

Alas! many words are not needed. Besides, what words could they be? To Mary's heart, to Mary's holiness, to Mary's dolor, each minute of those hours was longer than sheaves of centuries bound together in some one secular revolution of the system of the world. Each separate mystery, each blow of the scourging, each fragment of action or suffering which we can detach from the mass, was far, far away of more value, import, size, reality, than if at each moment a new universe, with all its immeasurable starriness, had been called out of nothing, and peopled with beings more beautiful than angels. It is as if the course of all nature were quickened, and time accelerated, and all things bidden to take the speed of thought, and flash onward to the end which God appointed. Like the fearfulness of some gigantic machinery to a child, so to our eyes is the vision of our Lady's holiness, cleaving its way, like some colossal orb in terrific velocity, through the darkness, and the blasphemy, and the blood. Can her soul be the same which left Bethany only yesterday afternoon? The saint in his beaming glory, and the white-faced, querulous sick man on his dying bed, are not further apart than the Mother of yesterday and the Mother of to-day, apart, yet cognizably the same. She has reached the point of the fourth dolor. She is ready now to meet Jesus with the Cross.

St. John, at length, returns to the house with the news of the sentence, and other information. Our dearest Mother, broken-hearted, yet beaming as with divine light in her tranquility, prepares to leave the house with Magdalen and the apostle. The latter, by

his knowledge of the city, will lead her to the end of a street, where she can meet Jesus on His road to Calvary. But has she strength for such a meeting? Not of her own; but she has as much strength to meet Him as He has to travel by that road. For she has Himself within her, the unconsumed species of the Blessed Sacrament. It is only with Jesus that we can any of us meet Jesus. It was so with her. We take Him in Viaticum, and then go to meet Him as our Judge. She took Him, in a strange sense, in Viaticum, and went to meet Him as condemned, and on His way to death. It was that unconsumed Blessed Sacrament, which had carried her through the superhuman broken-heartedness of the last twelve or fifteen hours. If that marvellous conjecture be true, as we think it is not, that it was at the moment when the species of the Blessed Sacrament were consumed in Himself, that our Lord cried out, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? we can estimate the strength that sweet Sacrament was to her now.

Everywhere the streets are thronged with multitudes setting in one tide to Calvary. Heralds at the corners of the streets blow their harsh trumpets, and proclaim the sentence to the people. Mary draws her veil around her. John and the Magdalen lean their broken hearts on hers, for they are faint and sick. What a journey for a Mother! She hardly takes note of the streets, but with their shadows they fling into her soul dim memories of the Pasch twenty-one years ago, and the three bitter days that followed it. She has taken her place, silent and still. She does not even tremble. Some tears flow as if spontaneously from her eyes.

But her cheeks are red? Yes,—her tears were blood. The procession comes in sight; the tall horse of the centurion shows first, and leads the way. The trumpet sounds with a wailing clangor. The women look from the lattices above. She sees the thieves, the crosses, every thing,—and yet only one thing, Himself. As He draws nigh, the peace of her heart grows deeper. It could not help it; God was approaching, and peace went before Him. Never had maternal love sat on such a throne as that one in Mary's heart. The anguish was unutterable. God, who knows the number of the sands of the sea, knows it. Now Jesus has come up to her. He halts for a moment. He lifts the one hand that is free, and clears the blood from His eyes. Is it to see her? Rather, that she may see Him, His look of sadness, His look of love. She approaches to embrace Him. The soldiers thrust her rudely back. Oh, misery! and she is His Mother too! For a moment she reeled with the push, and then again was still, her eyes fixed on His, His eyes fixed on hers; such a link, such an embrace, such an outpouring of love, such an overflow of sorrow! Has he less strength than she? See! He staggers, is overweighed by the burden of the ponderous Cross, and falls with a dull dead sound upon the street, like the clank of falling wood. She sees it. The God of heaven and earth is down. Men surround Him, like butchers round a fallen beast; they kick Him, beat Him, swear horrible oaths at Him, drag Him up again with cruel ferocity. It is His third fall. She sees it. He is her Babe of Bethlehem. She is helpless. She cannot get near. Omnipotence held her heart fast. In

a peace far beyond man's understanding, she followed slowly on to Calvary, Magdalen and John beside themselves with grief, but feeling as if grace went out from her blue mantle enabling them also to live with broken hearts. The fourth dolor is accomplished; but alas! we only see the outside of things.

Although this dolor seems to be but one step in the Passion, it has nevertheless strongly-marked peculiarities of its own. The fact of its having been selected by the Church as one of the seven sorrows of Mary implies that it has a significancy belonging to itself. To our Blessed Lady it was the actual advent of a long-dreaded evil. It was the fulfilment of a vision which had been before her, sleeping and waking, for years. It is the first of her dolours which stands clear of the mysteries of the Infancy, and belongs to the second constellation of her griefs, those of the Passion. There is a peculiar suffering of its own in the coming of a misfortune which we have long been expecting. There is such a thing as the unpreparedness of extreme preparation. We have imagined everything beforehand. We have tried to feel the very place where we were sure the blow would fall, and to harden it beforehand. We have placed the circumstances all round about the sorrow just in the order and position which is our liking. We have thought over and over again what we would think, what we would say, what we would do. We have practised the attitude in which we intend to receive the blow. We have left nothing unthought of, nothing unprovided for. We have made up our minds to it. It is before us like a picture, and, though there has been no little suffering

in the anticipation, familiarity has almost taken the sting out of our sorrow before it comes. And then it comes. Oh, the cruel waywardness of the evil! It has not observed a single one of our many rubrics. It has come by the wrong road, at the wrong hour, with the wrong weapon, struck us in the wrong place, and borne no similarity, not even a distant family resemblance, to the romance of woe for which we had prepared ourselves. It has taken us unawares. It has disconcerted us utterly. We feel almost more wronged by this, than by the evil in itself.

Moreover, the tension of mind and body, to which we have strung ourselves up for endurance, renders us peculiarly susceptible of pain, and disables us from bearing it one-half so heroically as we had resolved. There are many men, who can meet punishment and death bravely, if it comes at the appointed hour; but if it is deferred, the powers of the soul, which had knit themselves up for the occasion, fall away, and disperse, and often become soft with almost an effeminate softness. And yet to us ordinary mortals, as the poet has justly said, "all things are less dreadful than they seem;" whereas in the case of our Blessed Lady's sorrows the realities far outstripped the most ample expectations. They fulfilled to the uttermost the cruel pains which were foreseen, and brought many with them likewise, as if tokens of their presence, for which no allowance could have been made even in the clearest prevision granted to her. The sorrow, that had been queening it over all other sorrows for three-and-thirty years, had now met her at last, in the streets of Jerusalem. It came to do its

work for God, and it did it, as God's instruments always do, superabundantly.

Even with our Blessed Lady there is a great difference between sight and foresight, between reality and imagination. There is a vividness which could never be foreseen. There is the unexpectedness of the way in which the circumstances are grouped. There is a withdrawal of that medium of time and unfulfilment, which before existed between the soul and its sorrow, and which made it less harsh and galling in its pressure. Besides which, there is a life, an announcement, an individuality in the actual contact of the misfortune, which belongs to each misfortune by itself, is inseparable from it, and is unshared by any other sorrow whatsoever. It may be called the personality of the sorrow. Alas! we all know it well enough, in our degree. Many a time it has driven us to extremities. It is always the unbearable part of what we have to bear. It needs not to have lived a long life to be able to say from our own experience that there is no sameness in sorrow; likenesses there are, but not identities. We have never had two griefs alike. Each had its own character, and it was with its character that it hurt us most. So it was with our dearest Mother. Her sorrows, when they lay unborn in her mind, were hard to bear; but when they sprang to life, and leaped from her mind, and with Simeon's sword clove her heart asunder, they were different things, as different as waking is from sleeping, or life from death.

There was another aggravation of her grief in this dolor in the knowledge that the sight of her increased

our Lord's sufferings. In the preceding dolor He had been, as it were, her executioner; now she was His. Which was the hardest to bear? Is there any loving mother who would not rather receive pain from her son, than cause it to him? What must this feeling have been in Mary, who transcended all maternal excellence in the fondness and devotedness of her deep love? What must it have been to her whose Son was God? Each outrage which had been offered to Him, each stripe which had fallen upon His Sacred Flesh, had been torture to her beyond compare. She had been penetrated with horror as she thought of the cruelty and the sacrilege of which all, priests, judges, soldiers, executioners, people, had been guilty who had taken part in these atrocities. And behold! she herself was one of the number. She was adding to His load. She was more than doubling the weight of that heavy cross He was carrying. The sight of her face at the corner of that street had been worse a thousand times than the terrible scourging at the pillar. It was her face which had thrown Him down upon the ground in that third fall. What name can we give to a sorrow such as this? The records of human woe furnish us with no parallel to it which would not dishonor the subject. Some have spoken of the meeting between Sir Thomas More and his daughter in the streets of London. But what is the result of the allusion? Only to take the beauty and the pathos out of that touching English scene, without reaching the level of the sorrow we are speaking of, or reaching it only to degrade it. It was part of the necessity which was laid on Mary. She was to be

her Son's executioner, and, in the pain she inflicted, the cruellest of them all. This fourth dolor was the first exercise of her dreadful office. It was new to her; for she had never given Him pain before. But it was the Will of God, that Will which is always sweet in its extremest bitterness, always amiable when flesh and blood and mind are shrinking aghast from the embrace it is throwing round them. It was that Will which headed the procession to Calvary, that Will which was waiting on Calvary like a luminous cloud, that Will which was a crown of thorns round the brow of Jesus, and a Cross upon His shoulders, and a sword in His Mother's heart, and His Mother's heart a sword in His. Had ever saint such a Divine Will to conform to as Mary had? Had ever saint such conformity to any Divine Will he ever encountered? She is going up to Calvary, in brave tranquility, to help to slay the Babe of Bethlehem.

There was another grief also in this dolor, which was new to her, and caused in her heart in an incomparable degree the acute pain which the sight of sacrilege causes to the saints. She saw Him in the hands of others who could touch Him and come near Him, while she was kept far off. How she longed to wipe the blood from His face with her veil, to part His tangled hair, to remove with lightest touch that cruel crown, to lift the Cross off His shoulders and see whether her broken heart would not give her superhuman strength to carry it for Him! Oh, there were countless ministries in which a mother's hand was needed by that dear Victim of our sins! And think of the plenitude of the rights she had over Him,

more than any mother over any son since the world began! He had acknowledged them Himself. He had made her assert them openly in the temple. But these men knew no more of the Mother of God than poor heretics do. Moreover, they who had trampled her Son under foot would have made but little scruple of her rights. In the times of Bethlehem and Egypt it had been her joy to touch Him, in the performance of her maternal office. Her love had risen so high, that it could find no vent except in breathless reverence, and it was the touch of His Sacred Body which hushed her soul with that thrill of reverence. Saints at the altar have exulted with the Blessed Sacrament in their hands, till they rose up from the predella in the light air, and swayed to and fro, like a bough in summer, with the palpitations of their ecstasy. How many times must we multiply that joy to reach Mary's! She had only not grudged Joseph the embraces of her Child, because she loved him with the holiest transports of conjugal affection, and best satisfied her love by giving him his turn with Jesus. The novelty had never worn off. The joy had never become thinner from use. The reverence only grew more reverent from custom. The thought of it came back to her now, and the waves of grief beat up against her heart as if they would have washed it away. She had seen the filthy hands of the public executioner grasping His neck and shoulder. She had seen the miry foot of some sinful soldier spurning His bruised flesh. She had seen them brutally knock the wooden cross against His blessed head, and drive the spikes of the thorns still farther in. St. Catherine

of Genoa had to be supported by God, lest she should die when He showed her in vision the real malice of a venial sin. What if, with her eyes thus spiritually couched, she had beheld the malice which can trample the Blessed Sacrament under foot in the sewers of the street? The love of a whole Christian land will rise with one emotion to make reparation for a sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament. They who have been but too indifferent to their own sins will then afflict themselves with fasting, and impair their own comforts by abundant alms. It is the instinct of faith's loyalty, and of the love which lies in reality, however appearances may be against it, at the bottom of every believing heart. In truth, the feeling of sacrilege is like bodily pain. It is as if we were being cruelly handled ourselves. Holy people, both religious and seculars, have offered their lives to God in reparation of a sacrilege, and have rejoiced when He deigned to accept the offering. To die for the Blessed Sacrament,—that would be a sweet end, glorious also, but more sweet than glorious, because it would so satisfy our love! But the sacrilege that day in the streets of Jerusalem! Mary's woe is simply unimaginable. She would have died a thousand deaths to have made reparation. Ah, but, dearest Mother! thou must live, which to thee is worse far than death, and thy life must be thy reparation! All the evils which others find in death thou findest in life, and many more beside. To thee it would be as great a joy, as all thy seven dolours all together were a sorrow, if thou mightst not outlive three o'clock that Friday afternoon. But there is a bar between thee and

death,—a whole omnipotence. So thou must be contented, as thou ever art, and envy the accepted thief, and for our sakes consent to live!

There was also in this dolor a return of one of the worst sufferings of the Flight into Egypt, only now it was in a higher degree than then. It was terror. We always look at Mary as something very near to God, even though infinitely far off, as the nearest creature needs must be. It is a good habit, because it is the truth. But we must not forget that her heart was always eminently feminine. Fancy the sea of wild faces into which she looked in those crowded streets. Wild beasts in the desert would have been less dreadful. Every passion was glaring out of those ferocious eyes, rendered more horrible by their human intelligence mingled with the inhuman fiery stare of diabolical possession. A multitude, with the women, possibly the children, all athirst for blood, raving after it, yelling for it as only a maddened populace can yell. It was a very vent of hell, that voice of theirs, a concourse of the most appalling sounds, of rage, and hate, and murder, and blasphemy, and imprecation, and of that torturing fire in their own hearts which those passions had fiercely lighted up. The sights and sounds thrilled through her with agonies of fear. She was alone, unsheltered, uncompanied. For she was the companion to John and Magdalen; they were not companions to her. Oh for the loneliness of the desert, and its invisible panic, so much better to bear than this surging multitude of possessed men! They touch her, they speak to her, they jostle her. Visible by her blue mantle, she floats about on the billows of

that tossing crowd, like a piece of wreck on the dark weltering waters of a storm. And she is apart from Jesus. He is perishing in the waves of that turbulent people. He is engulfed. She can stretch out no hand to save Him. The Mother of the Maccabees looked bravely on the fearful pomps and cruel pageants of the legal injustice which was to make her childless, and her name justly lives, embalmed in sacred history, and, still more, in Christian hearts. But those faces and those cries,—earth never saw, never heard, any thing so terrible; the demon-maddened creatures howling over their conquered God! And to Mary it had such reality, such significance, as it could have to no one else. Surely the suffering of fear was never more intensely felt by any creature than it was by her on that Friday; and the many bitter chalice she had drunk during the preceding night and all that morning rendered her, in the ordinary course of things, less able to bear up against this violent assault of terror. Her fear was not so much for herself; it was for Him. Her fear, as well as her love, was in His Heart rather than in her own. The knowledge that He was God only deepened her terror. It was just that very thing which made the horror of the scene unsurpassed by any other the world had ever known, or ever could know again. The day of doom will be less terrible than Good Friday was. Nay, it is the fearfulness of Good Friday which will make the pomp of the last judgment so endurable, so calm, so full of reverent sweetness. O Mother! that day will pay thee back the terror of to-day; for thou wilt see thy Son in all the placid grandeur of His hu-

man glory, with those beaming Wounds illuminating the whole circle of the astonished earth, and thou wilt return from the valley of Josaphat with a family of other sons, that can be counted only by millions of millions, to be thine eternal possession in heaven, won for thee only by the dread mysteries of this great Friday!

As we have said before, it belonged to the perfection of Mary's heart that one ingredient of her sorrow did not absorb or neutralize another. She felt each of them as completely as if it were simply the whole sorrow. It possessed her with an undistracted possession. Each feature was as if it were the entire countenance, the full face, of each dolor, and it looked into her heart as if it, and it alone, expressed the fulness of the mystery. Thus her terror did not kill any other of the afflicting circumstances of this fourth dolor. As it did not perturb her peace, so neither did it confuse her feelings or blunt her susceptibilities. This is always one of the peculiarities of Mary's griefs which puts them beyond the reach of parallels. Thus it was an additional sorrow to her on the present occasion that, except St. John, the apostles were not following their Master to His end. The graces of each one of them came upon her mind. She revolved the peculiarities of the vocation of each, and all the minute tenderness and generous forbearance on the part of Jesus to which it testified. She saw the words of eternal wisdom pouring for those three years into their souls, in the communication of the sublimest truths, in the pathetic kindness of affectionate admonitions. She saw how omnipotence had placed itself in

their hands in the gift of miracles. They, like her, only for fewer years, had fed upon the beautiful grace of Jesus. They knew the marvellous expressions of His venerable face. The tones of His voice were familiar to them. The touch of His hands, the look of His eye, the very significance of His loving silence, all was known to them. They had been drawn within the ring of its attractions. It had been to them a new birth, a new life, an anticipated heaven. To use our Lord's phrase, they had gone into their mother's womb again, and had been born anew of Mary, brothers of Jesus, resemblances of Jesus. She knew that, next to the dignity of being the Mother of God, the world could have no vocation so high as that of being apostles of the Word. Eternal Wisdom had come to earth, and of all its millions He was to choose but twelve, who should know His secrets, who should reflect Him, perpetuate Him, hold His powers in vessels of flesh, and accomplish the work He had begun. They were more than angels; for no angels ever bore such messages to mankind, except the secret annunciation of Gabriel to the Divine Mother. They were kings as none ever were before; for they were not only to conquer the entire earth, but their thrones of judgment are set up round His in heaven. No blood of martyrs was more precious in their Master's sight than theirs. No doctors have ever attained to their science. No virgins have equalled their purity, whether it were the purity of innocence or the purity of penance. No confessors have ever confessed as much, or confessed it more bravely. No bishops have used the keys more liberally, more discreetly, more blamelessly than