

sion also was interior, in her heart as well as His. It was drawn, too, from the same afflictive sources. It had passed through His Heart before it entered into hers. At the same time, there is certainly a contrast, in this respect, as well as a similitude. For she had no outward Passion to correspond with His. Her interior agony was not, of course, without aching exhaustion of the frame, bitterest smarting and crushing of the fleshly heart, and intolerable burning of the brain. Her body suffered as well as her soul. It had to hold fire, and the fire burned it through and through. Nevertheless, there was nothing at all to answer to the outward Passion of our Blessed Lord. Her outward Passion was the fifteen years of wearisome, suffering delay which was her lot when He had ascended into heaven.

The Passion and the Compassion may also be compared together, in that each was the cause of the other. Both were causes, and both were effects. It was our Lord's Passion which filled our Lady's heart to the brim with bitterness; and it was our Lady's Compassion which was one of the main ingredients in our Saviour's Passion. Only our Lady's Compassion was not coextensive with the Passion as its cause, while it was coextensive with it as an effect, because it took it all in, embraced it, assimilated it to itself, and made it utterly its own. The contents of our Lady's heart could not fill our Lord's, but hers could hold the contents of His. The Mother crucified the Son, and the Son, crucified as He was, went and placed Himself with all the implements of His Passion in His Mother's heart, making it large enough by

breaking it. It was not only that each pain of the Passion was represented in her Compassion. It is most likely that she really felt it all, just as it was, not in all its intolerable reality, but in such dread reality at least as was according to the measure of her immense capabilities of suffering. The saints have felt it so, in their lesser measure, great in our eyes as that lesser measure was. They have been invisibly stigmatized, and they have been led in horrible inward unimaginable tortures through all the mysteries of the Passion, miraculous power often being needed to prevent the separation of body and soul. Can we imagine that this inward real compassion was granted to them, and that she was without it? It is also another similitude between the Compassion and the Passion, that just as saints have been allowed in mystical ways to feel the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, so have they also been allowed mystically to participate in the sorrows of Mary. Both the Compassion and the Passion have been recognized fountains out of which have flowed some of the most singular and at the same time the best-accredited phenomena of mystical theology.

## SECTION VI.

### THE SEEMING EXCESS OF THE COMPASSION.

But there is another point in the resemblance between the Passion of Jesus and the Compassion of Mary, which must not be omitted. It is the seeming excess of her sorrows over his. We call it *seeming*, because no



one in his senses would dream of saying that Mary's sufferings equalled those of our Blessed Saviour. But her Compassion, as we have seen, is a divine work, a divine mystery, and, inasmuch as this semblance is an undeniable feature of it, it must have been intentional. Every thing in a divine work is notable, and we learn from it by the mere noting of it, even where it is beyond our powers of explanation. It was in the joint mystery of the Compassion and Passion that the Mother and the Son saddened each other. Now, in proportion as His beauty exceeded hers, His power to increase her sorrow exceeded her power to augment His. It was a more terrible thing for the Mother to see the Son expiring on the Cross, than for the Son to see his mother broken-hearted at the foot of the Cross. But when we remember that He was God, and that her whole love of Him was what it was because He was God, still more disproportioned will her suffering appear to His, and she too the weaker vessel, the less capable of enduring such highly-wrought agony as that on Calvary. We must bear in mind also that inward pain is greater than outward pain, and that as she had no visible Passion to compare with His, the sorrow, which each outward pain and outrage of His caused in her, must have been inward also. His bodily Passion produced a mental counterpart in her. She was inwardly scourged, inwardly crowned with thorns, inwardly stripped, inwardly nailed to the Cross, and she died inwardly. All that was outward in Him was obliged to be inward in her. So also, when the Passion ended, the Compassion had at least three hours, perhaps six, of agony crowded with dreadful mysteries,

yet to run. The fear of His limbs being broken, the wound of the lance, the taking down from the Cross, the embalming, the burial, and the desolation, all these sorrows were crucifying Mary's woe-weary heart while He was flashing light and beauty and glory through the caverns of Limbus and being worshipped by the congratulations of all the patriarchs, kings, and prophets of the olden time. Moreover, she was left behind to mourn for fifteen years, and what was that delay but a prolongation of all that was hardest to bear in each of her seven dolors through more than twice seven years? The words are easily written, but what hidden worlds of heroic endurance and desperate heart-worn life do they not imply! And there was one thought through all that scene on Calvary which she alone could have, and which must have reigned supremely over her mind, inspiring her with an incredible hatred of sin, and throwing a peculiar light upon the Passion, which it is not easy for us to conceive. It was the knowledge that Jesus was at that moment paying the price of her Immaculate Conception,—that His Passion was for her redemption, and so principally for hers,—that it was more for hers than for that of the rest of the world together. Who then shall say what the Passion looked like to Mary's eye?

#### SECTION VII.

##### THE MEASURES OF MARY'S COMPASSION.

Lastly, we must say a few words of the measures and dimensions of her Compassion. We have drawn such a picture of it as we are able. It not only falls



far below the truth, but it sensibly falls far below the real image of it in our own minds. A thousand unexpressed thoughts are teasing us at this moment, but the difficulty is how to express them fitly. Words do not seem to be measures for them. They are thoughts of love; and love does not speak; it burns. Moreover, there must be limits to all things except loving. There are no limits there. Love is an eternal work. Love alone can measure the Compassion of Mary. Think of the sufferings of Jesus. They open at our feet like a huge abyss. Can we fathom their dreadful depths? Or do we not rather shrink in conscious nothingness from a task so hopeless and so rash? Yet Mary's Compassion contains that world-wide abyss, measures it, and holds it miraculously within its own dimensions. If we speak of the beauty of Jesus, straightway the vision of a shoreless sea, which no horizon bounds, over which the sun is rising and setting at the same moment, the half disk sunken in the west already rising in the east, and the waters rolling on and on for evermore. Yet as are the waters of that beauty, so were the waters of Mary's bitterness. By an opposite miracle to that of Moses, the wood of the Cross thrown into those waters of beauty has converted them into bitterness. If we think of men's cruelty in the Passion, it is a mystery nearer to our understanding; yet is not that nearness almost an infinite distance? Are we not obliged to call to our aid the theory of diabolical possession? Even then the horrors of the Passion are almost incredible, because they are so nearly inconceivable. Yet these horrors were but a part of Mary's Compassion; and truly,

compared with the wrath of the Father, and the beauty of Jesus, they were the very least part of it. If we think of her deep love of Jesus, it is only to delight in its interminable magnificence. It is beyond our definitions, out of the sphere of our comprehension. We make wild comparisons of all angels and of all saints, indulge in fanciful arithmetic, repeat our superlatives, but we only do so to convince ourselves more satisfactorily that it is all beyond us, just as a man uses violence with himself to be sure he is awake. Yet the dimensions of that love do not reach to the dimensions of her Compassion, because there is another love yet, to which it marvellously outstretches. It is the deep love of Jesus for her. Who can tell it? Who can speak of it even figuratively? for where is our figure to come from? Yet the breadth, and the depth, and the height of that love of Jesus for His Mother are the only true dimensions of her Compassion. Here are five abysses, five measures, five standards, His sufferings, His beauty, men's cruelty, her deep love of Him, His deep love of her. We must do our poor best with them all, and we shall reach a view of our Blessed Mother's Compassion which will be good for us and acceptable to her, but it will be below the truth. A work which Jesus and Mary made together, out of God's wrath, and man's sin, and the Hypostatic Union, and the sinlessness of a pure creature, must be a marvel about which at best we can but stammer, and lovingly go wrong; and such a work is Mary's Compassion. Our task is ended, and love will give our poor thoughts a truth of its own which will make them good for souls.



It is a beautiful and a dread sight to see all the sorrows of fallen earth resumed in the broken heart of our own Mother. Has it moved us? Then why not for the rest of life, in sober panic at the world and worldliness, go and sit at our Mother's feet and meditate her griefs? Is there a fitter work for prodigals come back to their Heavenly Father? Compassion with her is already compassion with Jesus; and we may say that compassion with the Invisible Creator Himself is the devotional feeling out of which we shall serve Him most generously, and realize Him most tenderly as our Eternal Father,—eternal because He has been—blessed be His Majesty!—from all eternity, and eternal because we shall be—blessed be His compassion!—with Him, His happy sons, His pardoned, sons to all eternity. Truly Mary lays us evermore in the lap of God. Truly by some celestial logic of their own, all Christian things, be they doctrines or devotions, come out at last in that one compendious, melodious, alone-sufficing word, Eternal Father!

THE END.

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