

quite as dreadful in the flight of the creatures from their Creator, which we see going on all day? When faith has opened our eyes, what a scene the world presents! Everywhere God, with His omnipresent love, is pursuing His creatures, His guilty creatures; but it is to save them, not to punish them. There is not a recess of the world, not a retirement of poverty, not a haunt of sin, not an unlikely or unbecoming place for so vast a Majesty, where He is not following His creatures and trying almost to force His great gifts upon them. Swifter than the lightning, stronger than the ocean, more universal than the air, is His glorious, many-sided compassion poured out over the world which He has made. Everywhere are men flying from this generous, this merciful, this tender pursuit. It seems as if the grand object of their lives was to avoid God, as if time were a respite from the necessity of God's presence in eternity, which it is unfair of Him to interfere with, as if space were a convenience expressly provided for creatures to get out of the way of their Creator. Little boys even are flying from Him with all their might and main, as if they understood the matter just as well as grown-up men, and had made up their minds as determinedly about it. God speaks, entreats, pleads, cries aloud; but still they run. He doubles His sunbeams upon them, to win their hearts by the excess of His fatherly indulgence; but they run. He throws shadows and darkness over them, to make them sober and wise; but they run. He *will* have them. Great graces go forth to their souls, like swift stones from a sling, and they fall. But they are up again in a moment, and con-

tinue their flight. Or if He gets up with them, because they are too much hurt to rise on the instant, they only let Him wipe the blood and earth from their wound and kiss them sweetly on the forehead, and they are off again. He will not be baffled. He will hide Himself in the water of a sacrament, and make loving prey of infants before they have reached the use of reason. It is well; but then He must slay them also if He will keep them; for almost before they can walk they will run away from Him. And what is this picture compared to the vision which was always before our Blessed Mother's eyes?

But let us make the world stand still, and see how it looks. If our common love of God, which is so poor, is irritated by the sight, what must Mary have suffered? For what is irritation to our weakness to her would be the most deep and transcending sorrow. God comes to His creation. It does not stir. It cannot. It lies in the hollow beneath Him, and has no escape. He comes in the beauty of a mercy, which is almost incredible, because it is so beautiful. But seemingly it does not attract the world. He draws nigh. Creation must do something now. It freezes itself up before His eye. He may have other worlds, more fertile, more accessible to Him, than this. In the spiritual tropics, where the angels dwell, He may perhaps be welcome. But not here. This is the North Pole of His universe. He shed His life's blood upon it, and it would not thaw. It is unmanageable, un-navigable, uninhabitable, for Him. He can do nothing at all with it, but let His sun make resplendent colored lights in the icebergs, or bid the moon shine

with a wanner loveliness than elsewhere, or fill the long-night sky with the streamers of the Aurora. which even the Esquimaux, burrowing in his hut, will not go out to see. The only difference is that the material pole understands its business, which is to make ice in all imaginable shapes; whereas we men are so used to our own coldness, that we do not know how cold we are, and imagine ourselves to be the temperate zone of God's creation.

If God gets into His world, matters are not much mended. It is dismal to think—would that it were also incredible!—how much of the world is tied up from Him, so as to render almost a miracle necessary in order to insinuate grace into the soul. Look at whole regions of fair beginnings, of good wishes, holy desires, struggling earnestness, positive yearnings, and see how tyrannically the provisions of life deal with all these interests of God. Here are souls tied up from God by family arrangements. They have to live away from the means of grace, or they are thrown among bad examples, or they are forced into uncongenial dissipation, or they are put into the alternative of either judging their parents or blunting their perceptions of God, or they are entangled in unsuitable marriages, or they are forced into the ambitious temptations of worldly positions, or their religious vocations are rough-riden. God is not to have His own way with them, and will not have it. He on His side will not work miracles, and souls are lost. How much again is tied up by money arrangements! The religion of orphans is endangered by executors who have not the faith. Fortunes are left under conditions.

which, without heroic grace, preclude conversion. Place of abode is dictated by straitened circumstances, and it so happens that spiritual disabilities come along with it. Questions of education are unfavorably decided on pecuniary grounds, as also are the choices of profession. Want of money is a bar to the liberty of many souls, who, as far as we can judge, would use that liberty for God. Even local arrangements tie up souls from God. There is a sort of necessity of living for part of the year where regular sacraments are not to be had, or where men must mix very much with people of another creed, or must lay themselves out for political influence, or where young people must break off habits of works of mercy only imperfectly formed in the great city, which after all is a truer sanctuary of God than the green, innocent country. How many also, without fault of their own, or fault of any one, are tied up from God by the temporal consequences of some misfortune! Homes are broken up. Souls are imprisoned in unsuitable occupations, and in unfavorable places; and a host of religious inconveniences follow, from which there is literally no escape. It may be said that, after all, the excellence of religion is interior. But to how many is this interior spirit given? Surely it is not one of God's ordinary graces. And how few really interior persons are there, who are not visibly deteriorated when their public supplies of grace are impoverished! Others again are tied up from God by some irretrievable steps which they themselves have taken, culpably or inculpably. It is as if an eternal fixity had insinuated itself into

some temporal decision. And now souls are helpless. They cannot be all for God, if they would, unless He communicates to them some of the extraordinary graces of the mystical saints. We have often need here to remember for our comfort, that, if steps are irretrievable, nothing in the spiritual life is irremediable. Who could believe the opposite doctrine, and then live? It is fearful the power which men have to tie their fellow-men up from God. What an exercise it is for a hot temper, with a keen sense of injustice, and an honest heartiness of love for God and souls, to have to work for souls under the pressure of the great public system, organizations, and institutions of a country which has not the faith! To watch a soul perilously balancing on the brink of the grand eternal question, and to see plainly that the most ordinary fairness or the cheapest kindness would save it, and not be able to command either,—it is a work of knives in one's flesh, smarting unbearably. We have no right to demand the fairness: indeed, the fairness is perhaps only visible from our own point of view. We are more likely to get justice if we ask for it under the title of privilege and by the name of kindness. For the sake of Christ's poor, let us insist upon God's multiplying and prolonging our patience! Thus, all the world over, in all classes, especially the upper classes, creation is tied up as it were from God, and His goodness has not fair play with it, unless He will break His own laws, and throw Himself simply on His omnipotence. There is a tyranny of circumstances, which does not seem far short of a necessity of sin. It needs a definition of the faith to assure us that such

a necessity is happily an impossibility. We feel all this. It cuts to the quick. Now it depresses, now it provokes, accordingly as it acts on the inequalities of our little grace. Multiply it till the sum is beyond figures, magnify it till its bulk fills space and hangs out beyond, and then we shall have our Lady's sensitiveness about the honor of God's majesty.

There is still another disposition in our Lady to which our attention must be called. Her charity for sinners was proportioned to her horror of sin. While on the one hand she mourned over the slighted love of God and the scant harvest of His glory, she had no feeling of bitterness against sinners. She was not angry with their guilt, but unhappy for their sakes, because of the consequences of their guilt. It was not in her heart to condemn them, only to pity them. To her eyes sin came out clear and hideous when seen against the honor of God, but when seen in the sinner the horror melted away in the flood of compassion. Her zeal was not anxious to avenge the outrage on the Divine Majesty by startling judgments and condign penalties. It sought rather to repair the outrage by the conversion of the sinner. She thought herself best consulting the interests of God's justice by wishing well to His mercy. There is, in truth, a sort of reverence due to sinners, when we look at them, not as in their sins, but simply as having sinned, and being the objects of a divine yearning. It is the manifestation of this feeling in apostolic men which lures sinners to them, and so leads to their conversion. The devotedness of our Blessed Lord to sinners transfers a peculiar feeling to the hearts of His

servants. And, when the offenders come to repent, the mark of divine predilection in the great grace they are receiving is a thing more to admire, and revere, and love, than the sin is a thing to hate in connection with the sinner. In all reformatory institutions it is the want of a supernatural respect for sinners which is the cause of failure, the abundance of it which is the cause of success. When our Lord strove to convert, it was always by kind looks, by loving words, by an indulgence which appeared to border upon laxity. He did not convert by rebuking. He rebuked Herod and the Pharisees just because He did not vouchsafe to try to convert them. Because He let them alone, therefore he spoke sharply to them. Such were the feelings of our Blessed Lady in the view of sin, which this dolor brought before her. She was not angry with men. She loved them, and was in her heart so pitiful to them that she seemed rather to think their lot a hard one than a guilty one. Her love for them rose with the measure of their sins, just as the fulness of our Lord's time seems to have been the fulness of the world's iniquity. However much their sins widened, her love was always wider. There is scarcely any thing in which the instincts of sanctity are more peculiar than the view which a holy heart takes of sinners. It testifies more unerringly than any thing else to secret communion with Jesus, to deep, tender union with God, and to the right apprehension as well as the happy infection of the Sacred Heart. It is always the contemplative saints who have loved sinners best, even more than the active saints who were wearing out their lives to convert them. Is this the reason why

the contemplative element is an essential ingredient in a complete apostle?

But this dolor contains also many lessons for ourselves. In fact, the Residence in Egypt is a complete picture of the way in which God, our Blessed Lord, the Blessed Sacrament, the faith, and the saints, are in the world. There is the life of common things made wonderful by an interior spirit. There is the company of Mary and Joseph. There are the three evangelical sisters, labor, poverty, and detachment. There is the mysterious hiddenness, with apparently nothing to hide under. There is the exile, and an Egyptian exile. There is the love of God in supreme sovereignty. And finally, there is our Lord in the world as a little Child; and so is the invisible God, despite the blaze of His perfections, in His own creation; and so is our Lord also still, in His Church and Holy See, despite of all its triumphs; and so is the Blessed Sacrament, notwithstanding all the luminous theology which has been written about it, and so is the faith, in the jostling interests and grandeurs of modern civilization, despite of its old historic conquests and its present daily propagation; and so are the saints, down in the hollows of life, where publicity cannot find them out, despite the miracles they work. They are all in the world as little children. We, too, are part of the picture. There is the mighty Nile, "lashing through old hushed Egypt like a dream." There are the pyramids, the monuments of pagan greatness. There are the sandy wilds, the rich loamy fields, which the inundation annually renews, the palm-groves, and the many-colored life of the Oriental

bazaar, and Jesus, Mary, Joseph, somewhere. The allegory is complete. Such is the world, such is our native land, to us. God is hidden in it. All is awkward and foreign to us, though it is native; for grace has made aliens of us after a strange fashion. Patiently we wait to do God's work, counting the years. One will come which will be the last. It will bear us home, and drop us at His feet; and as we have been all for God in our exile, so God will be all to us in our eternal home. Blessed be His mercy! it was unloving to say that; for is He not all to us already?

But, besides the lesson which the allegory itself contains, there are others which we must lay to heart. We must learn first of all to sympathize with Jesus, especially in the sufferings which we ourselves have caused Him. Religion is a personal love of God, the sincerity of which is attested by our obedience. It is the love which is the soul, the value, the significance of it all. To be truly religious, our souls must live in a peculiar atmosphere of their own, a charmed atmosphere, which the world cannot breathe in and therefore cannot break through. We must be unable to breathe out of an atmosphere of prayer. The soul must have a world of hopes and fears of its own, its own set of tastes and sympathies, instincts and forbodings of its own, its own gravitations and repulsions. It will not do merely to believe a number of doctrines, or to keep certain commandments. These things are essential; but they do not make up the whole. They are the flesh and the blood, but the soul is love. Now, the chief way in which we create this charmed atmosphere

around ourselves is by devotion to the mysteries of our Blessed Lord. Mary sanctified herself in this dolor by sympathy with Jesus. The venerable Joanna of Jesus and Mary, a Franciscaness, when she was meditating on our Lord's Flight into Egypt, suddenly heard a great noise, like the running and clashing of armed men pursuing some one, and presently she saw a beautiful little boy, panting with fatigue, and running up to her at the top of his speed, crying, O Joanna! help Me and hide Me. I am Jesus of Nazareth, flying from sinners, who wish to kill Me, and who persecute Me as Herod did; I beseech you, save Me! The grand thing at which we must aim is to bring it to pass that our Lord's mysteries, His Passion and Childhood especially, should be continually in our thoughts. They should not be in the least like some past history, about which we may feel poetical or sentimental, or have favorite views. But they should be as if they were living, contemporaneous, going on perpetually before our eyes, and in which we ourselves are actors. This is the difference between the mysteries of the Incarnate Word in the New Testament and the glorious manifestations of God in the Old Testament. These last are our lessons; the first are our life. They do not simply remain written there and shine. They live, they put forth attractions, they give power, they hold grace, they transform. The vitality of the Incarnation has gone into them. Here is the secret reason of the preference of the Old Testament over the New, which is so congenial to the temper of heresy. They, who have no Blessed Sacrament, and have dethroned Mary,