Sunday, September 25

The two banks of the Seine full of cavalry horses and bare-legged Mobiles, who are washing themselves in the waves made by the incessant plowing along of river boats. The usual placid anglers, but today they all wear the National Guard kepi. The Louvre gallery windows are protected by sandbags. In the Rue Saint Jacques women in groups of two or three talking, with anxious voices, about the rise in the price of food.

The Collège de France covered with white posters superimposed one on another, advertisements of *Pagliari Paper* for wounds, advertisements of *Phenol Boboeuf*, advertisements announcing publication of *The Emperor's Papers and Correspondence*. A newly posted notice on violet paper announces the formation of the Commune and calls for suppression of

the Prefecture of Police and for mass mobilization. A wounded or dead man is carried by on a stretcher under escort of a band of Mobiles.

At the back of a second-hand store courtyard there are heaps of wine merchants' counters up for sale, all the counters from the suburbs outside the walls.

In the Luxembourg the thousands of sheep crowded together and shifting about in their narrow enclosure make you think of the swarming of maggots in a box. In the Place du Panthéon, in the areas where paving stones have been removed, little girls barely able to walk do acrobatic exercises with uncertain steps. In the courtyard of the Sainte Geneviève Library a mountain of sand. Posters on the columns of the Law School announce the formation of a Women's Committee, with Louise Colet's name at the head of the list.

On the Boulevard de Port Royal, near the Capucins, I think, camp followers in Sunday dress singing patriotic songs; farther on, seated on the ground among his sheep in a big enclosure, a shepherd reading *Le Petit Journal*. At a wine shop with the sign: *Au Grand Arago*, some women catch your eye with blood-red bands stuck in their black hair.

On another street over the door to a business house a name in gilt which seems to radiate the well-being of established fortune—Colmant, the name of the fancy-man in *Germinie Lacerteux*.

All along the boulevards and on both sides of them uneasy, menacing cattle pushing against the horse-chestnut trees and the urinals; in their inclosures they crowd back into a corner, then rush forward in a confused and agitated mass that is dominated by a big bull mounting a cow, which carries him along almost standing up. Another, lowering his horns, lets out a bellow that goes echoing down the endless avenue.

The sun sets in a great gold-yellow burst, which turns the outline of the church at the head of the Rue Saint Jacques to violet, and makes dark and vague the silhouettes of armed men returning home in the blinding glare of the dusty street.

Monday, September 26

Today a deep silence has followed the cannonade of recent days. The whole road from the Point du Jour to the ramparts seems to have been fortified by the barricade engineers. There are classic barricades made of paving stones and others made of sacks of earth. There are picturesque ones made of tree trunks—regular fringes of forest growing out of a ruined wall. It is like an immense Clos Saint Lazare, erected again by the descendants of the men of '48 against the Prussians. All the walls are crenelated and pierced with gun-slits. The ground, full of round holes close together, looks rather like the tin platters on which they cook snails in Burgundy.

In Gavarni's garden workmen are getting ready to cut down the quincunx of horse chestnuts.

The arches of the viaduct bridge, barricaded and closed by great cross-pieces, are filled with a crowd of men and women who are looking through the openings at the gleaming river and the green hills, where their glasses are trying to spy out the Prussians. Men in blouses seated on the parapet wait for the first cannon shots, just as though they were waiting for the first burst of fireworks shot off on the Trocadéro. As they work, the masons chat about the carbine shot they just sent into the target; you still hear it echoing against the plaque next to which some women of a certain elegance are bravely eating fried potatoes in a restaurant improvised under a tent.

Saturday, October 1

Horsemeat is slipping quietly into the Parisian diet. Day before yesterday Pélagie brought home a piece of steak which, seeing her doubtful expression, I did not eat. At Peters' yesterday they brought me roast beef; I examined the meat, which was watery, without fat, and striped with white nerves; my painter's eye discerned the blackish red color, so different from the rose red of beef. The waiter assured me, though not very firmly, that this horse was beef.

Sunday, October 2

At breakfast this morning a thin, hollow-flanked cat, a real siege-cat, slips into the dining room with famished meow.

Today nothing of the painful emotion and sadness of the last two days, no memory of the wounded going by. The Sunday sun has swept it all away. Gay and joyous, Paris streams out to all her gates for a promenade, as giddy as though she were going to Longchamp for the races. Women in summer costumes, wearing the big bows on their behinds and the tiny hats which are still in style, trot along on the circular paths or slip between the big vans by the openings on the belt-line.

You see young girls who have climbed up the sandy banks like goats, their eyes at the rifle-slits. Under the escort of a National Guard with silver braid, American-type coaches carry elegant women who steal the show, and who with their pince-nez in their hands speak of *bastions*, *ramparts*, *gabions*, *horsemen*. Commercial vehicles are full of members of the family in their Sunday best, some of them bouncing on the added seats. And the roads are full of little boys who cut up and play to the encouraging smiles of their parents.

What is most popular at the moment is to make the tour of Paris by the belt railway, a journey on which you see women not afraid to show their legs as they clamber awkwardly with

brave little movements up to the top deck, from which they can look over the line of fortifications. I do the same and see new interior fortifications begun only a few days ago, barricades of paving stones, crenelations on truck-garden walls, moats being dug, all the work for a second line of defense. From a distance the ramparts under incessant construction take on the sharpness, the almost artistic finish of a little model of fortifications made of cork, of a finely constructed toy made for a young prince, to teach him to play siege.

I come back on foot along the quays in the gathering dusk at six o'clock. In the warm haze retained from the scorching day, in the dust stirred up all day long by the feet of men, women, horses, and carriage wheels, Paris is bathed in an African grey, the grey which Fromentin painted so well, into which the houses introduce a white accent and the trees a few violet blobs.

I keep on walking in this greyness, which deepens as night comes on, and out of which the red lantern of a river boat suddenly shines. I am still walking, lost in the silly dreams which the imagination makes out of the vague words that come to it from the passers-by, when I hear a man leaning against the quay say to another: "Well, they're going to jump on us now!" That statement wakens me and immediately convinces me that Strasbourg has fallen, a presentiment which is confirmed when I buy a newspaper on the boulevard.

This evening I do not observe in Paris the reaction I had expected from this sad piece of news. I think I see much more indifference than irritation.

Monday, October 10

This morning I go for my ration card. I feel as though I am beholding one of those long lines of the time of the Revolution, such as poor old Cousin Cornélie used to describe to me: a mixed group of people waiting, old women in rags, guardsmen in kepis, and lower-middle-class men all standing about in improvised premises with whitewashed rooms where you recognize your none-too-honest local tradesmen seated around a table, all-powerful in their National Guard officers' uniforms and supreme disposers of what you get to eat.

I bring home a piece of blue paper, a typographical curiosity for future times and the Goncourts to come, which gives

me the right to buy every day for me and my servant two rations of raw meat or four portions of food prepared in the municipal canteens. There are coupons for the period up to November 14; no doubt a good deal will happen between now and then. . . .

All around La Muette ditch-diggers are making an entrenchment linked to a barricade at the entrance to Passy. I stroll as far as the Avenue de l'Impératrice, where I see some women leading cows to pasture on what is left of the grass, great clods of which are being carried off in carts to cover the slopes or protect the powder magazines. Lawn, bridle paths, main walks, all are full of close-set holes such as you see on the road to Billancourt; and two broad moats are cut across the whole width of the immense avenue, one in front of the railroad station, the other level with the Avenue Malakoff. Out of this avenue rush artillery horses, led in groups of three by horsemen, among whom you see the heads of children who are completely happy at having received permission to climb on a saddle horse.

Everywhere horses, gun carriages, soldiers, and field kitchens, where the fire that boils the pot at the same time dries a freshly washed blue-checked handkerchief—a spectacle that a big-bellied Bank employe in his tricorne hat considers at leisure.

Wednesday, October 12

A sad day, as sad as one I passed at this time last year at Trouville with my poor Jules. The cannons on Mont Valérien or the heavy voices of the naval guns from the Mortemart battery continually make the windows rattle and send your blood in a rush to your temples.

These days you are glad to forget yourself, to strip yourself of your nothingness, to bury your waking life in a dream, with your imagination intoxicated by the cannon fire making you fancy yourself a partisan leader ambushing a convoy, killing off Prussians, lifting the siege of Paris—in this way living for long moments in a patriotic hallucination. You invent a means of flying which enables you to see and discover the enemy positions; you invent a murderous machine which kills by battalions and puts whole segments of an army to death. And you go around in a state of absorption like that of a child reading his first book; you range through the open spaces and

the grand adventures of the impossible, the hero of a fiction which has being for an hour.

How many turns I made around this garden while my imagination, having nothing to do with the little promenade my body made on the winding paths, was completely absorbed in a daydream about taking the oxygen or hydrogen out of the air and making it mortal for the Prussian lungs of a whole army!

Thursday, October 13

It is a strange feeling, one of humiliation and pain rather than of fear, to know that those hills so near at hand are no longer French; those woods are no longer thronged by promenaders such as Gavarni drew; those houses, so pretty in the sun, no longer shelter your friends and acquaintances. How strange it is with a pair of glasses to try to pick out on that Parisian landscape men in Prussian helmets with a black and white flag, to detect the vanquished men of Jena hidden on the green horizon 4,000 meters away.

I find that the ruins and torn-down walls on the slope from Passy to the Trocadéro have been scaled by men and youngsters who follow the cannonade with their eyes from their perches on the crumbling stone. Beneath them are women in madras kerchiefs looking stupidly around. At every moment against the violet and russet landscape you see projected little bursts of smoke, which leave in the sky little round clouds that look like balls of cotton wool.

Around me opera glasses and good eyes follow the trajectory of the shells, leaving in turn from the Issy and Vanves fortresses and passing each other above the hill and woods at Clamart. The crowd is huge and the grand stairway of the Trocadéro is covered with curious people.

To live on yourself, to have no exchange of ideas except those few and unvaried ones of your own which always revolve around a fixed idea; to read only the news that you expect about the miserable war, to find in the papers nothing but rehashes of defeats glossed over with the name of *offensive reconnaissances;* to be chased off the boulevard by the necessity of economizing on gas; to be unable to enjoy modern life in this *early-to-bed* city; to be unable to read; to be unable any more to rise to the realm of pure ideas and thought because you always plummet back to earth thinking of food; to be deprived of everything that was the intellectual recreation of the Parisian man of letters; to lack everything that *is new* or *renews;* in short, to vegetate in this brutal and monotonous condition of war means for the Parisian to suffer in Paris boredom like that of a provincial city.

This evening a man was walking down the street ahead of

me, hands in pockets, humming almost gaily. All of a sudden he stopped and cried out as if he were waking up: "Things are bad, God damn it!" This vague passer-by expressed everybody's basic feeling.

Thursday, October 20

At Batignolles endless lines of people signing up for meat rations. At the doors of butcher shops, too, endless lines made up of broken-down old men, ruddy National Guards, old women with little stools under their arms so they can sit down, little girls strong enough to bring home the niggardly ration in the big market basket, and tarts with their noses in the air, their hair flying, and their eyes full of coquettish glances for the veterans who keep the line in order.

From Montmartre to the Rue Watteau, where I have din-

ner, you see nothing but billposters in white blouses covering the walls with notices about the manufacture of cannons.

All the stores have exercised their ingenuity to convert their merchandise into *rampart goods;* there is nothing but rampart bedding, rampart furs, rampart beds, rampart kerchiefs, rampart gloves. The show windows of merchants and provisioners have a somewhat sinister air by reason of their emptiness. The dirty napkins of the regulars is all you see at the cheap restaurants; two sickly laurels among empty earthen jars are all you see at the pork butchers'. In contrast, little handcarts being pushed along the streets are mobile pancake factories.

The big Central Market is very strange. Where they used to sell fresh fish all the stalls are selling horsemeat; instead of butter they have beef or horse fat in big squares like yellow soap. But the movement and animation are at the vegetable market, which is still in good supply, thanks to the foragers. There is a crowd around little tables laden with cabbages, celery, cauliflower, which the women vie for and middle-class women carry home in napkins. In the bedlam of bids, words, jokes, insults, you suddenly hear an *Oh! My God!* noisily breathed out by the market women as they see a sniper's body go by behind the open curtains of the litter in which he is being taken to his home.