

Slowly he loosened his vest and cotton shirt. He extracted a little bag, untying the string. "Hold here thy cigarette," he said; and he counted the bank-notes on the table, amongst his paints.

"Four thousand! Thou art mad!" cried his friend.

"France needs five milliards," said Jules. He would say nothing more at first. "Hist!" he exclaimed, "I hear the others. Put away the money. Take it to the Government. To Monsieur Thiers. Say it is for France. From—an artist. I know thou art honest, Pierre. I would thou hadst not killed the Prussian! Perhaps he had a sweetheart at home."

"He should not have sought for one here then!" answered Pierre. He slipped away, as the gardener and Marguerite came up. Marguerite was talking.

"We have news!" she cried to her brother-in-law. "Great news. The Prussians are going. The first instalment is to be paid!"

"Already? Is it possible? So much? Ah, the brave people to give it!"

"It isn't given; it is loaned," replied Marguerite with scorn. "But thou dost not understand such things. Yes, the Prussians are to go in a few days. Tomorrow already a great Somebody passes, a prince. He is to sleep at the château; there is to be a feast."

"Perquisitions have been made," said Armand darkly, "for arms. Two men in whose houses were still guns have been locked up."

"Hear the Germans shouting!" said Marguerite.

"They shout far into the night," said Jules. "They are happy. They drink."

"The red blood of Alsace," said Marguerite.

Armand grinned, behind her back. "The wine of the cellar," he said.

They sat listening in silence to the songs and bursts of merriment. The silent stars glittered above.

It was late before the noise subsided. It was early when the bustle began again.

The garden was immediately invaded. Orders came which the gardener could not resist. Greenery and floral decorations were required in abundance. "They will go, but they will leave us a ruin," swore Armand.

Worse and worse as the afternoon wore on. Statues of nymphs stood here and there in the French garden. Armand had to look on whilst great laughing sons of the Fatherland hauled them away. The marble ladies were ignominiously dragged to the other side, in the shrubbery, and disappeared behind a hoarding. "*Verboten!*"

The general, superintending everything, stopped, as he had sometimes done before, for a moment's talk with the quietly working Jules.

"I am going to leave," he said, "in a day or two. Now, bethink you! Make me something pretty, as a memento of Féry."

Jules looked up. "I would rather not," he said. "Please!"

"As a present to my daughter. Come, they tell me you make something out of nothing! The maire showed me a carved cherry-stone in silver on his chain."

"I would rather not," explained Jules in much agitation. "I could not think of anything good. It would not do."

"An artist's humor?" said the general haughtily. "Very well, I shall not ask you again."

The gardener appeared at the window. "Monsieur le Général," he said with angry servility. "The statues?"

"Ah, the statues? You will see. A little surprise to-night. A glorification of Germany. In your brother's line. I too am an artist." The general clanked away. "'S death," said, this time, both the brothers.

Marguerite spoiled it by a long *kyrielle* of imprecation, adjuration, and reproach. According to her, apparently, God could easily have saved France by ten men of Féry-le-Coultinois; only the ten men failed him.

"One maid of Lorraine was enough," said Jules, half to himself. "But, of course, she was a maid." Marguerite did not listen.

A dead weight was on the place, in spite of all the commotion, in the sultry summer heat. The prince, a serene highness, arrived with his suite and more soldiers. Every barn for miles round was packed. As night fell, a glorious June night, myriads of lights awoke all over the château and its gardens. Tables were set out