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Lettre d'Eugène Lee-Hamilton à Matilda Paget - 22 Mai 1871

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Texte & Analyse

Analyse22 Mai 1871

MeWC

Ambassade d'Angleterre

17 rue des Réservoirs

Versailles

May 22. 71

(monday, noon)

^E.L.H.'s return to France after leave at Rome

VP. 1919^

My little darling,

I hope thou hast safely received my telegram telling thee of my arrival and good health ?

My journey was a very fatiguing one and difficult one. I have nothing of interest to tell thee respecting it however, except that yesterday morning, on arriving at Melun, I had to get out of the railway and take the diligence to Versailles right across the country. It took me nearly the whole day. At Dijon I first came upon the Prussians. Nothing can be more saisissant than their ^thus^ suddenly coming upon them. The first I saw were two sentries in full campaigning dress with their pointed helmets on the railway line, looking like ghosts in the grey morning light. On the Platform at Dijon there were a large number, all perfectly silent and quiet, and the contrast between them, --so soldier like, so rigid--, and the French soldiers who were hurrying about beside them was very curious. At Lonjumeau where I stop we stopped to rest the horses, and where I got some dinner yesterday, a balloon containing proclamations etc which had been let off at Paris by the Communists fell in the yard in front of the house I was eating in. There was great excitement of course and the ballon, --a small one--was carried off by the gendarmes. As one approaches Paris the military movement becomes very marked, Cavalry galloping along, estafettes etc etc --but I did not pass near enough to Paris to see any of the active operations. On arrival here I was given a small room in Lord L's apartment (a very small one something like our Rue du Luxembourg apartment & on the second floor) The room is very small, but has is clean & has plenty of air. I fear it is quite out of the question finding even a bedroom to let here except at a fabulous price. 200 a month is asked for an inferior bedroom. So I suppose I must stay with Lord L. though I dread the long meals and the I should far prefer a more independent mode of life.

Lord L. is very cordial, as he always is. The other people staying with him are Wodehouse Sheffield and a new military attaché, Colonel Conolly, whom I have scarcely had time to judge of. West, the Secretary of Embassy, is also here.

I have arrived just in time for the great dénouement, it seems. As I telegraphed thee, the Army forced its way in to (sic) Paris yesterday, and a great battle is raging there today. Sheffield has been at Meudon all the morning, whence there is a splendid view of the contest. He says the Versailles army has reached the Arc de Triomphe on the right bank of the Seine and the Champ de Mars on the other. The Insurgents are apparently bombarding Paris from Versa Montmartre, and we are very anxious for the safety of the Embassy & its inmates.

A great fire can also be distinctly seen to be raging in the neighbourhood of the Tuileries. I am going to Meudon in half an hour, and shall write thee this evening what I see. Here at Versailles there is of course tremendous excitement. Cavalry, artillery galloping about, great crowds in the streets. Large numbers of unfortunate prisoners are bro continually being brought into Versailles and are jee cruelly jeered at by the mob. I saw a great body of them this morning escorted down the Avenue de Paris by cavalry. They look like brigands rather than like soldiers. They are horribly dirty and squalid, most of them in a sort of garde mobile uniform. Most of them are either very young or very old, few of them middle aged. I saw among them many deserters from the regular army, who walked along doggedly, apparently quite prepared for their fate. Close by to this house is the Place du Château with the fine statue of Louis XIV and the inscription "à toutes les gloires de la France". It was at the foot of this statue that the Crown Prince of Prussia distributed medals to his soldiers.

I have been studying the timetables between for thee between Verona & Salzburg. I find thou wilt have to make two days journey of it, and thou must absolutely sleep at Innsbruck. The best arrangement I can make for thee is to leave Verona at

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