I think, sincerely regrets the disappointment of her hopes, but admires the justness of character in him which leaves her religiously free.'

'He has no religion, then?' said the priest.

'Practically none,' she replied. 'His mother, I understand, is a recent convert among the Unitarians. My impression is that he was brought up without religious influences of any sort.'

Mrs. Long paused reflectively.

'I believe,' she said, after a moment, 'he is willing to do what is required of him to secure a dispensation.'

Father Terry sat looking out the window, apparently lost in profound thought. For a moment neither spoke.

'Oh!' cried Mrs. Long passionately, 'the helplessness of mothers! Blinded by youth and inexperience, she is doing this thing—and I can't save her from it—God send her children yet—if He does—this difference—the mother fighting—all alone—with an unsympathetic father—will make it so hard for her—so bitter—why can't I forbid her?' she exclaimed suddenly. 'After all, she is my child.'

The priest put up his hand swiftly.

'No, Mrs. Long, don't do that; you will be asking her to choose between you. And it is too late. To a young girl of strong emotions a command will simply force an unfortunate, an unhappy, a useless issue. Then, in a certain sense, it is unfair. Her heart is engaged, and Evelyn is a girl of deep feeling. She knows him to be otherwise a good man—worthy of her. She will not give him up. You would be fighting her youth and her heart—both strong forces. In an issue like that the mother loses and there is a break, perhaps at least for a time. Incalculable harm is then done, as the home influence is weakened. Invariably there is a certain resentfulness toward you on the part of the husband. No, Mrs. Long,' continued the priest kindly, 'let us not make a mistake. Persuade her all you can—let her see your heart and your feelings—your regret—your worry, but don't command her in this. Let us both pray rather—pray fervently—that God will permit her to see it as we do.'

*

Meanwhile preparations for the wedding crept on apace in Mrs. Long's little household, punctuated not infrequently with certain long, pulsating conversations between mother and daughter as they sat, walked, or worked together—conversations which got nowhere and accomplished little; patient admissions, sad asides, a certain weary wistfulness on the part of the mother; eager, confident argument, vivid hopefulness, an affectionate distress at her mother's want of reasonableness from the daughter. 'Convince me if you can, but I am not yet convinced,' was the unspoken attitude of the one; 'I have all the arguments, but you will not be persuaded,' the underlying thought of the other.

'It is true, mother dear, that David Campbell married a non-Catholic girl, as you say, and the marriage has been unhappy. That is so different. Surely you see that it is one thing for a Catholic man to marry a non-Catholic girl, but for a Catholic girl to marry a non-Catholic man is quite another. You must see that there is a serious saving difference. A family is always what the mother is, and David Campbell's children are what the mother is—a Protestant. Were I your son, I would tremble before such a risk as David Campbell took in his marriage; but I am your daughter—an affectionate one, I hope,' she interrupted, laying her fresh young cheek against the mother's saddened one. 'What risk do I take?'

'Dear Evelyn, it is not altogether the risk; I admit there is some truth in what you say. As long as the mother's faith holds, the risk is slight. But a husband who is what he should be—all in all to his wife—an influence above everything—surely there is a strain on the wife's beliefs and religious principles in that daily, close, constant contact with a human force that holds all these things as nothing.'

'You don't mean,' cried the daughter, indignantly, 'that you actually fear for my faith?'

Mrs. Long sat silent before her daughter's flashing eyes, secretly exultant, too, at the outburst.

'I don't speak at all,' she said, 'of the loneness, the poignant sense of separateness that must be in the hearts of the wives we see trudging off to Mass with their children but without their children's father. There are so many such every Sunday at St. Clements'; my heart always bleeds for them.'

'I have no doubt Richard will go with me to Mass,' said Evelyn. 'Robert goes with Ursula. There's Ursula. Surely her marriage has been happy; a good husband, even if he is not of her faith; three charming children, brought up, of course, by Ursula in her religion. Surely, Ursula is a happy wife?'

An affectionate light flashed into Mrs. Long's eyes at the name of her daughter's friend. At her name all their arguments rested. All avenues of protest and discussion led to her and there stopped. After all, there was Ursula. Surely, as Evelyn said, here was indeed a happy marriage. A charming, lovable girl of deep religious feeling, Ursula Paine had married Robert Elliott, a young man of excellent character who, though brought up in a family circle of staunch Presbyterianism, was himself professedly without religion.

Ursula's family gave at last a reluctant consent to the marriage an attitude which softened later into open blessing and approval, as the progress of years appeared but to intensify the daughter's happiness. Robert proved an affectionate husband, attending Mass regularly with his little family and offering no obstacle to his wife's plans for their training and welfare. The thought of this happiness was a singular source of consolation to Mrs. Long's wrestling mind.

After all, thought the mother for the hundredth time over her sewing—after all, there is Ursula; and others, of course, with a married content like unto Ursula's.

'Hundreds of them,' exclaimed Evelyn; 'hundreds, I am sure, if we only knew of them. Ursula can't be the only one, of course.'

But at night, Mrs. Long remained long on her knees before her little crucifix.

* * * * *

Two weeks later a breathless message from one of Elliott's servants came distortedly over the telephone and burst like a shell into the Longs' little sitting-room.

'Please—ma-am—come quick—Mrs. Elliott, ma'am—the automobile—'

Mrs. Long seized her hat and ran, waiting for no more, while Evelyn telephoned hurriedly for Father Terry.

At the young mother's bedside the priest had barely time to extend the great rites of his calling; the girl to hear a last dying exclamation—an exclamation poignant with the insight of a soul faced with eternity—when death came.

'Evelyn!' she had cried; 'Evelyn! my children!'

Something in that heart-rending scene struck the deeps in Evelyn's heart. All her thoughts, all her energies were now diverted from the trivialities of trousseau making to Ursula's little family. She postponed her marriage one month in an effort to see more of the motherless ones.

'Their little faces would follow me on my wedding journey,' she said to her mother. 'I shall wait until Robert's mother comes on from California to make her home with them.'

Mrs. Elliott finally arrived and Evelyn picked up the loose ends of her halted wedding plans, running occasionally into the Elliott's to see Mrs. Elliott and the loved little ones.

One evening, as Mrs. Long sat sewing, Evelyn came in from her usual call at the Elliotts. Without removing hat or coat she threw herself into a chair near her mother, in an attitude of the most abandoned grief

'Mother!' she cried, in a tense voice, then paused. 'How can I tell you?' she burst out. 'Mrs. Elliott has taken Robert and James from St. Clement's and Ursula from St. Agatha's. They all started to the public school to-day. And yesterday,' she continued, ignoring her mother's interruption, 'yesterday she took them to the Presbyterian church.'