

might come out of dependence; but I could never have really known you; my God! how I have loved you, Virginia — I think I still love you! I told you once I should die loving you — and perhaps I am dying now."

She gave him a startled glance, but his pale face had undergone no change. He was still smiling up at her — wistfully, tenderly.

"You were the most beautiful woman in the world to me," he said softly. "I loved you before he went away — and I grew old and hard in waiting — for you never cared for me! I became embittered and angry with you because you could not love me in return. How could I deal honestly with you, how could I place riches in your hands? I wanted to keep you here, for I still had hope. But I found I could not wrong you, and remain the man I was. I changed so I did not know myself. Since I suffered, I was willing you should suffer; it was only right! The money was nothing to me at first but a shame and a reproach; but later I changed in that even; money came to mean more and more to me. From believing in much, I came to believe in little —" he paused again, and then went on. "But as far as now lies within my power I have made it right. The bulk of what I leave, is yours, Virginia, in tardy recompense of the wrong I did you, a wrong I freely acknowledge. Only in thinking of it, Virginia, think of the motive that prompted it. As for Stephen, I have left him nothing; since I know what is yours will be his. It is better that you should do for him, and I wish him to have every incentive for love and devotion — though once I wished to take that from you, too, Virginia."

"You must not talk of death," said Virginia.

"It will be no further off for not speaking of it," he muttered.

"I am sorry for the charge I made."

"I am not. If you had not made it you would not be here now. When I built this house, I could still believe that some day you would be its mistress. That was almost thirty years ago, and you have never entered it until to-night, to spend the last hours of my life with me! I wish you would say that you forgive me!"

"I do — but —"

"But what?" catching at the word.

"How much better it would have been if you had not done the thing you did."

"I don't know, I have waited all my life for a little tenderness from you, and you have never shown it until to-night. No, what