

circumstances, again changed the current of his feelings and rendered matters more unpromising than before.

Mathieu Durand having returned from L'Etang, and left his daughter there still in a most alarming state, was seated in the same cabinet in which we were first introduced to him; but he no longer wore that aspect of calm serenity, that air of supreme content that beamed from his countenance some months before. He seemed now to be swayed by alternate feelings of active joy and deadly chagrin. These various emotions were excited by the successive consideration of different circumstances. When he reflected that he had been named deputy by three colleges of the arrondissement, and one of the department, a glowing sensation of pride mounted to his head, and his eyes sparkled with satisfaction; but when he contemplated the road by which he had attained this eminence, and recollected that he had been compelled to sacrifice the stability of his affairs at the shrine of ambition, a chilling fear took possession of him and drove the colour from his cheeks. M. Durand was labouring under the fever common to great political gamblers, being sometimes affected with those burning transports, which in sick persons produce delirium, and lend them for the time an unnatural vigour; and at others, with cold shiverings, which prostrate them as if deprived of all strength.

It was only in solitude, however, that M. Durand gave way to these symptoms of anxiety concerning his affairs. When in public, he performed his part with the skill and *sang froid* of a well trained actor.

As M. Durand was informed that a number of persons were waiting in the antechamber for an audience, he had the list handed to him, and was not a little astonished to meet, among a considerable number of unimportant names, that of Monsieur le Comte de Lozeraie. Beside it was the name of M. Daneau.

The banker appeared to consider for an instant, how he should act, with regard to the Count, and then said to the servant—

"Make my apology to M. de Lozeraie, and tell him that my morning is entirely pre-engaged with business, and that I fear I shall keep him waiting too long; but that if he can make it convenient to call again to-morrow, or the day after, I shall be at his service. As to M. Daneau, tell him to wait; I have particular business with him: shew in the others."

When he had given this order, the banker quitted the arm chair on which he was seated,

and prepared to receive, standing, the various persons who came to visit him, that he might oblige them to shorten their visit. This slight difference between the manner in which he now received his visitors, and the welcome he gave them a short time before, when he asked them to be seated with so much courtesy, shewed that M. Durand thought it a waste of time now to listen to the requests of those, of whom he not long ago bestowed whole hours of his time. He first dispatched a half dozen electors who came to beg favours of him, which he took care to refuse, allowing that he was bound to uphold the interests of the people at the tribune, but not in the bank; that is to say, in theory, but not in practice. In fact, M. Durand received and dismissed the electors with the dignified air of a man who felt horribly bored by their visit. He told them that he could not choose to commit himself with the government; and this phrase, repeated to all as an excuse for not complying with their requests, served to give them an exalted idea of the noble independence of their new deputy. In thirty minutes all the electors were despatched. An old contractor, however, of the imperial army, having presented him with a petition to the chambers, by which he reclaimed immense sums from the government, the titles to which he accused them of having fraudulently deprived him of, the banker read his petition from beginning to end, and said to him—

"Yes, sir, I will support this demand with all my influence. It is my pleasure and my duty to bring to light so shameful a robbery. Your claims have been disallowed, because they refer to an epoch of whose glory and whose engagements the present government make no account. But the day of justice will come, sir, and it will not be the fault of me or my friends, if you do not obtain entire satisfaction."

"Do you think so, sir?" said the ex-contractor. "Ah! sir, you restore me to life; for I will not conceal from you that, with the title that you yourself think to be so valuable, I am reduced to the lowest state of poverty and misery. Indeed so low, that if I could but borrow a small sum upon the strength of the claims, to serve me until they are admitted through the medium of your eloquent intervention, I should be saved from destruction."

"It is a thing you can easily manage," said M. Durand, advancing towards the door of his cabinet, as if to shew it to his *protege*, with a nonchalance which shewed him admirably qualified, in that respect, to become a minister.