

and the all-holy God were one and the same. This was the overpowering unity of her dolors. She must go forth therefore, and follow the footsteps of Jesus, and wet her feet in the blood He has left behind Him. She must listen to the fierce singing of the scourges as they cleave the air, and count the stripes, and take into her heart the variety of deadly sickening sounds they made as they lit on this or that part of His Sacred Body. She must see the mock king of Jews and Gentiles, as Pilate, half in worthless pity, and half in merciless derision, exposed Him to the crowd, and she alone adored His royal majesty almost out of the very annihilation of herself by the violence of grief. She must hear the dull hammering of the nails on Calvary, whose sounds, muffled by the soft flesh of His Hands and Feet, pierced her soul through and through. She must listen to the seven beautiful words upon the Cross, as if He Himself were singing his own dirge, with such melancholy sweetness as was enough to have drawn her living soul out of her weak, worn, and aching body. All this was terrible. Yet she was a true mother. Not for one instant would she have consented to have it otherwise. It was a portion of the royalty of her heart. Nevertheless, it was an unspeakable aggravation of her suffering. It was true that the whole of it had lain before her in clearest prevision, at least since the hour of Simeon's prophecy. But sense is something more than prevision, something different from it. The senses "betray the succors which reason gives." They interrupt that interior tranquility in which the darkest visions may possess the soul, without disturbing it. Sight interferes with

that self-collection, which is our attitude of strength in the endurance of interior pains. It throws the soul off its guard, or elicits from it a painful strain of inward fortitude in order to preserve its guard. Moreover, the senses have special things of their own in sights and sounds and touches of grief; and they pierce the flesh, causing it to tremble with chilly pains, torturing the nerves, freezing and firing the blood by turns, stabbing the brain like daggers, and nipping the convulsed heart as if it were within an iron vice. It was this eyewitnessing of the Passion, which made Mary's martyrdom to be in her body as well as in her soul, and which was something more than the aching physical exhaustion in which excess of mental effort leaves the frame, because it laid each limb upon the rack, and made every pulse a beating instrument of pain.

Another fountain of sorrow is to be found in her clear view and appreciation of sin. We cannot doubt that, independent of her own sinlessness and of the magnificence of her reason, our Blessed Lord allowed her to participate in some degree in that supernatural perception of sin, of its exceeding malice and of God's adorable hatred of it, which distinguished Himself, and actually gave its character to the suffering of the Passion. It was the view of sin which crucified His soul in the garden of Gethsemane. It was the weight of sin which pressed Him down to the ground. It was the chalice of His Father's anger, which He so plaintively desired might pass from Him. We read of St. Catherine of Genoa fainting away, when it pleased God to show her in vision the real horror even

of a venial sin. There could be no fainting with Mary. She was too strong, too perfect, too complete, for weaknesses like those. Her use of reason, which had begun at the moment of her Immaculate Conception, and had never been interrupted for one instant since, could not decorously be suspended by any trance or fainting-fit. But we must necessarily suppose that, whatever supernatural gift of insight into sin was granted to St. Catherine of Genoa or any other saints, our Lady's gift of that sort must have unspeakably transcended theirs. Indeed, when we consider on the one hand the part which His deep view of sin played in our Blessed Saviour's Passion, and on the other the "communication of attributes," so to call it, which passed between His Passion and her Compassion, we cannot but suppose that our dear Lady was gifted with no inconsiderable portion of His amazing and overwhelming insight into sin. None estimated as she did the spotless innocence of the victim. None so truly appreciated the beauty and sublimity of His goodness. None so fathomed the ingratitude of those whom He had taught, and fed, and healed, and comforted, with such unselfish patience and such considerate affection. None felt more acutely the barbarous excesses of those cruel hours of Thursday night and Friday morning. When all these thoughts rushed into one, what a view it was which broke upon her of the amount, variety, intensity, malignity, of sin which there was in the Passion! But she saw more than that. She saw, hideous, appalling, mountainous vision! the sins of the whole world on the stooping shoulders of Her blessed Son.

But yet more: she saw up to the heights of His Divinity; she saw that it was truly God whom all this sin reached, assailed, defiled, and murdered; and then such a light, as from another universe of diviner things, broke in upon the sin of the Passion that none but Jesus and herself could have confronted and endured. Oh that we could better tell what this pain of sharp light was like! But it is far from us. Could we live if God showed us our real selves? We have need to be immortal before our hour of judgment comes. But the sins of the whole world, the concentrated sin of the Passion,—Mary saw it all, and died a thousand inward deaths in the agony it made her bear.

It is not easy to say what was the highest point, or what made the deepest wound, in the Passion. The instruments of the Passion were not material only. There were invisible lances, and nails, and hammers, and thorns, and stripes. They were intellectual and moral, as well as physical. And in all these three departments the implements of torture were both numerous and diversified. Each of them went to the quick. None of them deserve to be considered subordinate or inferior. Each had its pre-eminence in its own way. All ran up higher than our eye can follow them. But it is not easy to say which of them, if any of them, reached higher heights in Him than others did. The Passion was an excess of excesses. Every thing belonging to it was in excess. It is this in great measure which hinders it from being lowered into a mere epic of human suffering, even independently of the consideration of His Divinity. But there are some

things which we can conceive of as being sharper than others, or wounding in more tender places. There is one of these, a participation in which will furnish us with a sixth fountain of Mary's sorrow. It is the foreseen ingratitude of the faithful for the Passion of our dearest Lord. The Mother of the Church, the queen of the apostles, sees it all in her heart. Such a scroll is unrolled before her eyes of carelessness about forgiven sin, of relapses into deadly sin, of astonishing prolific broods of venial sins, swarming in hordes all over the soul and laying waste that paradise of God, of cold-hearted negligences, of unbecoming imperfections, of immortalized, consciously immortalized lives, of distaste for spiritual things, of careless freedom with great sacraments that cost her Son so dear, of narrow, jealous, suspicious tempers, of the sickening lukewarm ways of conceited human prudence, and of all that dismal infinite of pusillanimity, out of which here and there a saint stands up but half distinguishably, like a palm in the sand-fog of the wilderness. Neither was it altogether a vision of the future. Where was Peter? Was he weeping in some grotto outside the walls in the luxury of his newfound grace? Where was Andrew, who was to be the model of all lovers of the Cross? Where was James, in whose diocese his Master was at that moment crucified? There was the passionate Magdalen, there was the beautiful heart of John, there was herself, to represent the world on Calvary. Alas! if from that day forth every baptized soul was to be a saint as high as an apostle, how fearful would the Passion have been, and how sadly unrequited too!

But if this was not to be, surely those who love Jesus should love Him well. All the saved should be saints, saints before they reach heaven, saints that need not an exodus through the sea of fire beneath the earth, saints even while on earth. Half-hearted creatures hanging on to God by an occasional sacrament, clinging to the Church by a jubilee; balancing in silly indecision, like wayward, stupid animals, between the shepherd and the hireling, giving their love of love to the world, and now and then their love of fear to God when He thunders, enjoying life and time and earth uncommonly, and making a clutch at eternity and heaven upon their deathbeds,—is the Crucified to be the own Father of such as these? Oh, to the generous, heroic heart of Mary this was a sight that was equal to a whole Passion in itself! She saw how the dear Heart beneath that white blood-seamed side upon the Cross was sickening over that very vision, and her heart yearned over it also with indescribable faintness and repugnance.

But what shall we say of the sight of those who should be lost? Think of the value of each drop of blood! But why talk of drops? She is slipping in it. It has trickled all over her hands as she clasped the Cross. It lies like a red line between the foot of the Cross and the pillar of the scourging. The gnarled roots of the olives on Gethsemane are ruddy with it in more spots than one. Look up at the countless stars, strewing like luminous dust the purple concave of midnight. One stripe would have redeemed them all, if all had fallen a thousand times. And if there were six thousand stripes! What a calculation of the

infinities of redemption! And all that blood and all those stripes given for each soul, each soul to have unshared for its own self all those infinite salvations, and yet to be lost eternally! Christ to pay that price, and then to be defrauded of its value! If one soul, for whom all that Passion has been thinkingly and intentionally undergone, and then with such solemnities as creation never saw before, and with such inconceivable priesthood, offered by God to God,—if one soul should perish everlastingly, should triumph by its guilt over its Saviour's love, should dry up the oceans of His Blood by the fiery heats of hell,—what an anguish to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! It might have wrung from Him a worse cry than leaped out of the passionate, broken heart of Jacob when Joseph's many-colored coat, with blood-stains on it, was held up before his eyes. But if not one soul only, but millions, and millions of millions, should be lost, what then? Nay, if it should have to be a doubt, of which we might not be sure even while we believed it, whether as many adult believers are saved as are lost, what then? Well! He did not repent of the Cross, as He hung upon it. That is all we can say. But He had another crucifixion, that was invisible, far worse than that one of wood, and iron, and red blood, and a mock title, which we see. It was the crucifixion of a Heart already crucified, because of the thought of the countless multitudes who would fall from Him and be lost and be no more members of Him, but turn from Him through the triumphant envy and rage of Satan with cruel sundering, with helpless, irremediable dismemberment. They "brake not His bones;" but

the bones of His Soul were all broken by this cruel inward Passion. And in this dark agony, in this special chalice apart, Mary also had her share; and if in that moment she could distinguish between what this thought made her suffer because she so loved Jesus, and what it made her suffer because she so loved souls, then did she see two separate, most frightful abysses, into which, half suffocated with anguish, she must enter with shrinking yet unreluctant horror.

These were the seven fountains of Mary's dolours, beneath which, and underlying all of them, was the grand parent source of all, the incomparable divine beauty of our dearest Lord Himself. It was this which gave the vitality and keenness to every pain. It was this which aggravated every thing, but could exaggerate nothing, because it could magnify nothing to a greater size than itself. Even she did not know all that beauty. It was incomprehensible, absolutely in itself incomprehensible. But what she did know is incomprehensible to us, it is so far above us and beyond us. Yet we can speak great words of our Saviour's beauty, and think thoughts of it far greater than any words, and, when even thoughts fail, we can weep, weep tears of heavenly feeling. We can burn away with love, and die of His beauty; yet, though thus we shall reach Mary's home, we shall not attain to her comprehension of the exceeding loveliness of Jesus. There was an ocean of it in the lowest, most unfathomable caverns of her heart, which ever and anon broke upward in other seas that rolled above, and made them bitter beyond endurance.