

must have thought so. And that first day—when we were coming up the mountain side——”

She stopped. She was seized, she was held fast in the grip of a memory so intense, so poignant, that she made, she could make, no effort to release herself. She heard the drowsy wail of the Ceramella dropping down the mountain side in the radiant heat of noon. She felt Maurice's warm hand. She remembered her words about the woman's need to love—"I wanted, I needed to love—Do men ever feel that? Women do often, nearly always I think." The Pastorale—it sounded in her ears. Or was it the sea that sounded, the sea in the abandoned chambers of the Palace of the Spirits? She listened. No, it was the Pastorale, that antique, simple, holy tune, that for her must always be connected with the thought of love, man's love for woman, and the Bambino's love for all the creatures of God. It flooded her heart, and beneath it sank down, like a drowning thing, for a moment the frightful bitterness that was alive in her heart to-night.

"Delarey loved you," Artois repeated. "He loved you on the first day in Sicily, and he loved you on the last."

"And—and the days between?"

Her voice spoke falteringly. In her voice there was a sound of pleading that struck into the very depths of his heart. The real Hermione was in that sound, the loving woman who needed love, who deserved a love as deep as that which she had given, as that which she surely still had to give.

"He loved you always, but he loved you in his way."

"In his way!" she repeated, with a sort of infinite, hopeless sadness.

"Yes, Hermione, in his way. Oh, we all have our ways, all our different ways of loving. But I don't believe a human being ever existed who had no way at all. Delarey's way was different from your way, so different that, now you know the truth of him, perhaps you can't believe he ever loved you. But he did! He was young, and he was hot-blooded—he was really of the South. And the sun got hold of him. And he betrayed you. But he repented. That last day he was stricken, not by physical fear, but by a tremendous shame at what he had done to you, and perhaps also by fear lest you should ever know it. I sat with him by the wall, and I felt, without at all fully understanding it, the drama in his soul. But now I understand it. I'm sure I understand it. And I think the depth of a shame is very often the exact measure of the depth of a love. Perhaps, indeed, there is no more exact measure."

Again he thought of the episode with Vere, and of his de-