

obstacles on a road. I was always tumbling over things—always—and you must always have been laughing. I have been a fool. Instead of growing up, my heart has remained a child—till now. That's what it is. Children who have been kindly treated think the world is all kindness. Because my friends were good to me, the world was good to me, I got into the habit of believing that I was lovable, and of loving in return. And I trusted people. I always thought they were giving me what I was giving them. That has been my great folly, the folly I'm punished for. I have been a credulous fool. I have thought that because I gave a thing with all my heart it was—it must be—given back to me. And yet I was surprised—I could scarcely believe it—when—when——”

He knew she was thinking of her beautiful wonder when Maurice had said he loved her.

“I could scarcely believe it! But, because I was a fool, I got to believe it, and I have believed it till to-day—you have stood by, and watched me believing it, and laughed at me for believing it till to-day.”

“Hermione!”

“Yes, you mayn't have meant to laugh, but you must have laughed. Your mind, your intellect must have laughed. Don't say they haven't. I wouldn't believe you. And I know your mind—at any rate, I know that. Not your heart! I shall never pretend—I shall never think again for a moment that I know anything—anything at all—about a man's heart. But I do know something about your mind. And I know the irony in it. What a subject I have presented to you all these years for the exercise of your ironic faculty! You ought to thank me! You ought to go on your knees and thank me and bless me for that!”

“Hermione!”

“Just now you talked of my coming in to your room in Kairouan, all covered with dust. You asked me if I remembered it. Yes, I do. And I remember something you don't—probably you don't—remember. There was no looking-glass in your room.”

She stopped.

“No looking-glass!” he repeated, wondering.

“No, there was no looking-glass. And I remember when I came in I saw there wasn't, and I was glad. Because I couldn't look at myself and see how dreadful, and dishevelled, and hideous I was—how dirty even I was. My impulse was to go to a glass. And then I was glad I couldn't. And I looked at your face. And I thought 'he doesn't care. He loves me, all dusty, and hideous, and horrid, as I am.' And then I didn't care either. I said to myself, 'I look an object,