

plead my excuse for having kept you so long waiting."

"Fortunately," replied the Count, "I have a great deal of time for a very little business, which may account for my spending so much of it waiting in your anteroom."

"Well, M. le Comte, unless you wish us both to lose more, pray explain to me the business that brings you here."

This appeal to the real object of his visit seemed to check the current of frivolity to which M. de Lozeraie was giving way; his embarrassment returned, and M. Durand could see more plainly than ever, that he held in his hands the most important interests of his enemy.

After a moment's silence, the Count resumed :

"You must remember, sir, the arrangement that was proposed to us both by the Marquis de Berizy, by which I consented to pay into your hands the price of a forest I had just purchased?"

"I remember perfectly," replied the banker, "that I *consented* to receive the price on account of M. de Berizy."

Monsieur de Lozeraie bit his lips with vexation, at this sarcastic repetition of the word "*consented*," which had, in fact, escaped him without any intention of impertinence; but habit had proved too strong for his resolution to be simple and polite, and he soon found that he had to do with a man, who was disposed to let nothing escape him that savoured of an assumption of superiority. He continued, however— "Of the two millions of francs that you so kindly undertook to receive from me, twelve hundred thousand have already been deposited."

"Yes, sir, and the remainder has to be forthcoming within this month."

"It is to obtain a few months delay for this last payment, that I now sue, sir."

"From me, sir?" replied the banker, with an air of surprise; "you must be aware that in this transaction, I am, as it were, merely the Marquis's cashier, and that he only can grant you such a delay."

"I anticipated such a reply on your part, and to overrule it, I think it right to detail to you the circumstances that have put it out of my power to fulfil my engagements."

The banker assumed a listening attitude, and the Count proceeded—

"When I made this purchase, it was in the hope of seeing fall into my hands the exclusive contract, for furnishing the different supplies necessary for the expedition to Algiers."

"I understand you, sir," replied the banker, disdainfully; "you reckoned upon the enormous profits resulting from so *honourable* a speculation, to complete the sums necessary for the payment of your purchase."

"No, sir, the price of my purchase was complete at the time; but I was inveigled into this speculation, as you call it, by a miserable sharper, who, under the pretext of buying over the persons who were to procure me this monopoly, has defrauded me of an enormous sum."

M. Durand could not entirely conceal his exultation at this revelation, but replied to M. de Lozeraie—

"These reasons you can explain to M. de Berizy, who will understand them thoroughly."

"Not so well as you, I am sure," said the Count. "The Marquis is an old country gentleman, who has lived quite apart from, and a stranger to business transactions, whilst you, M. Durand who know how these things are managed——"

"I know nothing at all about such transactions as you speak of," replied the banker, with disdain. "We men of no name confine ourselves to such as are — — legal."

I cannot say whether the hesitation that induced M. Durand to substitute the word *legal* for *honest*, which he was going to use, proceeded from some remains of politeness, which restrained him from offering such an insult to a gentleman in his own house, or whether the remembrance of what had so lately transpired between him and M. Daneau, in which he had stretched his *legality* somewhat beyond the bounds of *honesty*, had any thing to do with it. At any rate, the Count replied only to the word pronounced, and, resuming his trifling tone, said with unaccountable heedlessness—

"It is true, that this affair is not exactly legal one, and therefore it would be a singular confidence to make to the Marquis de Berizy a member of the upper house."

"Do you find it then more politic to make such a confidential communication to a deputy a member of the lower house?" asked M. Durand, with sarcastic gravity.

The Count at once perceived the *gaucherie* he had committed, and thinking to pass it off with a tone of affected good nature, he exclaimed—

"Come, come, M. Durand, let us not pretend to misunderstand each other. You know as well as I do, how these matters are managed. You are a man of the world."

"I am a man of the people, Monsieur