

"You don't know what the last few months have meant to me, coming up here again, every day or twice a day, taking care of you, giving you back those letters, knowing you knew. . . ."

"You had not the temptation to rid yourself of me again?"

"You have grown so cold. Gabriel Stanton is nothing to you now. I suppose you would not look at the idea of marrying me?"

"You suppose quite correctly," I answered, thinking of Ella, and what a score this would be to her.

"It would make everything so right. I have been thinking of this ever since you began to get better, before, too. You will always be delicate, need a certain amount of care. No one could give it you as well as I. Why not? I have almost the best practice in Pinelands, and I deserve it, too. I've worked hard in these years. I gave an honest, scientific trial to every new treatment. I've saved scores of lives. . . ."

"Your own in jeopardy all the time," I said cruelly.

"Nobody could ever possibly have known. There was not even an inquest. Lansdowne stuck to his 'thoracic neo-plasm.'" He spoke wildly. "I'd do it again to-morrow. I don't care who knows. You may write it if you want to. If you married me you couldn't give evidence against me. . . ."

His smile startled me; it was strange, cunning. It seemed to say, "See how clever I am; I have thought of everything."

"There, I have had that in my mind ever since you began to be better!"