

The girl turned upon him, that bright flash again in her eyes. "Why are you so anxious that I should marry? Why is it that you yourself do not marry?"

The man's answer came quickly: "I have sworn, and so has your brother Julien, that we will not marry until our father's death has been avenged."

The girl placed both her hands on the edge of the table, leaned forward, and looked into her brother's face, as she said: "And neither will I."

She spoke with suppressed intensity.

"You knew our father," she continued; "you loved him when he was alive and you can love him now. You have something tangible to remember; I can only love his memory. I was but a child a few days old when he fell beneath the knife of the assassin. I do love his memory, and I know if he were living he would not condemn me to a loveless marriage."

Again that inscrutable look came upon the man's face. He shrugged his shoulders and the dark line of eyebrows lifted perceptibly.

"I do not know what he would do; I only know what he did."

"And what did he do?" broke in Vivienne.

The man started. The question was asked with such vehemence that for an instant his marked self-possession was overcome.

"What did he do?" he repeated, thus gaining time, for he wished to think of the most forcible way in which to present the matter to his sister. "I will tell you. I know that he talked the matter over with old Count Mont d'Oro. The Count is dead, or there would be a living witness to the compact. But a few days before our father's death, in fact the very day you were born, even while you were in your nurse's arms, he said to me, 'I am glad that it is a daughter. She shall be called Vivienne, and when she grows to womanhood she shall be a countess, for I have talked the matter over