

sometimes force us suddenly across great trials we hardly know how. There was no succession in them, because they all stuck in her, like Sebastian's arrows, and their poisoned barbs were all rankling there at once. It is terrific, this reality of Mary's sorrows. It is a feature of them which must not be forgotten when we cease to speak of it, else we shall understand but very imperfectly what has yet to follow. Truly this is an immense reality, such as could not be found anywhere out of Jesus and Mary, another participation in the depths of the Passion.

But these sorrows of hers had some sort of share in the redemption of the world; and this gives them a peculiar immensity of their own. This, however, is a matter to be examined hereafter, and at length. It is sufficient then to say now that by the ordinance of God, Mary was mixed up with the Passion, that her dolours were added to our Lord's sufferings, not without a purpose, but, as is the case with all divine things, with a most real and mysterious purpose, and that as the Mother and the Son can in no wise be separated at any other point in the Thirty-Three Years, least of all can they be separated on Calvary, where God has joined them so markedly, and almost unexpectedly.

Of the diversified romance and artistic beauty of Mary's dolours we need not speak. Such things belong of right to all divine works. Her compassion was part of the great epic of creation, a pathos and a plaintiveness not to be disjoined from the sublimities and terrors and sacred panics of the Passion of the Incarnate Word. But it is not touching poetry of

which we are in search. Rather it is plain piety, and a downright increase of love of Mary, and of devotion to her Son. If there be one department of practical religion from which we could desire that a sentence of perpetual banishment were passed upon mere sentiment and feeling, it would be the department of Mary. Mary is a great reality of God, and sentiment is prone to rob us of our reality by turning substance into fancy, solidity into prettiness, and so overclothing the outside that we almost come to doubt whether there be an inside at all. Let then the exceeding beauty of Mary's martyrdom find us out, if it will, and catch us up into the air, and surprise us into sweet tears, and calm the trouble of our sympathies; but do not let us seek it, or go out of our doctrinal, devotional way for it. Yet if artistic things can in any way increase our genuine love of God, let even them be welcome.

SECTION II.

WHY GOD PERMITTED OUR LADY'S DOLORS.

But may we now ask why God permitted these dolours of Mary? Is it reverent to institute such an inquiry? All things are reverent which are done in love. We do not inquire because we are in doubt, or as if we were calling God to account, or as though we had a right to know; but we inquire in order that we may gain fresh knowledge to mint into fresh love. Perhaps there is no one work of God of which we are capable of knowing all the reasons, or of understand-

ing them if He vouchsafed to tell them. Things, which God does, come out of infinite depths. But we find that the more we know the more we love, and therefore we inquire into many things, where love alone gives us the right of questioning, and the courage also. Why did God permit the dolours of His Mother, whom he loved so unspeakably, who was sinless and had nothing in herself to expiate by penance, and whose tears were in no way needful to the Precious Blood which was of its sole self the redemption of the world? Such reasons as we see on the surface of the matter are these. It was because of His love for her. What can love give, which is better than self? But, with Him, self was suffering. Even in the matter of earthly greatness high destinies are destinies of glorious pain and more than common trial. And how human and earthly, even when most heavenly, is all in the Three-and-Thirty Years! The same law which lies round Him must also lie round her. She could not have a more passionate wish than this in her tranquil soul. But the law is a law of suffering, of sacrifice, of expiation, of ignominy, of abjection almost touching on annihilation. She would have been a mere instrument rather than a Mother had she been disjoined from all this, had she lain like a quiet low-lying landscape with the sun on it, away from the storm-enveloped glory of those heights of Calvary, more terrible by far than the ledges of ancient Sinai. Is it not even now, even to those far off from Him compared with the nearness of His Mother, is it not the fashion of His love to show itself in crosses? He left heaven because pain was such a

paradise for Him, and it was an exclusively terrestrial paradise; and if He loved it so, He may well expect that those who love Him shall love it also. Great graces are the mountain-chains thrown up by the subterranean heavings of pain. Martyrdoms have crowns belonging to them of right. Was Mary to be uncrowned? Would not the excess of His love for her be likewise an excess of suffering? But why waste many words, when it is enough to appeal to our own Christian instincts? What would an unsuffering Mary be like? The idea implies nothing less than the disappearance of the Madonna from the Church. An impassible Incarnation would have brought in its train an unsuffering Mother; but the passible Babe of Bethlehem has swathed His Mother in the same bands of suffering which compass Himself. The keenness of her martyrdom is the perfection of His filial piety.

The augmentation of her merits is another reason of her dolours; and nowhere has the force of merit such velocity as in suffering. Her being the Mother of God will not raise her high in heaven, apart from the sanctifying grace preceding and following the dignity of the Divine Maternity. The greatness of her dignity is an argument with us for the greatness of her grace, because in the purposes of God the two things are inseparable; and thus the dignity which we see is an index to us of the grace which we do not see. Her exaltation must depend upon her merits, and her merits must be acquired by lifelong suffering. Oh, who shall tell the crowds of nameless raptures this day in heaven, and within her soul, in which our

Blessed Mother recognizes the distinct rewards of each separate suffering, the special crown of each supernatural act? And in all these, discerning it even through the amazing excess of the recompense, she beholds a congruity, a suitableness, to the sorrows rewarded, nay, even a sort of natural growth of them, though in a supernatural way. For grace is not a different thing from glory. It is only glory in exile, while glory is but grace at home. Grace is the solid treasure; glory is only its exultation and success. So that huge Compassion of Mary's has come to be glory by the ordinary and lawful processes of the kingdom of heaven. Sixty-three years of ecstatic joys would never, under the present dispensation of things, have raised that Maternal Throne in such extraordinary vicinity to God. The queen of heaven must of necessity be trained as a queen, that she might queen it the more lawfully and the more supremely when the day of her accession came. The buoyancy of the Assumption was due to the bitterness of the Compassion.

There is always a look of cruelty in high destinies. Fortune drags its favorites through drawn swords. Mary's high destiny is not without this look of cruelty, and that which seems so cruel is the Divine Nature of her Son. It is the result of the infinite perfection of God that He must necessarily seek Himself, and be His own end. It is thus that He is the last end of all creatures, and that there is no true end in the world but Himself. Hence it is part of His magnificence, part of His deep love, that all things were made for Him, and that His glory is paramount over all things else. His greatest mercy to His creatures is to allow

them to contribute to His glory, and to permit them to do it intelligently and voluntarily. Rightly considered, the creature can have no blessedness so great as that of increasing the glory of his Creator. It is the only true satisfaction both of his understanding and his will, the only thing which can be to him an everlasting rest. Here then is another reason for the divine permission of our Lady's dolours. They were permitted in order that God might receive from her more glory than from any other creature whatsoever, or from all creatures taken together, always excepting the created nature of our Blessed Lord. They were permitted that she might have the surpassing privilege of being equal to the whole creation in herself, nay, absolutely and transcendently surpassing it, in the praise and worship, the glory and adoration, which she paid to the Creator. Terrible as the heights were which she had to climb, far removed beyond all sympathy and intelligence of the saints, deep as were the torrents of blood and tears through whose rocky channels she had to make her way, exacting as were the mighty graces which claimed so wonderful a correspondence, there was not a gift that Jesus ever gave her which she prized so highly as her stern Compassion. Oh, not for worlds would she have been excused one least exaggerating circumstance of her sorrow! In the very excess of the most intolerable of her afflictions, she enjoyed in the spirit of deep worship the inexorable sovereignty of God. It was God who hung upon the Cross. Her Son was God. It was the Crucified, pale and faint and feeble and bleeding, whose glory was more illimitable than the world-

girdling ocean, and was feeding itself with unimaginable complacency on the streams of supernatural beauty and consummate holiness, which the deeply piercing swords of her grief were drawing from the caverns of her immaculate heart. She as it were supplied for all that the saints owed Him for His Passion but could never pay. At the foot of the Cross she was the world's worship; for what else in the world was worshipping Him in His abasement at that hour? And all this cruelty of God's avaricious glory, this insatiableness of His thirst for creatures, was to her the perfection of delight, the supremest exercise of her royalty, while it was on the part of her Divine Son by far the most inconceivable outpouring of His love which she had received since the midnight of the Incarnation. The Church would be a different thing from what it is, if the sea of Mary's worship in her dolours were not part of its beauty, its treasures, and its powers before God. We can think less uneasily, less despondingly, of the unrequited Passion of our dearest Lord, when we remember the sorrow, like no other sorrow but His own, with which His Mother worshipped Him.

We too make our appearance in the matter. She must suffer for our sakes as well as for His. For is she not to be the mother of consolation, the comfort of the afflicted? And for this end she must go down into the depths of every sorrow which the human heart can feel. As far as a simple creature can do so, she must fathom them all, and experience them in her own self, without even excepting sorrow for sin, though it cannot be for sin of her own, but in fact for

ours. She must know the weight of our burdens, and the kind of misery which each brings along with it. It must be a science to her to be sure of the measure of consolation which our weak hearts require in their various trials, and what soothes and alleviates our suffering in all its manifold, unequal, and dissimilar circumstances. Our Blessed Lord did not save us from our sins by a golden apparition in the heavens, by a transient vision of the Cross shown in the far-seen glory from the green dome of Tabor, or by an absolution once for all pronounced over the outspread west from seaward-looking Carmel. It was not His will that redemption should have the facility of creation, facility to Him at least, for to us the facilities are wonderful enough. He accomplished our salvation in long years, with infinite toilsome sufferings, out of abysses of shame, with the shedding of His Blood, and with unutterable bitterness of soul. He earned it, merited it, struggled for it, and only mastered it by the prodigies of His Passion. All this need not have been so. A word, a tear, a look, might have done it, nay, an act of will, with or without an Incarnation. But it was not His good pleasure that it should be so. In His infinite wisdom He chose not to lean on His infinite power alone, but took another way. So is it with Mary. She is not at once created mother of the afflicted, as by a sudden patent of nobility. She does not become the consolation of mourners by a mere appointment emanating from the will of the Divine Majesty. It might have been so, but it is not so. Her office of our Mother is a long and painful conclusion worked out from her Divine Maternity. She has

toiled for it, suffered for it, borne herculean burdens of sorrow in order to merit it, and has mastered it at last on Calvary. Not that she could strictly merit such an office, as Jesus merited the salvation of the world: nay, rather her motherly office to us was part of the salvation which He merited. Yet, nevertheless, according to a creature's capacity, she came nigh to meriting it, and met God's gratuitous advances to her on the way. How needful then was it for us that God should permit her dolours! What would the sea of human sorrows be without Mary's moonlight on it? The ocean, with the dark, heavy, overspread clouds lowering upon it, does not differ more widely from the silvery plain of green and whitely flashing waters, exulting in the sunlight, than the weary expanse of life's successive cares, without the softening and almost alluring light which falls upon it from Mary's love, differs from life as it now lies before us beneath her maternal throne. How many a tear has she not already wiped away from our eyes! How many bitter tears has she not made sweet in the shedding! And there is age, and the yearly narrowing circle of those we love, and sickness, and death, all yet to come; and to what amount may we not have to draw upon the treasure of consolations in her sinless heart? Oh, it was well for us, and it was most entirely to her heart's content, that God permitted her dolours, that she might be so much the more really the mother of the afflicted; for the heaviness of her sorrows is daily the lightening of ours; and how little it is that we can bear, and how great the load which she could bear, and how royally she bore it!

Our Blessed Lord was at once our atonement and our example. He redeemed the world solely by His Precious Blood. By His merits alone are we saved. His prerogatives as our Redeemer are simply unshared by any one. His Mother had to be redeemed as well as the rest of us, though in a different and far higher way, by prevention, not by restoration, by the un-mated grace of the Immaculate Conception, not by regeneration from a fallen state. Yet it was His will that His Mother, her office, her consent, her graces, her sufferings, should be so mixed up with the scheme of redemption that we cannot separate them from it. It was His ordinance that her Compassion should lie close by His Passion, and that His Passion without her Compassion would be a different Passion from what it actually was. Thus He seems to draw her almost within the same law of expiation which surrounded Himself, so that it should be true that there are many senses in which she may be said to have taken part in the redemption of the world. But if this is true of Christ as our atonement, where the union of the Divine Nature with the Human was needful to the infinite satisfaction of the work, much more is it true of Christ as our example. This was an office which she was more nearly competent, through His own grace, to share with Him; and one which the fact of her being simply a creature, and altogether human, would bring more touchingly home to us. Thus we may perhaps venture to suppose that God permitted the dolours of Mary, in order that she might be all the more excellently our example. Sorrow is more or less the characteristic of all human

life; and it is one which, while it contains within itself special capabilities of union with God, also deranges and perturbs our relations with Him more than any thing else. It assaults our confidence in Him, and confidence is the only true worship. It engenders temptations against the faith, or finds something congenial in them when they come. It leads to a certain kind of peevishness and petulance with God, which comes from the very depths of our nature, from the same depths as love and adoration, and which, while it is secretly alien to both of these, often succeeds in destroying both, and usurping their vacant places. That this petulance is a true phenomenon of the creature's nature is shown by the surprising manner in which God justifies the petulance of Job, and finds sin that needed expiation in the criticism of his friends upon him, while He, the Searcher of hearts, discerns in Job's bold querulousness nothing that damages the integrity of his patience, and much that is in harmony both with reverence and love. The endurance of sorrow is perhaps the highest and most arduous work we have to do, and it is for the most part God's ordinance that the amount of sorrow to be endured should increase with the amount of holiness enabling us to bear it. We must bear it naturally even while we are bearing it supernaturally. There is no sanctity in unfeelingness, or in the blunting of the soul, even when religious interests have blunted it by a superior engrossment and a higher abstraction. Spirituality no doubt hinders us from feeling many sorrows, and no one will say that such indifference is not in many ways a privilege. But it must not be confounded with an

heroic endurance of sorrow. To be heroic in this matter, the heart must feel to the quick, and divine love must barb the more cruelly, and drive the deeper in, the shafts with which we are wounded. Now, in all this, Mary is our example, and a purely human example, an example moreover which has as a matter of fact produced such results of exceeding sanctity and supernatural gracefulness in the Church, that we may safely venture the conjecture that it was one of the reasons for which God permitted her surpassing martyrdom.

There is yet another reason which we may dare to suggest for the permission of her sorrows. As the Bible is a spoken revelation, so in a certain sense Mary is an emblematical revelation. God uses her as an instrument whereby to make many things plain which would otherwise have rested in obscurity. It is a line of thought familiar to theologians, which regards her as a kind of image to the Most Holy Trinity. As the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, she shadows forth in herself, faintly of course because she is a creature, but nevertheless truly, the relations of the Three Divine Persons. She is as it were a still translucent lake in whose bosom wonderful attributes of God, and far-distant heavenly heights, are mirrored with faithful distinctness. We know more of God's mercy, of His condescension, of His intimacy with His creatures, of His characteristic ways, because of the light which He has made to shine on Mary, than we should else have known, and we have come also to understand better what we either knew or might have known in other

ways. Thus God's perfection in Himself, His dealings with His creatures, and the fashion of His redeeming grace, the possibilities of holiness, the inventiveness of divine love, His training of the saints, His guidance of the Church, His inward walk with the souls that seek Him,—all these things are written upon Mary like hieroglyphical inscriptions, easily to be deciphered by the light of faith and the intelligent surmises of devotion. So, by her dolours, He has hung about her a complete revelation of the great mystery of suffering. He has illuminated in her that pregnant doctrine, that suffering is the only true conclusion to be drawn from love, where divine things are concerned. She had no sin of her own for which to suffer. She had no penalty to pay for the fall of Eve. She was not included in the law of sin. She was, in the order of heaven's purposes, foreseen before the decree permitting sin. She also had no world to redeem. All her dear blood, the sweet fountain and well head of the Precious Blood, could not have washed away one venial sin, nor saved the soul of one new-born babe who had no actual sin at all to expiate. She was simply immersed in an unspeakable sea of love, and therefore the deluge of sorrow passed over her soul, and into it, by right, just as the great turbulent rivers run down unquestioned into the sea. Her sufferings close the mouth of complaint forever. With sweet constraint and unanswerable persuasiveness they impose silence on all the suffering children of our heavenly Father. The saints can doubt no longer that suffering is the one grand similitude of Christ. We too in our extreme lowness, whose patience is of so

thin a texture that it was threadbare almost when it was new, learn, not to be silent only, but to bear with gentleness, and even wistfully to think the time may come when we shall actually love, that suffering which seems to be the golden coin in which love repays our love.

SECTION III.

THE FOUNTAINS OF OUR LADY'S DOLORS.

We may now proceed to our third inquiry: What were the fountains of our Lady's dolours? By fountains we do not exactly mean causes, but rather the peculiar sources of feeling in her heart, which gave to her sorrows their distinguishing bitterness. When a mother loses her only son, the loss is of itself bitterness enough; but a character and intensity are given to it by circumstances which awaken particular feelings within her breast. Either he was so beautiful that the loss seems all the more intolerable, or he was so full of moral or intellectual promise, or he was taken so young, or there was something which, humanly speaking, might have been so easily prevented in the actual cause of his death, or there was a special combination of family circumstances which just at that time made his death a greater blow than at any other date it would have been; these, and similar things which might be indefinitely multiplied, are centres of peculiar bitterness round which sorrow gathers, deepening, broadening, magnifying, embittering it, far beyond the measure of the real affliction. Yet all these