

thing to draw us together, something to hold us together, something strong. Don't deny it even now. Don't deny it. Can't I be of some help, even now? Don't say I am utterly useless because I have been so useless to you, so damnably useless in the past. I see all that, my wretched uselessness to you through all these years. I am seeing it now while I am speaking. All the time I'm seeing it. What you have deserved and what you have had!"

He stopped, then he said again:

"What you have deserved and what you have had from me! And from—— it was so—it was the same long ago, not here. But till to-day you didn't know that. I was wrong. I must have been wrong, hideously wrong, but I didn't want you ever to know that. It isn't that I don't love truth. You know I do. But I thought that lie was right. And it is only lately, this summer, that I have had any doubts. But I was wrong. I must have been wrong. It was intended that you should know. God, perhaps, intended it."

He thought he heard a movement. But he was not quite sure. For there was always the noise of the sea in the deserted chambers of the palace.

"It seems to me now as if I had always been deceived, mistaken, blind with you, about you. I thought you need never know. I was mad enough to think that. But I was madder still, for I thought—I must have thought—that you could not bear to know, that you weren't strong enough to endure the knowledge. But,"—he was digging deep now, searching for absolute truth: in this moment his natural passion for truth, in one direction repressed for many years deliberately and consciously, in other directions, perhaps, almost unconsciously frustrated, took entire possession of his being,—“But nothing should ever be allowed to stand in the way of truth. I believe that. I know it. I must, I will always act upon the knowledge from this moment. Never mind if it is bitter, cruel. Perhaps it is sometimes put into the world because of that. I've been a horrible *jainéant*, the last of *jainéants*. I protected you from the truth. With Gaspere I managed to do it. We never spoke of it—never. But I think each of us understood. And we acted together for you in that. And I—it has often seemed to me that it was a fine thing to do, and that my motives in doing it were fine. But sometimes I have wondered whether they weren't selfish—whether, instead of protecting you, I wasn't only protecting myself. For it was all my fault. It all came about through me, through my weakness, my cursed weakness, my cursed weakness and whining for help.”—He grew scarlet in the dark, realising how his pride in his strength, his quiet assumption with Hermione that