

rand for probity, skill and wealth, was too deep rooted to be even shaken, by these apparent inconsistencies and deviations from the direct line of good management.

I have been thus particular in making my readers acquainted with this M. Durand, because he is *the* banker of my tale, and of course one of the most conspicuous personages in it; as, however, his character will be more fully developed in the course of the narrative, I will at once proceed with it.

He was seated then in his cabinet or private room, for the transaction of business; an apartment of moderate dimensions, but fitted in a style of luxury that would be deemed extravagant for any but a man of unbounded fortune. After having read all the journals with great attention, he opened one of the drawers of an immense bureau that was standing close by his chair, and drew from it a written paper, which he perused with still greater attention. He erased several phrases, and inserted others; then re-commenced reading it half aloud from one end to the other, whilst with pen in hand, he gave it the finishing touch, punctuating it with especial care. He then pulled one of the many different coloured bell ropes that hung near the bureau, not without having given a last fond look upon his work, such a look as a young mother gives who has just finished dressing her only child, and who, after having examined its dress, fold by fold, and pin by pin, and arranged its hair, ringlet by ringlet, holds it out at a little distance to feast her eyes with a thorough survey of the "tout ensemble," and to assure herself that nothing is wanting.

Immediately after, the servant appeared, and M. Durand said, "Send me M. Leopold."—The servant was on his way to obey his master, when the latter added—"go to M. Leopold's room by the private staircase, and tell him to come the same way. There is no necessity that the people in the outer room should know he is with me." The domestic obeyed, and the banker, while left alone, opened the letters that were lying by him. On most of them he bestowed merely a hasty glance and threw them aside; on some he wrote a few words and put them on the table; but there were three or four that seemed to be of importance, for he read them with evident concern and shut them up in his bureau. By this time, the valet returned, accompanied by a young man about twenty years of age, who stood before the banker as if penetrated by a feeling of the most respectful admiration.—

"Let no one in, for the present," said the banker, and the servant withdrew.

M. Durand then turned towards Leopold, and said to him in a voice of parental kindness:

"Monsieur Leopold, I have a favour to ask of you."

"A favour of *me!*" exclaimed the youth with eagerness, "what would you have me do, sir? You know that my life is yours, and that if you would have me sacrifice it,——"

"No, no my friend," said the banker, checking his enthusiasm with a gracious smile, "the favour I require of you demands not your life, it demands only promptitude and discretion."

"If that be all, sir, you may rest assured that they shall wrest my life from me sooner than your secret."

"You exaggerate the importance of what I ask of you, Leopold."

"So much the worse, sir, for I should be delighted to find at length some opportunity of proving my gratitude. All who are in your employ regard you as a father, but to me you have been even more than I can possibly express."

"I have only followed the dictates of common humanity towards one of my fellow creatures, who was unjustly treated. Your mother was left without fortune, and, although the widow of one who had fallen for his country in 1815, was refused a pension. This was a foul injustice."

"And nobly have you repaid it, sir. You came promptly to my mother's aid."

"Could I leave the widow of a brave soldier in misery?"

"You have taken care of me, and it is to your generosity I owe the education I have received, and that is a blessing."

"Yes, Leopold," interrupted M. Durand "that, I allow, is a benefit, and perhaps few have more right than myself to say so; for I came from my native village, knowing scarcely how to read, and the little I know, I was obliged to acquire by stealing some hours from the labour by which I earned my living. I was without a master that I learnt to write and without a master that I polished by degrees the coarse rusticity of my dialect. Then, when I had made my way a little in the world, and mingled with young men who had been better educated, I made an attempt at Latin and Greek, and even proceeded to the study of history and mathematics."

"What—all alone?"

"Yes, alone in my poor garret. Nor did