

with Count Mont d'Oro, and we have both agreed that the little Count Napier shall be the husband of my little Vivienne.' Three days later I looked upon his lifeless body. The words of the dead cannot be changed."

It was now the young girl's turn to think before speaking. The position that her brother had taken seemed, for the moment at least, unanswerable; but woman's wisdom, like her wit, is equal to any emergency.

"Brother Pascal," she began, and her voice was tremulous, "when I was bereft of a father's and a mother's love, you took their place. It is to you I have always looked for advice—both Julien and I, for you are so much older and wiser than we are. You have taken our father's place; his words have become your words, but you are living and can change your words and free me from this bondage, for I would rather die than become the wife of Count Napier, or any other man I cannot love."

Pascal Batistelli set his teeth tightly together, a dark look came into his face. "Am I to understand, then, that you absolutely refuse to marry Count Mont d'Oro?"

"Not only him, but any one else," answered the girl. "I am content as I am."

She turned away from the table, walked to the window, and looked out upon the grounds which stretched far and wide from the castle walls. The bright sunlight fell on tree and bush and on the brightly tinted flowers. All was beauty and peace without. How could nature be so happy, and she so miserable? Suddenly she turned and approached her brother, who had not changed his position.

"When did you wish this marriage to take place?" she asked, making a vain attempt to smile.

"On your eighteenth birthday," he said, calmly.

"Oh, I have some time, then, to wait," and she gave