

five milliards. Two, at once; then the robbers will leave Seine-et-Marne. *Nous sommes trahis.*

Meanwhile—feel it or not—the sun of peace shines. It is June, the month of roses. June, 1871, summer after the fearful ice-bound winter of the siege. A summer of renewed rose-gathering for the shaving-soap, of threats, and perhaps even a little laughter, as the “*bi-globes*” sit burnishing their arms.

Féry-le-Coultinois is a tiny place, hardly hurtable by the clamor and clang of invasion. Accident brought it into prominence. A general, who ought perhaps to have established himself at Rheims or Troyes, was attracted, in passing, to its beautiful little château, and chose to remain there. Not, of course, the commander-in-chief, the great Manteuffel, some lesser Teufel. A “*bon diable*,” on the whole, as the orderly inhabitants found, to their rather ungraceful surprise.

Till the business began of the “*franc-tireurs*.” Of course, we all admit now, in placid dissertations, that that never should have been. It was bad enough in the tussle of defeat: in the choke of the conqueror’s grip at your throat—but now that the fight was over, now that the assailant lay prone and had received quarter, now there could be no excuse for a blow in the dark.

Explain that, if you can, to the bruised man on his back. Get him to understand that a shot fired in a blue coat is heroism and a shot fired in a blue blouse homicide. All the difference between the gallows and the cross. He remembers only that his brother is slaughtered and his father’s farm-house burnt. Tell him that these two events were diplomatically legalized by gentlemen who get photographed in big leather chairs.

Before the peace there had been no cases of “*guerilla*” shooting near Féry. Now, suddenly, a couple of German soldiers came back from an evening walk and complained that they had been fired at behind a wall. General von Krell, at the château, frowned. They had not attempted to steal poultry? Not played the human fox amongst half-unwilling human geese?

Perhaps it was the return of summer heat, perhaps the certainty of humilia-

tion and despoilment. The tired victors, delayed on foreign soil, felt the hate of the peasantry smouldering, like sulphur springs, about their feet. It flashed out, here and there.

A young officer was found dead in a coppice, shot through the back.

A placard was posted up at the mairie stating plainly that any Frenchman found anywhere at any time with any weapon upon him would be hanged. Signed Von Krell. It was quite clear. Every villager could read, and none misunderstand, it. All endeavor to discover the murderer of the German proved fruitless. Workmen passing near had not even heard the shot!

“Which is impossible,” said the general to the gardener at the château. The swarthy Frenchman made no reply. The general turned on his heel. “You may tell every one so,” he added abruptly. “And that I shall certainly carry out my threat.”

Said the gardener in his own pleasant home, all scented with its trellis of rose, and freshness of *fritures*: “I shall certainly keep my tongue tranquil. What think you?”

“Let there be doing, not talking,” said his dark wife. Yet none had talked more than she: since July she had only paused to sleep. Had they left her to arrange matters, there would have been no war: the Germans would have been conquered without one. And now, since the loved provinces were lost, her talk had almost become a scream. She was the most patriotic of Frenchwomen, the worst bereaved, herself an Alsatian, named Schimmer (pronounced She-mare), from Roeschling.

For ten years she had been married to Armand Gadraux, the clever gardener at the château. They had no children. His brother Jules lived with them.

Poor Jules. He was a fool. At least so his sister-in-law frequently told every one, including himself. Most people were far slower to believe her than he.

The husband was a strong, lean, sinewy creature, rather quarrelsome, rather boastful, well worth his wage. The brother was delicate, without being sickly—small-featured, thoughtful-eyed, tired. Neither of the men talked much—they had little opportunity—but Jules would sit reading in silence for hours.

“Wasting his time, for he has read them