

I am going along the railroad line near the Passy station when I see some men and women escorted by soldiers. I go through the broken barrier and am on the edge of a path where the prisoners are waiting to set out for Versailles. There are a lot of them, for I hear an officer say in a low voice as he gives a paper to the colonel: "Four hundred and seven, of whom sixty-six are women."

The men have been put in rows of eight and are tied to each other with a cord around their wrists. They are as they were when caught, most without hats or caps, their hair plastered on their foreheads and faces by the fine rain which has been falling since morning. There are men of the common people who have made a covering for their heads with blue-checked handkerchiefs. Others, thoroughly soaked by the rain, draw thin overcoats around their chests under which a piece of bread makes a hump. It is a crowd from every social level, workmen with hard faces, artisans in loose-fitting jackets, bourgeois with socialist hats, National Guards who have had no time to change their trousers, two infantrymen pale as corpses—stupid, ferocious, indifferent, mute faces.

Among the women there is the same variety. Some women in silk dresses are next to a woman with a kerchief on her head. You see middle-class women, working women, street-walkers, one of whom wears a National Guard uniform. Among all these faces there stands out the bestial head of a creature, half of whose face is one big bruise. None of these women have the apathetic resignation of the men. There is anger and irony on their faces. Many of them have the eyes of mad women.

Among these women there is one who is especially beautiful, beautiful with the implacable fury of a young Fate. She is a brunette with wiry hair that sticks out, with eyes of steel, with cheeks reddened by dried tears. She is *planted* in an attitude of defiance, spewing out insults at the officers from a

throat and lips so contracted by anger that they cannot form sounds and words. Her furious, mute mouth chews the insults without being able to make them heard. "She is like the one who killed Barbier with a dagger!" a young officer says to one of his friends.

The least courageous ones show their feebleness only by a slight sideways tilt of the head, such as women have after they have prayed in church for a long time. One or two were concealed behind their veils when a noncommissioned officer touched one of the veils with a cruel and brutal flick of his whip: "Come on, off with your veils. Let's see your ugly faces!"

The rain increases in force. Some of the women pull up their skirts to cover their heads. A line of horsemen in white coats has reinforced the line of foot soldiers. The colonel, with an olive face like those in Ferri-Pisani's pictures, shouts: "Attention!" and the African riflemen load their guns. At this moment the women think they are going to be shot and one of them collapses with an attack of nerves. But the terror only lasts a moment; at once they renew their irony, and some their coquetry with the soldiers. The riflemen have slung their loaded carbines over their backs and have drawn their swords.

The colonel has taken his place on the flank of the column, announcing in a loud voice with a brutality which I think put on to induce fear: "Any man who lets go of his neighbor's arm *will be killed!*" And that terrible *will be killed!* is repeated four or five times in his short speech while you hear the dull sound of rifles being loaded by the infantry escort.

Everything is ready for their departure when pity, which never entirely abandons man, impels some infantrymen to pass their canteens among the women, who turn their thirsty mouths in graceful movements, at the same time keeping an

apprehensive eye on the grim face of an old gendarme, which they think augurs no good. The signal for departure is given, and the pitiable column gets under way for Versailles in the pouring rain.

The collapsing Ministry of Finance building fills the Rue de Rivoli with rubble, in the midst of which ridiculous companies of firemen from the provinces bestir themselves, looking like Clodoche types.

Returning to Passy, I meet a band of frightful street urchins and incendiary hooligans who have been put inside the station, which has been turned into a prison and is already full of prisoners sitting on the rails.

From Auteuil this evening all Paris appears to be on fire, with continual tongues of flame such as the bellows of a forge makes in a white-hot fire.

*Sunday, May 28*

I go by carriage into the Champs Elysées. In the distance legs and more legs running in the direction of the broad avenue. I lean out of the door. The whole avenue is filled by a confused crowd between two lines of horsemen. I get out and join the running people. The attraction is the prisoners who have just been taken at the Buttes Chaumont marching in fives, with an occasional woman among them. "There are six thousand of them," one of the escorting cavalymen tells me. "Five hundred were shot at once." At the head of this haggard multitude marches a nonagenarian on trembling legs.

In spite of the horror you feel toward these men, the sight of the lugubrious procession is painful; among them you see soldiers, deserters, wearing their tunics inside out with grey canvas pockets bulging around them. They seem already half undressed for execution.

I meet Burty on the Place de la Madeleine. We stroll along the streets and boulevards which have suddenly been inundated by people emerging from their cellars and hideaways, thirsty for light and sun, their faces showing their joy at their deliverance. We go up to get Madame Burty, whom we talk into taking a walk. While Burty, who is suddenly accosted by Madame Verlaine, is talking to her about ways of hiding her husband, Madame Burty tells me a secret which Burty had kept from me. One of his friends on the Committee of Public Safety, whom she does not name, told Burty four or five days ago that the government no longer had control over anything and that there was a plan to make raids on private houses, clean them out, and shoot all the owners.

I leave the couple and go for a look at burned Paris. The Palais Royal has been set fire to, but the pretty façade of the two pavilions on the square is intact; it is just a matter of money and rebuilding the interior. The Tuileries will have to be rebuilt on the garden and Rue de Rivoli sides.

You walk in smoke; you breathe air that smells at the same time of burned wood and apartment varnish, and everywhere you hear the *pscht* of the pumps. In many places there are still the traces and the horrible debris of battle. Here, a dead horse; there near the paving stones of a half-demolished barricade, kepis swimming in a pool of blood.

The large-scale destruction begins at Le Châtelet and is continuous from there on. Behind the burned-down theatre, costumes are spread out on the pavement: charred silk, from which here and there the gold and silver spangles strike your eye.

On the other side of the quay the roof of the round tower of the Palais de Justice has been sliced off. Only the iron skeletons of the roofs remain on the new buildings. The Pre-

fecture of Police is a burning heap of stones; through its bluish smoke there shines the bright new gold of the Sainte Chapelle.

By little paths made through the still undemolished barricades I reach the Hôtel de Ville.

The ruins are splendid, magnificent. In their rose, ash-green, and white-hot-iron coloration, in the brilliant agatization of stone cooked by petrol, the ruins look like those of an Italian palace colored by the sun of several centuries, or, better, the ruins of a magic palace bathed in a play of electric lights and reflections. With the empty niches, the smashed or broken statuettes, the remnant of the clock, the outline of high windows and chimneys which by some strange power of equilibrium still remain standing in the void, with its eroded silhouette against the sky, the building is a marvel of the picturesque, to be kept as it is if only the country were not condemned without appeal to M. Viollet-le-Duc's restorations. Irony of Chance! In the degradation of the whole monument there shines out on an intact marble plaque in bright new gilt the lying legend: *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*.

I go back to Le Châtelet by the quay. Suddenly I see the crowd head over heels in flight like a mob being charged on a day of riot. Horsemen appear, threatening, swords in hand, rearing up their horses and forcing the promenaders from the street to the sidewalks. In their midst advances a group of men at whose head is an individual with a black beard, his forehead bound with a handkerchief. I see another whom his two neighbors hold up under the arms as if he did not have the strength to walk. These men have a special pallor and a vague look which remains in my memory. I hear a woman shout as she takes herself off: "How sorry I am I came this far!" Next to me a placid bourgeois is counting: "One, two, three . . ." There are twenty-six of them.

The escort makes the men march on the double to the Lobau Barracks, where the gate closes after them with strange violence and precipitation.

I still do not understand, but I feel an indefinable anxiety. My bourgeois companion, who had just been counting them, then says to a neighbor:

"It won't be long, you'll soon hear the first volley."

"What volley?"

"Why, they're going to shoot them!"

Almost at that instant there is an explosion like a violent sound enclosed behind doors and walls, a fusillade having something of the mechanical regularity of a machine gun. There is a first, a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth murderous *rrarra*—then a long interval—and then a sixth, and still two more volleys, one right after the other.

This noise seems never to end. Finally it stops. Everybody feels relieved and is beginning to breathe when there is a shattering sound which makes the sprung door of the barracks move on its hinges; then another; then finally the last. These are the coups de grâce given by a policeman to those who are not yet dead.

At that moment, like a band of drunken men, the execution squad come out of the door with blood on the end of some of their bayonets. And while two closed vans go into the courtyard a priest slips out, and for a long time you see his thin back, his umbrella, his legs walking unsteadily along the outer wall of the barracks.

*Monday, May 29*

Posted on every wall is MacMahon's proclamation announcing that it was all over yesterday at four o'clock.

This evening you begin to hear the movement of Parisian life which is being reborn, and its murmur is like that of a dis-

Paris under Siege

tant high tide. The clocks no longer strike in the silence of a desert.

*Tuesday, May 30*

From time to time frightening noises: fusillades and collapsing houses.

*Wednesday, May 31*

Tricolor flags at every window; tricolor flags on every vehicle. Air vents in the basements of all the buildings closed and covered over. On the paving stones which have been replaced a swarm of Parisians in traveling clothes taking possession of their city once again.

It is good that there was neither conciliation nor bargain. The solution was brutal. It was by pure force. The solution has held people back from cowardly compromises. The solution has restored confidence to the army, which learned in the blood of the Communards that it was still able to fight. Finally, the bloodletting was a bleeding white; such a purge, by killing off the combative part of the population, defers the next revolution by a whole generation. The old society has twenty years of quiet ahead of it, if the powers that be dare all that they may dare at this time.