

ways been, not in the palpable sunshine of overflowing happiness, but in the unwitnessed depth of domestic sorrow. The grandeur of its beauty has been in proportion to the fiery heat of that furnace of agony in which the two lives had been melted into one. But, when we looked, we have trembled to think how the inevitable separation of death would ever be endured. Yet how faint a shadow of Jesus and Mary are these filial and maternal unities on earth!

In order, then, to understand the intolerable suffering which the withdrawal of the life of Jesus caused in the heart of Mary, we must know what His life had been to hers throughout. But this is not within the reach of our comprehension. We can but guess at it, and calculate it, and then be sure that the reality has far outrun our boldest calculations. Yet here, also, the annals of human sorrow help us by comparison. Who has not known instances of that perfection of conjugal love when husband and wife have so lived into each other that the life of one is apparently imbedded in the life of the other? Each has borne the other's cares. Heart has leaned on heart, and they have throbbed together in one pulse. They have used even each other's senses with such an affectionately borrowed use, that we have sometimes been fain to smile at such simplicity and dependency of love. Voice, expression, gesture, gait, manner, and a thousand little nameless ways, have been only the outward disclosure of the intense unity of love within. Long years have formed habits which it would seem downright death to break. The checkered experiences of life, with their dark and bright, their tears and smiles,

their losses and their compensations, have still more effectually moulded those two hearts into one. The two personalities are confused; God alone sees them clear and distinct, each in its own sphere of praise and blame, of merit and demerit, in His account. Death comes. There is not a power in nature but inexorable death which would dare to rend asunder so exquisitely delicate a union. And what has been the consequence? It has become plain that there was almost a physical reality in this oneness of two loving lives. For, now that one is left alone, the stream can hardly flow. It shrinks and runs dry, like a fountain in the summer. It is not self-sufficing. It cannot feed itself. The one spring cannot do the work of the two. The survivor is unable to face life. His mind succumbs distracted under the least burden. It is not merely that one-half of his strength is gone. It is something more than that. He is truly as feeble and faint as a man bleeding to death; but he is incomplete also. He has no front to present to the common tide of daily life, and breast it as it comes. No matter how calmly life may flow, it is too much for him. He droops, and pines, and dies in as many months as physical decay may require; and his death is not so much a death in itself as a part and completion of that other death. The lives were one, the deaths are one also. Who has not seen this? But we do not mourn over it. It is best and completest as it is. Here, also, we have but a partial shadow of the union of Jesus and Mary; yet it helps us to see what an overwhelming sorrow to her sensitive heart must have been the ces-

sation of the life of Jesus. It was the deepest depth to which the sixth dolor reached.

Another peculiarity of this dolor is the reappearance of responsibility, which formed so weighty a part of the third, but had not come to view at all during the fourth or fifth. It is Mary's feeling of responsibility about His Sacred Body, now that it had reverted to more than the original helplessness of childhood. No one understands the adorableness of that Body as she does. Who is to care for it but herself? And she also is helpless. It is the same feeling which pervades the whole Church with regard to the Blessed Sacrament. In the Church, if it is a feeling of anxiety, it is also a feeling of amazing joy. But with Mary it was a manifold sorrow. In the midst of sorrow responsibility is itself a new sorrow. Yet it is one of the providential laws of grief that it almost always brings new responsibilities to view, and just when we seem least capable of rightly discharging them. Grief is one of those things which concentrate, yet do not simplify, as most concentrations do. It is a perplexity rather than a light. It gives us more to do rather than less to do. A man in great grief has less leisure than any other man on earth. Nothing thickens life so much as sorrow. Nothing precipitates the great work of experience as it does. Nothing endows our nature with more magnificent accessions of power. A life of joy is, for the most part, thin and shallow. Few heroisms can be manufactured out of gladness, though it also has its sunny depths which are full of God. But sorrow is the making of saints, the very process of the transmutation of drossy earth into

purest heaven. This is why God seems to bear so hard upon us in sorrow. His wisdom makes His love cruel. These unendurable new responsibilities, whose apparently inopportune advent in seasons of grief is so depressing, are almost His choicest gifts. There is a crisis of life, perhaps, in every one of them. But our Lady's responsibility for our Lord's Body was also a grief to her because of the circumstances of the time and place. Violence and cruelty reigned supreme. Savage executioners and ruffian soldiers were the kings of Calvary. The chances of outrage and defilement were hardly chances. To human calculation they were inevitable necessities. The breaking of the legs, the spear of Longinus, the hurry to get every thing cleared away for the beginning of the Sabbath, the malice of the Jews, the way in which Pilate had truckled to them, the ordinary lot of the bodies of those whom justice had put to death, the very convenience of the Golgotha where the crosses were erected, the fact that there were three bodies to dispose of, and not one only,—all these things were so many terrific risks which the inviolate safety of that adorable Deposit which was in Mary's care had now to run. Furthermore, her responsibility was in a third way a grief, because of the sense of utter helplessness which came along with it. What could she do? How was it in her power to stave off, or even to divert into another channel, any one of these numerous, ill-boding consequences which were pressing upon her? And yet the consequences of a failure were too appalling to contemplate. Even to our thoughts in quiet meditation there is something almost more shocking

in the idea of the Dead Body of Jesus in the polluted hands of those fierce men than the dear and living Lord Himself. We shudder at the possibility. What, then, must have been the agony of Mary's adoring heart, to which these horrors were visible and imminent, with the feeling that the care was hers, and the knowledge that she was helpless as the merest mother of an odious criminal could be,—nay, all things considered, even more helpless, for her claims would have provoked insult where those of the common mother would have elicited compassion.

Out of this responsibility came again the misery of terror. It was a new kind of terror, the dread of sacrilege. No observant person—and love makes all of us observant—can avoid being struck with the part which terror plays in the dolours of our Blessed Mother. It comes out strongly as almost a universal characteristic of them. In treating of the second dolor we have seen what a huge aggravation of sorrow fear always is. Let us try now to conjecture why it is that fear fulfils so prominent an office in Mary's griefs. In the first place, it may have been as an especial trial to that which was her especial grace, tranquility. This tranquility, as we have already seen, is an essential element in the true idea of Mary. It is not perhaps so much a distinct grace, as the firmament, most rightly named a firmament, in which her purity, humility, and generosity were set to shine. In each of her sorrows—and the same remark is applicable to her joys as well—there was always something peculiarly trying to her tranquility, from the Annunciation to the Descent of the Holy Ghost, something,

which by its suddenness, or its vehemence, or its horror, or its exultation, or its strain upon human nature, was especially likely to disturb her inward peace, and to ruffle and arrest for a moment the calm onward majesty of her queenlike repose. But fear is, of all things, the most opposed to tranquility; and hence those varieties of terror, which we have discovered in her dolours, sometimes looming in the distance, sometimes frowning close at hand, now visible upon the surface, now working underneath in the recesses of her heart, may have been sent to try, and by trying to perfect and enhance, her heavenly tranquility. In the second place, it was necessary that such immense sanctity as that of our Blessed Lady should be tested by trials in proportion to its grandeur. Now several distinct worlds of the most grievous temptations were impossible in her case, because of her gift of original justice, while the consummate sensibilities of her beautiful and delicate nature would make terror a most agonizing trial to her, just as Jesus "began to fear and be heavy" when the Crucifixion of His Soul was reaching its highest point in the garden of Gethsemane. Thus, in her case, terror may have had to condense within itself the energies, properties, and pains of innumerable temptations, and to accomplish in her the ends which it was not permitted those other things to try, because of her utter sinlessness. Such we may reverently conjecture might be the reason of the amount of terror in our Lady's sorrows; but whatever becomes of the explanation, the fact is one of which we must never lose sight, if we would form a true idea of what she suffered.

But responsibility does not bring out fear only ; it brings out loneliness also. We may be alone in the world, without knowing how much we are alone. Our kindred may have failed us, and the bond which unites us to those immediately around us may be formed of far frailer materials than the blood of relationship. But we are well and strong. Life as yet is sparing us its worst. We feel tolerable sufficient for ourselves. In a beautiful place, on a fine day, in perfect health, the feeling of solitude is little more than poetry. But sorrow comes,—not to strip us of our domestic world,—that has lain long unpeopled, a wistful, weary blank ; but it comes to show us that we *are* stripped, and makes us feel the dreariness of being alone. Alone too, perhaps, without Cain's consolation, of being able to wander. Then, when new responsibilities supervene on recent sorrow, the sentiment of our desolation is complete. We want some one every moment. We wait, but they do not come. It is a folly to wait ; they cannot come who ought to come. We know it ; nevertheless we wait. There are voices which ought to speak to us now in counsel as of old, but they are mute. There were arms we used to lean upon ; and we feel for them in the darkness, and they are not there. Every moment a fresh want knocks at the grave of something which has long been buried, and the heart sinks at the hollow echoes which the knocking wakes. And all this is the worse to bear, because it is so deep down in the unpeopled hollows of the soul. We are alone. The fact is old and familiar ; but the feeling is new and terrible. Thus loneliness was part of this sixth dolor. It was

not utter loneliness yet. That point had to be reached in the seventh sorrow. But it began in this. When the Soul of Jesus left her, the world seemed a most awful solitude. Her feeling of responsibility about His Body deepened this sense of loneliness until it ached. Deeper down, and with more anguish, it penetrated together with her sense of helplessness, and deeper still was it carried, as by swift piercing shafts, by her terror lest some sacrilege should be committed. She was fearfully alone, and yet had to diffuse herself into those around her to be their comfort and support. As the life of Jesus had been her life, so was hers now the life of Magdalen and John. But she was not utterly alone. She had the Body still. Dead as it was, it was marvellous companionship. Dead as it was, it was like no other Body, for it was still united to a living and eternal Person. It was not a relic, such as love clings to and weeps over. It was a sanctity for worship and adoration. The loneliness therefore could not yet be desolation. But, such as it was, it was a weight of grief which no soul but Mary's could have borne.

It was also a peculiarity of the suffering of this dolor, that it consisted in prostration rather than in agony. It followed immediately upon the exhausting scene of the Passion. It came upon a nature, which of itself was on the point of dying from the excruciating severity of its martyrdom, and whose miraculous support never allowed itself to be felt in the shape of refreshment or sensible consolation. The Hand that held her up was a hidden support, like that which the Divine Nature ministered to the Human in our

Blessed Lord during the Passion. Thus, naturally, Mary felt every moment as if she had reached the ultimate term of endurance. It had worn her soul through, and the next pressure would be death. She felt in her soul the unrestful aching which overfatigue produces in the body. Her spirit was fatigued to death, not in a figure of speech, but in literal truth. Life was become a sensible burden, as if it were external to herself. She supported it; it did not support her. This exhaustion was more harassing than pain, more distressing than sharp suffering would have been. It was a collapse after the rack, bringing no relief, because the cessation of pain is not sensible when one is utterly crushed. We have got what is like a new being, capable of suffering quite in a different way. Yet this trial also her tranquility bore unshaken. It did not become stupid, passive, inert, as the victims of cruelty sometimes are under torture. It did not perform the duties which came to it with the feverish energy and impatient precipitation common to fatigue. It was a broken-hearted peace, but also gentle, collected, considerate, unselfish, full of majesty, and working with the noiseless promptitude and slow assiduity which always betokens the presence of God within the soul. As at the Crucifixion she stood three hours beneath the Cross, so now she knelt and held the heavy Burden on her outstretched arms, with the same becoming and unforward bravery. Never was any soul so prostrate as Mary's in this sixth dolor, never was any so upright in its prostration. But do we not stand cold and trembling on the shores of such an icy sea of sorrow?

In such a state kindness was unkind, not in its intention, but in its effect. Thus, when Joseph and Nicodemus, John and Magdalen, gathered quietly round her, as she was composing and embalming the Body, their very kindness somehow brought out the loss of the compassion of Jesus. When she stood under the Cross, she had not thought about herself. She was compassionating Him. She considered only the sorrow her sorrow was to Him, not the compassion toward herself which it was causing in His Soul. But she discovered now how great a support that compassion had been to her all the while. Like all divine operations, she saw it more plainly now that it was past; and it rose up in gushing memories which were full as much kindlings of sorrow as of joy. He was gone who alone could understand her heart. He Himself had overwhelmed her with grief by the implied comparison between Himself and John when He had given her the apostle for her son in His stead. And now the gentle sweetness, the graceful tenderness of loving sorrow and filial compassion, which John was showing, while it filled her heart with love of his virgin soul, awoke memories against its will, and instituted comparisons, in spite of itself, which filled her with sadness, and with that sorrowful feeling which is regret in us, but which could not be so in her, because there is something in the holiest regret which does not altogether square with the will of God. Besides which, the past reflected itself in all those kind faces round. John was in the place of Jesus, and he was like Him, too, as true friends always are to their friends. Jesus was mirrored in the eyes of the sorrow-

ful enthusiast Magdalen, and Mary saw Him there. None could be so high in grace as that seraphic penitent, and not resemble, even in their lineaments, the Bridegroom of their souls. Joseph had come to life again in him of Arimathea, and was standing where Joseph had so often stood, close by the lap on which Jesus lay, looking, as Joseph looked, at Him, and not at her. Nicodemus, too, with his myrrh and aloes, had renewed the offering of the Three Kings, no longer in prophecy, but when the spices were needed for His burial. And, while Mary herself anointed Him, she did not forget how Magdalen had anointed His Feet already "against the day of His burial." And in the midst of them was Jesus Dead. A very cloud of sorrowful remembrances rose up from the group and enveloped the soul of Mary in pathetic shadows.

Indeed, there was altogether a quiet intensity about this dolor, which was suitable to a state of prostration, and which contrasted visibly with the more active and changeful endurance of many of the sorrows past. It was the first dolor, which had been running in a subterranean channel under all the others, which was now coming to the surface again, with its lifelong volume of sorrow, undistracted, unimpetuous, in self-collected simplicity of suffering. This prostration is as if it were simply that old, lifelong sorrow risen to its natural high-tide and pausing for an instant before it ebbed. It had all the Three-and-Thirty Years in it. It joined the Infancy with the Passion, and confused in beautiful, orderly confusion Bethlehem and Calvary together, and the life Jesus lived on earth in His visible Flesh with the life He leads there now in the invisible

Flesh and Blood of His adorable Sacrament. Nay, the Infancy and the Passion are both actually present in that scene, visible to the eye, palpable to the touch, bound together in the one divine mystery of that Body lying over the Mother's lap. There was the Passion written, engraven, or rather deeply sculptured, on those limbs. Every sin had fiercely inscribed its own reparation there. From the Head to the Feet, from the Feet to the Head, the Way of the Cross was winding up and down. Each Station had left its mark, its dread memorial, its noticeable wound. Every mystery was represented there. And Mary's ardent contemplations fitted every mark with life, put a piteous voice into every wound, and kindled over again in her scathed and bleeding heart those fires of human cruelty which had burnt themselves out from very violence even before death had withdrawn their Victim beyond their reach. But the Infancy was there as well. The Child was on His Mother's knee. That other Joseph was standing by. Those maternal ministries were all such as beseemed a child in its uncomplaining helplessness. There was the old gracefulness of the Mother's ways, as she parted His hair, and smoothed His limbs, and swathed Him again in His last swaddling-clothes. Her sorrow now was the counterpart of the old joys; nay, rather it was the continuation and completion of the old sorrows. In Bethlehem, in Egypt, at Nazareth, she had long foreseen this hour. And now it was come. She was down in unfathomable depths of woe, where the eye can hardly reach her; but it is visibly the same Mother, indubitably the same Child. This is her pay-

ment for the old nursing. Strange payment! but it is God's way, and she, if any one, understands it well. Alas! to us the beauty of the sorrow almost distracts us from its bitterness!

Such were the peculiarities of the sixth dolor. Foremost among the dispositions of Mary's soul in her endurance of it we must reckon the calm clearness with which she saw and followed the will of God through the darkness of her sorrow. Grief indulged troubles the vision of faith. It is because we give way to the tenderness of nature that we are so backward in discerning the will of God, and so stupid in interpreting its meaning. When a mourner calls God's ways inscrutable in his affliction, it is the result of a pardonable dimming of his faith's lustre. Pardonable, because we are so weak, and none knows our weakness so well as God. God's ways are, for the most part, inscrutable in joy; inscrutable above all to us, who know what we are, and what we deserve. But they are seldom inscrutable in sorrow. Sorrow is God's plainest time. Never are the clouds which curtain His throne put so far back as they are then. A grief quietly considered, is generally a revelation. But to the most moderate self-knowledge how can it be a mystery? We are always startled afresh with the wonders of the Passion, though we have known them from our childhood. But Mary found nothing strange even in the tremendous realities present to her and almost crushing the life out of her. Her eye was single. It looked out only for God's will; and that will always came at the right time and in the right place. It is faith's peculiar habit to see what we may call the

naturalness of God's will. To faith it always seems so fitting, we cannot conceive what else could suitably have happened, except the very thing which has happened. It almost seems strange that we did not prophesy it beforehand. We see all this wonderfully illustrated in the lives of many of the saints, but never so wonderfully as in our Blessed Lady. The most exacting, the most uncommon, the most apparently unseasonable, will of God always finds her prepared, just as if it was an orbit traced by a law which she knew beforehand, so that she had nothing to do but to glide in it like a star in its proper heaven. This was the reason why no time was lost, no grace uncorresponded to, no grace to which the correspondence was not generous and prompt. The will of God was her sole mystical theology. It was her compendious way to that perfection for which the abstrusest mystical theology can find no name.

Another disposition, which was admirably exhibited in this dolor, was her union of reverence with familiarity. There is no truer index of union with God than this. It can only come out of great holiness. No rules can be laid down for it, just as no precise rules can be laid down for good manners. It is an instinct, or what we call breeding, or an inborn delicacy, which enables a man to comport himself faultlessly. So is it heavenly breeding, an instinct of the Holy Ghost, a refinement of high and unusual grace, which enables a man to unite familiarity and reverence in His dealings with the Most High. It cannot be learned. The utmost which can be taught is to avoid a familiarity to which in our low estate we have no right. We must