

dark, while incredible sorrow made itself coextensive with her incalculable love.

The words of Jesus on the Cross might almost have been a dolor by themselves. They were all of them more touching in themselves than any words which ever have been spoken on the earth. The incomparable beauty of our Lord's Soul freights each one of them with itself, and yet how differently! The sweetness of His Divinity is hidden in them, and for ages on ages it has ravished the contemplative souls who loved Him best. If even to ourselves these words are continually giving out new beauties in our meditations, what must they be to the saints, and then, far beyond that, what were they to His Blessed Mother? To her, each of them was a theology, a theology enrapturing the heart while it illumined the understanding. She knew they would be His last. Through life they had been but few, and now in less than two hours He will utter seven, which the world will listen to and wonder at until the end of time. To her they were not isolated. They recalled other unforgotten words. There were no forgotten ones. She interpreted them by others, and others again by them, and so they gave out manifold new meanings. Besides which, she saw the interior from which they came, and therefore they were deeper to her. But the growing beauty of Jesus had been consistently a more and more copious fountain of sorrow all through the Three-and-Thirty Years. It was not likely that law would be abrogated upon Calvary. And was there not something perfectly awful, even to Mary's eye, in the way in which His divine beauty was mastering every thing and beginning to shine out in

that eclipse? It seemed as if the Godhead were going to lay Itself bare among the very ruins of the Sacred Humanity, as His bones were showing themselves through His flesh. It was unspeakable. Mary lifted up her whole soul to its uttermost height to reach the point of adoration due to Him, and tranquilly acknowledged that it was beyond her power. Her adoration sank down into profusest love, and her love condensed under the chill shadow into an intensity of sorrow, which felt its pain intolerably everywhere as the low pulsations of His clear gentle voice rang and undulated through her inmost soul.

The thought which was nearest to our Blessed Saviour's Heart, if we may reverently venture to speak thus of Him, was the glory of His Father. We can hardly doubt that after that, chief among the affections of the created nature which He had condescended to assume, stood the love of His Immaculate Mother. Among His seven words there will be one, a word following His absolution of the thief at Mary's prayer, a double word, both to her and of her. That also shall be like a creative word, creative for Mary, still more creative for His Church. He spoke out of an unfathomable love, and yet in such mysterious guise as was fitted still more to deepen His Mother's grief. He styles her "Woman," as if He had already put off the filial character. He substitutes John for Himself, and finally appears to transfer to John His own right to call Mary Mother. How many things were there here to overwhelm our Blessed Lady with fresh affliction! She well knew the meaning of the mystery. She understood that by this seeming transfer she had been solemnly installed in her office of

second Eve, the mother of all mankind. She was aware that now Jesus had drawn her still more closely to Himself, had likened her to Himself more than ever, and had made their union more complete. The two relations of Mother and Son were two no longer; they had melted into one. She knew that never had He loved her more than now, and never shown her a more palpable proof of His love, of which, however, no proof was wanting. But each fresh instance of His love was a new sorrow to her; for it called up more love in her, and with more love, as usual, more sorrow.

But what a strange Annunciation it was, this proclamation to her of the Maternity of men, compared with the Annunciation of her Divine Maternity! The midnight hour, the silent room, the ecstatic prayer, the lowly promptitude of the consent, the swift marvel of the adorable mystery,—all these were now exchanged for the top of Calvary in the dun light of the eclipse, with her Son hanging bleeding on the Cross. Oh, what surpassing joy went with the first Motherhood, what intolerable anguish with the second! Yet while God sent His angel to make the first Annunciation, He Himself, with His sweet Human voice, condescended to make the second. But in Mary's soul there was the same tranquility, in her will the same alacrity of devout consent. When we are in deep sorrow, every action, which we are constrained to do, seems to excite and multiply our grief. Even the very movements of body disturb the stillness of the soul. An interruption, an external noise, the scene that meets the uplifted eye, these are sufficient to burst the

bounds, and throw the mass of bitter waters once more over the soul. So when Mary's whole nature rose to meet this word of Jesus, and threw itself into the consent she gave, and turned her forcibly as it were from Jesus to John, it was as if the whole anguish of the Crucifixion gained a new life, a fresh activity, a more potent bitterness, a more desolating power. The thought of Him, while it was the most terrible of all her thoughts, was also the most endurable. She felt most, when other thoughts usurped the place of that. Who has not felt this in times of mourning? He whom we have lost is our most terrible thought. Yet there is a softness, a repose, in thinking of him. The thought sustains our grief. But to think of other people, of other things, brings with it a rawness, a disquietude, an irritable dissatisfaction, an inopportune diversion, which makes our grief intolerable. So now Jesus Himself brought sinners uppermost in Mary's mind. He turned her thoughts from Himself to the Church, to His enemies, His persecutors, His murderers. He unsphered her, so to speak, from the sweet circle of her Motherhood, and placed her in the new centre of her office and official relation to mankind. For, even when He spoke to her and of her, it was still rather sinners than herself, which seemed to be uppermost in His affections. The suffering of all this was immense, worse than any other woe which that prolific morning had brought her yet. So the second hour upon the Cross elapsed, an age of wonders which ages of angelical science and seraphic contemplation cannot adequately fathom. Jesus still lived; the Blood was still flowing; the Body still grow-

ing whiter in the eclipse; the silence tingling all around, except when His beautiful words trembled lightly on the air, deepening, as it seemed, both the darkness and the silentness.

The third hour began, the third epoch in which this long dolor was working at the grand world of Mary's heart. His first word in this last hour was worse than Simeon's sword to our dearest Mother. He said, "I thirst." Well might He thirst. Since the blessed chalice of His own Blood the night before, nothing had crossed His lips but the taste of wine and gall, the pressure of the sponge with vinegar against His mouth, and His own Blood which had trickled in. Meanwhile the nails were burning like fires in His Hands and Feet; His limbs from head to foot had been scorched with the thongs and prickles of the brutal flagellation; endless thorns were sticking like spikes of flame through His skull, until His brain throbbed with the intolerable inflammation. Drop by drop His Blood had been drawn from Him, with all the moisture of His Body, and the fountains in the Heart were on the very point of failing. Surely we may well believe that there was never thirst like His. No shipwrecked sufferers have ever burned with a more agonizing thirst, or have ever pined and died with tongue and lips and throat more dry and parched, than His. Yet we know that single torture has been enough with strong men to sweep reason from its throne, and that there are few deaths men can die more horrible than death from thirst. We cannot doubt that our Blessed Lord suffered it beyond the point when without miracle death must have super-

vened. How fearful must have been the pressure of that physical suffering, which caused that silence-loving Sufferer to exclaim! If ever it was marvellous that in all her woe Mary had displayed no signs of feminine weakness, no fainting, no sobbing, no outcry, no wild gesture of uncontrollable misery, it was doubly marvellous now. Not only was this exclamation of Jesus a most heart-rending grief to her, but there came upon it that burden which human grief can never bear, and a grief of mother least of all, the feeling of impotence to allay the agony of those we love. She looked into His dying Face with a face on which death was almost as deeply imprinted as on His. She saw His parched, swollen, quivering lips, white with that whiteness of the last mortal struggle, which is like no other whiteness. But she could not reach, not even to wipe with her veil the Blood that was curdled there. It was vain, and she knew it, to appeal to the cruel men that were scattered about the mount. For a cup of cold water to those lips, through what new scenes of sorrow would she not be eager to pass! But it might not be. She remembered how He had once looked down into the cold sparkling water of Jacob's well, and longed in His fatigue and thirst for one draught of that element which He Himself had created, and then how He had forgotten both thirst and weariness in His loving labor of converting that poor Samaritan woman. But now—and it was an overwhelming thought—water was as far from the lips of the dying Saviour as it was from those of Dives in the endless fires out of which he had appealed if it were but for a single drop. No! Her

dearest Son must bear it. He has at last complained of His physical tortures. But of what use was it except to break His Mother's Heart again, and to call forth the love and adoration of countless souls through ages and ages of His Church? To Him it brought no relief. It was for our sakes that He complained, that, even at the expense of more agony to Mary, we might have one additional motive to love our Crucified Brother.

But this was not the only thirst that word was intended to convey. His Soul thirsted as feverishly for souls as His Body did for the water of the well. He brooded over all coming ages, and yearned to multiply the multitudes of the redeemed. Alas! we have approximations by which we can measure His torment of physical thirst; but we have no shadow even by which we can guess of the realities of that torment in His Soul. If the love, which the Creator has for creatures, whom He had called out of nothing, is unlike any other love either of angels or of men, if its kind is without parallel, and its degree an excess out of the reach of our conception, so also is the spiritual love of souls in the Soul of the Saviour of the world. Saving love is without similitude, as well as creative love. As all the loves of earth are but sparks of creative love so all apostolic instincts, all missionary zeal, all promptitude of martyrdom, all intercessory penance, and all contemplative intercession, are but little sparks of that saving love of which Calvary is at once the symbol and the reality. The torment of this thirst was incomparably beyond that of the other thirst. Mary saw it; and no sooner had she seen it, than the

very sight translated her, as it were, into a fresh, unexplored world of sorrow. She saw that this thirst would be almost as little satisfied as the other. She saw how Jesus at that moment was beholding in His Soul the endless procession of men, unbroken daily from dawn to dawn, bearing with them into hell the character of baptism and the seal of His precious Blood. See! even now, while the Saviour is dying of thirst, the impenitent thief will not give Him even his one polluted soul to drink! So was it going to be evermore. Mary saw it all. Why had He ever left Nazareth? Why had He gone through all this world of unnecessary suffering, only to succeed so inadequately at last? Was God's glory, after all, the end of Calvary, rather than the salvation of men? Yes! and yet also No! Mary, like Jesus Himself, grudged not one pang, one lash, one least drop of Blood that beaded His crowned brow. She too thirsted for souls, as He did, and her heart sank when she saw that He was not to have His fill. Oh, poor, miserable children that we are! how much of our own souls have we not kept back, which would have somewhat cheered both the Mother and the Son that day!

But Jesus had to go down into an abyss of His Passion deeper than any which He had sounded hitherto. Into that deep Mary must go down also. Not merely for us was the word He was now to utter. It is beyond us. It comes like a mysterious far-off cry out of the depths of spiritual anguish, to which even mystical theology can give no name. It is God abandoned of God,—the creature rejected of the Creator, although united to Him by a Hypostatic Union,—the Sacred

Humanity abandoned by the Divine Nature to which it is inseparably assumed,—a Human Nature left Personless, because the Divine Person, who never can withdraw Himself, has withdrawn,—the Second Person of the Holy Trinity deserted by the Other Two! What wild words are these? We know they cannot be, simply cannot. Yet when we put the dereliction of Jesus into words, these are the impossible expressions in which we become entangled. “My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Was there ever a more truly created cry? Yet He who uttered it was Himself the Creator. Not merely for us, then, could such a word be spoken. It was wrung from Him by the very spirit of adoration in the extremity of His torture. Some have conjectured that it was at that moment that the hitherto unconsumed species of the Blessed Sacrament was consumed, and so that mysterious union of Himself with Himself withdrawn. But this does not recommend itself to us. Why should He derive comfort and strength from His own sacramental Flesh and Blood, when He was exposing both Flesh and Blood to unheard-of torments? Why derive comfort at all, when He was studiously making all things round Him, even His Mother’s heart, fresh instruments of torture? Why should His Divine Nature in the Blessed Sacrament be a sweetness and restorative to Him, the loss of which extracted such a cry, when even in the Hypostatic Union, which was an incomparably closer union than that of the Blessed Sacrament, He was cutting off the supplies of His Divine Nature from His Human, excepting the single communication of His Omnipotence to enable Him to

live, in order that He might suffer more? The sense of the faithful—that instinct which so seldom errs—points without hesitation to the Eternal Father, as the cause of that suffering, and as addressed in that word.

But is there cruelty in God! No! Infinite justice is as far removed from cruelty as infinite love can be. Yet it was the Father, He who represents all kindness, all indulgence, all forbearance, all gentleness, all patience, all fatherliness in heaven and earth, who chose that moment of intensest torture, when the storm of created agonies was beginning to pelt less piteously, because it was now well-nigh exhausted, to crucify afresh, with a most appalling interior crucifixion, the Son of His own endless complacency. With effort unutterably beyond all grace ever given, except the grace of Jesus, Mary lifted up her heart to the Father, joined her will to His in this dire extremity, and, in a certain sense, as well as He, abandoned her Beloved. She gave up the Son to the Father. She sacrificed the love of the Mother to the duty of the Daughter. She acknowledged the Creator only as the last end of the creature. She had done this at the outset in her first dolor, the Presentation of Jesus, and it was consummated now. O Mother! how far that exacting glory of God led thy royal heart! She saw Jesus abandoned. She heard the outcry of His freshly-crucified Soul, pierced to the quick by this new invention of His Father’s justice. And she did not wish it otherwise. She would have Him abandoned, if it was the Father’s will. And it was His will. Therefore, with all her soul, with the most unretracted, spontaneous consent, she would have Him abandoned. She

would go down from the top of Calvary this moment if the Father bade her. But her love rose up, as if it were desperate, to meet this uttermost exigency. No one would have dreamed that a human soul could have held so much love as she poured out upon Jesus at that moment. Was her heart infinite, inexhaustible? It really seemed so. For at that hour it combined, multiplied, outstripped all the love of the Three-and-Thirty Years, and rushed into His soul as if it would fill up with its own self the immense void which the dereliction of the Father had opened there. Every thing went out of her, but the horrible bitterness of her martyrdom. Sorrow—pure, sheer, sharp, fiery sorrow—was flesh, and blood, and bone, and soul, and all to her. All else was gone into the Heart of Jesus, which thereupon sent forth upon her an outpouring of love, which deluged her with a fresh ocean of overwhelming woe. And by one miracle they both lived still.

Now, Blessed Mother, that thou standest on such incredible heights of detachment, the end may come! It was finished. All was finished. Chiefly creation. It had found a home at the grave of the First Adam under the Cross of the Second. The Father had left Him. He must go to the Father. It is impossible They should be disunited. Creatures had done what they could. They had filled to the brim the Saviour's cup of suffering, and He, with pitiable love, had drained it to the dregs. But there was one created punishment still left, created rather by the creature than the Creator, created chiefly by a woman. It was the punishment of death, the eldest-born child of the

first Eve. But could death hold sway over the living Life of eternity? Could Eve punish God? Was He to inherit the bitter legacy of the sweet Paradise? How could it be? How could He die? What could death be like to Him? Mary's heart must be lifted to the height of this dread hour. High as it is, it must be raised higher still, to the level of this divinest mystery. The Three-and-Thirty Years are ending. A new epoch in the world's history is to open. The most magnificent of all its epochs is closing. What will death be like to Him? Ah! we may ask also, what will life be like to her when He is dead? What will Mary herself be like without Jesus? She was not looking up, but she knew His eye was now resting on her. What strange power is there in the eyes of the dying, that they often turn round the averted faces that are there, and attract them to themselves, that love may see the last of its love? His eye was resting on the same object on which it rested the moment He was born, when He lay suddenly on a fold of her robe upon the ground while she knelt in prayer, and when He smiled, and lifted up His little hands to be taken up into her arms, and folded to her bosom. His arms were otherwise lifted up now, inviting us to climb up into them, like fond children, and see what the embrace of a Saviour's love is like. She felt His eye, and she looked up into His face. Never did two such faces look into each other, and speak such unutterable love as this. The Father held Mary up in His arms, lest she should perish under the load of love; and the loud cry went out from the hilltop, hushing Mary's soul into any agony of silence, and the

Head drooped toward her, and the eye closed, and the Soul passed her, like a flash, and sank into the earth, and a wind arose, and stirred the mantle of darkness, and the sun cleared itself of the moon's shadow, and the roofs of the city glimmered white, and the birds began to sing, but only as if they were half reassured, and Mary stood beneath the Cross a childless Mother. The third hour was gone.

Such was the fifth dolor, with its creative periods of sanctity and sorrow. She had stood through it all, notwithstanding the agonizing yesterday, the sleepless night, the long morning crowded with its terrible phenomena. In the strength of her unflinching weariness she had stood through it all, and Scripture is careful to mark the posture, as if this miracle of endurance was of itself a revelation of the greatness of the Mother's heart. It is, as it were, a reward for her dolor, that we cannot preach Christ Crucified unless Mary be in sight. It is something else we preach—not that—unless she be standing there. And now she stands on Calvary alone. It is three hours past noon of the most awful day the world shall ever see.

Something still remains to be said of the peculiarities of this dolor, notwithstanding that so much has been unavoidably anticipated in the narrative. Above all things, the Crucifixion has this peculiarity, that it was the original fountain of all the other dolores, except the third. That stands apart. It is Mary's own Crucifixion, her Gethsemane and her Calvary. But the two dolores which came out of the Infancy, and the four which represent the Passion, have the Crucifixion for their centre. The Three Days' Loss does not

belong to the Infancy, and the shadow of the Passion is no more thrown over it than it was over the whole life of Mary. It was the act of Jesus Himself, which seemingly had an especial relation to His Mother. The third dolor, which prefaces the Eighteen Years at Nazareth, was to her sorrows what the Eighteen Years were to her life generally, something between Jesus and herself, a mystery of a different sphere from those in which both He and she were concerned in the fulfilment of the world's redemption. But the sword in Simeon's prophecy was the Crucifixion. The Flight into Egypt was to hinder the cruelty of Herod from anticipating the moment of our Saviour's death. The Meeting with the Cross was the road to Calvary. The Taking down from the Cross, and the Burial, were sorrows which flowed naturally out of the Crucifixion, and were in unbroken unity with it. The Crucifixion was therefore the realization of her lifelong woe. The fountain was reached. She had tracked it up to Calvary. What remained was the waste water, or rather the water and blood, which flowed down from the mount, and sank in at the threshold of the Garden Tomb. Compared with the Crucifixion, the other dolores, the third always excepted, were almost reliefs and distractions stirring on the fixed depths of her unfathomable woe. The Crucifixion was a sorrow by itself, without name or likeness. It was the centre of the system of her dolores, while the independence of her third dolor betokens the existence of that vast world which Mary is in her own self, a creation apart, brighter than this world of ours, and more dear to Jesus. It is a mysterious orb