

said the Count, more alarmed by this expression, than proud of being declared master of the destiny of the man he detested.

"I will explain what I mean," replied the banker, and without further preamble he related to the Count the state of his affairs as I have done already, concluding with these words—"Thus you see, that the funds you have in my hands are perfectly secure, and if you doubt the word of a man of honour, my books can convince you."

M. de Lozeraic being once fully assured of the safety of his property and the solvency of his debtor, thought only of taking a cruel revenge for the affront he had once received at his hands, and therefore, interrupting the speaker at these words, he said—

"The books of bankers generally say whatever their owners please—they speak a kind of hieroglyphic, or rather elastic language, that proves either wealth or the opposite, at will.—I confess, sir, that I put no confidence in such evidence."

M. Durand bit his lips; but having resolved, at whatever cost, to save his fortune and his reputation, and to sacrifice his present pride to his future prosperity, he calmly replied—

"I am not surprised that you partake of the popular prejudices, concerning the accuracy of the system of accounts adopted in banking houses. All the numerous entries which we have introduced, to prevent, by an exact control of one part over another, the least appearance of fraud, seem, in the eyes of those unacquainted with the process, only an inextricable labyrinth, adopted to baulk the researches of those who are interested in their investigation. I cannot therefore object to what you say on that head; but there is between us something more clear and more intelligible, that is, the word of a man of honour, which I presume ought to be sufficient."

"And what if it is not sufficient for me?" said the Count.

"Would you doubt it?" cried the banker, with indignation.

"Even supposing I should not doubt your good faith, sir," replied M. de Lozeraic, "have I not good reason to doubt your judgment?—A fortune such as that of M. Durand, overthrown in the space of a few months, does not speak much in favour of the owner's prudence and skill."

"You seem to forget that it required a revolution to effect its overthrow."

"I do not, however, forget that you are one

of those who were mainly instrumental in producing that revolution."

The justness of this taunt so galled the banker, who had from the beginning, had great difficulty in curbing his rebellious disposition, that he lost his equanimity, and replied, tartly—

"I am not aware, M. de Lozeraic, that I am bound to account to you for my political opinions."

"But you are bound to render me an account of my fortune, I imagine."

"I have done so."

"I am not to be paid by words, sir; and when I say that I must have my fortune, and that to-morrow, I wish you to understand that I am speaking of ready money."

"I have already explained to you," said the banker, (grinding his teeth to restrain the rage that agitated him,) "that that is impossible."

"The tribunal will soon convince you that nothing is more possible," replied the Count.

"Do you threaten me with the tribunal?" exclaimed the banker, with ill suppressed alarm.

"That is where persons of bad faith who do not pay their debts, have to go," said the Count.

"There is another place, sir, where honest men go, who have paid theirs."

"When you have proved yourself to be qualified to visit that place," said the Count, with a sneer, "it will be time enough for me to consider whether I shall condescend to meet you there or not."

"It is a decision you will be forced to make, sooner than you imagine," replied the banker.

"Not so soon as I desire, sir, seeing that I am anxious to have evidence of your qualification."

"You shall not wait long, M. de Lozeraic. You shall hear from me to-morrow."

"The receipt shall be ready," said the Count.

"You had better have your arms ready also," replied the banker.

"Don't make me lose my ink and paper, I beg."

"You shall lose nothing so valuable, I assure you," said M. Durand, and he withdrew.

CHAPTER VIII.

INCENSED as the banker was at this ungenerous, though not unprovoked treatment, a sense of honour compelled him instantly to communicate to M. M. de Berizy and Daneau, the untoward turn affairs had taken, and the impossibility that now existed of his ever being able to repay their kindness, which was thus