

from the United States without reserve, but find myself still in need of fifty thousand francs, before I can reap any real advantage from this sacrifice, beyond the consciousness of having done right."

"And you intend perhaps, to ask them of me?"

"You have rightly conjectured, M. Durand: that is my object."

"Then M. Felix, I must beg you to excuse me. I am quite willing to believe your story, nor do I wish to say any thing offensive, but as to making myself the treasurer of all the bankrupts in France, it is out of the question."

"Do not forget that it is an old man who is pleading for the recovery of his honour."

"It was not I who made you lose it."

"I am aware that the sum I ask the loan of, is no trifle, but you have often sunk as much in the purchase of a painting."

"I imagine, sir," said the banker, rudely, that I have a right to do what I like with my fortune,—a fortune that I gained sou by sou.—I am no rich heir, sir. My father——

"Your father!" said the old man with emotion.

"My father left me no millions to squander. He was a labourer, sir, a poor but honest labourer. I was born poor, and have lived poor, and that is why I do not feel myself bound to repair the follies of those, who having been rich did not know how to keep so."

"If you knew what feelings drove me to this unhappy condition, you would pity rather than blame me."

"Apply to M. Dumont, sir."

"Pardon me, M. Durand," said the old man with much solemnity in his tone and manner, at the same time rising to depart. "I flattered myself that you would have understood me better than he: but I have been mistaken." Thus saying, he bowed, and withdrew.

M. Durand paced up and down the room for a few seconds in evident ill humour. At length ringing the bell violently, he gave his servant orders to refuse admittance to M. Felix, should he appear again, and then enquired what further applicants for an interview were in waiting. "There are about a dozen persons, sir," replied the valet, "come as they say, on the part of M. Daneau."

"Ah," said the banker, with an air of returning cheerfulness, "shew them in."

The first that appeared was a master locksmith. "What may your business be, sir?" said M. Durand, as if he knew nothing about the reason of his coming.

"To ask of your honour a simple explanation, if I may make so bold. M. Daneau has given us cheques on your bank, and notes of hand payable at your house. Now the cheques have not been paid, and we fear that the notes will be dishonoured also."

"The notes will be honoured and the cheques too."

"Ah! then it is true, sir, that M. Daneau has a credit with you for four hundred thousand francs?"

"Quite true."

"Then you have saved him, sir."

"I know it; but it is not for his sake only that I have done so. I know what his engagements are with you and many others, and I have resolved, sir, as far as lies in my power, always to uphold that man on whom depends the fortune of so many honest men, especially mechanics and labourers."

"Ah! M. Durand, this is conduct worthy of you. There is not another banker in Paris would act as you are acting."

"It is not as a banker that I do it; but rather as a man who remembers what he himself has been, and who is not ashamed to own himself one of the people."

"At any rate you are well known as a staunch friend of the people, and it is a pity but that they could find some opportunity of evincing their gratitude; but what have you to desire in your situation?"

"For myself, nothing; but I have often thought that if the rights of the people were better defended in the chamber of deputies——"

"True, I never thought of that. I am an elector, sir, and if ever you put yourself in the ranks ——"

"I have no such intention, I assure you."

"But you ought to be pressed, sir."

"My friend, I must now give my sanction to the payment of your cheques, so farewell; and the banker politely bowed out the locksmith, who was in raptures at his condescension, and also at the new idea that had just been so ingeniously suggested to him. All the other mechanics having been received and dismissed in turn, after the same fashion, at last appeared M. Tremont, the cashier and head clerk of the establishment.

"Well, Tremont, what is your report?" said the banker.

"Still the same story, sir. I am afraid that the end of the month will not shew well. I hardly dare draw any more upon our little provincial houses of business, for most of our late draughts have been returned."