

any inconvenience? because——."

"No, sir!" replied the Count, haughtily, "do not misunderstand me. My hesitation arises not from a scarcity of funds, but from a disinclination to allow myself to be cheated.—I must have security, Monsieur Poissy."

"How can you have security in such a transaction as this? I fear the law will not defend us in affair that is purely one of honour."

"But do you consider that I am advancing nearly one million francs."

"Of course, I do, my dear Comte, but when a man of your name and rank, offers himself in competition, especially *sub rosa*, he cannot expect to out-weigh all his competitors with a rifle. Even the minister has his hands tied."

"Do you think so?" said M. de Lozeraie; "well, we shall see. I am going to visit the King. I shall find the minister there, and after sounding him on the subject, I will give you an answer to-morrow. I shall meet you, of course, at M. de Favert's."

"I shall be there; but in the meantime, they are expecting an answer. What shall I say to them?"

"That I am considering about it."

"There are other offers more considerable than yours, and they may close with them before to-morrow."

"I cannot, however, give such a sum, without deliberating about it."

"Your formal promise will be enough. The word of such a man as you is a sacred bond."

"I know it," replied the Count, with a smile of gratified vanity, "and it is on that account that I do not give it lightly. Let them wait."

M. Poissy, though evidently chagrined at the unwonted firmness of his dupe, rose with the air of one who had no personal interest in the matter, and promising to make it his business that nothing should be concluded before he saw the Count again, he left him to make a third essay, to depart for St. Cloud.

It is not much to be wondered at, then, that M. de Lozeraie's patience was somewhat exhausted, when his valet announced another visitor, as Monsieur Felix of Marseilles. "I know no such person," said the Count, who is he?"

"An old man of eighty, sir, who says he has a letter of recommendation to you."

"Ah! some beggar, of course—say I am not at home." And without delay, he crossed the kitchen and hall, in his way to the carriage. He was here, however, met by M. Fe-

lix, who deputed him respectfully, and holding out a letter, said to him—

"From M. le Viscomte de Couchy."

The Count, without acknowledging the old man's salutation, took the letter, and read thus:—

"MY DEAR COUNT,

"The person who will hand you this letter, is a worthy old man, whom the revolution has deprived of his fortune. He will tell you his history, and I shall feel obliged by any thing you can do for him."

The Count threw the letter upon a table, and said to his servant—"Give this man two louis, and order up the horses."

"M. le Comte," said M. Felix, interposing himself between him and the door; "I came not here to ask alms."

"What then, sir?"

"I came to demand a restitution."

"A restitution! I have no debts, sir; and if I had, it would not be with men of your sort."

"Perhaps so, sir," said the old man, in a firm tone; "I did not speak of your personal debts towards me, but of those of your father-in-law, M. de Lore. He borrowed some large sums of me, before my emigration, and I am come to ask them back from you."

"From me! I am not a guarantee for M. de Lore's debts, even though your story be not a fabrication."

"And yet his daughter, who was your wife, received all his fortune."

"In that case, your demand should concern my son, rather than me, for he inherits his mother's fortune. But where are your titles?"

"When I shall have detailed to you the circumstances, you will recognize the truth of what I say, but I cannot assert that I have any exact titles."

"Indeed," sneered the Count, in a tone of mingled rage and disdain, "this is a pretty story you have trumped up, to extort money, founded upon some circumstances that have come to your knowledge by chance; but you are a little too late, sir;—I am up to this kind of knavery, and would advise you to go and try it somewhere else."

"I know, also," said the old man, austere, "that no one is better skilled than M. de Lozeraie, in the art of trumping up stories founded on circumstances learnt by chance."

"What would the rascal say?" cried the Count.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," replied the other, calmly, "but as you have referred me to your son, to him will I appeal."