

hast heard, but one syllable thereof thou shalt not bear to those who sent thee. Citizens, he now addressed the soldiers, who had crowded around to witness the strange scene—two of you each take a hand of this man and place yourselves with him at the head of the line, he shall be our guide; if you detect him deceiving you, if he but move to fly, blow out his brains and cast his body over the hedge.

Then a few orders given in a low voice went spreading commotion amidst the broken line of soldiers that surrounded the ashes which had been a village. The groups lengthened out, each platoon appeared, as it were, to flow into another. A dark line was formed, descended to the long road which separates Saint Crepin from Mountfaucou, closed it up as a wheel sinks into a rut, and when, some minutes later the moon passing between two clouds, was reflected for a moment by the stripe of bayonets gliding noiselessly along, you would have thought you beheld an immense black serpent with its silver scales gliding through the shade.

A march by night is a sad event for an army. War is beautiful by a bright day when the heavens look down on the struggle when the nations standing erect around the field of battle sit on the benches of a circus, with hurried hands applaud the victors, when the thrilling sounds of the brazen instruments make the bold fibres of the heart wildly vibrate, when the smoke of a thousand cannons covers you with a shroud, when friends and foes are there to see how well you'll die. It is sublime. But by night, by night!.....To be unconscious of who attacks and how you defend yourself, to fall without seeing the hand that dealt the death blow, to be trampled down by those who stand and know not whom they tread upon! Oh! then you do not fall like a gladiator, you wither, you roll upon the earth, you bite it—you tear it with your nails; then—it is horrible.

This was what caused that army to march on in silent sorrow; they knew that high hedges and wide fields of broom and rye stretched away on each side of their route and that at the end of that route a combat awaited them—a combat by night.