

# Paris Under the Long Range Bombardment

## First Days of Alarm and Anxiety After Mysterious German Gun Opened Fire Vividly Described

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PARIS, March 25.

It is a story new, thrilling, no matter what you have read—if I can tell it. Paris is under pretty steady fire. Here and there, not often, big shells fall on the eastern edge of the capital. To-day it began with half hour intervals. Yesterday it was every fifteen minutes in the morning, falling off later to thirty, forty-five, seventy minutes, then stopped at 3 P. M.

Boom! I pull out my watch. It is 9:30 A. M. The previous crash was at 8:55. Before that it was at 8:25.

Boom! Louise, our servant comes running. "Monsieur, it's nearer!"

"How?" I ask.

"Monsieur, it must have fallen in central Paris!"

Inside my room, doors shut, typewriter clacking, I scarcely heard it. Boom! Thunder, I heard that one! It came out of time—only ten minutes after the other. It seemed, on my soul, to have exploded to the west of us. Are they falling beyond us to-day? Going over our heads?

Neuilly, where we are, is a western suburb. All day yesterday we were quite safe. But now? I must know. Around the corner is our great American Red Cross military hospital, No. 1, formerly our famous Ambulance Hospital of Neuilly. Boom! Again! "They're coming oftener!" says Dewey. It is 10:45 A. M.

### American Ambulances Ready.

I went for news to our hospital boys, all American soldiers. It's only four minutes, around the corner. Lined up under the park like trees are twenty-five beautiful American motor ambulances. Our lads in khaki are in the seats, standing about, chatting with passers by, smoking, reading novels, waiting for a wounded call from Paris, which has not come yet.

These ambulances stand at spaced distances in the open avenue and the square in front of the church. The church is open, organ pealing, crowds of worshippers coming and going all the morning.

A clean, straight boy is reading "Veri of the Apes" on the front seat of an ambulance. Boom! Another. It is exactly 11 A. M. That one was loud. It seemed to have fallen on our west.

"Man, aren't you afraid," I said, "to be reading a novel?" He winked. He chewed gum thoughtfully.

"That seventy mile long range cannon

### The Exodus From Paris.

An extremely interesting side of the bombardment of Paris is presented in the following extract from a personal letter just received by a resident of New York:

"Well, Paris is all upset now and the stations are crowded with tens of thousands frantic to get away. It's really laughable the way so many want to get away. I'll admit between air bomb raids and the new long range gun that you have trouble getting enough sleep, but aside from that it isn't so bad. The German seems to have decided to wear down the morale of Parisians by keeping 'em awake, and he's succeeding right well. Air warnings almost nightly, and every morning old Fritz wakes us up with his new alarm clock in the shape of a shell. He doesn't believe much in giving us too much sleep. Sometimes in the air raids only a single ship comes over, but that's enough to rouse the town. As one aircraft can't do much damage, it would seem his game to keep Paris on the alert all the time with shells by day and a few bombs by night in the hope of breaking down the morale. It is certainly resulting in an enormous outward flow.

"I presume you look upon the present offensive as most people do over here—as the last big act in this drama. Certainly peace must inevitably follow operations of such magnitude. Whichever way it turns out peace looks inevitable, though it is inconceivable that they can crumple our lines. All we can do is to watch and wait."



FAMILIES LEAVING PARIS WHEN THE BOMBARDMENT BEGAN.

is a peach," he said. "They must have it hidden in some tunnel. Hope we'll find it and put it out of action soon. There's some American airmen in the hunt. We've got a lot in the air now in France.

"Bah! It ain't doing any harm to Paris. Those long range pieces always blowed themselves out in three days. We haven't had an ambulance call yet, not one! I hear there were ten killed and fifteen wounded in all Paris yesterday."

Boom!

Now I am back home. In the janitor's lodge, on the ground floor, ten women and children huddle. In the cellars, which are pretty secure, are thirty more. They have an oil stove down there, chairs and tables. Some women lunched down there yesterday.

Boom! Every fifteen minutes now.

In our flat the iron shutters are closed, thick curtains pulled together, and we see by electric light. No sense in it, but a feeling of doing something.

### Window Panes Protected.

Every one has pasted long strips of gummed paper diagonally across the big glass panes, to prevent their shivering and breaking in the air concussion. The shops have done a roaring trade in gummed paper.

"Shall I get beefsteak or chops at the butcher's?" asks Louise.

I told her she need not go out. We have American tinned corned beef.

"No," says Louise, "better keep it for a worse day. I'll go!"

Mother is knitting, to keep her nerve and patience. She just won't go to the cellar.

"I'd get pneumonia," she says. "I almost feel like washing out some handkerchiefs and socks."

The laundry is very irregular; and now, who knows? Boom! Another big explosion. "Suppose we should want to leave Paris?" It's a great problem, this leaving Paris or staying. One hates to go. Also, there's a fair rush, and railway tickets have to be waited for several days.

Dring! dring! Our door bell.

A French lady in tears.

"I saw Dr. Blank," she says. "He comes from central Paris. Shells have fallen. He saw one at such and such a place."

### Tired Folk Sleep Well.

The lady has her Angora cat in her arm. "Poor Mimi, you'll be killed, like your mamma! I have my tickets for Pogue, but how will I dare cross Paris in a taxi to the railway depot?" More tears, but this panic is exceptional. One aged lady in our apartment house goes with her daughter to their chateau this evening. No other family budges.

It racks the nerves. Night before last, at 9 o'clock, the sirens of Paris and our Neuilly church bell gave the alarm of Gothas. Rushing and rumor on the stairs. Women running down. All shutters and curtains tight. No lights to show.

Crash! A big bomb, rather far off. A rattling barrage, rather far off. More silence.

The janitor comes up sociably. A kind man. We smoke cigarettes in the darkened parlor.

Everybody is sucking peppermints! Long silence. The janitor goes down to his lodge. Rumor and gayety on the stairs. Ta-ra-ta-ra! The "breloque"! "All's clear!" Ouf! Mother, we can go to bed. It is near midnight.

Tired folk sleep well. Every night we have slept soundly after the "all's clear" trumpet. In the silent watches, if we wake, we revel in the peace and silence of it.

At 9 o'clock the next morning (yesterday morning) new alarm of Gothas. We said Gothas. All alarms are the same. We listen. No barrage. Boom! And then more silence in the gay sunlight.

### Tea Party in Cellar.

Rumors on the stairs, as usual. I go down. The janitor's lodge is full of schoolgirls from the establishment across the way. They have apportioned so many to each cellar refuge. Docile, silent girls, between 9 and 13, anxious not to give trouble.

And down in the cellar the usual tea party. Now and then a schoolgirl slips down. Boom! Far away, in east Paris, explosions sound, one every fifteen minutes.

The weather is magnificent. After lunch we walk in the Neuilly avenues with mother. She will stop to chat with American soldier boys lined up beside their ambulances, just as again to-day in the shady open square and streets.

Boom. It is 3 o'clock. Also it is the last shell of the day. Ta-ra-ta-ra! The welcome "breloque" ("All's clear!") blown on a trumpet by an American soldier standing magnificent in an open auto lorry careers through the streets.

All this was yesterday afternoon. Life was peaceful, with the evening papers and the Government's statement of a German long distance gun as the real cause of the mysterious spaced explosions.

### New Alarm Is Given.

Imagine eating meals! Our lunch had been boiled beans. No meat. Nobody wanted the tin of "monkey" opened. Apple sauce, toast, tea, strawberry preserves. There are meals that choke. Dinner, 7 P. M., poached eggs, rice pudding sweetened with figs. Tea.

At 9 P. M., just as we are preparing to go to bed, a new alarm! Sirens shriek in Paris. The Neuilly church bell looms for fifteen minutes. The Boche is making us dread all beautiful things, church bells now! I'll never hear them in the future without a tightening of the heart. We hate moonlight, starlight, beautiful, clear days of sun—because they mean a raid of Gothas.

Lights again veiled. Again the rumors and complaints on the stairway. It is hard on the children. Lone women, husbands at the front, feel responsibility and agony. We've seen houses, big apartment houses, go down like a house of cards, not far away. Which house will it be next in the black night?

Again the faithful janitor comes up. "Won't you come down where it is safe?" Safe! How shall I tell him that a janitor was blown to pieces in his own lodge the other night after the Gotha torpedo, coming from a mile high, had pierced the four upper stories like butter and ex-

ploded in the second floor, blowing out everything to the ground?

The cellar? It is comparatively safe; but pneumonia is there, congestions, bronchitis. The cellar is crowded with women on the edge of hysteria, with girls and children and big boys. I hate to think what might happen in a panic down there should the front of the big apartment house come down on it.

Also, there is gas. They are dropping the abominable mustard gas, liquefied, in rubber balloons as big as your head. The good janitor stays with us.

The night drags on. Silence. Waiting.

"My old, old mother," says the janitor, "was in her house at Ham. I went three times to make her come to Paris. She would not budge. She had made friends with the Smith College girls who were planting her field after they had ploughed it.

### Another Day of It.

"Think of that—those American girls. I'm told they are from rich families. Now they're all suddenly evacuated to Amiens. Ham is a furnace in this big offensive! What's my old mother doing to-night, a refugee in Amiens?"

Crash!

"That one was far off," says the janitor.

In mournful strain, we smoke. The boredom of it! We are all weak, tired, nervous.

"I've enough! I'm going to bed!" says mother. (And she does it.) Now I've got an extra strain, in the cold, dark, waiting silence.

Ta-ra-ta-ra! Thank heaven, the "all's clear" at last!

We sleep again. A bully, good night's sleep. It is wonderful how well everybody sleeps! We wake refreshed. Ah, the day is good!

Wir-ee-ee-ee-ee-uuu! The Paris siren!

The Neuilly church bell tolls the tocsin! A new alerte at 7 A. M. No rest! Great Scott, another day of it! Louise arrives with the milk and butter.

"There's a big barrage being fired to the northwest again, direction of Poissy," she says.

### Just the Regular Boom!

It means a Gotha raid. Boom-boom-boom-boom-boom! A barrage, this time, from the east. Ah, the annoyance of dressing hastily—while listening.

Again the fraacs and lamenting on the stairs. Louise puts on the breakfast. Porridge, toast and strawberry preserves, with coffee. By heck, we're all as hungry as bears! Don't tell me about fear taking away the appetite! An hour has passed, and no more sign of Gothas.

Boom!

Ah, bah! It's the regular long distance visitor. We're not afraid of him! He doesn't range as far west as our Neuilly suburb; and we know that those ninety-ton guns require cement foundations, and are not moved easily. He hits no nearer us than central Paris.

Breakfast is over.

I begin to read the paper.

Boom!

Good heavens! That's loud! It shook the floor!

Where did it fall? Did it fall nearer?