

they. No sovereign pontiff will let himself be called by Peter's name, because none else has worn the world's tiara so gloriously or so meekly as he. And these other Christs, gleaming with gifts, enriched with graces, the wide world's special souls, the new paradise which God had planted,—where were they now? Peter was in his lurking-place on Olivet, weeping bitterly over his fall. He went to Calvary only in his Master's heart and in Mary's. His love was not like hers. He could not bear to see the sufferings of Him whom he loved far more than the others loved Him. The very penitent shame of his fall made him less able to bear so great a sorrow. The rest were hidden. They had fled from Gethsemane, and were dispersed, the prey of grief, uncertainty, and pity, the strength of love dubiously contending with the timidities of despair. They have left Jesus to tread the winepress alone. When He is risen, He will meet them with the old love, with more than the old love, and they will hear no word of reproach from His sweet voice, and they will see no look of reproach in the deserted Mother's eye. Only John is there, drawn by His Saviour's love of Him rather than urged by his own love of Jesus.

The absence of the apostles was a keen aggravation of Mary's sorrow. It was a triple wound to her. It wounded her in her love of Jesus. She knew how deep the wound was which it made in His Sacred Heart. She saw how, far beyond the cruel scourging and the barbarous coronation, Her beloved was tormented by this cruel abandonment of Him by those whom He had loved beyond the rest of men. She

could go near to fathoming the anguish which this was causing Him. Moreover, her own love of Him underwent a cruel martyrdom in seeing Him thus deserted, and by those whose very office should have taken them to Calvary, who should have been witnesses of His Crucifixion as well as of His Resurrection. There was something unexpected in it, although it was fore-known. So it always is with ingratitude. It is a knife with so sharp an edge, that we cannot help but start when it cuts us, however long and bitterly it has been anticipated. We excuse much to men who think, even though it be mistakenly, that they have been the victims of ingratitude; and thus we acknowledge the agony of the smart. But it wounded her also in herself. Her own love of the apostles made her value their love of her. It was true love, it was intense love. She knew it. Then why was John only with her in that encounter with her cross-laden Son, in that melancholy pilgrimage to Calvary? A broken heart like hers could spare no love which rightly belonged to it; and when the love of Jesus toward her was working bitterness in her soul rather than consolation, she could the less afford to do without such love as would simply be a joy, a rest, a consolation. But she must not expect it. It is her place to console, not to be consoled. Her Son came to minister, not to be ministered to. She must participate in the same sublime office. She must empty her own heart of consolation, and pour it all out upon the rest, keeping for herself what is not only specially her own, but what none else are able to receive,—the untold weight of her exceeding sorrow. It would have been

somewhat easier to have gone up to Calvary with the apostles round her. And yet for their sakes she was content to have John alone, content the others should be spared what it would so overwhelm them to behold. But their absence inflicted yet a third wound upon her heart, in the love which she herself bore to the apostles. Their weakness was a cruel sorrow to her love, and yet it strove with the sorrow that they should be suffering so much as that very weakness implied. She grieved, also, because one day it would so grieve them that they had not been with Jesus to the last. She mourned, likewise, because they lost so much in after-thought by not having witnessed those appalling mysteries. There was not a varying sorrow in the heart of any one of them which she did not take into her own. For they had come to her in the place of Joseph, and she poured out on them the love she had poured out on him. He had been with her in her three first dolours; why were they absent from her fourth? And a gush of marvellous, unavailing love to her departed spouse broke from the fountains of her heart as she asked herself the question. Oh, how wonderful are the ingenuities of suffering which love causes in the heart!

But Judas was almost a dolor by himself. We learn, from the revelations of the saints, how she had striven in prayer for that wretched soul. She had lavished all manner of kindness on him, as if he had been more to her than either Peter or John. She had watched with unspeakable horror the gradual steps by which he had been led on to the consummation of his treachery. She had seen how sensitively the Heart of

Jesus shrank from this cruel sin, and how many scourgings would have gone to make up the sum of pain which the traitor's single kiss had burned in upon His blessed lips. For a while it appeared as if Judas had been even more to her than Jesus, so had she occupied herself at that awful season to rescue the falling apostle, and to hinder that tremendous sin. Moreover, none could know so truly as herself the immensity of that sin, and the whole region of God's fair glory which it desolated. She saw it in the Heart of Jesus. It was as if she had been an eyewitness of the fall of Lucifer from the heights of heaven to the inconceivable lowness of that abyss which is now his miserable and accursed home. Terrible as was the thought that an apostle could betray her Son, it seemed even yet more injurious to His honor that, although Judas should have stained himself with so black a crime, he should yet despair of mercy and doubt the infinity of his Master's love. She had lost a soul. She had lost one of her little company. Jesus was not the first son she was to lose. That grand apostolic soul, decked with gifts like a whole angelic kingdom, crowned with the splendors of earth's most beautiful vocation, canonized by the especial choice and outpoured love of Jesus, was gone, gone down in the most frightful hopeless wreck. Even Mary had some things to learn. This was her first lesson in the loss of souls. If we were more like saints, we should know something of what it meant. The Passion began by losing an apostle's soul, and ended by saving the soul of a poor outcast thief. Such are the ways in which God takes His compensations.

But we have to add physical horrors now to the agonies of mind and heart. They begin in this dolor, and are among its most marked peculiarities. There are few persons who have ever read a book on the Passion, from which they would not wish something to be left out. This is not from the weakness of their faith, but from the fastidiousness of a natural taste, which has not yet been fully refined by the supernatural love, whose one object St. Paul so significantly divides into two, Jesus Christ *and* Him Crucified. Truly penitent love would not shrink from the contemplation of those dread realities which the Son of God condescended to undergo for us, and into the horrors of which our own sins drove Him. When adoration cannot swallow up sentimentality, or invest it with a new character, it is a sign that we are wanting in a true sense of sin as well as a true love of our Blessed Lord. It is not well with a soul when it averts its inward eye from the crucifixion, and fixes it on the secret mental agony of Gethsemane, because the three hours of the one are free from the frightful atrocities of the three hours of the other. Reverence will not allow us to deal thus either with our Saviour's Passion or with our Lady's dolours. Her broken heart was surfeited with physical horrors. It was part of her sanctification. She pressed her way through them all that day, steeling her shrinking nature. She would not have missed one of them for all the world.

It was a dreadful thing for a mother to walk the streets over her own son's blood. It was fearful to have her own feet reddened by the Precious Blood, and the loss of Judas fresh in her afflicted soul. She

saw the crimson track which Jesus had left behind. The multitude were mixing it up with the mud, which it tinged with a dull hue. It was on their shoes, and upon their garments. It went up the steps of their doorways. It splashed up the legs of the centurion's horse. No one cared for it. No heart was touched. None suspected the heavenly mystery, at which angels were gazing in silent stupor. Mary too must tread upon it. It was sorrow almost literally trampling its own heart under foot. She must tread on that which she was worshipping. That which colored the street-mud, which blotched the paving-stones, which clung, half wet and half dry, to the garments of the multitude, was hypostatically united to the Godhead. It merited the plenitude of divine worship. Mary was adoring it at every step. There was not a spot tinged with that dull red, not a garment laid by that night in a clothes-press with those spots upon it, over which crowds of angels were not stooping, and would remain to guard it till the moment of the Resurrection. Surely this is unutterable woe, over which the heart should spread itself in silence only.

In this dolor also we must notice particularly, what has been observed before, the union in Mary of horror of sin with intense anguish because of the misfortune of sinners. She saw some who were handling our Lord or shouting after Him, in completest ignorance, without so much as a suspicion of the dreadful work in which they were engaged. They were obdurate sinners, hardened by ungodliness, who sinned almost as they would breathe the air or move their limbs. All ignorance of God was pain to her, now especially

that souls were beginning to belong to her. But the ignorance of a seared conscience was a grief too deep for tears, a phenomenon she would have longed should not exist upon the face of God's weary earth. How dark it was! how hopeless! Even now Eternal Truth was looking it in the face, and, alas! only blinding it! Then there were others whose malice was more intelligent, who were consciously satisfying some evil passion, hatred of purity perhaps, or the spite of untruthfulness against truth, or the envy which meekness always excites when it is very heavenly and heroic, or political vengeance, or the long-treasured anger against one who had reproved them, or the mere love of cruelty, and the excitement of human fury which the smell of blood causes in men as in beasts. All this she saw. She trembled at the horror of the vision. She was heart-stricken by the thought of Him, the gentle blameless One, against whom all this was concentrated. She was pierced also by the sharpest anguish from the love of the very sinners themselves. She would not have called fire down from heaven, as James and John were fain to do upon the Samaritan village. She craved not for judgments. She would have deprecated with all the might of her holiest impetrations the advent of a destroying angel. She must have those souls. She has lost Judas. She claims consolation. Into those dark minds the light of faith shall be poured. Over those blood-stained souls more Blood, more of the same Blood, shall flow, but it shall be in gentlest fertilizing absolutions. On those blaspheming tongues the Blessed Sacrament shall lie. She will travail in pain with them till they

are born again in Christ. So she too goes up to Calvary with a work to do. Look well at her heart! She will accomplish it. There are few things the sanctity of human sorrow cannot do. God seems to treat it as a power almost coequal with Himself. But here in our Blessed Mother, what sanctity! what sorrow!

Then, as if the very contrast had called it forth, there rose up before her the most vivid vision of the beautiful Infancy. It was true that from the very first her life had been dismantled by an enduring sorrow. Nevertheless how peaceful and how sweet seemed the old days at Nazareth, and even the cool evening airs on the brink of the distant Nile, compared with the violence and noise and bloodshed of this fearful Passion! Then, when her arms were round Him, she had pressed at once her sorrow and her love to her bosom. She had held quiet colloquies with Him. He belonged only to her, for Joseph was most truly a second self. Now she had given Him away, not in thought only, not in the tranquility of a heroic intention, but in reality. He was not only in the hands of others, but He was taken from hers. Any one could come near Him, except herself. She alone had lost her rights. Every action of the Holy Childhood came before her, and found its bitter contrast in the scene that was then enacting in the streets of Jerusalem. She thought how she had washed Him, clothed Him, given Him food, nursed Him to sleep, and knelt down and worshipped Him when He was asleep, though she knew well He could see her even then. Every one of those things found their opposites

with dreadful accuracy in the Way of the Cross. Earth, and blood, and shameful spittings defiled His face and hands and feet. His hair, from which handfuls had been pulled, was clotted, entangled, and deranged. His tunic clung painfully to the half-congealed blood of His wounds. Alas for those baths of His childhood and the reverent ministries of His loving Mother! We shall come to them again in the sixth dolor, and then how changed the circumstances! They have once torn His garments from the wounds, and made them bleed afresh. They will do so again at the top of Calvary. It was not thus she had undressed Him in the quiet sanctuary of Nazareth. He had had no food but the sins of men, and a very feast of ignominy, since the evening before. He was worn with want of sleep, but will never sleep again now. She thought of tears which ran silently down His cheeks in the days of His Childhood. Why should they not have redeemed the world, and washed all sin away, seeing their worth was infinite? Oh, how busy memory was in that hour with its comparisons and its contrasts! and there was not one which did not heighten the misery of the present. Could she be a mere mortal to go up to Calvary with a will nestling so tranquilly alongside of the will of God, with a heart broken to pieces, yet out of whose rents not one breath of her peacefulness had been allowed to escape? Yes! she was mortal, but she was also the Mother of the Eternal, and loving hearts alone know how those two things contradict each other, and yet are true together.

Such was the fourth dolor. Let us now examine

the dispositions in which she endured it. First of all, there was the unretracted generosity of the oblation she had made. Amid the multitude of thoughts, which in all her sorrows passed through her mind, her will lay still. So completely was she clothed in holiness from head to foot, that it never so much as occurred to her to think that the load might be lightened, or the pangs mitigated, or the circumstances be more tolerably disposed. When we have committed ourselves to God, we have committed ourselves to more than we know. John had not reckoned on the long years of weary waiting in the exile of life, when he said he could drink his Master's cup. So is it with all of us. We find that what God really exacts from us is more than we seemed to be promising. The more He loves us, the more exacting does He become. He treats us as if we were more royal-hearted than we are, and by His grace He makes us so. Our Lady knew more of the length and breadth and depth of her oblation than any one else had ever done. It was this which made her lifelong sorrow so much more real and intense than the mere foresight of a prophet or a saint. Nevertheless, even she probably, though she knew all, did not realize all. Probably she could not compress into a vision, no matter how piercingly clear, that slow pressure which the lapse of time lays upon a sorrowing heart. Thus in its totality, in the disposition of its circumstances, in the combination of its peculiarities, in their united pressure, and in the long years of their endurance, as well as the actual impressions of the senses, her sorrow was not more than she meant

to promise, because she meant to promise all, she meant herself to be a holocaust, a *whole* burnt-offering to the Lord, but it might be more than she realized at the moment that she promised. She was a creature. We need to be reminded of that, because the magnificence of her sanctity so often makes us almost forget it. St. Denys said he should hardly have known her to be a mere creature, if he had not been told.

Now, this consideration renders still more wonderful the unretracted generosity of her offering. If she was not taken by surprise in any of her sufferings, she felt new things coming upon her. She was sinking into depths deeper than had been revealed to her. The actual horror of the present shut out some of the light, which had lighted her down the abysses, when she had explored them in mental anguish only. Yet she went on in tranquility. God was welcome to it all, welcome to more if His omnipotence should see fit to anneal her heart to bear a stronger heat. She had cried out once. It was an awful moment. It was in the great temple of the nation, before the doctors of her people. But her Creator Himself had wrung it from her, partly because He yearned to load her with another world of graces, and partly because He loved to hear it, seeing that it worshipped Him so wonderfully. Job sanctified himself by the patience of his complaining. Low as we are, how imitable the virtue of Job seems by the side of Mary's generous endurance! Even great saints have begun to sink, when called, like Peter, to walk upon the waters. As to ourselves, even in our little sorrows, how hard it is to

keep to God, and not to turn aside, and lie down, and rest our heads on the lap of creatures, and bid them whisper consolations in our ear, as a respite to us for a while from the oppression of God's vicinity! What does our perseverance look like at best but a running fight between grace and time, the one to win which chances, for it seems a chance, to have struck the last blow when the death-bell sounds? But are not those saints the most indulgent to others who have been the most austere to themselves? Is it not ever the unmortified who are the critical? Do not they always stoop lowest who have to stoop from the greatest heights? So will Mary be all the better mother for us in the dust in which we creep, frightened, shrinking, and despairing, because of the sublimities of that generosity of hers, which is always above the clouds, always with the eternal sunshine on its brow.

We must observe also the firm hand which our Blessed Lady kept upon her grief. Amid the jostling of the crowd, she seemed as if she were impassible. There was not a gesture or a movement which betrayed the slightest interior emotion. When they repulsed her from Jesus, and barbarously interposed between the embrace of the Mother and the Son, there was no impatience in her manner, no resentment on her countenance, no expostulation on her lips. She possessed her soul perfectly. The movements of the Blessed in the visible presence of God in heaven could not be more regulated than were hers. St. Ambrose has dwelt at length upon this excellence of hers. Yet we must not conceive of our Blessed Mother, as of a coldly graceful statue, never descending from her

pedestal because she was heavenly marble, and not flesh and blood. Statues have not broken hearts. This calm imperturbability of her demeanor arose from the sublimity of her holiness, which itself arose in no slight degree from the intensity of her sorrow. The excesses of her suffering were commuted into excesses of tranquility, which looked superhuman only because what is completely and perfectly and exclusively human is seen nowhere but in her. This is the picture we must always draw of our Blessed Lady. She is woman, true woman, but not mere woman. We shall sadly degrade her in our own minds, if for the sake of facility or effect we venture to exaggerate the feminine element beyond what we find it in the Gospels. It is easy to distort the image of Jesus. When men speak of His compassion to sinners, they often throw a sentimentality over the narrative, which is far removed from the calm gentleness of Scripture. They think they bring Him nearer to us by making Him as like ourselves as doctrine will allow them, and all the while they are excavating an impassable gulf between Him and us, and casting Him leagues and leagues away from us. Unfortunately this lowering process is yet more easy with Mary, for she has no divinity to save her in the long run. A merely feminine Mary is not the Mary of the Bible. Neither again is she a simple shadow of our Lord, or her mysteries a repetition of His. If we endeavor to establish any parity, even a proportionate one, between her and our Lord, we only meddle with Him without really elevating her. She had not two Natures; her Person was not divine; she was not the Redeemer of the

world; she was not clothed in our sins; the anger of the Father never directly rested upon her; her innocence was not His sinlessness; her Compassion was not His Passion; her Assumption was not His Ascension. She stands by herself. She has her own meaning, her appropriate significancy. She is a distinct vastness in God's creation. She is without a parallel. Jesus is not a parallel to her, nor she to Him. She fills up the room of a huge world in the universe of God, but the room she fills is not the room of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, nor even like to it. She is Mary. She is the Mother of God. She is herself. Near to God yet every whit a creature, sinless yet wholly human, human in person, and not divine,—in nature human only, and not divine also. They who represent her as a pale shadowy counterpart of our Blessed Lord, changing the sex and lowering the realities, miss the real grandeur of Mary as much as they miss the peculiar magnificence of the Incarnation. Thus it comes to pass that if, in order to paint her sorrows in more striking colors, we exaggerate what is feminine about her, we obtain the same result with those who insist in finding in her all manner of unequal equalities with her Son, namely, an unworthy view of her as well as an untrue one. She is more like the invisible God than like the Incarnate God. She is more accurately to be paralleled with what is purely divine than with what is human and divine together. She is a creature clothed with the eternal sun, as St. John saw her in the Apocalypse, the most perfect created transcript of the Creator. As the Hypostatic Union links Creator and creature literally

together, so Mary, the divinely perfect, pure creature, is the neck which joins on the whole body of creatures to their Divine Incarnate Head. She has her own place in the system of creation, and her own meaning. She is like no one. No one is like her. What she is most like is the Incomprehensible Creator. Thus, of the three elements into which the idea of Mary resolves itself in our minds, the feminine element, the element of the Hypostatic Union, and the divine element, it is this last which seems to control the rest, while all three are so inextricably commingled that we can detach none of them without injury to truth.

We must also not omit to mention here the union of Mary's sorrows with our Lord's. We have spoken of it before; but a new and very significant feature in this disposition of hers comes to view in the fourth dolor. There is such a gracious unity vouchsafed to us between our Blessed Lord and ourselves,—between the Redeemer and the Redeemed,—that we may, not in mere imagination or as an intellectual process of faith, unite our sufferings to His, and so make them meritorious of eternal life. It is chiefly the more excellent attainment of this union which distinguishes the saints from ourselves. Theologians have said that the great difference between the service of the Blessed in heaven and the service of the elect on earth is, that on earth the soul unites itself to God by the exercise of a variety of virtues, whereas in heaven Jesus Christ is the one virtue of the Blessed, the link which joins them to the Father. Some saints have been allowed, in a certain measure and by a very peculiar

gift, to anticipate on earth this heavenly particularity, and to be clothed in an unusual way with the very spirit of Jesus. Cardinal de Berulle was even said to have the gift of communicating this spirit in a subordinate degree to the souls which he directed. Of course no saint, nor all the saints put together, ever possessed the spirit of Jesus so nearly to identity as His Blessed Mother. Hence in all her dolors she suffered in the most unspeakable union with Him. But in this one the invisible realities of the spiritual life seem to come up to the surface, and pass into outward facts, into the actualities of external sensible life. Her sorrows and His became almost indistinguishably one,—in fact as well as feeling, in reality as well as faith, in endurance as well as love. It was His suffering which made her suffer. The way in which He suffered she suffered. His dispositions were her dispositions. Nay, it was rather in Him than in herself that she suffered. His very sufferings were her very sufferings. It was only as His that they were hers. And her sufferings made Him suffer; they were His worst sufferings. He suffered in her, as she in Him. They were exchanging hearts, or living in each other's hearts, all the while in that journey to Calvary. She seemed to have put off her personality, and to have become to Jesus a second multiplied capacity of suffering. Never was union more complete; never were the inner mystical life of the soul and the outward present life of tangible facts so identical before. We have no terms to express the union, which would not at the same time confound the Mother in the Son, and so be undoctinal, unfaithful, and untrue.