

"What they sow they must reap," said Pomereul.

"Ah, well, he will come out right," said Nicois; "perhaps he needed a friend and adviser of his own age in whom he could confide. Sulpice is rather too austere for your youngest son, and Sabine's very innocence prevents her being of service to him."

"And what of me?" asked Pomereul.

"You, why confound it, man, you are his father. Besides you are of that disposition which difficulties to be overcome in early life naturally make a man, and whose character forbids Xavier to confide in him. Things will improve when Benedict Fougerais is your son-in-law, for you said, did you not, that you meant to give him Sabine?"

"Gladly, my friend," said Pomereul. "Benedict is one of those young men who left my workshop to become masters in their turn. For I have the deep satisfaction of knowing that my house has produced men who will be an honor to their country. One reason why I love my calling is that it enables me to aid deserving talent. Once a boy gains the special interest of his professor in drawing or modelling I keep my eye on him. I inquire as to the condition of his family. If they are poor I give the boy a pension, stipulating that he will pay me back, by yearly sums, till he has paid all I have advanced. This, in turn, is used to open a future to some other boy. It has another advantage, for it teaches them the proper value of money; that they must regard it, not as an idol, but as a power; that it must be used less for our pleasures than our necessities; that its worth may be increased a hundred-fold by the use made of it. Many artists owe their future to this plan of mine: Luc Aubry, the landscape painter, Jean Leroux, who painted the interior, which you bought last year, Benedict Fougerais, who is likely to take a front rank among our sculptors if he does not degenerate."