

healthy complexion, and her thin well-braced figure, she looked ten years younger than her age. Not often was her composure disturbed, but on this occasion trouble and anxiety were both evinced by the knitting of her brows and the occasional twitching of her usually firm lips. She sat behind the coffee-urn, but she had finished her own breakfast long since, and was now occupying her ever-busy fingers with some knitting until her brother should appear. But her hands were unsteady, and at last, with an exclamation of disgust, she laid down her knitting-pins, and crossed the long white fingers closely over one another in her lap.

"Surely Hubert got my telegram!" she murmured to herself. "I wish he would come—oh, how I wish that he would come!"

She moved in her seat so as to be able to see the marble clock on the massive oak mantelpiece. The hands pointed to the hour of nine. Miss Vane rose and looked out of the window.

"He might have taken the early train from town. If he had, he would be here by this time. But no doubt he did not think it worth while. 'An old woman's fancy!' he said to himself perhaps. Hubert was never very tolerant of other people's fancies, though he has plenty of his own, Heaven knows! Ah, there he comes, thank Heaven! For once he has done what I wished—dear boy!"

Miss Vane's hard countenance softened as she said the words. She sank down into her chair again, crossed her hands once more upon her knees, and assumed the attitude of impenetrable rigidity intended to impress the observer with a sense of her indifference to all mankind. But the newcomer, who entered from the terrace at that moment, was too well used to Miss Vane's ways and manners to be much impressed.

"Good morning, aunt Leo. I have obeyed your orders, you see," he said, as he bent down and touched her forehead lightly with his lips.

He was a young man, not more than one or two and twenty, but he had already lost much of the freshness and youthfulness of his years. He was of middle height, rather slenderly built, well dressed, well brushed, with the air of high-bred distinction which is never attained save by those