

am ten years older than you, and I have been given a nature that was, I think, always older than yours could ever be."

"I wonder if that is so."

She looked at him very directly, even searchingly, not with eager curiosity, but with deep inquiry.

"You know, Emile," she added, "I tell you very much, but you tell me very little. Not that I wish to ask anything—no. I respect all your reserve. And about your work: you tell me all that. It is a great thing in my life, your work. Perhaps you don't realise how sometimes I live in the book that you are doing, almost as if I were writing it myself. But your inner life——"

"But I have been frankness itself with you," said Artois. "To no one have I ever said so much as to you."

"Yes, I know, about many things. But about emotion, love,—not friendship, the other love—do you get on without that? When you say your nature has always been older than mine, do you mean that it has always been harder to move by love, that it has had less need of love?"

"I think so. For many years in my life I think that work has filled the place love occupies in many, perhaps in most men's lives. Everything comes second to work. I know that, because if any one attempts to interfere with my work, or to usurp any of the time that should be given to it, any regard I may have for that person turns at once to irritation, almost to hatred."

"I have never done that."

"You—no. Of course I have been like other men. When I was young—well, Hermione, after all I am a Frenchman, and though I am of Normandy, still I passed many years in Paris, as you know."

"All that I understand. But the real thing? Such as I have known?"

"I have never broken my heart for any one, though I have known agitations. But even those were long ago. And since I was thirty-five I have never felt really dominated by any one. Before that time I occasionally passed under the yoke, I believe, like other men. Why do you fix your eyes on me like that?"

"I was wondering if you could ever pass under the yoke again."

"Honestly, I do not think so. I am not sure. When can one be certain that one will never be, or do, this or that? Surely,"—he smiled,— "you are not afraid for me?"

"I do not say that. But I think you have forces in you not fully exercised even by your work."

"Possibly. But there the years do really step in and count