

must preside over all our devotion, a reparation which is the immediate growth of familiarity, or rather which is the loving familiarity itself, with its eye resting on the reverence out of which all our devotion springs. To the devout mind Jesus habitually presents Himself as one who has not got His rights. He is injured and wronged with every heightening circumstance of pathetic injustice. There is no time when love pours itself out from the deepest and purest fountains of the heart with more self-abandonment than when the object of our love has been wronged. The very thought is so pitiable that it creates new love, such love as we never felt before, and the spirit of self-sacrifice beats in it like a heart. It is no longer a mere private joy of our own, a luxury of sentiment, a romance of feeling, which, while it enveloped the object of our love, reflected also no little radiance back upon ourselves. Self is more at home in love than in any other of the affections. It is an humbling and unpoetical truth, but nevertheless a truth. Now, the position of being wronged invests the object of our love with a kind of sanctity. Affection assumes something of the nature of worship, and then self can live there no longer, because worship is the only real incompatibility with self. Hence it is that the love of reparation is a pure, and unselfish, and disinterested love. But this is not all. Jesus not only habitually presents Himself to us as one who is suffering, because He is defrauded of His rights, but also of one who is in some mysterious way dependent upon our compassion to console Him, and upon our reparation to make good His losses.

This adds tenfold more tenderness to our love, and self returns again, but only in the shape of sacrifice, of generosity, of work, of sorrow, of abandonment. The spirit of reparation is a beautiful spirit, a spirit of human beauty fit to wait on the Humanity of our dearest Lord. It is the true Mary's lap within our souls, in which the Blessed Sacrament should ever lie, the pure white corporal of our most disinterested love!

Such should be our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, as taught us by our Mother ministering to the Body of Jesus on the top of Calvary. It should consist of reverence, tranquility, love, familiarity, and reparation, rising out of each other in this order, and connected with each other in the supernatural logic of a devotional spirit.

But Mary is also our model of behavior in grief. Grief may either be the solid foundation on which a vast supernatural edifice of sanctity is to be raised, or it may be the very thinnest and most diluted of all human affections, a mere clumsy ingenuity of selfishness, the most self-seeking of all the kinds of love; for there can be little doubt that sorrow is a kind of love. Thus the very highest and at the same time the very lowest things may be predicated of grief. The reason of the difference is to be found in the way in which we bear it. Grief is a difficult thing to manage. There is no time when our correspondence to grace requires to be more active, more vigilant, or more self-denying than in seasons of affliction. If we once begin to indulge our grief, a great work of God is frustrated. Every thing which happens in the world happens with

reference to our own soul. But sorrow is the tool with which God finishes the statue and animates it with its beautiful expression. It is sad for us when we take it into our own hands. If God condescends to resume His work, and succeed us when we have done, He must disfigure us with suffering again before we shall be once more in a condition for Him to commence His gracious work anew. Now, we have all of us a great temptation—and the more tender-hearted we are the greater our temptation—to indulge in grief as if it were a luxury. To endure, to hold fast by God, to do our duty, to supernaturalize our adversity, to carry our cross, to aspire heavenwards,—all these things are fatiguing. They give us the sensation of toiling up a steep. We have all the weariness of an ascent without the satisfaction of any visible elevation; for we seem to make no way at all. Whereas to indulge our grief, to give way unreservedly to the ready inundation of comfortable tears, to complain,—especially if we bring in a vein of religion, like a vein of poetry, into our complaining,—these things bring with them the relieving sensation of going down hill. Of a truth it is the most earthward process through which a heart can well go. Thus, a tender-hearted man ought to be as much on his guard against sorrow as an intemperate man should be against wine. There is a fascination in it which may easily become his ruin. What makes the temptation more dangerous is, that the world applauds the indulgence as if it were a moral loveliness, and looks shy at the restraint, as if it were hardness and insensibility; and to be suspected of coldness and indifference is almost more than a

tender-hearted man can bear. There is no need to do physical violence to ourselves to hinder tears. The effort will make us ill, without bringing any profit either to body or soul. God does not dislike to see His creatures weeping. We creatures even like to see those we love weeping sometimes. All which our Lady's example counsels is moderation. Let us relieve our hearts. It will make us less selfish. But let us not foster, embrace, rekindle, and indulge our grief. For then our sorrow is a selfish and luxurious fiction, a ground in which the Holy Spirit will not dig; for he knows there is no gold underneath.

Neither is the indulgence of grief content to stop in the mere luxury of sentiment. It goes on to do positive evil. It prompts us to dispense ourselves from the duties which our hand finds to do. It seems hard to work when we are grieving; but it is just this hardness which renders the work so heavenly. We think that sorrow makes us privileged persons, forgetting that our privileges are only an increase of our responsibilities. They think deepest and most truly of their responsibilities who most habitually regard them as privileges. The world's work is not to stop for our sorrow. We are but units in a multitude. We must roll round from west to east with our fellows; we must meet life as life meets us; we must take joy and sorrow as they come; they mostly come both together; both are at work at once, both unresting, both unimportant; but both lie upon our road to the only thing which is of importance, and that is God. Self-importance is the canker-worm of Christian sorrow. We must not make too much of our-

selves; yet this is what the world's stupid consolations try to do with those who are in grief. Dispensations are always lowering, but there is nothing which they lower so much as suffering and sorrow. Our grief is part of the world's rolling, because it is part of our own way to God. It is a going on, not a standing still, a quickening of life's time, not a letting the clock run down and stop. For the great clock goes while ours stands, so that we gain nothing, but lose much. We pull down the blinds, and strew the streets, and muffle the bells, and go slowly, and tread lightly, when sickness is in the house; but let us take care not to do so to sorrow in our own souls. For sorrow is by no means a sickness of the soul; it is its health, and strength, and vigor. Sins of omission may be more venial in times of sorrow, but they none the less unjewel our crown, and intercept the generosity of God.

Sorrow is a sanctuary, so long as self is kept outside. Self is the desecrating principle. If a time of sorrow is not the harvest-time of grace, it is sure to be the harvest-time of self. Hence, when we find people indulging in the sentimentality of their sorrow, we are almost certain to find them inconsiderate toward others. They are the centres round which every thing is to move. Every thing is to be subordinate to their mourning. Thus they pay no attention to hours. They disturb the arrangements of the household. They make the servants carry part of the burden of their wretchedness. They diffuse an atmosphere of gloom around them. They accept the service of others ungracefully, sometimes as if it was their right, be-

cause they are in grief, sometimes as if the kindness were almost an intrusion, which politeness only constrains them to endure. If this goes on, so rapid is the process of corruption when self has tainted sorrow, childhood works up again to the surface in middle life or age, and we have ill-temper, peevishness, petulance, quick words, childish repartee, self-deploring foolishness, grandiloquent exaggerations, attitudes and gestures of despair: in short, the long-banished ghosts of the nursery come back again, in proportion as sorrow with literal truth is allowed to unman us. A Christian mourner notes the least acts of thoughtfulness, and is full of gratitude for them. He feels more than ever that he deserves nothing, and is surprised at the kindness which he receives. He is forever thinking of the others in the house, and legislating for them, and contriving that the weight of his cross shall be concentrated upon himself. He smiles through his tears, takes the sorrow carefully out of the tone of his voice, and makes others almost gay while his own heart is broken. A saint's sorrow is never in the way. To others it is a softness, a sweetness, a gentleness, a beauty; it is a cross only to himself.

We must be careful also not to demand sympathy from others, and, if possible, not even to crave for it ourselves. What is it worth, if it comes when we have demanded it? Surely the preciousness of sympathy is in its being spontaneous. There is no balm in it, when it is paid as a tax. Not that it is wrong to hunger for sympathy when we are in sorrow. We are not speaking so much of right and wrong, as of

fittest and best, of what God loves most, of what makes our sorrow heavenliest. The more consolation from creatures the less from God. This is the invariable rule. God is shy. He loves to come to lonely hearts, which other loves do not fill. This is why bereaved hearts, outraged hearts, hearts misunderstood, hearts that have broken with kith and kin and native place and the grave of father and mother are the hearts of His predilection. Human sympathy is a dear bargain, let it cost us ever so little. God waits outside till our company is gone. Perhaps He cannot wait so long, for visits to mourners are apt to be very long, and He goes away, not angrily, but sadly, and then how much we have missed!

Where self comes, unreality will also intrude. This unreality is often shown in shrinking from painful sights and sounds, which it is necessary or unavoidable for us to see and hear. Much inconvenience is often occasioned to others by this, and the generous discharge of their duties in the house of sorrow rendered far more onerous and disagreeable than it need have been. It is just those who are cherishing most the sight or the sound in their morbid imaginations, who shrink with this unreal fastidiousness from the substance of that on which they are perversely brooding. There is none of this unworthy effeminacy of sorrow about those who are all for God. Such men neither seek nor avoid such shadows of their grief as come across them. They are supernaturally natural; and this is the perfection of mourning. Neither must we fail to exhibit the utmost docility to the arrangements of others. If this righteous unselfishness is

hard to bear, it is a legitimate part of the sacrifice which grief brings along with it. Sorrow tends to eccentricity. The strain of endurance makes men curiously fanciful. All this we must restrain, make it part of our immolation, and offer it to God. If our sorrow intrinsically weighs one ounce, a pound of self-sacrifice must go along with it. We must bear harder upon ourselves than God bears upon us. This is royal heartedness. The whole theology of sorrow may be compressed into a kind of syllogism. Every thing is given for sanctification, and sorrow above all other things; but selfish sorrow is sorrow unsanctified: therefore unselfishness is grace's product out of sorrow.

To all these counsels we must add yet another. There must be in our grief a total absence of realizing the unkindness or neglect of human agents. Nobody is in fault but God, and God cannot be in fault: therefore there is no fault at all; there is only the divine will. Faith must see nothing else. It must ignore secondary causes. It takes its crosses only from Jesus, and straight from Him. It sees, hears, feels, recognizes no one but God. The soul and its Father have the world to themselves. Oh, what a herculean power of endurance there is in this sublime simplicity of faith! But all these are hard lessons; and sorrow, if it is not peculiarly teachable, is the most unteachable of all things. Yet we could hardly expect Mary's lessons to be easy ones, least of all when she gives them from the top of Calvary.

Let us gaze at her once more, as she swathes the Body in the winding-sheet. How like a priest she

seems! How like a mother! And are not all mothers priests? For, rightly considered, all maternities are priesthoods. Ah, Mary! thy maternity was such a priesthood as the world had never seen before!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEVENTH DOLOR.

THE BURIAL OF JESUS.

THE shades of evening fall fast and silently round that Mother, sitting at the foot of the Cross with the covered Head of her dead Son upon her lap. The very earth is weary with the weight of that eventful day. The animals were fatigued after the panic of the eclipse, whose darkness they had mistaken for the night, so that the beasts slunk to their lairs, the birds to their roosts, and the lizards went to rest in the crevices of the rocks. Men themselves were outworn with sin and the impetuous activity of their own evil passions, while the scattered few who composed the Church were weary with shame, and fear, and sorrow, and the agitation of accumulated thoughts. The well-known sounds of night begin to succeed to the sharper and more frequent noises of the day. There is a divine light in the heart of Mary, more golden than that last lingering rim of departed sunset, that sun which seemed so glad to set after the burden of such a day, and she is resting on it for a moment, before she girds up her whole nature to meet her seventh sorrow and her last.

It was a strange station for a Mother to choose for her repose, just at the foot of the cruel tree on which her Son had died, and which was yet bedewed with