

"I can't! Tell him that I'm ill."

"I won't lie to him in such an hour."

Shivering in silence she led Stuart to the door of Bivens's room and fled to her own.

On another magnificent bed of gleaming ebony inlaid with rows of opals, thousands of opals, Stuart found the little shrivelled form. The swarthy face was white and drawn, the hard thin lips fallen back from two rows of smooth teeth in pitiful, fevered weakness. He was trying to talk to the pastor of his church, while the fashionable clergymen bent over him with an expression of helpless misery, now and then wiping the perspiration from his sleek, well-fed neck.

"I want you to go into that next room and pray," the little man gasped. "I haven't done anything very good or great yet, but I have plans, great plans! Tell them to God, ask Him to give me a chance. Ten years more -- or five -- or one -- and I'll do these things."

The shifting eyes caught sight of Stuart. He released the minister's hand and raised his own to his friend.

"Jim!"

The preacher moved aside with a sigh of relief and softly tiptoed out of the room as Stuart took the outstretched hand.

"It's awfully good of you to come up here so soon," he began feebly. "I've some plans I want you to carry out for me right away. You see I never thought before of the world as a place where there were so many men and women sick and suffering -- thousands and tens and hundreds of thousands. These doctors say that every night in New York alone there are half a million people sick or bending over the beds of loved ones who are suffering, and two hundred die every day."

He paused for breath, and the black eyes stared at his friend.