

"My friend," said he, in a troubled voice, "I paid to folly one tribute, which though brief cost me dear. My hair has been always white since you knew me, has it not?"

"It is true."

"It grew white in a single night."

"In consequence of some terrible misfortune?"

"Yes, you name it right, a terrible misfortune," said Nicois.

Seeing his friend's astonishment at this unexpected confidence he continued:

"It is since that, I have had such a passion for money. Till then I only thought of it as a means of obtaining an independent position; now, I want it to gratify my pride, my wife's follies, to excite the envy of others, and plunge myself into such a whirlpool of business and of pleasure that I forget, or at least for an hour lose that one recollection."

"Will you not confide to me the cause of your suffering?"

"Ah," said Nicois, "if you knew all. But some day the friend will come to your fireside and open his heart to you. To-day, the banker alone has told you his misfortune."

Pomereul took his friend's outstretched hand. Nicois rose to go.

"You say that the money will be ready for me the day after to-morrow?"

"The day after to-morrow," said Pomereul, "a hundred thousand francs will be in this portfolio for you."

As Nicois passed out, Lipp-Lapp brought him his overcoat and cane.