

CHAPTER IX

THE EYES OF PITY

As he had feared, Nan refused point blank to enter the death chamber and asked him to come to her boudoir.

He found her standing by a window, apparently calm. Stuart looked at her a moment with a curious detached interest. Suddenly aware of his presence she turned, her eyes shining with tears, the first he had seen since entering the house.

"At last — at last!" she said in low broken accents. "Oh dear God, how long I've waited and despaired! At last we may belong to each other forever — body and soul! Nothing else matters now, does it? We shall forget all the blank hideous years; you'll forget it, won't you, dearest? You'll forgive me — now — say that you will?"

"I've long ago forgiven, Nan, but tell me about this sudden fatal attack. You were with him when he was stricken?"

"Yes, I took the nurse's place at midnight; I couldn't sleep."

Stuart lowered his eyes to conceal his excitement.

"How long did you stay with him?"

"Until I called you."

"And you gave him the medicine in the absence of the nurse?"

"Only one," she answered, hesitatingly, "a particular kind the doctor had not prescribed, but which he persisted in taking to relieve his pain."