

to the manner born. His face was singularly handsome, strong, yet refined, with sharply-cut features, dark eyes and hair, a heavy black moustache, and a grave, almost melancholy expression—altogether a striking face, not one easily to be forgotten or overlooked. As he seated himself quietly at the breakfast-table, and replied to some query of his aunt's respecting the hour of his arrival, it occurred to Miss Vane that he was looking remarkably tired and unwell. The line of his cheek, always somewhat sharp, seemed to have fallen in, there were dark shadows beneath his eyes, and his olive complexion had assumed the slightly livid tints which sometimes mark ill-health. In spite of her preoccupation with other matters, Miss Vane could not repress a comment on his appearance.

"What have you been doing with yourself, Hubert? You look positively ghastly!"

"Do I!" said Hubert, glancing up with a ready smile. "I shouldn't wonder. I was up all last night with some fellows that I know—we made a night of it, aunt Leo—and I have naturally a headache this morning."

"You deserve it then. Surely you might have chosen a more fitting time for a carouse!"

It seemed to her, curiously enough, that he gave a little shiver and drew in his lips beneath his dark moustache. But he answered with his usual indifference of manner.

"It was hardly a carouse. I can't undertake to make a recluse of myself, my dear aunt, in spite of the family troubles."

"Hubert, don't be so heartless!" cried Miss Vane imperiously; then, checking herself, she pressed her thin lips slightly together and sat silent, with her eyes fixed on the cups before her.

"Am I heartless? Well, I suppose I am," said the young man, with a slight mocking smile in which his eyes seemed to take no part. "I am sorry, but really I can't help it. In the meantime perhaps you will give me a cup of coffee—for I am famishing after my early flight from town—and tell me why you telegraphed for me in such a hurry last night."

Miss Vane filled his cup with a hand that trembled still. Hubert Lepel watched her movements with interest. He did not often see his kinswoman display so much agitation. She was not his aunt by any tie of blood—she was a far-