

"You will save my life," said Nicois.

"Ah, it is too much to put life in the scale with money," said Pomereul. "I simply do you a service, which in like circumstances I should ask of you. If friendship does not go as far as the purse, and a little beyond, there is not much use in making a parade of it."

"Pomereul," said Nicois, "you know what true friendship is, though you do not make a parade of it. But who could be more noble, more unselfish than you are, to your very workmen, to all who surround you?"

"Stop there," said Pomereul; "I object. What you call unselfishness, generosity, liberality, and so on, is only a knowledge of business. If I have laid a foundation of benevolence to others, it is only making a profitable investment. I am rich, and it gives me the very great happiness of being loved by those around me, respected without being feared, and the possessor of four millions, without having any enemies or being envied. Looking back upon my life, it seems that in all its circumstances I was blessed by Providence. There is one cloud upon the blue horizon, but that I trust will in time disappear. My father was a blacksmith, pursuing his humble trade, and gaining a scanty sustenance. I resolved to aid him by my earnings. As a mere boy I got a situation in a bronze factory. I was employed only to run errands, and to sweep the store. But I never loitered upon the way, nor left a speck of dust where my broom had been. So I won my employer's confidence. He made me an apprentice. I astonished the workmen by my facility in learning. My master began to take a special interest in me. He had me taught the intricacies of the trade, instead of leaving me to spend my life toiling at its lower branches. I attempted first the casting, then the setting or the carving of large pieces. At twenty, few workmen could equal me. If my education was not