

had not indecorously brought it before so many of us—still less were there any vehement attitudes of grief, any contortions of the venerable beauty of her face, any womanish wringing of the hands, any negligence of dishevelled hair, any prostrations on the ground as of one overcome with mortal anguish, least of all any fainting away, any need of a supporting arm around her, whether it were that of John or Magdalen, any suspension of that glorious reason which sleep even had not interrupted in its magnificent exercises since the very first moment of the Immaculate Conception. Let us in indignant love give to the flames these ignorant, dishonorable representations, and drive out of ourselves the odious images which their skill and beauty may have left upon our minds. Mary “stood” beneath the Cross: that is the simple grandeur of the scriptural picture, which represented the actual truth, and whose artist was her own Spouse, the Holy Ghost. And it was on the picture of that calm standing woman on which her fond child, St. Bernard, gazed in admiring love. This too is the attractiveness of our Lady’s apparitions in the revelations of Mary of Agreda, compared with her portrait in the visions of Sister Emmerich. The instincts of the Spanish nun were more true than those even of the artistic soul of the ecstatic German. Never then must we put away from ourselves the thought of this moderation of Mary in her woes. There was nothing wild, nothing unsettled, nothing dramatic, nothing passionate, nothing demonstrative, nothing excessive; but she stood in calmest, queenliest dignity, quiet, not as a sweet evening landscape, or a noon-tide summer sea, or a green wood at dawn, or a moon-

lit mountain-top, or as any other image in the poetry of nature, but quiet, in her measure and degree, as the Divine Nature of our Lord while the tumult of the Passion was trampling His Human Nature to death. Her tranquility was the image of that tranquility. It was one of many participations in Himself which Jesus gave to her in those dark hours.

#### SECTION V.

##### HOW OUR LADY COULD REJOICE IN HER DOLORS.

Having thus considered the characteristics of our Lady’s dolors, we must now pass to a peculiarity of them which it is necessary always to bear in mind, namely, their union with the intensest joy. That her dolors were accompanied throughout with floods of heavenly joy, she herself revealed to St. Bridget. But indeed it could not be otherwise. Can we suppose it possible that a sinless, rational creature can ever be otherwise than bathed in joy? Beatitude is the life of God, and it is out of that life that torrents of gladness inundate His whole creation. It is sin only that brings sorrow, and if the sins of others can make the sinless grieve, they can never interfere with that abiding gladness deep down, which union with God must of necessity produce. Moreover, there is no merit where there is no love. If our Lady’s dolors had not risen out of her love and been animated by it, they would not have been meritorious. But in truth love was the very cause of them. Out of the excess of love came the excess of sorrow. Now, it is undeni-

able that love cannot exist without delectation. Love is of itself essentially a joy; and in proportion to the eminence of our Mother's love must also be the eminence of her celestial joy. To sorrow and rejoice at once is possible even for us, whose inward life sin has distracted, and made irregular and uncompact. We have all of us done so, even though our sensitive nature is a battlefield where the struggles are quickly over, and one or other of the contending passions is left master of the field. But it is in Jesus and Mary that this perfect union of the uttermost of joy and sorrow has taken place, and been an abiding, lifelong, normal state. It is one of the most remarkable phenomena of the Incarnation, and has seemed, in our Lord's lower Nature, to be a sort of adumbration of His union of Two Natures in one Person. It is also one of His characteristics in which He has given His Mother largely to participate. In His Passion He restrained His Divinity, and would not let it sensibly penetrate His Human Nature with its light and glory. Nay, He even laid His hand upon that Beatific Vision, which was due to His Sacred Humanity, and which was uncloudedly before His Soul from the first moment of His Incarnation, and would not allow it to include within its sphere of gladness His sensitive nature, lest it should blunt His suffering and quench the fire of His great agony. So, in her measure, our Blessed Lady in the depths of her soul was filled with gladness because of her intimate union with God, and yet the gladness had a sphere of its own, and was not allowed to break out with its vast world of light, so at least as to banish all sorrow from the heart. As

was said before, her joy, so far from alleviating her sufferings, probably made her suffer more. But once again we must remember it was not with her as with the martyrs. They sang among the fires and exulted among the panthers, because their soul was all whole and joyous, while their flesh was torn and their bones broken. But with her the soul was the chief sufferer; and joy and sorrow divided it against itself. This was nearer to a mystery. Indeed, it was a true participation in the characteristics of Jesus, a cleaving asunder of the soul without disturbing its simplicity, a division without sedition, a wound which was a new life, a battle while all was harmony and peace. O Mother! we cannot tell how it was, only that so it was! Thou wert all joy, and, being so near God, how couldst thou help but be so? Thou wert all sorrow, and what else couldst thou be in those dark abysses of the Passion? And thy sorrow had no power over thy joy; but thy joy had power over thy sorrow, and gave it a brisker acid, a more volatile and pervasive bitterness! Glad creature! sorrow crushed thee, and then a joy, like that of heaven, sat upon thy burden, and made it tenfold more hard to bear!

Yet we are hardly doing justice to her sorrows, when we say that they had no influence upon her joys. Doubtless they increased them, and were to her the fountains of new joys which she had never had before, or of new degrees of old accustomed joys. It is not as if her joy and sorrow were two oceans in her soul, which had no mutual inlets, and did not commingle with each other, or ebb and flow in sympathy. So far from that, there is a sense in which

we might say that her sorrow and her joy were almost identical; for her joys were sorrows, and her sorrows joys. They might be the one or the other, according to the double life that was in them. Truly in her sorrows were many reasons for joy such as the grandest and happiest archangel of heaven has not in himself. If we look long at the darkness of Calvary, a beautiful light breaks out of its gloomiest centre. What is it all but a magnificent reparation of the Divine Honor? Not Michael, when flushed with triumphant sanctity he drove usurping Lucifer out of heaven, so rejoiced in the honor of God, as Mary did. She, who had been allowed to fathom sin so deeply, and who in the spirit of Gethsemane had tasted somewhat of the Father's anger, could exult in the satisfaction of His justice as neither angel nor saint could do. She, who had lived thirty-three years with Jesus and had caught from Him His passionate yearning for His Father's honor, could find depths of blissful congratulation in the restoring of that honor, which not all creatures together could discover. Sometimes there has been a minutest drop of that joy in our hearts, and we know what it was like, but could not tell even if we would. Oh for that land where it will be an unchecked, eternal habit!

There was joy too through all the immense wisdom with which God had endowed her, because of the divine wisdom which was apparent to her in the whole scheme of our redemption. There was not a cavern of shame, but it was illuminated by several of the divine perfections, shedding over it a perfect blaze of beautiful splendor. There was not a physical horror

in the Passion, from which an unloving faith shrinks back in vulgar fastidiousness, but was clothed with a strange loveliness out of the treasures of the divine mind and will. The science of the Incarnation never came out, even to her, in such amazing, fascinating clearness as it did in her Compassion, with all its reasons, possibilities, adaptations, and conveniences. The sight she saw would have been enough to feed the worship of the nine choirs of angels forever.

There was joy also in her foresight of the exaltation of Jesus. She saw Him already at the Right Hand of the Father, His Sacred Humanity enthroned there as an object of highest worship forever. To her eyes the bright clouds of Ascension Day were strangely interlaced with the darkness of the dun eclipse on Calvary. She saw the feet that were dropping blood, as if they were rising up in the sunny air, each with its glorified stigma gleaming like a roseate sun. She almost saw the angels in their glistening white, moving about amid the horses of those ruthless foreign centurions. The darkness of the depth set off the brightness of the exaltation, as if it were a background of storm throwing forward the bright things in front of it with vivid, lifelike light. There was joy also in her participation at the time in the interior joy of Jesus. For that failing Heart upon the Cross had a very ocean of gladness within itself, a gladness none on earth but His Mother knew, a gladness none else could share, because none else could understand it. If her share of it were parted among the numberless elect, we should each have more than we could bear. It was a joy also, of a peculiar kind, to see

Him paying then and there for the glorious prerogatives He had given her. When the blood moistened her hand and stained its whiteness, she recognized and worshipped it as the price of her Immaculate Conception. Could she see that, and then not love Him ten thousand times more than she had loved Him hitherto? And with the rush of love must needs come a rush of joy as well.

It is impossible also not to rejoice in the operations of grace within our souls. Each augmentation of grace is a mission of a Divine Person, a contact with God, a more intimate and exquisite union with Him. If we were slower, graver, less occupied, and less precipitate in our spiritual life, we should feel this more than we do. How greatly then must she have rejoiced in the magnificent supernatural acts which her sorrows were causing her to elicit all the while! Such faith, such hope, such love, such fortitude, such conformity, such love of suffering, such spirit of sacrifice, such intelligent worship, such incomparable union! Millions of saints could have been made out of each of these royal magnificences, and yet have left a marvellous amount to spare. There was joy too, who can disbelieve it? in her thought that her Compassion should be so rich a boon to us, that it should win us so many graces, give us so many examples, excite so much devotion, lead us so much nearer Jesus, and fill us with a wiser spirit of more profound adoration. Here are seven joys, which came out of her very sorrows. They might be multiplied indefinitely; but these are enough for love, and more than enough for our comprehension in their fullness.

## SECTION VI.

THE WAY IN WHICH THE CHURCH PUTS OUR LADY'S  
DOLORS BEFORE US.

Such is a general description of the dolors of Mary. The Church puts them before us as part of the gospel, as one of the facts of the gospel, and as an object of special devotion. Marchese, in his *Diario di Maria*, mentions an old tradition, which would carry devotion to the sorrows of our Blessed Lady up to apostolic times. Some years after her death, while St. John the Evangelist was still grieving over his loss and longing to see her face again, it pleased our Blessed Lord to appear to him in a vision, accompanied by His Mother. The sorrows of Mary, together with her frequent visits to the holy places of the Passion, were naturally a constant subject of devout contemplation to the Evangelist, who had watched over the last fifteen years of her life; and, as if it were in response to these continual meditations, he heard her ask Jesus to grant some especial favor to those who should keep her dolors in remembrance. Our Lord replied that He would grant four particular graces to all those who should practice this devotion. The first was a perfect contrition of all their sins some time before death; the second was a particular protection in the hour of death; the third was to have the mysteries of the Passion deeply imprinted in their minds; and the fourth a particular power of impetration granted to Mary's prayers on their behalf.

St. Bridget relates in the seventh book of her revelations that she saw in a vision, in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome, the immense price which was set in heaven upon the dolours of Mary. To the Blessed Benvenuta, the Dominicaness, it was granted to feel in her soul the sorrow which our Lady suffered during the Three Days' Loss. The Blessed Veronica of Binasco had several revelations regarding this devotion, in one of which, as related by the Bollandists, our Lord said that tears shed over His Mother's sorrows were more acceptable to Him than those which are shed over His own Passion. In like manner Gianius, in his history of the Servites, relates that, when Innocent IV. was raised to the apostolic chair, he felt some alarm regarding the new order of the Servites of Mary. There were several false and counterfeit religions, which had troubled the Church about that time, the Poor of Lyons, the so-called Apostolic Men, the Flagellants, and the followers of William de Saint Amour, and the pope was anxious to assure himself that the Servites, lately instituted near Florence, were not of the same character as these. He therefore commissioned St. Peter Martyr, the Dominican, to investigate the matter. Our Lady appeared to the inquisitor in a vision. He saw a lofty mountain, covered with flowers, and bathed in shining light, and on the summit of it sat the Mother of God as on a throne, while angels offered garlands of flowers before her. After this they presented to her seven lilies of exceeding whiteness, which she placed for a moment in her bosom, and then wreathed them like a diadem round her head. These seven lilies, as she

explained the vision to Pietro, were the seven Founders of the Servites, whom she had herself inspired to institute the new order in honor of the dolours which she suffered in the Passion and Death of Jesus. When St. Catherine of Bologna was one day weeping bitterly over our Lady's sorrows, she suddenly saw seven angels near her, weeping also, and joining their tears with hers. But it would not be difficult to compile a whole volume of visions and revelations regarding the dolours of Mary. The reader will find abundance of them in two books especially, both of which are of easy access, Marchese's *Diario di Maria*, and Sinischalchi's *Martirio del Cuore di Maria*: the first writer was an Oratorian and the second a Jesuit.

This devotion has received the highest sanction of the Church, for it enters both into the Missal and the Breviary. Two distinct feasts are appointed in honor of these sorrows; one falls in September, and the other on the Friday in Passion Week. The Rosary of the Seven Dolours, as well as several other devotions, have been richly indulgenced. Among these may be mentioned the Hymn *Stabat Mater*, an hour at any time of the year spent in meditation on the Dolours, an exercise in honor of her sorrowing heart, seven Aves with the *Sancta Mater istud agas*, another exercise for the last ten days of the carnival, and an hour or half an hour's prayer on Good Friday and other Fridays. Nothing, therefore, is wanting to the sanction of this devotion, nor has the Church spared any means to attract her children to it.

She has, however, especially selected seven of Mary's sorrows for our more peculiar devotion. She

has embedded them by means of antiphons in the divine office, and she has made them the seven mysteries of the Rosary of the Dolors. They are, Simeon's prophecy, the Flight into Egypt, the Three Days' Loss, the Meeting Jesus with the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Taking down from the Cross, the Burial of Jesus. Thus, in one way of dividing them, three belong to our Lord's Infancy, and four to His Passion. Or, again, one covers His whole life, two His Infancy, and four His Passion. Or, again, one puts before us all the Thirty-Three Years, two the Child Jesus, two Jesus Suffering, and two Jesus Dead. These seven are mysterious samples of her multitudinous other sorrows, and we shall find, perhaps, that they are types of all human sorrow whatsoever. The seven chapters, therefore, which follow will consider one by one these seven dolors, observing the same simple and easy method in the investigation of all of them. Each dolor will present four points for our consideration: first, the circumstances of the mystery itself, secondly, its peculiarities, thirdly, our Lady's dispositions in it, and fourthly, its lessons to ourselves. A ninth chapter will be added on the Compassion of Mary, in order to explain the relation in which it stands to the Passion, whether it had any share in the redemption of the world, and what the true meaning is of those puzzling expressions, co-redemptress, and the like, which are sometimes found in approved writers on the grandeurs of Mary.

## SECTION VII.

## THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION TO OUR LADY'S DOLORS.

Before concluding this introductory chapter, however, it seems necessary to say something on the spirit of this beautiful and popular devotion. It produces in our minds an extreme tenderness toward our blessed Lord, united with the profoundest reverence. Jesus demands from us our worship as God. He claims our undoubting faith in His goodness and in the abundance of His redeeming grace. He expects from us a rational conviction that our only trust is in Him, and that we should consequently discharge our duties to Him and obey His commandments as our necessary and reasonable service. But He wants far more than this. He has something much nearer His heart. He desires our tenderness. He wishes to see us with our hearts always in our hands for Him. He would fain win us to Himself, and unite us with Himself in the bonds of the most familiar and intimate affection. He would have us identify our interests with His, and concentrate our sympathies in Him. The thought of Him should fill our eyes with tears, and kindle our hearts with love. His name should be the sweetest music that we know; His words the laws of all our life. He wishes us, as it were, to forget the precise amount of our actual obligations to Him. Indeed, what is the use of remembering them when we know that it is beyond our power to fulfil them? He would have us deal with Him promptly, generously, abun-