

no reason to regret, therefore, that you have for a year taken up soldiering instead of trading, especially as our business was all stopped by the war, and you must have passed your time in inactivity."

In the evening when the merchant and Francis were alone together the former said:

"I told you last autumn, Francis, when I informed you that henceforth you would enter into my house as a partner in the business when we again recommenced trade, that I had something else in my mind, but the time to speak of it had not then arrived. I think it has now come. Tell me, my boy, frankly, if there is anything that you would wish to ask of me."

Francis was silent for a moment; then he said:

"You have done so much, Signor Polani; you have heaped kindness upon me altogether beyond anything I could have hoped for, that even did I wish for more I could not ask it."

"Then there is something more you would like, Francisco. Remember that I have told you that I regard you as a son, and therefore I wish you to speak to me as frankly as if I was really your father."

"I fear, signor, that you will think me audacious, but since you thus urge upon me to speak all that is in my mind I cannot but tell you the truth. I love your daughter, Giulia, and have done so ever since the first day that my eyes fell on her. It has seemed to me too much even to hope that she can ever be mine, and I have been careful in letting no word expressive of my feelings pass my lips. It still seems to me beyond the bounds of possibility that I could successfully aspire to the hand of the daughter of one of the noblest families in Venice."