

not quite realised the wonderful persistence of love in the hearts of certain women, and not only the persistence of love's existence, but of its existence undiminished, unabated by time.

"How am I to bear it?" she said, as he did not speak.

"I cannot tell. I am not worthy to know. And besides, I must say to you, Hermione, that one of the greatest mysteries in human life, at any rate to me, is this: how some human beings do bear the burdens laid upon them. Christ bore His cross. But there has only been since the beginning of things one Christ, and it is unthinkable that there can ever be another. But all these who are not Christ, how is it they bear what they do bear? It is easy to talk of bravery, the necessity for it in life. It is always very easy to talk. The thing that is impossible is to understand. How can you come to me to help you, my friend? And suppose I were to try. How could I try, except by saying that I think Vere is very worthy to be loved with all your love?"

"You love Vere, don't you, Emile?"

"Yes."

"And I do. You don't doubt that?"

"Never."

"After all I have said, the way I have spoken, you might."

"I do not doubt it for a moment."

"I wonder if there is any mother who would not, if I spoke to her as I have spoken to you to-day?"

"I think there is a great deal of untruth spoken of mother's love, a great deal of misconception about it, as there is about most very strange, and very wonderful and beautiful things. But are you so sure that if your husband had stamped himself upon a boy this force within you could have been satisfied?"

"I have believed so."

She was silent. Then she added quietly, "I do believe so."

He did not speak, but sat looking down at the sea, which was full of dim colour in the cave.

"I think you are doubting that it would have been so?" she said at last.

"Yes, that is true. I am doubting."

"I wonder why?"

"I cannot help feeling that there is passion in you, such passion as could not be satisfied in any strict maternal relationship."

"But I am old, dear Emile," she said, very simply.

"When I was standing by that window, looking at the mountains of Ischia, I was saying to myself, 'This is an old, tired world, suitable for me—and for you. We are in our right environment to-day.' I was saying that, Hermione, but was I believing it really? I don't think I was. And I