect, the poet and overseer, summated the sculpture that carved his façades, the painting that illuminated his stained-glass and the music which set his bells swinging and breathed air into his organs. And even poor poetry, properly so called, still stubbornly vegetating in manuscripts, was obliged, if it wanted to be something, to enter within the framework of the building in the form of a hymn or of *prose*; the self-same role, after all, which the tragedies of Aeschylus had played in the priestly festivals of Greece, or the book of Genesis in the Temple of Solomon.

Thus, up until Gutenberg, architecture was the chief, the universal form of writing. It was the Middle Ages which wrote the final page in the book of granite, which had been begun in the Orient and carried on by Ancient Greece and Rome. Moreover, this phenomenon, of a popular architecture succeeding a caste architecture, which we have just observed in the Middle Ages, has occurred in every analogous movement of the human intelligence in the other great periods of history. Thus, to enunciate only briefly a law it would require whole volumes to develop: in the high Orient, the cradle of early times, after Hindu architecture, Phoenician architecture, the opulent mother of Arab architecture; in antiquity, after Egyptian architecture, of which the Etruscan style and Cyclopean monuments are only an offshoot, Greek architecture, of which the Roman style is merely an extension, with the Carthaginian dome added; in modern times, after Romanesque architecture, Gothic architecture. And if you divide these three series into two, you will find the same symbol on the three elder sisters, Hindu, Egyptian and Romanesque architecture: theocracy, caste, unity, dogma, God; and the same meaning too, whatever the diversity of form inherent in their nature, for the three younger sisters, Phoenician, Greek and Gothic architecture: liberty, the people, man.

In Hindu, Egyptian or Romanesque buildings, you are conscious always of the priest and of nothing but the priest, whether he be called brahmin, magus or pope. The same does not hold for popular architectures. They are more ornate and less sacred. In Phoenician architecture you are conscious of the merchant; in Greek of the republican; in Gothic of the burgess.

The general characteristics of any theocratic architecture are immutability, the horror of progress, the preservation of traditional lines, the consecration of original types, the constant bending of all the forms of man and nature to the incomprehensible whims of the symbol. They are murky books which initiates alone can decipher. For the rest, every form, every deformity even, has a meaning which makes it inviolable. You must not ask of Hindu, Egyptian or Romanesque buildings that they should amend their design or improve their statuary. To them any improvement is an impiety. In these architectures, the rigidity of dogma seems to have spread across the stonework like a second petrification. The general characteristics of popular buildings on the other hand are variety, progress, originality, opulence, perpetual motion. They are sufficiently detached from religion to think of their beauty, to cultivate it, to be constantly adjusting the statues and arabesques that adorn them. They belong to their century. There is something human about them mixing ceaselessly in with the divine symbol beneath which they are still produced. Hence buildings accessible to every soul, every intelligence, every imagination, still symbolic yet as easily understood as nature. The difference between this architecture and a theocratic one, is that between a sacred and a profane tongue, between hieroglyphs and art, between Solomon and Phidias.

If we now sum up what we have so far said all too hurriedly, omitting many proofs as well as many objections of detail, it amounts to this: that up until the fifteenth century architecture was the principal register of mankind, that during that period all ideas of any complexity which arose in the world became a building; every popular idea, just like every religious law, had its monuments; that the human race, in fact, inscribed in stone every one of its important thoughts. And why? Because every idea, be it religious or philosophical, is concerned to perpetuate itself, because the idea that has moved one generation wants to move others, and to leave some trace. But how precarious was the immortality of a manuscript! While a building is an altogether more solid, lasting and resistant book! It takes only a torch and a Turk to destroy the written word. To demolish the word of stone you need a social, terrestrial revolution. The barbarians passed over the Coliseum, the flood perhaps over the Pyramids.

the Gothic genius had been extinguished forever on the horizon of the art, architecture became increasingly drab, colourless and self-effacing. The printed book ate its way into buildings like worm, and bled and devoured them. Architecture shed its skin and its leaves, and wasted visibly away. It became mean, impoverished, null. It no longer expressed anything, not even the memory of the art of earlier times. Reduced to itself, abandoned by the other arts because the human mind had abandoned it, it turned to common labourers for want of artists. The plain window replaced stained-glass. The stonemason succeeded the sculptor. It meant farewell to all vitality, all originality, all life, all intelligence. It dragged on, like a pitiable mendicant of the studios, from imitation to imitation. Michelangelo, who had no doubt sensed that it was dying as early as the sixteenth century, had had one last, despairing idea. This Titan of the art piled the Pantheon on the Parthenon and created Saint Peter's of Rome. A master-work which deserved to remain unique, the final originality of architecture, an artistic giant signing his name at the foot of the colossal ledger of stone and closing it. But once Michelangelo was dead, what did this wretched architecture do, which was only the ghost or the spectre of its former self? It took Saint Peter's and traced it, it parodied it. It became a craze. It was pitiful. Every century has its Saint Peter's of Rome; in the seventeenth century the Val-de-Grâce, in the eighteenth Sainte-Geneviève. Every country has its Saint Peter's. London has one. St Petersburg has one. Paris has two or three. A trivial testament, the last ravings of a great art in its decline, which relapsed into infancy before it died.

If, instead of the characteristic monuments like those of which we have just been speaking, we examine the general aspect of the art between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, we observe the same phenomena of decline and wasting. From François II on, the architectural form of buildings becomes steadily less noticeable, and allows the geometrical form to show through, like the bone-structure of some emaciated invalid. The beautiful lines of art give way to the cold and inexorable lines of the geometer. A building is no longer a building, it is a polyhedron. Yet architecture is desperate to conceal this bareness. You see Greek pediments inscribed within Roman pediments and vice versa. It is always the Pantheon inside the Parthenon: Saint Peter's of Rome. Look at the brick houses of

Henri IV with their stone quoins: the Place Royale, and the Place Dauphine. Look at Louis XIII's churches, heavy, squat, flattened, thick-set, burdened by their domes as if by a hump. Look at the architecture of Mazarin, at the Quatre Nations, that bad Italian pastiche. Look at Louis XIV's palaces, elongated barracks for courtiers, stiff, glacial, uninteresting. Look finally at Louis Quinze, with its chicory and vermicelli, and all the warts and proud-flesh which disfigure that old, decrepit, toothless and coquetish architecture. Between François II and Louis XV the disease grew in geometrical progression. The art was no longer anything but skin and bone. It died a miserable death.

What, meanwhile, had become of the printing-press? All the vitality which went from architecture came to the press. As architecture waned, the press waxed and grew fat. The capital sums of energy that the human mind had expended on buildings, it henceforth expended on books. And so, as early as the sixteenth century, the press, now the equal of a declining architecture, fought with it and killed it. In the seventeenth century, it was already sufficiently dominant, sufficiently triumphant, sufficiently secure in its victory, to treat the world to the banquet of a great literary age. In the eighteenth century, after its lengthy repose at the court of Louis XIV, it took up Luther's old sword once again, armed Voltaire with it, and ran in tumult to attack the old Europe, whose architectural expression it had already killed. When the eighteenth century came to an end, it had destroyed everything. In the nineteenth century, it was to rebuild.

And now we must ask which of these two arts, over the past three centuries, has truly represented the human mind? Which has translated it? Which has expressed, not only its literary and scholastic obsessions, but its vast, profound and universal movement? Which has constantly superimposed itself without let-up or interruption, on the march of that myriapod monster, the human race? Architecture or printing?

Printing. Let there be no mistake, architecture is dead, dead beyond recall, killed by the printed book, killed because it is less enduring, killed because it is more expensive. Every cathedral is a billion francs. And then imagine what sums it would require to rewrite the book of architecture, to once more cover the earth with thousands of buildings, to return to those ages when, so crowded

were the monuments, that, according to an eye-witness, 'it was as if the world had shaken off its old garments so as to clothe itself in a white vestment of churches'. *Erat enim ut si mundus, ipse excutiendo semet, rejecta vetustate, candidam ecclesiarum vestem indueret* (Glaber Radulphus).

A book is so soon made, it costs so little, and it can travel so far! Why wonder that the whole of human thought should flow down this slope? This is not to say that architecture will not now and again have a fine monument, an isolated masterpiece. From time to time, in the reign of printing, we may well still get a column made, I suppose, by a whole army, from the fusing of cannons, as, under the reign of architecture, they had Iliads and Romanceros, Mahabharatas and Nibelungen, made by a whole people from an accumulation and fusion of rhapsodies. The great accident of an architect of genius might occur in the twentieth century just like that of Dante in the thirteenth. But architecture will no longer be the social, the collective, the dominant art. The great poem, the great edifice, the great creation of mankind will no longer be built, it will be printed.

And in future, should architecture accidentally revive, it will no longer be master. It will be subject to the law of literature, which once received the law from it. The respective positions of the two arts will be reversed. It is a fact that during the age of architecture the – admittedly rare – poems resembled the monuments. In India, Vyasa is intricate, strange and impenetrable, like a pagoda. In the Egyptian East, poetry, like the buildings, has a grandeur and tranquillity of line; in ancient Greece, beauty, serenity and calm; in Christian Europe, the majesty of Catholicism, the naïvety of the people, the rich and luxuriant vegetation of an age of renewal. The Bible resembles the Pyramids, the Iliad the Parthenon, Homer Phidias. Dante in the thirteenth century was the last Romanesque church, Shakespeare in the sixteenth the last Gothic cathedral.

Thus, to sum up what we have said so far in a necessarily incomplete and truncated form, the human race has two books, two registers, two testaments: masonry and printing, the bible of stone and the bible of paper. When we study these two bibles, so fully opened through the centuries, it is permissible surely to feel nostalgia for the visible majesty of what was written in granite, those gigantic alphabets formulated as colonnades, pylons and obelisks, those man-made mountains, as it were, which covered the world and the

past, from the pyramid to the steeple, from Cheops to Strasbourg. We must re-read the past from these marble pages. We must constantly admire and turn the pages of the book written by architecture; but we must not gainsay the grandeur of the edifice which printing has erected in its turn.

This edifice is colossal. Some maker of statistics or other has calculated that if all the volumes which have issued from the presses since Gutenberg were placed one on top of the other they would occupy the distance from the earth to the moon; but that is not the kind of grandeur we mean. Yet, when we try to compose in our minds a total picture of the sum of the products of the printing-press up till our own day, does the whole not appear to us as a vast construction, with the entire world as its base, at which mankind has been working without respite and whose monstrous head is lost in the profound mists of the future? It is the ant-hill of the intellect. It is the hive to which all the golden bees of the imagination come with their honey. It is an edifice of a thousand storeys. Here and there, on its staircases, one can see the mouths of the murky tunnels of science, which intersect in its bowels. On its surface, everywhere, the luxuriance of art, with its arabesques, its rose-windows and its tracery. Here, each individual work, however isolated or capricious it may appear, has its own place and protuberance. Its harmony comes from the whole. From the cathedral of Shakespeare to the mosque of Byron, innumerable bell-turrets jostle indiscriminately on this metropolis of the universal mind. At its base, a number of the ancient titles of mankind have been rewritten, which architecture had not recorded. On the left of the entrance has been affixed the old white marble bas-relief of Homer, on the right the polyglot bible rears its seven heads. Further on stands the bristling hydra of the Romancero, with other hybrid forms, the Vedas and the Nibelungen. For the rest, this prodigious edifice remains perpetually unfinished. The printing-press, that giant machine, tirelessly pumping the whole intellectual sap of society, is constantly spewing out fresh materials for its erection. The entire human race is on the scaffolding. Each mind is a mason. The humblest can stop up a hole or lay a stone. Restif de la Bretonne<sup>1</sup> contributes his hod-load of plaster. Every day a new course is added. And aside from the

1. Nicolas Restif (1734–1806), a prolific observer of contemporary and especially lower-class life, long thought a salacious writer.

original offerings of individual writers, there are collective contingents. The eighteenth century gives the *Encyclopédie*,<sup>1</sup> the Revolution the *Moniteur*.<sup>2</sup> This indeed is a construction which grows and mounts in spirals without end; here is a confusion of tongues, ceaseless activity, indefatigable labour, fierce rivalry between all of mankind, the intellect's promised refuge against a second deluge, against submersion by the barbarians. This is the human race's second Tower of Babel.

1. The famous attempt by Diderot and others to encompass, in thirty-five volumes, the then state of knowledge of the world. It is now seen as a landmark in the advance of rationalism and the popularization of the scientific attitude.

2. *Le Moniteur universel* was launched in 1789 to publish the debates of the Constituent Assembly.

## BOOK SIX

### ONE

#### *An Impartial Look at the Old Magistrature*

IN the year of grace 1482, the noble Robert d'Estouteville, Chevalier, Sieur of Beyne, Baron of Yvri and Saint-Andry-en-la-Marche, Councillor and Chamberlain to the King, and Keeper of the Provostry of Paris, was a very fortunate man. It was now almost seventeen years since, on 7 November 1465, the year of the comet,<sup>1</sup> he had received from the king the high dignity of Provost of Paris, reputed to be more a lordship than an office, 'dignitas,' says Joannes Loemnoeus, 'quae cum non exigua potestate politiam concernente, atque praerogativis multis et juribus conjuncta est.'<sup>2</sup> A gentleman holding a commission from the king whose letters of appointment dated back to the time of the marriage between Louis XI's natural daughter and the Bastard of Bourbon, that was a most remarkable thing in 1482. On the same day as Robert d'Estouteville had replaced Jacques de Villiers in the provostry of Paris, Maître Jean Duvet had replaced Messire Hélye de Thorrettes in the first presidency of the Court of Parliament, Jean Jouvenel des Ursins had ousted Pierre de Morvilliers from the office of Chancellor of France, and Regnault des Dormans had dis-appointed Pierre Puy from the post of Master of Requests in Ordinary to the King's Household. But upon how many heads had the presidency, the chancellery and the mastership not fallen since Robert d'Estouteville got the provostship of Paris! It had been 'bailed in keeping' to him according to the Letters Patent, and he had indeed kept it well. He had clung to it, had incorporated himself into it, had identified himself with it. With the result that he avoided that mania for change that overcame Louis XI, a distrustful, querulous and industrious king, intent on preserving the elasticity of his power by frequent appointments and dismissals. What was more, the gallant chevalier had secured the succession in his post for his

1. This comet, against which Pope Calixtus, uncle of Borgia, ordered public prayers, is the one that will reappear in 1835 (V.H.).

2. 'A dignity which is associated with no small powers of police, and with many prerogatives and rights.'