

conceal that he was growing bald; but it was the expression of his black eyes that filled the gazers' hearts with doubt.

They were bold, bad, and crafty; he had an evil face, in fact, on which the impress of an ill-spent life had left its dusky shadows. He bowed profoundly as he entered the room, gave one quick glance at each of the three standing before him, and then dropped his eyes, and stood hat in hand, waiting for Madame to begin the conversation.

This she did with even more than her usual volubility.

"This is my friend," she said, waving her red sunshade in the dubious looking man's direction, "Mr., or if you like it better, Monsieur Dobree. This gentleman has known me more years than I like to mention; since my early girlhood, in fact, when poor Josephine—I mean, poor Natalie—and I—were—were children."

She tripped and faltered in her speech after she had said the word "Josephine," but tried to recover herself; but Nora, listening, clasped her hands together, and stood with parted lips and a sinking heart.

"And he is ready to prove," went on the woman rapidly, "that I am not the wife of this gentleman;" and she pointed her sunshade at Biddulph. "This gentleman married my sister—you are ready to swear this, Dobree?"

"Perfectly ready, madame," answered Dobree, with a bow and a quick warning glance at the woman's face, who looked excited and strange. I have had the honor," he continued, speaking in a slightly foreign accent, "of knowing this lady and her twin-sister *Natalie*" (he pronounced the name with marked emphasis) "since their interesting infancy;" and again he bowed.

"And who did this lady marry?" asked Biddulph, in a cold, inquiring tone.

Monsieur Dobree shrugged his shoulders, and raised his hands with a gesture of regret.

"It was a misfortune," he said, "this lady's marriage. Her first marriage was an unhappy one; her second," and he smiled, "I hope will be otherwise."

"What was his name?" asked Biddulph, sternly.

"It was Monsieur Whitaker—one of your countrymen;" and again Monsieur Dobree shrugged his shoulders.

"And you can prove this?" asked Jock Fraser, looking with his shrewd brown eyes at the Frenchman's face.