

ing to us, since here we have to consider the love which this holy and sublime creature bears to us; she, who has above her nothing that is not God, and who, without being God herself, approaches nevertheless on every side to the Divinity.— Now this love which she bears us surpasses every other love, inasmuch as the dignity of this admirable Virgin is superior to that of all creatures; for it is not only a tender, ardent, heroic, generous love, but we may say it is an excessive love, which seems to pass all limits. Why? Because Mary by a prodigy of charity towards us, has given her divine Son for our salvation, and, God as he was, she offered and sacrificed him for us.— When Jesus Christ wished to show the most astonishing effect of the charity of the Father, he said, that he had “so loved the world, as to deliver his only son. John iii. 16. This is what the great Apostle calls the excess of God’s love for men: *Propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos.* Ephes. ii. 4. Now the heart of Mary has been capable of a similar excess of love: she also has delivered up her only Son, the adorable fruit of her womb, for the redemption of the world with this difference, that this great sacrifice cost no pain to the eternal Father, who is essentially impassible, but it caused anguish so bitter, so profound, to the most tender, the most feeling of mothers, that no expression can be found to give a just idea of the martyrdom she endured; a martyrdom which commenced not on Calvary, but even from the moment she received the visit of the angel. As soon as it was announced to her that she would have a Son who would be called Jesus: that is to say Saviour, she comprehended all that this name signified; she knew she was called to bring forth to the world the victim of the human race. She consented and by her voluntary acceptance, she devoted herself to all the desolations inseparable from such a destiny.— What joy could she at that moment feel? what could alleviate her pain? During the time, that she bore the divine Infant in her womb, that she nourished him with her milk, that she saw him advance in age, she ceased not to have the heart-rending thought present to her mind, that he was growing up for sacrifice. She could not banish from her mind the frightful images of the garden of Olives, the Pretorium, or Calvary. All that forms the Consolation of other mothers, was changed into bitterness for her. When Jesus extended to her his innocent hands, she believed already that she saw them loaded with chains, or pierced with the nails that were to fasten them to the cross. If he smiled at his mother or fixed on her a tender look, or solicited her caresses, she represented to herself, by a cruel anticipation, his eyes obscured and fainting in

death; his face covered with blood and tears; his whole body one continued wound. It was a martyrdom at every instant, which love alone could make her support! Behold her co-operate towards the sufferings of this adorable son, and become in our favor the minister of the rigorous designs of his Father in his regard. Did she not deliver him to the knife of circumcision, that his blood might begin to flow for us? Did she not carry him in her arms to the temple, there to offer him as our victim, and to solemnly devote him to death? On what may we suppose the familiar discourses of Jesus and Mary turned, during the thirty years they lived in the retreat of Nazareth? Was it not on this same passion of which he afterwards continually spoke to his Apostles, and which was the constant subject of all his thoughts? What conversations for a mother, and what deep wounds did not each discourse inflict upon her heart! Yet, she never had the weakness of St Peter to exclaim: “Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee.” Matt. xvi. 22. On the contrary, she inflames still more the ardent desires of her Son: they drink together, and inebriate themselves in anticipation, with the bitter wine of this frightful chalice, and mutually animate each other to drink to the dregs, that we may be saved. Need we produce any other proof than her conduct when the fatal hour arrived? Ah! my sisters, what a spectacle is now presented to our view! and who could contemplate it without being affected?— The Son of man is condemned to die; already overwhelmed with the most insulting outrages, exhausted of blood and strength, loaded with a heavy cross, under which he falls, he is rather dragged than conducted to the place of execution.— The pious women who know his innocence, and see him reduced to this sad extremity, cannot restrain their sighs, and fill the air with their lamentations. Where is his mother? Has she fled far from the theatre where so horrible a scene is prepared? Is she gone to bury in darkness her profound and insupportable grief? Has she remained expiring and forlorn in her own dwelling? Ah! she is near to the victim, she ascends beside him the mountain of sacrifice, and the gospel does not mention that she wept; she sees the executioners strip her Son, lay him inhumanly on the fatal wood, bury with redoubled blows, the nails into his hands and feet; she sees his tears flow, stream down on every side; she hears his sobs and sighs, intermingled with the cries of rage, and barbarous insults of his enemies. It is not at a distance, like the holy women, and timid friends of the Saviour, that she assists at so cruel a spectacle. No, she is even at the foot of the cross, in the midst of the executioners and soldiers, so near