

allowed to come in sight of this other system, where we are,—a disclosure of all that world of phenomena which is hidden from our eyes in the Eighteen Years, during which Jesus devoted Himself to her. It ranks with the Immaculate Conception, the Incarnation, and the Assumption, all which belong to Mary's world, and would have been even if sin had not been, though they would have been different from what they were. But that third dolor shows how the fallen world of sin and the necessity of a passible Incarnation told on her world, as it did on His, and passed upon the lineaments of the Maternity as well as upon those of the Incarnation. There are certainly few mysteries in the gospel which we understand less than the Three Days' Loss.

Another peculiarity of the Crucifixion is the length of time during which the tide of suffering remained at its highest point without any sign of ebbing. The mysteries, which filled the three hours, seem too diversified for us to regard them, at least till we come to the Dereliction, as rising from less to greater in any graduated scale. They are rather separate elevations, of unequal height, standing linked together like a mountain-chain. But the lowest of them was so immensely high that it produced most immeasurable agony in her soul. The anguish of death is momentary. The length of some of the most terrific operations which can rack the human frame seldom exceeds a quarter of an hour. Pain pushed beyond a certain limit, as in medieval torture, is instantaneous death. In human punishments which are not meant to kill, the hand of science keeps watch on the pulse

of the sufferer. But to Mary the Crucifixion was three hours, three long hours, of mortal agony, comprising hundreds of types and shapes of torture, each one of them intolerable in itself, each pushed beyond the limits of human endurance unless supported by miracle, and each of them kept at that superhuman pitch for all that length of time. When pain comes we wish to lie down, unless madness and delirium come with it, or we are fain to run about, to writhe, gesticulate, and groan. Mary stood upright on her feet the whole weary while, leaning on no one, and not so much as an audible sigh accompanied her silent tears. It is difficult to take this thought in. We can only take it in by prayer, not by hearing or reading.

It was also a peculiarity of the Crucifixion that it was a heroic trial of her incomparable faith. Pretty nearly the faith of the whole world was in her when she stood, with John and Magdalen, at the foot of the Cross. There was hardly a particle of her belief which was not tried to the uttermost in that amazing scene. Naturally speaking, our Lord's Divinity was never so obscured. Supernaturally speaking, it never was so manifest. Could it be possible that the Incarnate Word should be subject to the excesses of such unparalleled indignities? Was the light within Him never to gleam out once? Was the Wisdom of the Father to be with blasphemous ridicule muffled in a white sack, and pulled about in absurd, undignified helplessness by the buffooning guards of an incestuous king? Was there not a point, or rather were there not many points, in the Passion, when the limit of what was venerable and fitting was overstepped?

Even in the reserved narrative of the Gospels, how many things there are which the mind cannot dwell on without being shocked and repulsed, as well as astonished! Even at this distance of time do they not try our faith by their very horror, make our blood run cold by their murderous atrocity, and tempt our devotion to withdraw, sick and fastidious, from the affectionate contemplation of the very prodigies of disgraceful cruelty, by which our own secret sins and shames were with such public shame most lovingly expiated? Is not devotion to the Passion to this day the touchstone of feeble faith, of lukewarm love, and of self-indulgent penance? And Mary, more delicate and more fastidious far than we, drank all these things with her eyes, and understood the horror of them in her soul, as we can never understand it. Think what faith was hers.

The Divine Perfections also suffered a strange eclipse in the Passion. Sin was triumphant. Justice was condemned. Holiness was abandoned even by the All-holy. Providence seemed to have withdrawn, as if under constraint. God was trodden out, and creatures had creation to themselves; nay, more than that, they had the Creator in their power. There was no divine interference, just when it appeared most needed and most natural. If men could have their own way then, surely they could have it always. One while God looked passive, another while cruel. Oh, it required angelic theology to reconcile the providence of that day with the attributes of the Most High! Then the angels themselves might be a trial of her faith. Were there such things, such beings, as

angels? She had seen them so often she could not doubt it. She had seen St. Michael but the night before, bending in adoration by the side of Jesus in His agony, a glorious being, fit for that strange exceptional mission of consoling the Son of God in His inconsolable distress. But where was their zeal for the Incarnate Word, that grand grace by which they had all been established in their final perseverance? Where were the double-edged cherubic swords that guarded the entrance into Eden from all but Henoah and Elias? Ah! there were legions of them pressing forward, yet ever beaten back, like a storm-cloud striving to plough its way up against the wind, eager and burning, yet with difficult obedience bending backward before the meek, admonishing eye of Jesus. Then, again, who could have believed, when they saw the beauty of Jesus and fathomed the depth of His prayer, as Mary only could see the one or fathom the other, that divine grace really had power to convert human hearts? He was the very beauty of holiness. During His Passion men themselves tore away every veil which humility and reserve could hang about His sanctity. His humility, His sweetness, His patience, His modesty, all stood disclosed with the fullest light upon them, exercised openly and heroically in the midst of the grossest outrage. And yet men were not won to Him! There were the guards who had fallen backward in the garden the night before. There were those who had stood nearest to Him during the scourging, those who had talked with Him as Pilate had, those who had taken Him to Herod and brought Him back again. There was the impenitent

thief close by His side. Grace was going out from Him every moment. His effectual prayer was incessant. Mary's intercession itself was busily engaged. Yet, when the sun set on Friday, how little visible harvest had all that grace gathered into its garner! Never did any one so walk by faith, simple, naked faith, as Mary did that day. There was faith enough to save a whole world in her single heart.

Another peculiarity of this fifth dolor is to be found in the seven words which our Lord uttered from the Cross. They were as seven sharp thrills in Mary's heart, reaching depths of the human soul to which our griefs never attain. It was not only the well-known accents of her dying Son, with their association inconceivably heightened by the circumstances in which they broke upon the stillness. It was not only the exceeding beauty of the words themselves, disclosing, as death sometimes does with men, an unexpected interior beauty in the soul. It was not only that, like the unuttered music of poetry in a kindred soul, they waked up in her the remembrances of other words of His, and gave light to many mysteries in her mind, and played skilfully upon the many keys and with the various stops of her wonderful affections, saying, as they did to her, what they do not say to us, and what we cannot so much as guess. But they were the words of God, such words as are spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews,* "living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and discerning the thoughts

* iv. 12.

and intents of the heart." Such was their operation in the heart of Mary, penetrating her as the blast of a trumpet seems to penetrate the recesses of our hearing, and in their subtlety and agile swiftness carrying grief into the crevices of her nature, whither it could not else have reached. She was the broken cedar, the divided flame of fire, the shaken desert of Cades, in the twenty-eighth Psalm. "The Voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of majesty hath thundered, the Lord upon many waters: The Voice of the Lord in its omnipotence, the Voice of the Lord in its magnificence. The Voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord shall break the cedars of Libanus. The Voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire. The Voice of the Lord shaketh the desert, and the Lord shall shake the desert of Cades."

We have already spoken of the parallel between the Crucifixion and the Annunciation, which is another peculiarity of the fifth dolor. She became our Mother just when she lost Jesus. It was, as it were, a ceremonial conclusion to the Thirty-Three Years she had spent with Him in the most intimate communion, and at the same time a solemn opening of that life of Mary in the Church to which every baptized soul is a debtor for more blessings than it suspects. In the third dolor He had spoken to her with apparent roughness, as if her office of Mother was now eclipsed by the mission which His Eternal Father had trusted to Him. In this fifth dolor He, as it were, merges her Divine Maternity in a new motherhood of men. Perhaps no two words that he ever spoke to her were more full of mystery than that in the temple, and now

this one upon the Cross, or ever caused deeper grief in her soul. They are parallel to each other. With such a love of souls as Mary had, immensely heightened by the events of that very day, the motherhood of sinners brought with it an enormous accession of grief. The multitudes that were then wandering shepherdless over the wide earth, the ever-increasing multitudes of the prolific ages, all these she received into her heart, with the most supernatural enlightenment as to the malice of sin, the most keen perception of the pitiable case and helpless misery of sinners, the clearest foresight of the successful resistance which their free will would make to grace, and the most profound appreciation of the horrors of their eternal exile amidst the darkness and the flames of punishment. Our Lord's word effected what it said. It made her the Mother of men, therefore, not merely by an outward official proclamation, but in the reality of her heart. He opened up there new fountains of inexhaustible love. He caused her to love men as He loved them, as nearly as her heart could come to His. He, as it were, multiplied Himself in the souls of sinners millions of millions of times, and gave her love enough for all. And such love! so constant, so burning, so eloquent, so far above all earthly maternal love, both in hopefulness, tenderness, and perseverance! And what was this new love but a new power of sorrow? We cannot rightly understand Mary's sorrow at the Crucifixion under any circumstances, simply because it is above us. But we shall altogether miss of those just conceptions which we may attain to unless we bear in mind that she became our Mother at the foot

of the Cross, not merely by a declaration of her appointment, but by a veritable creation through the effectual word of God, which at the moment enlarged her broken heart, and fitted it with new and ample affections, causing thereby an immeasurable increase of her pains. It was truly in labor that she travailed with us when we came to the birth. The bitterness of Eve's curse environed her spotless soul unutterably in that hour of our spiritual nativity.

We must not omit to reckon also among the peculiarities of this dolor that which it shares with the fourth dolor, and in which it stands in such striking contrast to the sixth,—her inability to reach Jesus in order to exercise her maternal offices toward Him. So changeful can sorrow be in the human heart that the very thing which will minister sorrow to her by the fulness of its presence in the Taking down from the Cross is a sorrow to her here by its absence. But they have mourned little, too little for their own good, who have not long since learned to understand this contradiction. It is hard for a mother to keep herself quiet by the deathbed of her son. Grief must be doing something. The wants of the sufferer are the luxuries of the mourner. The pillows must be smoothed again, the hair taken out of the eyes, those beads of death wiped from the clammy brow, those bloodless lips perpetually moistened, that white hand gently chafed, that curtain put back to give more air, the weak eyes shielded from the light, the bedclothes pressed out of the way of his difficult breathing. Even when it is plain that the softest touch, the very gentlest of these dear ministries, is fresh pain to the sufferer, the

mother's hand can scarcely restrain itself; for her heart is in every finger. To be quiet is desolation to her soul. She thinks it is not the skill or the experience of the nurse which dictates her directions, but her hard-heartedness, because she is not that fair boy's mother; and therefore she rebels in her heart against her authority, even if the chances of being cruel do in fact restrain her hands. Surely that foam must be gathered from the mouth, surely that long lock of hair must tease him hanging across his eye and dividing his sight, surely that icy hand should have the blood gently, most gently, brought back again. She forgets that the eye is glazed and sees no more, that the blood has gone to the heart, and even the mother's hand cannot conjure it back again. And so she sits murmuring, her sorrow all condensed in her compulsory stillness. Think, then, what Mary suffered those three long hours beneath the Cross! Was ever deathbed so uneasy, so comfortless, as that rough-hewn wood? Was ever posture more torturing than to hang by nails in the hands, dragging, dragging down as the dead weight of the Body exerted itself more and more? Where was the pillow for His Head? If it strove to rest itself against the Title of the Cross, the crown of thorns drove it back again; if it sank down upon His Breast, it could not quite reach it, and its weight drew the Body from the nails. Slow streams of Blood crept about His wounded Body, making Him tremble under their touch with the most painful excitement and uneasiness. His eyes were teased with Blood, liquid or half congealed. His Mouth, quivering with thirst, was also caked with

Blood, which His breath seemed less and less to moisten. There was not a limb which was not calling out for the Mother's tender hand, and it might not reach so far. There were multitudes of pains which her touch would have soothed. O mothers! have you a name by which we may call that intolerable longing which Mary had, to smooth that hair, to cleanse those eyes, to moisten those dear lips which had just been speaking such beautiful words, to pillow that blessed Head upon her arm, to ease those throbbing hands and hold up for a while the soles of those crushed and lacerated feet? It was not granted to her; and yet she stood there in tranquility, motionless as a statue, not a statue of indifference, nor yet of stupor and amazement, but in that attitude of reverent adoring misery which was becoming to a broken-hearted creature who felt the very arms of the Eternal Father round her, holding her up to live, to love, to suffer, and to be still.

We must also remember that the abandonment of Jesus by His Father was something to Her which it cannot be to us. In religious mysteries we are continually obliged to take words for things. We speak of the Eternal Generation of the Son and of the Eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit, but we cannot embrace the wisdom, the brightness, the love, the tenderness, the pathos, if we may venture on the word, which those acts of the Divine Life imply. Consequently the words do not call out in us an intelligent variety of feelings and sentiments and emotions: we meet them by a simple act of adoring love. Yet they mean more to theologians than to unedu-

cated Christians, more to saints than to theologians, more to the blessed in heaven than to the saints on earth. But according to our knowledge so should be our love, and in heaven it is so. Thus, while the dereliction of Jesus on the Cross fills our minds with a sacred horror, we only see into it confusedly. We rather see that it *is* a mystery, than in what the mystery consists. It is often the very indistinctness of divine things which enables us to endure them. Who could live, if he realized what hell is, and that every moment immortal souls are entering there upon their eternity of most shocking and repulsive punishment? We smell a sweet flower, and just then a soul has been condemned. We watch with trembling love the elevation of the Host and Chalice, and meanwhile the gates of that fiery dungeon have closed on many souls. We lie down upon the grass, and look up at the white clouds, dipping through the blue sky as if either had waves, and catching the sun on their snowy shapes, and all the while hell is underneath that grass, within the measurable diameter of the earth, living, populous, unutterable, its roaring flames and countless sounds of agony muffled by the soil that covers the uneasily-riveted crust of the earth. What agony would this be, if our minds were equal to it, or coextensive with its reality! Nay, if we realized it, as sometimes for a moment we do realize it, we could not survive many hours, even if we did not die upon the spot. For, if the guilt of one venial sin shown to His saint by God would have produced the immediate separation of body and soul, unless He by miraculous interference had supported her, what must the vision be of the

countless enormities of hell, with the additional hideousness of final impenitence and the unspeakable horror of its punishments! So, with this dereliction of our Blessed Lord, none understood it as Mary did. The whole of the marvellous theology that was in it was perhaps clear to her. At least she saw in it what no one else, not even an angel, could see. Hence, while it called out in her a variety of the most vivid emotions and most sensitive affections, it also plunged her into fresh sorrow, by transferring all at once the Passion of Jesus into another and more terrific sphere.

The universality of her suffering is also another peculiarity of the fifth dolor and in this it was a sort of shadow of the Passion. Who can number the variety of the pains which those three hours contained? What portion of her sinless nature was not covered with its appropriate suffering? There was no spot whereon a sorrow could be grafted where the hand of God had not inserted one. She was as completely submerged in grief as a fish is submerged in the great deep sea. The very omnipresence of God round about her was to her an omnipresence of suffering. As the fires that punish sin are so dreadfully efficacious, because God intended their nature to be penal, so the supernatural sorrows of our Blessed Mother on Calvary were fearfully efficacious, because they were intended to carry suffering to the utmost limit which the creature could bear, that so her holiness, her merits, and her exaltation might exceed those of all other creatures put together, except the created nature of her Son. There was not an inlet of any one of the