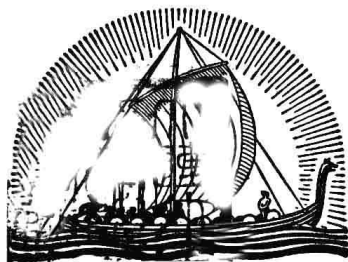


A WORLD TO WIN

Upton Sinclair



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Up to the year 1938 there had been issued in European countries a total of 690 titles of the books of Upton Sinclair, and in India, China, and Japan a total of 57. The number of books cannot be estimated, but in Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union the total was over seven millions. I have no way of learning how many of these readers have survived the Great Blackout, but I take this opportunity to send to them my greetings and my hopes. May they succeed in building the new world, dedicated to the practice of democracy, both industrial and political, as I have tried to explain it in many books and pamphlets. For the benefit of these old readers and of others who may be interested, I have placed as an appendix to this, the seventh volume of the *World's End* series, the data as to foreign editions of the series, issued or in preparation, up to March, 1946.

UPTON SINCLAIR

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BOOK ONE

The Pelting of This Pitiless Storm

The Hurt That Honor Feels

I

LANNY kept thinking: This must be the only man in France who can smile. At least it was the only one Lanny had met, and Lanny had done some traveling in this time of agony and grief. The man whose name spelled backward the same as forward, and who all his life had taken this as an omen of good luck—this man was in power again; he was overcoming all his enemies, thousands of them, yes, even millions. He sat at his desk by the window of what had once been a luxurious hotel suite, and beamed upon his visitor, reminding him: "It has happened just about as I told you, M. Budd." Lanny said it was so, and thought that the death of something like a hundred and twenty-five thousand Frenchmen, and the captivity of ten or twelve times as many, signified less to Pierre Laval than the ability to say: "*C'est moi qui avait raison!*"

It was midsummer of the year 1940, and a hot wind was blowing from the deserts of Africa over the plains of Central France. The French are never prone to open windows, and the Vice-Premier was shut tightly in his overdecorated office. He made no concession to summer fashions, but wore his customary black suit and the white bow tie which had become his trademark in French politics. He mopped his swarthy forehead as he talked, and now and then passed the damp handkerchief around his neck; elegance had never been his role, and the fact that he had amassed one or two hundred million francs made no difference. Now and then he chewed on his thick black mustache, and when he smoked his cigarette too low, Lanny feared that the fire might reach this adornment. Laval had odd slanting eyes, and his enemies called him *le fripon mongol*; the "rascal" part of this was undoubtedly true, and the other half might have been—who could say?

Ordinarily he was a free talker, but now he chose to listen, for his caller had just come down from Paris, and had talked there with the Führer of the conquering Germans. Laval was in touch with Paris, getting his orders, more or less politely disguised; also, there were German

representatives here in Vichy, making no secret of their authority. But one who knew the Nazi leaders personally, and chatted with them socially, might pick up hints that could be got in no other way. An American was supposed to be a neutral, a friend of both sides; so the Mongolian rascal put one question after another and listened attentively. What were Hitler's real intentions toward *la patrie*? What would they be when Britain had quit? To what extent would he leave the control of French business in French hands? And what would be his attitude toward the Fleet? Delicate questions, which a statesman did not ask except from one he trusted.

And Britain? Lanny had been there just before Dunkirk, less than two months ago. What did the true friends of France in that country think about the present deplorable situation? What chance did they have to advocate their cause? Pierre Laval hated England with a bitterness which had now become a sort of mania, but he would be careful about giving voice to his feelings in the presence of an Anglo-Saxon. He would listen while Lanny talked about his "appeaser" friends, the extreme difficulties they now faced, and the work they were doing, quietly and yet effectively, to bring this blind meaningless struggle to an end.

"I don't suppose there is any more need for secrecy," said the friend of all good Europeans. "I carried a message from the Maréchal to Lord Wickthorpe; but I found that it was too late."

"Have you seen the Maréchal here?" inquired the other.

"No, *cher Maître*. It was Baron Schneider's suggestion that I should consult you first." *Cher Maître* is the way you address a French lawyer when you are a colleague or an important client; from Lanny Budd it was a delicate reminder of their last meeting, in the home of Denis de Bruyne, an old-time fellow-conspirator of Laval's. It meant that Lanny had lived in France and understood nuances, a word invented by a people who live by them. The butcher's son who had once been head of the nation would know that this was the son of a great airplane manufacturer, and the former husband of one of the richest women in America. Lanny Budd, a friend of the great, knew how to deal with them, flattering them, teasing them now and then, above all never failing to entertain them.

Presently the Vice-Premier inquired: "Where are you staying?"

"I haven't looked up a place," was the reply. "I checked my bags at the *gare*."

"You may have trouble, because this town is packed to the last attic and cellar."

"So I have been told; but I thought more of France than of my own comfort. You know, your country has been my home since I was a babe in arms."

"Perhaps you had better come out and spend the night at my place. In the morning I will see what can be done for you."

"You are very kind, *cher Maître*."

"Not at all; I want more talk with you." But Lanny knew that an honor was being done him, for the French rarely open their homes to strangers—and especially not when a million or two have come staggering into your peaceful province, and your gates are besieged by a horde of people, starving and many of them wounded, craving no more than to share the shelter you give to your horses and cattle; and convinced that they have some claim upon you because you are a friend of the people, and they have attended your public meetings, joined your party, voted for you, and worked for your election to the *Chambre*.

II

It was the Bourbonnais province, almost in the geographical center of France. Fourteen miles from Vichy lies the village of Châteldon, where Pierre Laval had been born. His father had been the village butcher, tavernkeeper, and postmaster—which of these you heard mention depended upon whether it was an enemy or a dependent of the great man who spoke. The lad had been put to work early, driving to the railroad to fetch the mail; apparently it was not locked up, for while the old nag jogged along, the driver read the newspapers, and so learned about politics in his native land and what the great Napoleon had called "the career open to talents."

Little Pierre had had talents, and had convinced his father and got an education. He had become the most rascally lawyer in France, and had come back a multimillionaire and bought the ancient castle which dominated the place of his birth. Also the mineral springs, whose water Madame de Sévigné had held superior to the water of Vichy. Pierre had known how to exploit that fact, and how to get the water on sale in the restaurant cars of his country's railroads. One of his fortunes had come from it; and sitting at cushioned ease in his shiny black Mercedes he forgot his country's troubles for a while and told funny stories about those early days—stories not always to his credit, but he didn't mind, provided that he had come out ahead on the deal.

The village has two rivers flowing through it, and high mountains surrounding it. The medieval castle has a round tower and a square tower, and the cottages and smaller houses are gathered close around it for protection, like chicks about a mother hen. The visitor's first impression was that it was neither very elegant nor very sanitary; but then, he reflected, neither was its owner.

The residence was the manor house, and when Lanny went inside he perceived that this had been remodeled to fit it for a great gentleman's residence. Before dinner he was taken in his role of art expert to see the murals in the castle. Over the immense mantelpiece in the dining-room hung a painting representing the defeat of the English troops in the battle of Auvergne during the Hundred Years' War. It was by a painter of the so-called Fontainebleau School; Lanny had never heard his name, but naturally he wasn't going to say this to the proud *propriétaire*. He praised the school, saying that its contribution to the art of historical representation was coming to be more and more appreciated. This pleased Pierre greatly; he said that whenever he found himself discouraged by the present international situation he came into this old banquet hall and read the inscription beneath the mass of charging horses and men-at-arms. It was in Gothic lettering, and told the lord of Châteldon that "Here the English were so well received that they never returned."

"God damn that bastard Churchill!" exclaimed Pierre Laval; and Lanny Budd politely agreed that he was a curmudgeonly character.

III

Madame Laval had been the daughter of the village doctor, and had risen as high as possible in her land. Like a sensible Frenchwoman she had stuck by her man in spite of his many forms of misconduct. They had had a daughter, with the black hair, olive skin, and slanting eyes of her father. He had been wont to exhibit her in the law courts and the Palais Bourbon, to show his fellow-deputies what a devoted family man he was. In due course it had become necessary to find her a husband, and Pierre had selected René, Comte de Chambrun, son of a French general and lineal descendant of the Marquis de Lafayette. One does not get a son-in-law like that without paying, and Pierre had put up a *dot* which was written in eight figures and had been whispered with awe all over the land. If anyone forgot it, Pierre would whisper it again.

They sat at the family dinner table. René was an international

lawyer and his father-in-law's faithful errand boy; Lanny thought: He looks like a jumping jockey. José—pronounced French fashion, with a soft “j” and the “s” as “z”—was the most elegant lady in smart society. Both of them had met the son of Budd-Erling, and found him acceptable. His tropical worsted suit had been cut by the best tailor and everything about him was in harmony. He was to be forty in about three months, but his wavy brown hair showed no trace of gray. His neatly clipped little mustache looked like a movie star's, and his amiable smile suggested to the ladies that he was a person of kindness, and without guile. This last, unfortunately, was not entirely true.

The ladies questioned him eagerly about what had become of this person and that—one's friends were so scattered in these dreadful days, and it was all but impossible to communicate with them, on account of censors and submarines. But all the members of this snug little family were certain that the storm would blow over soon, and Europe would settle down to the longest period of peace it had ever known. The British would realize the futility of further resistance—and what more could they ask than the assurance that Hitler held out to them, that he had no slightest desire to interfere with or threaten the British Empire?

They wanted to know what their guest thought; and Lanny spoke according to his role of art expert who did not meddle in politics, and who so far had been able to travel where he wished. Naturally his friends told him what they thought, and what they wished to have reported, and he reported it, though without guaranteeing it. What he reported concerning England was that Churchill's position was strong at present, but there was quiet opposition growing among influential persons, and perhaps after London had been bombed a few times they would be able to make headway.

The *père de famille* said that it had been the prime task of French statesmanship to keep Paris from sharing the fate of Warsaw and Rotterdam, and in that, at least, they had been victorious. Madame added, piously: “*Grâce à dieu!*”—and then added her opinion as to the source of all the trouble, that there were too many foreigners in her country, and especially Jews. Lanny agreed politely, in his secret heart recalling that one of the ladies with whom her husband's name had been connected through the years had been of Gypsy descent, while another had been a daughter of the wealthy family named Goldsky.

But it was Jewish men they were thinking about now: Blum and Mandel, that accursed pair who had been fighting Pierre Laval ever since he had deserted the working-class movement that had elected

him to the Chamber of Deputies. They it was who had forced the ruinous alliance with Russia, which had made friendship with Germany impossible; they it was who had almost succeeded in dragging France to aid the Reds in seizing Spain. They were a traitor pair, and Pierre declared that every power he possessed would be used to have them tried and hanged by the neck. The cords in his own thick neck stood out as he denounced them, and his swarthy face turned crimson. So many enemies he had, and once he had been able to laugh at them and even with them; but now rage was coming to possess him more and more. It spoiled his dinner, and made his conversation repulsive.

Alone in his study with the visitor, he made it evident that he did not give much credence to Lanny's role as a non-political friend of man. He knew that Lanny had traveled to England on a mission—how could one travel otherwise in these days? Marshal Pétain had sent him, and Madame de Portes, mistress of the then Premier, Paul Reynaud. She had recently been killed in a motor accident, so Pierre couldn't find out from her. Lanny assured his host it was no longer especially important—just one more effort to persuade the British to join with the French in making peace; their position would obviously have been much stronger if they had stood together. Even now it would be stronger, for France had as yet no peace, only an armistice, and it was costing her four hundred million francs per day for the upkeep of the German Army which would have to stay so long as Britain fought. The Germans were using a great part of this sum to buy their way into the key industries of the country, and that would ruin any nation, lamented this lover of money. Lanny agreed, and tactfully refrained from hinting what he had been told by some of his Nazi friends in Paris, that Pierre Laval was handling some of these deals and taking a generous "cut."

And then the old Maréchal. No serpent ever slipped into its hole more silently than Pierre Laval trying to slip into the mind of Lanny Budd and find out why he wanted to see the head of the French State and what he was going to say to that venerable warrior. Lanny was all innocence; the Maréchal was a friend, Lanny's father had known him since World War I and before that, and as salesman for Budd Gunmakers had tried to persuade him that America had a better light machine gun than France. Now the Maréchal had asked Lanny to try to bring Britain into the armistice, and Lanny had failed, and wanted to tell the old gentleman how sorry he was.

Tactfully the host imparted the fact that when a man is eighty-four years of age his mind is not so active, he tires easily, his memory

fails, and he needs guidance. The Maréchal had around him a horde of self-seekers, all trying to pull him in different directions. They played upon his pride in France and his memories of French glory; it was hard for him to face the fact that France was beaten, and that her future was in German hands, and nowhere else. "We cannot have it two ways," declared this black serpent with a white necktie. "If we are going to be friends we have to mean it and act accordingly." When the visitor said, "I agree with you wholeheartedly," Pierre went on to suggest that Lanny Budd should advise his aged friend to declare war upon Britain, and to turn over to the Germans the remainder of that French Fleet which the British had just attacked with shameless treachery in the ports of North Africa.

Lanny said: "*Cher Maître*, I do not imagine that the chief of your government will ask the advice of an art expert as to state policy; but if he does I will surely tell him that I am a lover of peace and order, and that I think Herr Hitler has discovered the formula by which the spread of Bolshevism over Europe can be checked."

"I perceive that you are a man both wise and tactful, M. Budd," replied the host. "You may do me a favor if you will visit Châteldon again and tell me whatever you can about your interview with the old gentleman. Let me add that I know your social position, and respect it, but at the same time I know what the world is, and that one has to live in it, and if there is any reward within my gift you have only to call upon me."

Lanny smiled. "Herr Hitler has several times made me the same tactful offer, and so has Reichsmarschall Göring. I tell them all that my profession of art expert has always provided for me. I don't need large sums."

"Money is not to be treated lightly," countered the master of Châteldon. "It is like toilet paper, when you need it you need it bad."

IV

Lanny slept well, and in the morning breakfasted on coffee and eggs and marmalade, all of them luxuries in wartime France. Driving back to town, he answered more questions of his host, and did not mind, because he could learn from a man's questions what the man wanted to know, what he hoped and what he feared and what tricks he was up to. When the two parted, Lanny knew of a certainty that Pierre Laval hated the venerable old soldier who was his chief, was counting

the weeks or months that he might be expected to live, and was busily intriguing with the Nazis to be permitted to take his place.

The trouble was that the Nazis needed Pétain, or thought they did, to keep the French people quiet. Pétain was the hero of Verdun, whose picture was in every peasant's hut, whereas it was hard to find anyone who would trust Laval around the corner. Laval was all for doing whatever the Nazis demanded; he argued vehemently to Lanny that when you had once chosen sides you could no longer remain on both sides—as the ancient figurehead was trying to do. Pétain wouldn't let the Nazis have the French Fleet, or the air force in Africa, or the troops in Syria; he clung to these things as the last pawns in a lost game; he promised this and that, and then delayed to keep the promise, and argued over petty details in his stubborn dotard's way, and not even the shrewd Vice-Premier could be sure whether it was stupidity or malice.

Laval had arranged for the American to have a room in one of the cheaper hotels, the better ones having been taken over by the different government departments. It meant that somebody was turned out, but Lanny wasn't told who and didn't inquire. He deposited his bags and then went for a stroll, to take in the sights of this small resort city which had become overnight a sort of left-handed world capital. It lies in the broad valley of the river Allier, and its warm baths and mineral waters have been famous since the days of the ancient Romans. They were full of bubbling gases which made them seem alive, and whether this helped your stomach or not, you believed that it did, and that could help you immensely.

In modern days the wealthy had flocked here, and there had been built for them the magnificent Hotel du Parc, surrounded with plane trees; its five stories and broad tower were now crowded by offices of the new government. There were baths all over the place; one of them, the Thermal Établissement, covering seven acres, could take care of thirty-five hundred persons per day; you could float over red marble, or green marble, or mosaic tiles, and later you could stroll in palm-shaded porticoes and chat with your fashionable friends. There was every kind of luxury to be had for a price; the poor clamored for a hunk of tasteless gray bread, but for the wealthy there were still the dainty little brown cubes and the *croissants* to which they were accustomed. The jewelry shops did a land-office business, both buying and selling; for jewels are the most easily hidden and transported form of wealth—in an extreme emergency they can even be swallowed.

Lanny Budd was an art expert, and wherever he went he renewed his acquaintance with the dealers, and made inquiries concerning private collections. This was not merely the way he earned his living, it was also his camouflage; he had always in his suitcase a file of correspondence, and when it was opened and inspected in his absence—something which happened now in every country of Europe—the most suspicious police spy would be satisfied that the visitor was really the friend of American millionaires and the possible means of bringing real dollars into the poverty-stricken land.

You could never know in what part of France you might find an art treasure. In the dingy ancient mansions which were scattered about this countryside there might be some old work whose value the owner did not realize; or there might be some modern master who had fled from the Nazi tanks and bombing planes, and now was glad to exchange a painting for a loaf of the adulterated gray bread. Lanny strolled into the fashionable dealers' shops and introduced himself, and looked at what they had to show him and listened to their sales talks. His mind was a card catalog of personalities in "The States" to whom these sights and sounds might or might not appeal, and now, and then he would ask a price and shake his head and say that it was much too high.

V

In one of the sidewalk cafés the visitor ordered an omelet and a salad, and while waiting he watched the few rich and the many poor who thronged the sidewalk. There were several million refugees in Vichy France, and as many discharged soldiers who had no place to go and nothing to do; many had no shelter but the trees in the park, and no food but what they could beg or steal. The son of Budd-Erling had been born into the leisure class, and had had to learn to eat his food and digest it, in spite of knowing that there were swarms of people about him who had poor food or none at all. He had been taught that it was their own fault; and anyhow, it had been that way through the ages and would be for ages to come and there was nothing you could do about it. Lanny no longer held that idea, and was trying to do something, after a fashion peculiar to himself.

Now and then he looked at his wristwatch; and presently, having paid his *addition*, he arose and strolled on. In Paris he had received a letter signed Bruges, telling him of an excellent collection of Daumier drawings which were for sale in Vichy, and adding that

the writer of the letter could be seen at the Santé baths at two o'clock any afternoon. Lanny approached the place, but did not go inside; he strolled on the other side of the street at the hour named, and presently he saw, passing the baths, a dark-haired slender man wearing the dungarees and blouse of a peasant of this district. Lanny made sure that the man had seen him, and then he strolled on; out of town, along the banks of the blue Allier which flows through this fertile land, northward until it joins the Loire. Under the shadow of a willow tree he stopped, and the other man joined him and they clasped hands. "*Eh, bien, Lanny!*" and "*Eh, bien, Raoul!* How did you manage to get a letter through to Paris?"

"We have our ways," smiled the younger man, a Spaniard who had lived a full half of his life in France. He had delicately carved features and an ascetic face, as if he had not had a real meal for a long time; but when he met Lanny Budd he was so happy that the blood returned to his cheeks and he flashed a fine set of nature's own white teeth.

"I was worried about you," Lanny said. "Can you be safe in this nest of intrigue?"

"I have papers; they aren't genuine, but I'm all right unless the police should take my fingerprints, and I'll do my best not to get in their way."

"You know the terms of the armistice, Raoul. The French must surrender on demand anyone whom the Nazis want, and so long as Laval holds power they will do it."

"I know; but I have a job with a family who can be trusted. You won't want me to talk about it."

"Of course not. Your letter said Daumier, and I suppose that means leftwing politics. What have you to tell me?"

"We have a small center of activity here, and I think it will spread. I need a little money, but mostly I want your advice, what our line should be. Everybody is bewildered, and the main task is to keep them from despair."

"I know, Raoul, it's awful. I have a hard time myself."

"What hope can I hold out to anybody?"

"Britain is going to go on fighting; that I am sure of. The appeasers there have all had to crawl into their holes."

"But how long can Britain hold out against the entire Continent?"

"Hitler has told me that he means to invade, and I think he means it. But I think the Fleet will stop him."

"But the air, Lanny! He will bomb all the cities to rubble."