

of my soul when I look at you, and hear you ask for my forgiveness—knowing what I know. Do you think my heart is of stone?" I checked the torrent of words which I knew could only injure my patient, and, pressing his hand again warmly, said, "You know we must be calm. A doctor has to close the doors of his heart when duty calls."

"You have made me strangely happy," he murmured, with a wistful smile. "But I see death in your face, Doctor. Do I not?"

"No, no," I replied with eagerness. "You must not think that."

"I do think it," he said; "but do not imagine I fear death. It can only be a grateful release for me. Not only do I live a living death, but the lives of others are in danger while I breathe. It were better I died now."

Mr. Ashcroft was now on his knees at the couch, and was holding between his palms the hand I had relinquished.

"Dear old Ashcroft!" murmured Mr Brabazon, "there is a world where we shall meet without fear."

Delay was dangerous; every moment was precious now.

"Come!" I said, "I must be dictator for a while. You must bear a little pain, and all will be well."

"Pain!" he cried, with a shudder. "I can bear it, but you know what it means—for others. That is my only fear. I have mastered myself of late; but I fear great pain still, not for my own sake, but for the sake of those I love. I know what you mean, Doctor. My arm!"