

in this struggle ; to win her back, whether against her will or not, to her old self ; to eliminate the shocking impression made upon her soul by the discovery of that day, to wipe it out utterly, to replace it with another ; to revive within her that beautiful enthusiasm which had been as a light always shining for her and from her upon people, and events, and life ; to make her understand, to prove to her that, after all allowance has been made for uncertainties and contradictions of fate, for the ironies, the paradoxes, the cruelties, the tragedies and the despairs of existence, the great broad fact emerges, that what the human being gives, in the long run the human being generally gets, and that she who persistently gives gold will surely at last receive it.

The thought of a lost Hermione struck to his heart a greater fear than had already that night the thought of a dead Hermione. And if she was changed she was lost.

The real, the beautiful Hermione—he must seize her, grip her, hold her fast before it was too late.

"Hermione," he said, "I think you saved me from death. I am sure you did. Did you save me only to hate me ?"

She made no reply.

"Do you remember that evening when you came into my room in Kairouan all covered with dust from your journey across the plains ? I do. I remember it as if it had happened an hour ago instead of nearly seventeen years. I remember the strange feeling I had when I turned my head and saw you, a feeling that you and Africa would fight for me and that you would conquer. It had seemed to me that Africa meant to have me and would have me. Unless you came I felt certain of that. And I had thought about it all as I lay there in the stifling heat, till I almost felt the feverish earth enclosing me. I had loved Africa, but Africa seemed to me terrible then. I thought of only Arabs, always Arabs, walking above me on the surface of the ground when I was buried. And the thought made me shudder with horror. As if it could have mattered ! I was absurd ! But one is often absurd when one is very ill. The child in one comes out then, I suppose. And I had wondered—how I had wondered—whether there was any chance of your coming ! I hadn't actually asked you to come. I hadn't dared to do that. But it was the same thing almost. I had let you know—I had let you know. And I saw you come into my room all covered with dust. You had come so quickly—at once. Perhaps—perhaps sometimes you have thought I had forgotten that evening. I may be an egoist. I expect most men are egoists. And perhaps I am the egoist you say I am. Often one doesn't know what one is. But I have never forgotten that day, and that you were covered