

friend, about yourself and Vere. Perhaps you scarcely know how deeply the mother and child problem interests me—that is when mother and child are two real forces, as you and Vere are."

"Then you think Vere has force?"

"Do not you?"

"What kind of force?"

"You mean physical, intellectual, or moral? Suppose I say she has the force of charm?"

"Indeed she has that, as he had. That is one of the attributes she derives from Maurice."

"Yes. He had a wonderful charm. And then, Vere has passion."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. Where does she get that from?"

"He was full of the passion of the South."

"I think Vere has a touch of Northern passion in her, too, combined perhaps with the other. And that, I think, she derives from you. Then I discern in Vere intellectual force, immature, embryonic if you like, but unmistakable."

"That does not come from me," Hermione said suddenly, almost with bitterness.

"Why—why will you be unnecessarily humiliated?" Artois exclaimed.

His voice was confusedly echoed by the cavern, which broke into faint, but deep mutterings. Hermione looked up quickly to the mysterious vault which brooded above them, and listened till the chaotic noises died away. Then she said:

"Do you know what they remind me of!"

"Of what?"

"My efforts. Those efforts I made long ago to live again in work."

"When you wrote?"

"Yes, when I tried to throw my mind and my heart down upon paper. How strange it was! I had Vere—but she wasn't enough to still the ache. And I knew what work can be, what a consolation, because I knew you. And I stretched out my hands to it—I stretched out my soul. And it was no use; I wasn't made to be a successful writer. When I spoke from my heart to try and move men and save myself, my words were seized, as yours were just now by the rock—seized, and broken, and flung back in confusion. They struck my heart like stones. Emile, I'm one of those people who can only do one thing; I can only feel."

"It is true that you could never be an artist. Perhaps you were made to be an inspiration."