

the property, as to absorb, not only all my profits, but also all the money I myself have put into the undertaking."

"That cannot be," replied M. Durand, with imperturbable phlegm. "You have put three hundred thousand francs into the concern, yourself; when you came to me, you had raised twelve hundred thousand francs on mortgage, and I have lent you four hundred thousand francs also on mortgage, making in all, nineteen hundred thousand francs laid out; so that from that sum, to three millions, the valuation you yourself have put upon the property, is far enough to leave you good scope for the profits."

"True, sir; but the four hundred thousand francs lent by you, went to pay some former engagements, as I told you at the time; I have therefore been compelled to make new ones, depending upon a continuance of your generosity, and have still, now that the buildings are finished, more than two hundred thousand francs of liabilities to take up."

"Well, sir, even that makes only two millions one hundred thousand francs, and you will then have nine hundred thousand francs profit, if your calculations are correct and honest."

"They are honest, sir," cried M. Daneau, with some warmth; "and they will prove correct, if you will allow me the time necessary to make a fair market of the houses."

The banker opened a drawer, took out a paper, and read some passages from it to M. Daneau. "You see," added he, "the terms of our contract are perfectly clear. I have lent you on mortgage, four hundred thousand francs for four months. This time expires to-morrow, and I should be quite justified in demanding an immediate and entire reimbursement—I do not do so, however; but give you a month's delay, and I think that in so doing, I go beyond what my own interests demand."

"In truth, M. Durand," said the builder, with a suppliant air, "it will be impossible for me to satisfy you so soon."

"In that case," replied the banker, coolly, "you cannot be surprised if I adopt the measures the law allows me, to satisfy myself."

"What!" cried the builder, in dismay; "an execution?"

"It depends on yourself to avoid it, by making prompt payment."

"But, sir, this is too hard. This is treating me with a rigour your former kindness forbade me to expect."

"I thank you, sir," said the banker, bitterly.

"I thank you, sir; but I am used to ingratitude, and can bear it. I did not treat you with rigour when I opened my chest to you; but when I require back that which is my own, then, forsooth, I am a rigorous man. It is enough. I know what remains for me to do."

"Oh! sir, sir," replied M. Durand, almost in despair, "pardon an imprudent word, which I disavow from the bottom of my soul; but I swear to you that to press me so is to ruin me. You know as well as I, that to procure purchasers one must appear not to seek them. They must be waited for until they come to you, and it is not in a month that such valuable properties can be disposed of at a fair remunerating price. Besides, should purchasers be obtained, they will ask for time, and if I do not obtain it myself, how can I grant it? The sale, then, will become impossible."

"Substitute another mortgage for mine; I have no objection," said the banker.

"And who would advance money upon security, that the house of Durand thought unsatisfactory? Depend upon it, M. Durand urged the unfortunate mechanic, "no one will doubt if you enforce the payment thus, that it is because you consider your funds in danger. No one will, for a moment, suppose that a man like you, the support of the poor, and the friend of the industrious,—you, who have lavished your fortune to assist honest men,—would be so severe towards me, if I had not deserved it by some dishonesty or breach of faith. And yet, M. Durand, I am an honest man. I am like you as you have often told me, a child of the people, who have acquired what little I possess by honesty and hard labour; and you would ruin both my fortune and my reputation! You are incapable of it."

The banker appeared moved by this appeal and said—

"Believe me, if I had not a pressing necessity for the money, I would not be so rigorous; but from the day on which I lent it to you, I had entered into an engagement for it at that time, and I cannot withdraw myself from it."

"In that case, sir," said Daneau, in despair, "I will see;" and he prepared to withdraw when the banker called him back, saying—

"Listen, M. Daneau. I do not wish to hear it said that I have ever failed to help an honest man, and a man of the people, like myself."

The builder's countenance brightened, and he waited with anxiety for the coming proposal, which the banker himself seemed at a loss to utter. At last he decided, and resumed—

"According to your calculations, you have