

senses down which pain was not flowing masterfully, like clashing tides in a narrow gulf. There was not a faculty of her mind which was not illuminated, or rather scorched, by a light which hurt nature and gave it pain. Her affections had been cruelly immolated at the foot of that altar on Calvary, one after another, and the zealous Priest had not spared His victims. Her will was strained up to the height of the most unheard-of consents, which the devouring justice of God had demanded of her. Her soul was crucified. Her body was the shrinking prey of her mental agony. Her feet were weary with standing, her hands wet with His Blood, her eyes filled with her own. "How hath the Lord covered with obscurity the daughter of Zion! Weeping, she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. There is none to comfort her among all of them that were dear to her. From above He hath sent fire into my bones, and hath chastised me; He hath spread a net for my feet; He hath turned me back; He hath made me desolate, wasted with sorrow all the day long. The Lord hath taken all my mighty men out of the midst of me. He hath proclaimed against me a time, to destroy my chosen men. The Lord hath trodden the winepress for the virgin daughter of Juda. Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water, because the Comforter, the relief of my soul, is far from me. My children are desolate, because the enemy hath prevailed. My heart is turned within me, for I am full of bitterness. Abroad the sword destroyeth; and at home there is death alike. O, all ye that pass by the way! attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow; for

He hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of His fierce anger!"*

Last of all, there was her inability to die with Him. Many a time, to die with the dead would be the only true consolation of the bereaved. One heart has been the light of life, the unsetting light of long years of various fortune, bright in the blue sky of prosperity, brighter still in the black clouds of adversity. Now that light is put out by death. Why should we survive? Henceforth, what significance can there be to us in life? That cold heart was the end of all our avenues. Every prospect terminated there. We valued no past where that heart was not. We saw no future in which it did not play its part. All our plans ended there. The weight of our expectations was concentrated on that one point, and now it has given way, and we are falling through, we know not whither. Ah! this loss is truly the end of life, more truly far than the mere physical dissolution of soul and body. The apostles—especially the quick, affectionate Thomas—wished to go and die with Lazarus, simply because Jesus loved him so. Oh, surely we can all remember days which were the world's end to us,—days which it seemed impossible should have a morrow! There was a bed—laden with a sad weight, with a beautiful terror—which was to us the end of time, the edge of the world, the threshold of eternity. It had been long looked for, and yet words would not tell how cruelly unexpected it came at last. All our hopes, and fears, and loves were gathered up, as if the Judge were coming then to settle them. Common

* Lamentations, i.

things could not go on after that. Daily duties must not recur. Habits were run out. It was an end, an end of so much,—so much so cruelly ended. It was as fearful to have no prospect as it is to have no hope; and therefore we longed to lie down and die, on the same bed, and be buried in the same grave, though it seemed strange that any one should remain behind to bury us, so completely did it seem a universal end. This is a wild extremity of human grief. Our Lady's dolor was something else than this. The end of the Thirty-Three Years was not like any other end. Her Son was God. It all lies in that. Think, after that, of the unutterable misery of the Mother's life protracted, when His was done. It will not bear explaining. It cannot be explained. But we can feel it, below the world from which words come; we can see it,—a light beyond the region where thought can grasp things,—that actual sundering of Jesus and Mary, the dissolution of that union which had been the world's divine mystery for all those wonderful and wonder-peopled years! Which of us can tell what grief is like, when it has gone beyond the point at which it would kill us, and we only live by a miracle external to ourselves? Such grief was our Mother's when our Lord breathed out His Soul into His Father's hands.

But let us turn from the peculiarities of the fifth dolor to the dispositions in which our Blessed Lady endured it. Yet the task of describing these is impossible. We read the lives of the saints, and see in each one of them a peculiar inward sanctity, sometimes different from that of all others that we know,—sometimes congenial to the spirit of another saint,

—sometimes, though not often, allowing itself to be grouped in numerous classes. Many of the graces which we read of, have no names in the nomenclature of the virtues of their kindred dispositions. We wonder as we read. We are dazzled by the lights which keep appearing in the beauties of holiness, in splendoribus sanctorum. Yet we know that what we see is as nothing to that which we do not see. As the Queen of the South said of Solomon, not the half is told. All that comes to the surface is a mere indication of the depths which are below, hardly enough to let us guess at the interior beauty which the eye of God beholds in the saintly soul. But, if this is the case with the saints, how much more so is it with our Blessed Lady! It is expressly said of her that the beauty of the king's daughter is all within; and when our Lord, in the Canticle, describes her loveliness, He adds twice over, "besides that which lieth hid within." It is, therefore, impossible to speak worthily of the interior beauty of Mary. As we have considered each dolor it has become more difficult to speak of her dispositions. We are obliged to use common words for things which are singular and only akin to what is common. The realities keep rising taller and taller above the words, until these last almost mislead us, instead of elucidating the subject, and we have to repeat the same words for dispositions which have become different in the transition from one sorrow to another, as well by the novelty of their exercise as by the increased magnificence of their heroism. Thus the depth and grandeur of our Blessed Mother's inward life are sufficient of themselves to hinder our

doing it justice. Mary is one of those divine visions which expands before expanding holiness, and, even like the Blissful Vision itself, excites hunger in the beholder, even while it is satisfying his soul unutterably.

But there is another reason also of this difficulty, which bears especially upon her dolors. It is the comprehended reality of the present. We must explain our meaning. It hardly ever happens to us, either in sorrow or in joy, fully to take in the present at once. We realize our sorrows and our joys piecemeal. We are constantly finding new features in them, and coming across peculiarities which did not strike us at the first. In every thing which happens to us there is always far more implied than is expressed. This is what we mean when we speak of a growing sorrow. It is not the sorrow that grows: it is our own appreciation of it. It belongs to the imperfection of our minds that this process should be gradual. All that years unfold, apply, bring home to us, was in the transient act, whether death, misfortune, or disgrace, when it was present; only we were unable to embrace it. Hence it is that we often seem more heroic in sorrow than we really are. We bear no more of our burden than what we see, and we see but a portion of it. Our heavenly Father lets it down gradually upon us, dividing the weight between His own hand and our shoulders, till use enables us to bear the full pressure without being crushed. We commit ourselves to Him, engaging ourselves to what is implied, while our eyes are fixed upon what is expressed. Our venture succeeds not so much by our

own courage as by His grace. It even sometimes happens that we lose a friend, whose death affects us very moderately. Somehow the light of life is not thrown on the chasm that he has made in leaving. Years pass on, and circumstances change. All at once, or by degrees, we miss him. We cannot do without him. He is a want which, just at this particular moment, must be supplied, and cannot be supplied. The loss is irreparable, and is now fast becoming intolerable. It seems as if something which had to be gone through cannot be gone through, simply because he was the part of our life needful to the going through with it, and now he is not here. A false, a cruel, a suspecting friend we lose before he dies. But we never miss him. It never comes out that he is wanted. He is found to have been always in reality outside of our lives; and he is dismissed from our minds with a sad sort of relief that we have done with him, and the pious consolation that after all no love is ever wasted which at any time, or for any object, has been mixed up with God. But it is not so with a true friend. The loss of him is never over; it is continually reappearing, and making our hearts as strangely tender as if his spirit were touching them at the moment. All this comes of the present being too much swollen with realities, so that we cannot get into our souls at once. Thus we are always behindhand with life, understanding ourselves and others, and, most of all, God, when it is too late. We cannot keep up with the present by intelligence or sentiment. We can only keep up with it by a spiritual quickness which prompts us to act, to suffer,

and, above all, to compromise ourselves, at the bidding of the instincts of grace. Thus it is that sorrows are mostly less hard to bear than they seem; for we are almost unconsciously bearing them by degrees. Now, it was not so with our Lady. She took in the present in its fulness; she embraced it in the tranquility of her vast comprehension. A sorrow revealed itself to her in its completeness, and thus pressed with all its weight upon her soul at once. Thus her sorrows are greater than they seem. They grow upon us, but they did not grow upon her. This is very much to be remembered when we speak of her dispositions in her sufferings. Her endurance was of another kind from ours, because of her complete realization of the present; and hence her dispositions, while the poverty of language compels us to call them by the same names, must be magnified and multiplied into something quite different from what they were before.

Having premised this, we must look first of all, as we have had to do in the other dolours, at our Blessed Mother's tranquility. If we pass in review the manifold horrors of the Crucifixion, and see the various assaults of grief of which her soul was the centre, it will seem as if tranquility was just that grace the exercise of which would be impossible. If we did not know that God was everlasting peace, there would appear something almost incongruous and out of keeping with the scene, in a holiness which was stayed in the deepest calm at such a time. With us depth of feeling is for the most part accompanied by agitation, which makes it difficult for us to conceive

the union of the liveliest sorrow and the most delicate sensitiveness with a tranquility which looks as if it were impassible. Among men, calmness in grief is but a token of insensibility. Our Lady's peace is like that of God, undisturbed amid the sounds of ten million worlds, unruffled by the portentous revolt of sin, and self-possessed in the very profusest outpouring of intense and burning love. Nothing discloses to us more astonishingly her union with God than this unbroken calm. Where God is there can be no trouble; and there was not a recess in our Lady's nature where God was not, and which He did not possess with the most undivided sovereignty. Hence, while horror followed horror, there was no amazement in her soul, no stupefaction, no bewilderment. As the mystery unfolded strangest depths of suffering, even the counsels of God did not seem to take his chosen creature by surprise. In what an abiding presence of God must her soul have dwelt! How trained must each faculty of the mind have been to fall in with the ways of God as it met them, and with such unquestioning promptitude, with such unstartled dignity! In what subordination must every affection have been to the instantaneous dominion of grace, a subordination which would so increase their freedom as to augment their powers of loving and of sorrowing a thousandfold! There was no effort, no struggle, no pause, no token that her inward life felt the pressure of outward circumstance. The creature kept step with the Creator, and the angels marveled at the divine repose of her beautiful dependence.

Out of this calmness came her silent courage. We

must remember that, although her surviving so great a sorrow was miraculous, her endurance of the sorrow was not a miracle, but a grace. Her life was kept in her by the hand of God; but she received no such support in her endurance as for one moment interfered with the perfection of its merit. It was fortitude such as the most glorious spirit in the choir of Thrones could not attain to. It was a courage the very silence of which showed at once the severity of its trial and the earnestness of its generosity. The silence itself was another proof of Mary's amazing union with God. For they who are much with Him lose their habits of speaking, and acquire in their stead habits of supernatural listening. She spoke not, because she reposed in God. She did not even gather herself up to bear, or prepare her courage for the combat. She let the burden take her as it found her. She neither quickened her pace nor slackened it. How could a resolution so quiet be at the same time so strong? This is the question which our limited notion of sanctity is tempted to ask. The answer is easy: its strength was in its very quietness. But, if we understand the words, do we comprehend the thing? Do we fathom the disposition of Mary's soul in which this grandeur of strength was wedded to this childlike simplicity of unwondering quietness?

Out of her quietness we pass into her silent courage, out of her silent courage into her generosity. They are like ample halls within her soul, where we dare hardly speak above a whisper lest we wake the echoes, and where we gaze, without questioning, on the wonderful trophies which hang upon the walls.

A creature has but one will to give away to God, and when he has given it irrevocably, what further oblation is left? All generosity then is but a perseverance in the first grand generosity, and, if perseverance is a grander thing than the act or disposition in which we persevere, it is so only in its completeness, and not in each of its separate stages. Yet it seemed as if Mary had endless wills to give to God, and as if they came as fast as He could call for them. The Divine Will tried her everywhere, and everywhere it found the most entire conformity. There was no failure, no lagging behind, nothing unequal. There was a strain, certainly. How shall the creature not strain who has to keep up with God, especially when His awful justice was urging its chariot-wheels through the Red Sea of the Passion? But it was a strain of the most heavenly peace, of the most graceful adoration. When God went quicker, she went quicker. Her will actually entered more promptly into His will, in proportion as it exacted more from her. Her soul seemed to become more inexhaustible the more it was exhausted, like the souls of the Blessed, endlessly loving, endlessly adoring, as they sink deeper still and deeper in the Vision of the Holy Trinity.

But the very thought of these impossibilities of Mary's generosity turns us from her dispositions to the lessons which this fifth dolor teaches to ourselves. The last dolor taught us how to carry our crosses, this one how to stand by them. We must not leave the Cross. We must not come down from Calvary until we are crucified, and then the Cross and ourselves will have become inseparable. But Calvary is

a great place for impatience. Many have the courage to march up the hill, shouldering their cross with decent manfulness. But when they get there, they lay their cross on the ground, and go down again into the city to keep the remainder of the feast with the people. Some are stripped and then leave, refusing to be nailed. Some are nailed, but unfasten themselves before the Elevation. Some stand the shock of the elevation, and then come down from the cross, before the three hours are out, some in the first hour, some in the second, some, alas! when even the third hour is drawing to its close. Alas! the world is full of deserters from Calvary, so full that politic or disdainful grace seems to take no trouble to arrest them. For grace crucifies no one against his will. It leaves that work to the world, and treacherously and tyrannically does the world do it. Men appear to believe that to breathe the fresh air on the top of Calvary for half a minute is to act upon them like a charm. Crucifixion, like a plunge in the cold sea, the briefer it is, will have the healthier glow and the more sensible reaction. But unfortunately it is not so. Sorrow is a slow workman, and crucifixion a long business. A tree takes root in a new ground quicker than the cross in a new heart. But all this is by no means agreeable to rapid, impulsive nature. It will allow sanctification to be like an operation, sharp but soon over. It cannot wait if it comes in the shape of a gradual cure. Yet who is there that has ever tried to kill self in any one of its least departments, and has not almost despairingly wondered at its amazing and provoking vitality? How many great minds are there, who have

travelled far along the road of sanctity, before they are out of sight of personal feeling and wounded sensibility! Oh, then, for the grace to remain our three full hours on the top of Calvary! Can there be a sadder sight on earth than that which tells how often and how easily great heights in heaven are missed, those half-crucified souls we meet in all companies, so strangely out of place, such mournful monuments of the impatience of nature and the jealousy of grace?

God is very exacting. They who love Him can say so without loving Him less. Nay, to them the very thought is an additional degree of love. He is not content with our remaining on Calvary our three full hours. When we are not nailed to our cross, we must stand. There must be no sitting, no lying down, no leaning on our cross, as if forsooth that was meant for our support which is waiting there only to crucify. Indeed, and this is significant enough, kneeling is not so good as standing. We go there to suffer, not to worship. Our suffering will turn into worship. We are not to adore our cross, or say fine words about it, or put ourselves into sentimental attitudes before it. We are to do the commonplace thing of standing by it, which is the posture of men. Standing is what the ceremonial of Calvary prescribes. Here again what sad sights we see! It is well if we do not play a part in them ourselves. There are souls whose Way of the Cross is full of promise, and yet who spoil every thing on the top of Calvary. Perhaps if they had been crucified at once they might have done well. But that was not God's Will. Waiting has unmanned them. Their courage has oozed out among the ugly