

how much he cares for Marion. He has been a different man ever since that terrible day. I am afraid for his health—for his reason even, if——”

“For Heaven’s sake, stop,” said the young man hoarsely. “I can’t bear this enumeration of misfortunes; it—it makes me—ill! Don’t say any more.”

He pushed back his chair, rose, and went to the side-board, where he poured out a glass of water from the carafe and drank it off. Then he leaned both elbows on the damask-covered mahogany surface, and rested his forehead on his hands. Miss Vane stared at his bowed head, at his bent figure, with unfeigned amazement. She thought that she knew Hubert well, and she had never numbered over-sensitiveness amongst his virtues or vices. She concluded that the last night’s dissipation had been too much for his nerves.

“Hubert,” she said at length, “you must be ill.”

“I believe I am,” the young man answered. He raised his face from his hands, drew out his handkerchief, and wiped his forehead with it before turning round. It were well that his aunt should not see the cold drops of perspiration standing upon his brow. He tried to laugh as he came forward to the table once more. “You must excuse me,” he said. “I have not been well for the last few days, and your list of disasters quite upset me.”

“My poor boy,” said aunt Leo, looking at him tenderly. “I am afraid that I have been very thoughtless! I should have remembered that these last few weeks have been as trying to you as to all of us. You always loved Marion and Sydney.”

It would have been impossible for her to interpret aright the involuntary spasm of feeling that flashed across Hubert’s face, the uncontrollable shudder that ran through all his frame. Impossible indeed! How could she fancy that he said to himself as he heard her words—

“Loved Sydney Vane! Merciful powers, I never sank to that level, at any rate! When I think of what I now know of him, I am glad to remember that he was my enemy!”