

BOMBARDMENT OF PARIS*

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WHEN the first bombardment of Paris by the long-range German gun followed a night of bombing by enemy airplanes, no one at that time realized that shells were being sent into the city from a point behind the front line trenches, which are at least 75 miles from the centre of the city. I was out on the streets the morning the bombardment began and everybody was under the impression that it was a daylight air raid, something entirely new, as of course all of the previous air raids had been engineered under cover of darkness. The sky above Paris was thick with French fighting planes, scooting here and there in search of enemy machines. It was not until late that day that we realized that the explosions did not come from bombs. The excitement was intense and everyone was mystified, for explosions were occurring at regular intervals of about twenty minutes, and no enemy machines could be spotted overhead.

Use Subway as a Refuge

The regular *alerte*, which is a warning sounded at the approach of German bombing machines, was given early in the morning, and both the "Metro" and the "Nord-Sud," the two Paris subways, were shut down in order that the stations, platforms and underground tubes could be used as a refuge by the people of Paris. The tramways, or street railways as we would call them, stopped operation. Cars were emptied, motormen and conductors left their platforms, and the rolling stock was left standing in the street wherever it happened to be when the *alerte* was given. Traffic was absolutely paralyzed and the only wheels turning were those of the taxi-cabs.

As a matter of fact, the shutting down of the subways in order to furnish underground retreats for the population defeated the very purpose for which it was done. In an hour or two, people got tired of staying under ground and came up for a breath of fresh air. Many of them had to get from one part of the city to the other, and the only way of doing this was by walking along the streets. Therefore, with the subways shut down, there were far more people on the streets and subject to danger from explosions of shells than would have been the case if the lines had continued their normal operation. This fact evidently was appreciated later, for during succeeding bombardments by the long-range gun, the subway system has continued in operation.

Bombs Do Most Damage

The damage done by the long-range gun is much less than that which results from the dropping of bombs by an airplane. I have seen a good many of the buildings hit by the long-range shells and they seem to damage only the upper two stories. The bombs, however, wreck things to a greater depth, sometimes as much as four stories. It often happens that when a shell strikes, the panes of glass on the opposite side of the street are shattered, while those on the same side remain intact.

Detonations of explosives are such a regular event here that the storekeepers are going to great trouble to protect their windows from breakage. The favorite stunt seems to be to paste across the glass long strips of paper. It has been interesting to watch the development of this form

of protection. Originally two diagonal bands were pasted across the window. Then someone with an artistic touch got busy and produced a design of squares and triangles like the strips of pastry on an old-fashioned cranberry pie. He soon had a large following and now the windows present designs of every conceivable pattern. It seems to me that these Parisian shop-keepers have something to learn in the matter of window protection from New York merchants, whose stores were situated along the excavations for the new subway lines. There, it will be remembered, the favorite trick was to truss the panes with diagonal wires and struts at the centre. I have yet to see one of these rigs in service here. The gummed strips of paper, however, apparently have official sanction for the windows of the Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées are "dolled up" in this way.

The city authorities are busy providing shelters or *abris* for the people during air raids. These are generally cellars of buildings not less than four stories in height. On the entrances to buildings containing cellars which have been officially designated as *abris* are big paper placards indicating the capacity of the shelter. Going along any street in Paris now you see on the buildings these placards with the words "150 places," "80 places," etc. Some of the cellar *abris* had window gratings fronting on the streets. At the present time all of these are being blocked up with plaster to intercept shell splinters.

Although the subway is now kept running during daylight bombardment by the big gun, it is closed down during an air raid at night. Those people who seek underground shelter on such occasions now take the experience pretty much as a matter of course, and during the last raid I saw people filing down stairs into the Etoile station of the "Metro" with camp-stools, chairs, newspapers and magazines, and other aids to comfort during the two or three hours sojourn below street level.

"La Grosse Bertha"

When a night air raid starts, the fire engines are sent at full speed through the streets with their sirens going full blast, church bells outside of Paris start ringing, and factory whistles add to the discord. New stationary sirens are in course of installation. Pretty soon the anti-aircraft guns start booming on the outskirts of Paris and from my window I can see the flash of the shells as they burst in mid-air. It looks just like the bunch of sparks produced in grinding metal with an emery wheel. In twenty minutes or so after the guns have started the airplanes which have managed to break through the barrage begin to "lay their eggs." It is very easy to distinguish between the detonation of bombs and the burst of the shrapnel from the "Archies." The bomb makes a deep roar while the shrapnel produces a higher staccato note.

Paris is not greatly disturbed by the shelling of "le canon à longue portée" which is generally dubbed by the French newspaper writers as "La Grosse Bertha." People go about their business very much as usual. The moving pictures are taking a fling at the big gun in a humorous way. At the last performance I attended there was shown an "animated cartoon" in which "La Grosse Bertha" was sending over shells and Charlie Chaplin (whom they call Charlot over here) was catching them, standing forth as the defender of Paris. After he had caught three of these the cartoon showed him juggling them, and finally hurling them back in the direction of Berlin.

While many persons have departed from Paris as a result of the air raids and bombardment, the bulk of the populace is taking the matter calmly. I have yet to see anything in the nature of a panic.

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