

it will not be attended with that forlorn air of resignation that so often marks your bearing on like occasions. Let me beg that you will to-morrow evening exert those powers of pleasing, that you naturally possess in so great a degree, bearing in mind that Miss Flora de Favieri is a charming girl, and a rich heiress. You understand me."

It would be difficult to decide whether Arthur's countenance, during this extraordinary speech, betokened more astonishment or pleasure; it was evident, however, that the concluding phrase had given rise to feelings that he hesitated to express, until observing that his father regarded him with a severe and scrutinizing look, he rejoined—

"Certainly, my dear father, I ought to understand you, and I gather from your words, that you would not reject an alliance with a man, who, like Monsieur le Marquis de Favieri, follows the profession of a banker."

"Bear in mind, sir," replied the Count, with hauteur, "that this man is the representative of one of the most noble families of Florence. Commerce and monetary transactions, which in France are considered derogatory to nobility, are in Italy looked upon in a very different light; and there is no sort of comparison to be made between Monsieur de Favieri,—a man who has not made himself a banker, but who has remained one, as his ancestors were before him,—and the upstart citizens that become bankers in our country."

At these words, all traces of pleasurable emotion fled from the countenance of Arthur; he became embarrassed, and timidly remarked:

"Yet surely there are some honourable men among these citizens."

"That is, I presume, a matter of perfect indifference to you, sir. What can you have to do with such people?"

"Nothing, sir, nothing," said Arthur, in evident agitation, which caused the Count to look sternly at him, as if doubting his assertion.—At length he replied, pompously—

"You call yourself the Viscount de Lozerac, and my son. Do not forget this again, if you have already done so."

"I never have, sir;—I assure you, I have done nothing——"

"I ask for no assurances or explanations, Arthur. A gentleman trusts to the honour of his son. Remember, you will accompany me to the Marquis's to-morrow."

"I shall be at your service, sir," and the son withdrew.

The father was again on the point of pro-

ceeding to his carriage, when a second interruption occurred in the arrival of M. Poissy between whom and the Count the following conversation ensued:

"You have come but just in time, for I had given you up, and intended calling on you in my way to St. Cloud."

"I have been out all the morning; business keeps me always stirring."

"Well, how are we getting on?"

"The expedition to Algiers will take place. That is a settled point."

"And what success have our people had with the minister of war?"

"I scarcely dare tell you."

"What! will the immense sacrifices I have made, be all thrown away?"

"Not, if you go on to make more. Otherwise, I fear, yes."

"More yet!" cried the Count, with impatience; "I thought that the four hundred thousand francs I have already advanced, would surely be sufficient."

"But there are so many people to satisfy."

"Well, then, if I should decide upon making a new sacrifice, is it certain that I shall obtain the sole disposal of the equipments?"

"That is beyond all doubt."

"And what further advance is required?"

"Remember," said M. Poissy, evading an immediate and direct reply; "it is a contract by which you will gain three or four millions of francs."

"So I understand; but what is the additional price I must pay to procure this contract?"

"Not less than one hundred thousand crowns are requisite."

"One hundred thousand crowns! This is exorbitant."

"What, to gain four millions?"

"Ah!" replied the Count, with a sigh, "what times are ours? Once, the king could have made a present to one of his nobles, of such a monopoly as this, and that would have served for a fortune to his *protege*. But now it is no longer the king who governs, but a chamber of deputies, composed of money-scrappers and mechanics; and a chamber of upstart peers composed of clerks taken from behind all the counters in France, where they have learnt to sell even their very honour."

"So much the better for those who have the means of buying it."

"It is deplorable when one has to give ten times as much as it is worth."

"But tell me, Monsieur le Comte," interrupted the stranger, "will this sum put you