

Friday, May 19

Interminable days when I walk here and there, since anxiety and my fatigued eyes do not allow me the distraction of a book.

All the people you meet on the street talk to themselves aloud like crazy people—people from whose mouths come words like *desolation*, *misfortune*, *death*, *ruin*—all the syllables of despair.

Sunday, May 21

In my lack of occupation I allow myself to be taken by Burty to the Champs Elysées hospital.

The hospital has taken over the whole Musard concert hall building; the orchestra has become a linen room, and the

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winding path has disappeared under tents where you see haggard faces in beds. Many sick and dying have been taken into the open air of the garden. In the sun and under the greenery yellow hands flutter and wide eyes question the passer-by. There is a woman at the side of nearly every bed of suffering, and sometimes little children play on the bed clothes.

Guichard puts a dressing on a young man whose thigh has been shot away by an exploding shell. I mechanically ask the youth where he was wounded: at his house in Auteuil, where his mother had kept him in. This reply throws me into mortal anxiety. I reproach myself for my fierce egoism and vow on the morrow to go find that poor girl who has remained in my house, deciding to leave everything to the grace of God.

I pass the whole day in fear of a setback for the Versailles troops, tortured by a remark that Burty repeated two or three times: "The Versailles forces have been repulsed seven times."

With these various impressions of sadness and anxiety I go this evening to my usual observation post, the Place de la Concorde. When I reach the square there is an enormous crowd surrounding a hack that is being escorted by National Guards. "What's all this?" A woman answers: "That is a gentleman whom they have just arrested. He was shouting out the door that the Versailles forces had entered the city." I recall the little groups of National Guards whom I have just encountered on the Rue Saint Florentin, filing along in disorder. But we have been deceived so often, so often disappointed, that I have no faith in the good news; however, I am moved to the depths and stirred with that sickly state that doctors call anxiety.

I walk for a long time in search of information and clarification. Nothing, nothing, nothing. The people still on the

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street look like the people yesterday. They are just as calm or just as upset. Nobody seems to have heard about the shout in the Place de la Concorde. Probably another hoax.

I finally go home and to bed in despair. I cannot sleep. I seem to hear a distant noise through my hermetically closed curtains. I get up. I open the window. On distant pavements there is the regular tramp of marching men who are going in to replace others, as happens every night. Come now! It is the effect of my imagination. I go back to bed, but this time it really is the drums, it really is the bugles! I hurry back to the window. The call to arms sounds all over Paris; and soon above the drums, above the bugles, above the clamor, above the shouts of "To Arms!" rise in great waves the tragically sonorous notes of the tocsin, which has begun to ring in all the churches—a sinister sound which fills me with joy and marks the beginning of the end of hateful tyranny for Paris.

*Monday, May 22*

I can't stay home. I need to see, to know.

When I go out, I find everybody assembled under portecochères, an excited, grumbling, hopeful crowd, already steeling themselves to boo the dispatch-riders.

Suddenly a shell burst over the Madeleine, and all the residents immediately go back indoors. Far off by the new opera house, I see a National Guard being carried away with a broken leg. In scattered groups on the square people are saying that the Versailles forces are at the Palace of Industry. Demoralization and discouragement are visible among the National Guards, who return in little bands, exhausted and shamefaced.

I go up to Burty's, and we go out again at once in order to see what Paris looks like.

In the Place de la Bourse there is a gathering before a pastry-shop window which has just been shattered by a shell. On the boulevard in front of the new opera house there is a barricade made of barrels full of earth, a barricade defended by a few unenergetic-looking men. In a moment a young man arrives on the run and announces that the Versailles troops are at La Pépinière Barracks. He escaped as men fell all around him at the Saint Lazare station.

We go back up the boulevard. Sketchy barricades before the old Opéra, before the Saint Martin gate, where a woman in a red sash is pulling up paving stones. Everywhere there are altercations between bourgeois and National Guards. A small squad of National Guards returns from the firing line, among them a youngster with soft eyes who has a rag stuck on his bayonet—a gendarme's hat.

Always in groups the sad procession of grave National Guards abandoning the battle. Complete confusion. Not a senior officer giving orders. All along the boulevards not a member of the Commune in his sash. All by himself an out-of-breath artilleryman pushes a big brass cannon, without knowing where to take it. From time to time a column of white smoke from a cannon firing to the left of Montmartre.

Suddenly in the midst of the disorder and alarm, in the midst of the hostility of the crowd there passes by on horseback, with unbuttoned tunic, shirt tails out, face apoplectic with anger, striking the neck of his horse with his closed fist, a big common man, superb in his heroic disarray.

We go back. From the boulevard loud noises continually reach us, disputes and altercations on the part of bourgeois who are beginning to rebel against the National Guards, who end by arresting them to a hail of boos.

We climb up to the glass belvedere at the top of the build-

ing. A big cloud of white smoke covers the whole sky in the direction of the Louvre. Something frightening and mysterious in this battle that surrounds us, in these occupation forces which come closer and closer without noise and apparently without fighting.

I have come to make a call at Burty's and here I am a prisoner—until when? I don't know. You can't go out any more. The people whom the National Guards find on the streets are being pressed into service or made to work on the barricades. Burty gets to work copying extracts from *La Correspondance Trouvée aux Tuileries*, and I plunge into his *Oeuvre de Delacroix* to the sound of approaching shells.

Soon there are explosions all around and very close by. The building on the Rue Vivienne, on the other side of the street, has its kiosk broken. Another shell breaks the street light in front of us. Finally a last one during dinner explodes at the base of the building and shakes us in our chairs.

They have made me a bed and I lie down fully clothed. Under the windows the sound of the voices of drunken National Guards addressing a "Who goes there?" in hoarse tones to everyone who passes. At dawn I fall into a sleep broken by nightmares and explosions.

*Tuesday, May 23*

When I wake up no certain news. Nobody knows anything positive. Then imagination creates chimeras in the void. At last an unhopd-for newspaper, taken from the kiosk at the foot of the building, tells us that the Versailles forces have occupied a part of the Faubourg Saint Germain, Monceau, and Batignolles.

We climb up to the belvedere, where in the bright sunlight

which illuminates the immense battle and in the smoke from cannons, machine guns, muskets, we can see a series of engagements extending from the Jardin des Plantes to Montmartre. At the moment the major part of the action seems to be concentrated on Montmartre. In the midst of the distant rumbling of artillery and fire arms, rifle shots crackling near by make us suppose that there is fighting on the Rue Lafayette and the Rue Saint Lazare.

The deserted boulevard has a sinister air with its closed shops, with the big motionless shadows of its trees and kiosks, with its silence of death, broken from time to time by a dull shattering detonation.

Somebody thinks he can see the tricolored flag floating on Montmartre through his opera glasses. At that moment we are chased from our glass observatory by the whistling shells passing close to us, making a sound in the air like the meowing of kittens.

When we come down again and look out from the balcony, an ambulance is standing under our windows. They are putting in a wounded man who struggles as he repeats: "I don't want to go to the hospital!" A brusque voice answers: "You're going just the same." And we watch the wounded man raise himself up, gather his failing forces, struggle for a second with two or three men, and fall back in the vehicle, shouting in a despairing and expiring voice: "It's enough to make you blow your brains out!"

The ambulance leaves. The boulevard becomes empty again and for a long time you hear a cannonade coming near, with explosions apparently in the vicinity of the new opera.

Then the heavy gallop of an omnibus, the upper deck full of National Guards leaning on their rifles.

Then the galloping of staff officers who toss out to the National Guards gathered under our windows the recommendation to be careful they are not surrounded.

Then cannons start going by.

Then the stretcher-bearers arrive, going up the boulevard in the direction of the Madeleine.

Meanwhile little Renée is weeping because they won't let her go out to play in the courtyard. Madeleine, serious and pale, jumps at each explosion, and Madame Burty, feverishly moving frames, pictures, books, seeks and seeks again for an out-of-the-way corner of the apartment where her two children may be sheltered from bullets and shells.

The firing gets closer and closer. We are distinctly aware of rifle shots on the Rue Drouot. At that moment there appears a squad of workmen who have received an order to block the boulevard at the Rue Vivienne and to build a barricade under our windows. They do not put much heart into it. Some move two or three paving stones; others, to satisfy their consciences, give two or three blows at the asphalt with their picks. But almost at once in the face of the bullets which enfilade the boulevard and pass over their heads, they leave their work. Burty and I see them disappear down the Rue Vivienne with a sigh of relief. We both thought of the National Guards who were going to come up into the building and fire out of the windows with our collections all mixed up in a confused mass under their feet.

Then a large troop of National Guards appear, falling back with their officers slowly and in good order. Others come after them, marching at a more hasty step. Then still others bumping into each other in disorder; among them we see a dead man with a bloody head whom four men carry by his

arms and legs like a bundle of dirty linen. They take him from door to door, but no one opens up.

In spite of this retreat, these abandonments, these flights, the resistance at the Drouot barricade is long-drawn-out. The fusillade does not cease. Little by little, however, the fire decreases in intensity. Soon there are only isolated shots. Finally two or three last cracklings; and almost at once we see the last defenders of the barricade flee—four or five young boys of fourteen, one of whom I hear say: "I shall be one of the last to get back!"

The barricade is taken. It is about six o'clock. The Versailles troops come out of the Rue Drouot, spread out in a line, and open a terrible fire in the direction of the Saint Denis gate. In the enclosure of the two high stone façades along the boulevard the rifles thunder like cannons. The bullets graze the house, but at the windows we hear only a whistling sound resembling the tearing of silk.

We had retired into the back room for a moment. I come back into the dining room. There, kneeling down and protected as well as possible, this is what I see through the open curtain of the window.

On the other side of the boulevard a man is stretched out on the ground; I see only the soles of his boots and a bit of gold braid. Two men, a National Guard and a lieutenant, stand near the corpse. Bullets make the leaves of a little tree spreading over their heads rain on them. One dramatic detail which I forgot. Behind them in a recess in front of a closed porte-cochère a woman is lying flat for her whole length on the sidewalk, holding a kepi in one of her hands.

The National Guard, with angry violent gestures, shouting to someone off stage, indicates by signs that he wants to pick

up the dead man. The bullets continue to make leaves fall on the two men. Then the National Guard, whose face I see red with anger, throws his rifle on his shoulder, butt in the air, and walks toward the rifle shots, insults on his tongue. Suddenly I see him stop, put his hand to his forehead, for a second lean his hand and forehead against a little tree, then half turn around and fall on his back, arms outspread.

The lieutenant had remained motionless by the side of the first dead man, calm as a man meditating in his garden. One bullet, which made a little branch fall on him close to his head, which he tossed off with a flick of the hand, did not rouse him from his immobility. He looked for a moment at his fallen comrade. Then, without rushing, he pushed his sword behind him with disdainful deliberation, then bent down and attempted to lift up the body. The dead man was tall and heavy, and like an inert thing evaded the lieutenant's efforts and slipped out of his arms to one side or the other. Finally the lieutenant lifted him up and, holding him tight against his chest, he was carrying him off when a bullet, breaking his thigh, made them turn together in a hideous pirouette, the dead man and the living man, and fall on top of each other. I doubt that many people have been privileged to witness so heroic and simple a disdain for death. They told me this evening that the woman lying on the ground was the wife of one of those three men.

Our boulevard is once more in the hands of the Versailles forces. We are risking a look at them from the balcony when a bullet strikes above our heads. Some imbecile of a resident has decided to light his pipe at a window.

The shells begin again—shells this time shot by the Federals against the positions captured by Versailles. We camp in the anteroom. Renée's little iron bed is dragged into a protected

corner. Madeleine stretches out on a sofa near her father, her fair face standing out on its white pillow under the lamplight, her long little body lost in the folds and shadows of a shawl. Madame Burty sinks into an armchair. And for a long time there sounds in my ears the harrowing moan of a wounded infantryman who has dragged himself to our door and whom the portress will not let in because of a base fear of compromising herself.

Now and then I go to look through the windows on the boulevard at the dark Paris night without a glimmer of gas, without the glimmer of a lamp in the houses, where thick and redoubtable shadows guard the day's dead, who have not been picked up.