

world? In face of this catastrophe, in face of this hill all heaped with stones, which, five days ago, breathed the very spirit of history, how may we hold back the rage from our hearts?

Suddenly an aeroplane emerges from the dark sky. Swift bird of prey, its wings spread wide, it rushes upon the ruins. The air is rent. It is a machine-gun, which, from on high, is firing upon these *débris*. The bird swings round the hill, makes its observations, and all at once flies into the clouds and vanishes.

Books are scattered over the ground. Whence do they come? From the curé's house that has been blown up? Here, torn to pieces, are the sermons of Bossuet, the Verrines, sermons, a novel, a chapter of which begins with these words: "When Jeanne laughed, she showed all her teeth." And here is a Virgil, open at the third book of the *Æneid*. The poet is speaking of Polyphemus:

Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen
ademptum:

Trunca manum pinus regit et vestigia firmat.

Let us be off! Still they are fighting in the depths of these woods, where the guns thunder, and then become an indistinct murmur like that of a crowd.

And once more we cross the ruined country, the levelled villages. One has difficulty in breathing. One asks oneself if one is still a man—if one is not the victim of a nightmare. And the scent of death, of smoke, of ruins under which the carcasses of beasts are rotting makes one faint with nausea.