

that it must be all right, however hard to bear. But, oh, what a terrible thing it would have been, and what a frightful valley of the shadow of death I should have had to go through first!

I know my mother *said* nothing more just then, but let my father have it all his own way for a while.

*Father.*—You see this Percivale is an honest man. I don't exactly know how he has been brought up, and it is quite possible he may have had such evil instruction in Christianity that he attributes to it doctrines which, if I supposed they actually belonged to it, would make me reject it at once as ungodlike and bad. I have found this the case sometimes. I remember once being astonished to hear a certain noble-minded lady utter some indignant words against what I considered a very weighty doctrine of Christianity; but listening I soon found that what she supposed the doctrine to contain was something I considered vastly unchristian. This may be the case with Percivale, though I never heard him say a word of the kind. I think his difficulty comes mainly from seeing so much suffering in the world that he cannot imagine the presence and rule of a good God; and therefore lies with religion rather than with Christianity as yet. I am all but certain the only thing that will ever make him able to believe in a God at all is meditation on the Christian idea of God—I mean the idea of God *in* Christ reconciling the world to Himself. He will then see that suffering is not either wrath or neglect, but sore-hearted love and tenderness. But we must give him time, wife; as God has borne with us, we must believe that He bears with others, and so learn to wait in hopeful patience until they too see as we see.

And as to trusting our Wynn timer with Percivale—he seems to be as good as she is. I should for my part have more apprehension in giving her to one who would be called a thoroughly religious man; for not only would the unfitness be greater, but such a man would be more likely to confirm her in doubt, if the phrase be permissible. She wants what some would call homœopathic treatment. And how should they be able to love one another if they are not fit to be married to each other? The fitness seems inherent in the fact.

*Mother.*—But many a two love each other who would have loved each other a good deal more if they hadn't been married.

*Father.*—Then it was most desirable they should find out that what they thought a grand affection was not worthy of the name. But I don't think there is much fear of that between those two.

*Mother.*—I don't, however, see how that man is to do her any good, when *you* have tried to make her happy for so long, and all in vain.

*Father.*—I don't know that it has been all in vain. But it is quite possible she does not understand me. She fancies, I dare say, that I believe everything without any trouble, and therefore cannot enter into her difficulties.

*Mother.*—But you have told her many and many a time that you do.

*Father.*—Yes—and I hope I was right; but the same things look so different to different people that the same words won't describe them to both; and it may seem to her that I am talking of something not at all like what she is feeling or thinking of. But when she sees the troubled face of Percivale, she knows that he is suffering; and sympathy being thus established between them, the least word of the one will do more to help the other than oceans of argument. Love is the one great instructor. And each will try to be good and to find out for the sake of the other.

*Mother.*—I don't like her going from home for the help that lay at her very door.

*Father.*—You know, my dear, you like the dean's preaching much better than mine.

*Mother.*—Now that *is* unkind of you!

*Father.*—And why (my father went on, taking no heed of my mother's expostulation)? Because in the first place it *is* better; because in the second it comes in a newer form to you, for you have got used to all my modes; in the third place it has more force from the fact that it is not subject to the doubt of personal preference; and lastly, because he has a large comprehensive way of asserting things, which pleases you better than my more dubitant mode of submitting them—all very sound and good reasons; but still, why be so vexed with Wynn timer?

My mother was now, however, so vexed with my father for saying she preferred the dean's preaching to his, although I doubt very much whether it wasn't true, that she actually walked out of the octagon room where they were, and left him to meditate on his unkindness. Vexed with herself the next moment, she returned as if nothing had happened. I am only telling what my mother told me, for to her grown daughters she is blessedly trusting.

*Mother.*—Then if you will have them married, husband, will you say how on earth you expect them to live? He just makes both ends meet now: I suppose he doesn't make things out worse than they are, and that is his own account of the state of his affairs.

*Father.*—Ah, yes! that *is*—a secondary consideration, my dear. But I have hardly begun to think about it yet. There will be a difficulty there, I can easily imagine; for he is far too independent to let us do anything for him.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)