

underwent every possible sort of operation, and who, if he did sometimes speak to me of his love, must have known that he could not hope to ——”

Florence did not finish her sentence. Her eyes had encountered Don Luis's eyes; and she received a deep impression that he was not listening to what she said. He was looking at her; and that was all. The words she uttered passed unheard.

To Don Luis any explanation concerning the tragedy itself mattered nothing, so long as he was not enlightened on the one point that interested him, on Florence's private thoughts about himself, thoughts of aversion, of contempt. Outside that, anything that she could say was vain and tedious.

He went up to her and, in a low voice, said:

“Florence, you know what I feel for you, do you not?”

She blushed, taken aback, as though the question was the very last that she expected to hear. Nevertheless, she did not lower her eyes, and she answered firmly:

“Yes, I know.”

“But, perhaps,” he continued, more eagerly, “you do not know how deeply I feel it? Perhaps you do not know that my life has no other aim but you?”

“I know that also,” she said.

“Then, if you know it,” he said, “I must conclude that it was just that which caused your hostility to me. From the beginning I tried to be your friend and I tried only to defend you. And yet from the beginning I felt that for you I was the object of an aversion that was both instinctive and deliberate. Never did I see in your eyes anything but coldness, dislike, contempt, and even repulsion.