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So you think...
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SO YOU THINK
You're SUFFERING



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The Divine Surgeon

BY

REV. DENIS MOONEY, O.F.M.

Surgeon, cut deep into my mind!—
With the lance of contradiction
Purge out the selfish, pagan part
In my mentality,
That I may see all things
With the Mind of Christ.

Surgeon, cut deep into my heart!—
With instruments of Thine own choosing
Sever all attachments
To the things of earth,
That I may love all creatures
With the Heart of Christ.

Surgeon, cut deep into my will!—
With the scalpel of authority
Cut out my pride
Till self is dead,
And I obey in everything
With the Will of Christ.

SO YOU THINK YOU'RE SUFFERING

By

REV. BRUNO M. HAGSPIEL, S.V.D.



“Carry me, Christ, on the cross, which is salvation to the wanderers, sole rest for the wearied, wherein alone is life for those who die!”

ST. AMBROSE



Nihil Ostat May 30, 1953.

Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. H. Wiersbinski, V.G.

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Most Rev. John M. Gannon, D.D. Bishop of
Erie, Pa.



"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24)

THE MISSION OF PAIN

PAIN? What is pain?

It is the impress of the loving hand
Of the Great Artist on his formless clay;
The grinding of the Immortal Potter's wheel;
The chisel on the diamond, whereby it
Comes forth a gem of radiant loveliness.

Why be afraid? The Artist is expert.
He understands each move. The Potter's
hand

Is sure. It will not slip and mar the work.
And no more shaping shall the vessel have,
And not a single turn upon the wheel
More than is needed to insure the grace,
The beauty and the strength, the Master
Workman

Gives to all He makes.

Why be afraid?

FOREWORD

In this vale of tears, it is easy enough for each one of us to classify his own trials or sufferings as extreme examples of the privations or sorrows that beset all men ever since Adam and Eve were driven from Eden.

Individuals with true perspective of the role which the Divine Sufferer enacted on earth on our behalf are of course quick to remind us that, compared to His Agony and Passion, our own woes are puny ones, indeed.

But, without question, there are countless human beings whose vision does not lift to those heights, or cannot comprehend the depth and the breadth of the Saviour's suffering on account of mere mankind.

If, instead, actual examples were offered to us of other flesh-and-blood persons, perhaps even of our own nationality or our present generation, our human understanding can better compare how insignificant our personal troubles or griefs appear, and how little we are entitled to the luxury of personal moaning and groaning over our current plight, whatever it may be.

With this thought, the author has gone gleaning among ancient tomes and yesterday's newspapers, has jotted down narratives of sufferings undergone by saints and sinners, religious and laypeople,—all with the purpose of showing the reader that if he believes his suffering is terrible, here are without doubt cases which make his pain seem child's play.

Nor is it intended that this be done in a negative spirit, of belittling and minimizing the tribulations of



any fellow-man,—rather does the author want first to point the way, without undue preachment, to the proper attitude towards suffering, which can yield richer rewards than any mortal king ever bestowed.

Gold is tried by fire. The leaping flames burn the dross off, the impurities collect in the slag-heap, the final residue of metal gleams with brightest lustre only after the purification by the intensest heat.

Thus with human souls. God's magic wand of suffering, by merest touch, can refine our crude spiritual substance to an essence that will brighten even eternity.

May this collection of the sufferings of others help you bear your trials, may it point the way to higher awareness of the sanctity God offers you through Christ-like endurance of the sufferings He sends you.

Bruno Hagspiel, S.V.D.

Sacred Heart Mission Seminary
Girard, Pa.

**SO YOU THINK YOU'RE
SUFFERING!**

“IS YOUR CROSS SO BIG?”

God in His divine wisdom has
from all eternity beheld the cross
He bestows upon you —
His precious gift
from His Heart.

He contemplated this cross
with His all-knowing eye
before bestowing it upon you.

He pondered over it with His divine mind;
He examined it with His all-wise justice;
With His loving mercy
He warmed it thru and thru;

And with both His hands
He weighed it
to determine if it be
one ounce too heavy for you.

He blessed it with His all-holy Name;
With His grace He anointed it;
And with His consolation
He perfumed it thru and thru;

And then once more
He considered you and your courage.

Finally it comes from heaven
as a special message of God
to you,
an alms
of the all-merciful love
of God
for you.

St. Francis de Sales

It's a common mistake for anyone to think that God afflicts only evildoers with suffering and the travail of pain.

On the contrary, it is more often His own friends of the Cross whom He takes by the hand and leads into the School of Suffering, which is the School of Perfection.

Just reflect for a moment, while turning the pages of the Old Testament with St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, and listen to his inspired comment:

“Look at these just men—

“Abel, who was slain by his brother;

Abraham, who was a wanderer in a strange land;

Lot, who was driven from his native country;

Jacob, who was persecuted by his brother;

Job, who was reduced to poverty, humiliated,
and covered with sores from head to foot;

Tobias, who was struck with blindness. . . .”

We could add others: for instance, Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his own kinsmen . . . and when we come to the New Testament, what a roll-call of Apostles and Martyrs we can recall!

“We are never without wounds on this earth that is covered with thorns,” declares St. Louis de Montfort. You can carry your Cross unwillingly,—but if you will only glance around you and see how little is your portion of suffering, you will be led to say to yourself, “And I thought I had it bad! I thought I was really suffering!” It is easy to be full of spiritual pride, too, and to consider your scratches to be gaping wounds, your little rebuffs to be dreadful injuries, your crosses to be massive beams

instead of the splinters they truly are. That crushing blow—is it not in fact just a fly alighting on you? That fearful stab at your sensibilities—is it not rather the mere prick of a pin?

How much wiser shall we be if we can cry with St. Augustine, “Burn, cut, O Lord, in this world; only spare me in eternity!”

But before we measure our spiritual stature against that of sufferers who have gone before us, let us first see what suffering means.

During World War II, a common practice in every army unit of the U.S. forces was to have “orientation” talks. It was found very necessary first to instruct the soldiers just what they were fighting for, just what the enemy stood for, just what the whole struggle was about. These orientation meetings were followed by “briefings,” in which a senior officer usually explained with maps or sketches just what fortress of the enemy was to be assailed, how they were to go about it, what to do if they were victorious, what to do if they failed. . . .

Let us first “orientate” ourselves on what suffering means in the scheme of life, and then “brief” ourselves on what to do when we come to actual grips with the enemy,—which, in too many cases, is nobody but our own weak human soul.

DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU ARE SUFFERING?

There are so many ways of suffering: just which one do you mean?

Mental, spiritual, physical,—and a multitude of vari-

ations of each of these. Which kind of suffering is your lot, and just what little variation of it is yours?

Picture the Man of Sorrows, as He proceeds from the Mount of Olives to the death-rattle on Calvary.

Are you lonely? Here is Jesus, bereft of all human consolation, and of Divine solace too. The might of His Father is displayed not in allowing some soft waft of assuagement to touch Jesus' brow. No. God the Father sends an angel who proffers instead the chalice of bitterness.

Do you feel frustration sharply? A few feet away from the agonizing Jesus slumber the chosen few, the Apostles, on whom He plans to build His church. What of His glorious visions of their success in following His instructions, His long hours of teaching, praying, yes, —even of miracle-working?

Does the double-dealing of loved ones hurt you? Judas steps forward to offer the historic monstrous kiss of betrayal. Peter, later on, denies in his coarse fisherman's voice, snarling with curses, "I know not the man." And not one follower or disciple lifts a finger to rescue Him, except the headstrong Peter who proves his manhood to himself with a brief sword-swinging episode.

Do you suffer because lies have been told about you? Dragged before the Roman governor, Jesus hears fantastic charges screamed against Himself. With His infinite knowledge, Jesus knows better than any man just how false and twisted those trumped-up fabrications are.

Are you a victim of occasional twinges of pain,—

seasonal attacks of rheumatism, muscular aches, onsets of arthritis? Here is Jesus, scourged at the pillar. Every pore filled with blood from the Roman whips; every sinew ripped and torn; every inch of flesh gaping and raw.

Or perhaps today or yesterday it was a headache which wracked your body. . . . How we rush to abate the momentary flash of pain with aspirin or a cold pack or other quick remedy! But here is the God-man, wearing the supreme farce of a crown: sharp penetrating thorns.

Is it a neuralgic pain which twitches your cheek or face—or a toothache which afflicts your jaw? Jesus has His bloodied bruised face beaten by the calloused hands of soldiers, by the mock scepter, and feels the spittle of their contempt on His sacred face.

Are you being treated unjustly? Do you feel that if the truth were known, those who laugh at you would instead hold you in deep respect? Pilate washes his hands of Jesus; and the Jewish crowd roars that they think more of Barabbas, the robber, the murderer, than of Jesus, Who raised Lazarus from the dead.

Have you ever had a sore back or aching shoulder or an attack of lumbago? Here is the Son of God, walking the Way of the Cross, muscles fairly cracking under the strain of the massive cross.

Remember when you fell down and scraped your knee? or stumbled and hurt yourself? The weight of the cross crushes Jesus into the stifling dust of the road; the sharp rocks bruise Him Who is already one living bruise.

That time you had a skin rash or some mosquito

bites or poison ivy. . . how you complained about it! Watch how the barbaric hands of the Romans tear the garment of Jesus off His body, so that gobbets of bloody flesh are torn off. . . .

That time you cut your right hand slightly. . . or sprained your left wrist. . . everybody knew about it. The bandage stayed on for days. But see how the massive spike is driven into the very hands of Jesus, Whose hands had only been used to work wonders and do good.

Maybe you had a broken leg or a maimed foot. . . perhaps, if you were a soldier, you stepped on a land-mine and had the foot blown off. . . . observe the slow agony of the nail driven into the feet of Jesus, the crushing of the many tiny bones which go to make up a human foot.

Or you were in an auto accident—but you escaped serious injury,—only, for one jolting instant, your whole body was hurled about suddenly. Lo! the Cross is raised on high and with a final lurch thuds into the hole prepared for it, exquisite fingers of pain tearing at every tortured nerve and sinew and bloody fragment of flesh.

It hurts you to see your loved ones suffer. Lo! here is Mary, His mother, at the foot of the Cross, numb with grief and the stabbing pain of the swords of her great sorrow.

The piercing of His side with the lance. . . the sponge saturated with bitterness. . . the absence of the ministering angels that would seem to be the very least His Father could have done for His Son. . . .

Men who have survived the horrors of shipwreck,

adrift on the merciless expanse of the ocean, relate with shudders how their thirst drove some co-sufferers to insanity. Yet here is God the Son, with His thirst an infinite one. . . .

And, final stroke of shame, after Jesus has died, He is laid to rest, not in a tomb of His own, but in the final sepulcher that belongs to another man, who is not even one of His outstanding followers!

Yes, He was infinite God. . . . and His sufferings were infinite.

DO YOU STILL THINK YOU KNOW WHAT SUFFERING IS?

Can your trials and pains be even compared to the Crucified One?

Now, before you can even start to estimate your own sufferings with proper perspective, you must understand just what is the meaning of suffering, the "WHY" of it.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Once, when I was in a well-known Chicago hospital, I heard the moaning and wailing of a sufferer which was so loud it rang through the entire wing of the building.

I asked the Brother attendant who it was.

He shook his head sadly. "A hopeless case," he replied. "The boy is only nine years old; we have been giving injections trying to fight the infection but it is too far gone, I fear. Now, each time the nurse approaches to give the injection, the poor lad screams and screams

. . . even though he knows we are trying to help him.”

Doesn't it seem hard for a poor innocent child to be compelled to suffer such physical and mental agony? Why does God permit it, if He is all-merciful and all-good? How often have we heard friends or neighbors say: "Why did I have to lose the best wife a man ever had in that frightful accident?" or "Why was my baby stricken with polio?" or "Why does God allow the ignorance and savagery and rank immorality that makes our world of today such an appalling mess?" Even good people, feeling deeply about these problems, are sometimes tempted to doubt that God is powerful or good. . . .

Certainly, neither we as Catholics nor our faith of Catholicism are callously insensible to the evil and pain all around us. What other religion or philosophy does as much to alleviate the sorrows of humanity? But the Catholic outlook enables us to see suffering in proper perspective and to harness it for spiritual growth. Many people faced with tragedy are swayed more by their hearts than by their heads. And it is next to impossible to provide an answer that is emotionally satisfying, when some heavy blow has fallen.

Emotionally, it is hard to see why the same savage sweep of Death's scythe should mow down an ancient of the people, hoary with 90 years, and a tiny tot who has just barely been severed from his mother's umbilical cord. And if it is something that happened to you, the heart that is surcharged with grief gives vent only too often to outcries of rebellion and outrage against the Divine Creator Who has inflicted this pain.

WHY MUST WE SUFFER?

In a prayer approved by PIUS X, June 2, 1914, which was a favorite utterance of a modern Victim Soul, Martha M. St. Jean of Grand Isle, Maine, we have the whole "clue" to the so-called mystery of suffering given to us. This heroic sufferer for 20 years on a sickbed (she died on Easter Sunday April 17, 1949 in Fitchburg, Mass.) underlined these phrases in her copy of the prayer:

"This is why, O Lord, *even when I do not see, when I do not understand, when I do not feel*, I believe that the situation in which I find myself and all that happens to me is the work of Thy love; and with all my heart I prefer it to any other situation which would be more agreeable to me but which would come less from Thee. *I place myself in Thy hands: do with me as Thou wilt, leaving me but the consolation of obeying Thee.*"

What a different viewpoint from those who cry out against God, as we have just described it! It is nothing but an echo of the immortal words of Jesus in His agony on the Mount of Olives: "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from me: but yet not my will, but Thine be done." (LUKE XXII, 42).

What else did Jesus say when He declared "If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (MARK VIII, 34) ?

Take the example of a modern saint such as the Little Flower, St. Therese, whose whole story of sanctity can be traced in a simple line, from the time when she suffered from the loss of her mother in her early years,

until her desire for suffering was actually consumed by the union of her will with the will of God, to the shutting out of all other desires. Sanctity in a nutshell: SUFFER ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD.

In the scheme of Redemption, God allows crosses and pains to afflict us. With worries or anxieties, if we love God, we are aware that He has indicated His absence. Like the human soul in Francis Thompson's immortal HOUND OF HEAVEN, we can flee Him across the illimitable expanse of heaven and of earth, only to find peace when we allow the chase to end as His captive. Again, with actual physical sufferings God may force us to realize His presence, — shutting out the world behind a hospital door, stopping our frivolous or sinful gadding to and fro with crippled limbs, removing the mere thought of worldly pleasures with the daily constant pain of a hideous disease.

On Gethsemane, on Golgotha, God spelled out for all men, as you or I would make it clear to a child, the meaning of religion in our lives. He used blood, sweat, tears to make the letters stand out clear: GIVING, NOT GETTING is the meaning of it all. SUFFERING, — if so it be God's will, —not REFUSING TO SUFFER. Not our will, but God's will.

Many of us want consolation from Jesus; few of us ask for tribulation. We all love to celebrate Easter Sunday, — Lent is a time of sour faces too often. Many, in the words of Thomas a Kempis, "follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of His passion." Many of us are glad to do God's will if it

happens to agree with our own plans and desires, — but woe to God's plans if they should contradict ours! Read and re-read chapter 12 of Book II of *THE IMITATION OF CHRIST* *On the Royal Way of the Holy Cross*. It's a classic!

We must seek God's pleasure, not ours. In the light of Faith, suffering becomes the highroad to heaven, not an obstacle in our path. "Are you Christians?" asked St. Augustine. "If you are, what name do you bear? The name of reasonable beings or of the Faithful? Reason is not the final appeal for you." Mere reasoning, mere working out of a mathematical formula will not explain the meaning of suffering. It will not tell us the "WHY" of it all.

As the centuries have unfolded, here and there sage historians have been allowed to study certain events from the vantage point of knowledge that was hidden from the people who actually lived during the historic times. Not always, but sometimes these historians are able to show how God's Divine Providence operated so marvellously that certainly the people living in those far-off days could have never had an inkling of what He planned for future generations.

Yet think of the myriad other events which are still not understood by scholars who have pored over documents, dug in strange places, mastered forgotten languages, all to become "experts" on certain historic periods! Yet God still quietly keeps His "blueprints" to Himself.

One sure clue to the mystery of suffering we hold in our mortal hands. God's love for His children is the

reason for suffering. "For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth" (PROVERBS III, 12). Scattered throughout the Old Testament we can find one inspiring passage after another all pointing to the same exhortation that Judith gave to the ancients: "Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord with which like serpents we are chastised have happened for our amendment and not for our destruction."

How often Jesus preached the doctrine of pain! "You shall be made sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (JOHN XVI, 20). The whole public life of Our Lord pictured, described, underlined this theme. Jesus' entire primary mission with respect to human suffering and human sorrow was not to relieve them, but to show us how to bear them, use them, value them and so learn to thank God for them. The miraculous cures, the wonder-working episodes proved His Divinity, just so He could declare all the more strongly that not through fleeing from suffering but by bearing it for His sake, we could enter the kingdom of heaven.

We are all Simons of Cyrene at heart. We are reluctant to shoulder that fearful burden of a cross. And then, think what the people standing around will say! Won't many of them whisper, "Serves him right" . . . or "We know there is a good reason why God is punishing him with this sickness." It takes a struggle to face up to the suffering laid on us and bear it. But, St. Jerome points out quite bluntly that no saint ever was crowned without the fight first over.

WAS SUFFERING NECESSARY?

Jesus could have set us free from sin without making the royal road of the Cross as our pathway to heaven. As God, He could have come among men for a brief moment and offered just one brief prayer or sigh or the tiniest drop of His Precious Blood. It would have sufficed to make the plan of redemption operative. Why did He suffer, and why did He insist on His most dear ones, His Mother, the Apostles, and others, going through suffering also?

Into the lives of the ones whom God has loved the most, have the most grievous trials and afflictions been poured. Down the centuries, call the roll-call of the martyrs and saints who suffered poverty, hunger, starvation, stripes, scourgings, mental anguish of disgrace and shame and loneliness and abandonment, physical torments of disease and the rack, boiling in oil and beheading, flaying alive, and burning at the stake . . . and even, blessed privilege of imitating the Divine Master by crucifixion. Why?

But God's love was not content with mere redemption, — love demands all, is not satisfied with the mere shadow of giving, but must offer all, even the breath of life. Love bears all things, endures all things for the beloved. God, the greatest Lover, could show no greater love than by laying down His life for His friends. A mother risks death to rescue her child in a burning house, or from a racing auto. "Suffering is the badge of those who love," wrote the ardent pen of St. John

of the Cross. How suffering purifies the soul, sharpens its appetite for heaven, burns away the dross!

Then, too, Jesus suffered to teach us the awfulness of sin. We are all children of Adam, we are all possessors in our human frames of the weaknesses that find sin something attractive. Jesus, by being the victim of sin, from Olivet's bloody grove to the darkened summit of Golgotha, painted for us the fearful nature of sin, its hideous and fiendish conquest of the All-good God in human form. Himself sinless, He allowed the henchmen of sin to wreak their worst devices upon His body. "There is no soundness in Him, wounds and bruises and swelling sores . . ." What must it have been to feel the weight of sin on those divine shoulders?

I watched a master silversmith one day. An apprentice brought a beautiful gold plaque to him, and pointed out a most intricate piece of engraving which was incomplete. The master artisan studied the plaque, then went over to the wall where over fifty different instruments and tools were fixed on holders, unerringly selected one tool, and in a moment had made the one little gouge in the plaque which finished it and made it a work of art. As the apprentice walked off, he said to me, admiringly, "He sure knows just which tool to pick for the job."

In His omnipotence, God knew just which instrument would be the one for the job of saving souls for heaven. Shall we question His infinite knowledge? Of all the tools lying to His hand, God selected the one of suffering and pain. Shall we, who wish to follow Him, pit our imperfect wits against His, and choose some other instrument? The

saints knew that this was the secret of sanctity, — an open secret, for all to read, since Jesus walked the road of agony to the hill called Golgotha.

How simple it all is! “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him,” says St. Paul (II TIM. 11, 12). No Cross, no Crown!

Do you understand now why Jesus suffered, even though it was not necessary, and why He sends the cross to His friends? Ah, but now you say: “But I know of cases of truly hardened criminals, and actual atheists, who have suffered greatly. Were these then Jesus’ friends also? Do you put them in the same group with the heroic saints who gave up all, even life, for His sake?”

You will not deny that even the greatest criminal or most depraved sinner can regain the friendship of God. Who are you to know the innermost secrets of their hearts, their possibly secret yearning for the light that streams from Golgotha? Did not Jesus pronounce these mighty words: “I came not to call the just but sinners to penance” (LUKE V, 32)?

Brought into the world though we are all, with the brand of original sin upon our souls, yet we have the promise of redemption if we shall seek for it: “If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow” (IS. XXXXIII, 25). And how Our Lord rejoiced over the joy there would be in heaven over the one sinner that did penance, more than over the 99 who did not need penance. Truly, in His Father’s heaven there are many mansions. . . .

To all of us, would-be saint or obvious sinner, the

straight way to heaven is revealed. Suffering is like a hedge of thorns bordering the path on both sides . . . the stings of the sharp nettles force us to stay on the path, even though beyond the hedges the mirage of sun-kissed fields beckon us.

What wonderful magic there is in suffering! Watch how Nabuchodonosor is changed from an arrogant, despotic tyrant to a humble, submissive creature through his tribulations. See how the prodigal son, his pride abated, turns from ways of sin to become a humble son once more in his father's house. Achab, the wicked, — how his trials give him humility. Read the praises David sings to God after his afflictions have showed him the true attitude to have towards His Maker.

Not mere negative turning away from their sins was the fruit of suffering in the saints. Vibrant, living joy shone about them like a halo. "None can find more joy than those who suffer for Christ," said St. Francis Borgia. And St. Paul cries out: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations" (II COR. VII,4). The great Apostle to the Gentiles was no sit-by-the-fire; he travelled widely, "in shipwrecks often." . . . Yet he exclaimed fervently, "We glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope" (ROM. V,3-4).

From the lips of the Little Flower has literally poured forth one ecstasy of joy in suffering after another: "To suffer and to love is purest of all joys." And again, "My God, what joy can be greater than to suffer for Thy love!" And her wonderful statement, "Suffering itself be-

comes the greatest of all joys when we seek it as a precious treasure." Suffering, she sings in her poem MY JOY AND MY PEACE, is "my gladsome choice." Yes, St. Therese knew that God loves a cheerful giver. . . .

An Air Corps chaplain told me this story, apropos of this same cheerfulness. He paused by two privates digging a ditch alongside a runway. They were literally up to their waists in muck and mud and he thought a cheerful word might not be amiss. But one private was quite happy and contented, — in fact, he was as cheerful as his buddy was sour-faced.

The chaplain was puzzled. "Oh," laughed the first soldier, "the sergeant just passed by and told me I 'made' PFC (Private First Class). I can afford to feel good doing this job, when I know I'm getting a promotion."

Contrasted with this picayune reward, for so much toil and drudgery, think of the eternal reward held before a saint, — shouldn't he be cheerful to an incalculable degree? Aren't trials and tribulations well worth the while when he knows he is getting such a "promotion"?

HOW TO USE SUFFERING

A missionary in the wilds of Africa was one day introduced to a pygmy chief, who barely came up to his chest, so small of stature was he. Imagine the good Father's astonishment when the native guide stated casually, "This chief has eaten an elephant." Incredible! The missionary tried to correct this grievous tendency to tell a large lie. The native was nonplussed. "But it is true, Father," he

explained, “— although it is also true, he ate only one piece at a time.”

Behold the sufferings visited upon yourself and you may be lured to say the burden of them is too great. But study them one by one, bear them as they come, — and though you be small of soul when you start, your final heroism can be giant-size.

Or study the requirements which a great ascetic writer, Dom Marmion, requires of the soul in the face of suffering: silent patience, generous love, and filial abandonment. Apply these spiritual touchstones to your suffering and see how quickly you will find yourself embracing, not rejecting, your cross.

Even in our own day, Job is the supreme example of a man who had misfortunes heaped on him, only to bear them with a patience truly monumental. Read the narrative of his woes, mounting in intensity, including every type of distress: spiritual and mental and physical, anguish of soul and mind and body, — and still Job withstands every buffet from the hand of the Lord with patience, — victorious patience. “The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” These are the heroic words with which Job meets misfortune.

Loss of his oxen and asses, the murder of his servants, destruction of his sheep, stealing of his camels, ruin of his house, death of his sons; his personal physical affliction with boils from his head to his foot; — who can blame him when he bemoaned his fate to his friends who came to see him in his misery. Yet he renewed his patience

and once more put himself in God's hands with resignation and the true spirit of abandonment, — and God heaped upon him riches and honors greater than he ever enjoyed before!

Now, it must not be with the thought that by acting a patient part God will be led to "reverse" his treatment and remove your sufferings and instead shower you with blessings. Your attitude must be one of genuine readiness and ability to maintain a firm unyielding patience in bearing your trials. Jesus is Our Divine Model. See Him as He endures the mockery of Herod, the spittle and scorn of the soldiers, the lack of understanding of the Roman governor, the scourges and crown of thorns, the denial by His disciples, the abandonment by His loved ones, the terrible Death March to Golgotha, the last infinitely painful and drawn out horrors of the actual nailing to the Cross and dying upon it.

Train yourself to bear suffering, just as a little child learns to walk by stumbling, getting up, trying again. Start by bearing hunger with patience; do without liquid for a longer period than you are used to; endure cold; withstand uncomfortable heat; — little things will put iron into the structure of your patience. When small inconveniences arise, or contradictions from friends are interposed, — accept them. Say NOTHING, be PATIENT. "The patient man is better than the valiant; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities." Patience is not the virtue of cowards, of lukewarm listless souls: it is a heroic quality. From it the saints fashioned their ladder to heaven.

How easy to tell the first comer our troubles! Surely nobody ever had such a difficult time as we had. . . . Keep them to yourself! Apart from the human reality that nobody wants your headaches, the spiritual fact is that such complaining works directly against your own sanctity.

Instead, endure for Jesus' sake and with Jesus whatever trial has plagued you. The very patience of your endurance will inevitably lead you to meet your sufferings in a spirit of love, **GENEROUS LOVE**, which if carried to its extreme possibility will result in filial abandonment, the yielding of yourself as a son or daughter to the will of your eternal Father. Like a wise father such as we know on earth, He uses this suffering to make our love grow strong. If love can become so powerful that it can surpass the natural human cravings, then truly it is divine love. Suffering in itself, afflictions such as we all endure, in themselves mean nothing unless they obtain value through being united in faith and love with the sufferings of Jesus. To suffer, — nothing! But to suffer with Christ, — everything!

Consider this astonishing truth: God often treats His friends with renewed trials: St. Teresa of Avila asserts boldly "IT IS WITH SUFFERING THAT HE REPAYS THEIR SERVICES." Suffering is the rich coin with which He bestows largesse on those who embrace the Cross.

Surely Jesus wished to enrich His own Mother with the very best gift of all. Did He erect a palace, massive with gold and marble and jewels? No. Did He surround

her with throngs of obedient servants, lavish luxuries, finest garments, rarest perfumes? No. He plunged into her tender heart the SEVEN SWORDS OF SUFFERING, — the Seven Dolors. The Lily of Israel's fragrance was to be crushed — this was the supreme gift that Jesus could bestow on Mary.

If He saw fit to consider suffering as the finest reward in His capacity, for His own Mother, shall we think we are cherished by Him if He refuses us afflictions and trials? What foolishness on our part! Be glad He is willing to share His treasures of sorrow and grief with us mere humans.

THE TOOL OF SUFFERING

Before we begin to study the many ways that we can use suffering to make easy our path to heaven, I want you to read this authentic letter, which must remain anonymous, from a devoted soul to a suffering person who had asked for words of comfort:

“You ask me to write a few words on suffering, and for weeks I have wished to do it for you. But in spite of the fact that grief and sorrow surround us on every side, and that our poor hearts have felt, now and again, the pressure of their weight, in spite of this I hesitate, for sorrow and grief and pain are so sacred that next to the Sacraments I know of nothing more set apart and consecrated.

“Suffering in itself is not beautiful. The tools of the sculptor, the mallet of the stonecutter, the brush of the artist, — none of these is beautiful. Yet they produce

exquisite treasures of art. Without them, beauties the rarest would lie buried, hidden away, undeveloped and unformed. Without tools and brush and mallet, there is no art. Tools in the hand of the artist who loves his art bring life and beauty from the cold, hard marble. Tools in the hand of the one who rebels against effort, who begrudges the time spent at his work, do little more than hack the block and fail to strike the hidden beauty within. Suffering in the hand of a connoisseur, in the hand of one who knows its value, who knows its power, brings the living Christ from the fleshy tablets of the heart.

“A Cross is one thing.

“A Crucifix is another.

“Look at the procession of humanity. Look at Youth and Old Age. Look at them marching on towards eternity. Each with his cross, — there is no one without it, — but on how many do we see the Crucified? Let us kneel in adoration before the great and heroic, the magnanimous, the beautiful hearts that have so loved the Cross that they have found therein the hidden Christ.

“Let us kiss their feet, let us kiss them reverently, and with awe, — the feet of those who in their eagerness to find Christ, have used the tools of sorrow, tools that come in every shape, large and small, sharp and dull; tools, of death, sickness, failure, misunderstanding, infidelity of those we cherish, suspicion, mistrust, injustice, and thousands of others, — yes, let us kiss their feet, for they are holy.

“Suffering has made them so. Suffering has made them strong, tender, loving, sympathetic, joyful.

“What is there greater, what is there more sublime than the soul that has spent her life carving from her cross the delicate figure of Christ? Surely this is success! Is there any other? God grant that nothing along the road of life may hinder your work on your masterpiece. There is no injustice, no misunderstanding, when seen in the light of the Crucifix. Truly this is the explanation of every detail of our life.

“When we shall stand face to face with Jesus Christ, when the veil is drawn aside, what joy it will be to our Divine Saviour to find His image resplendent in our soul! What a happiness to us to know that we have pleased Him to whom our love was plighted years ago, and to whom we promised fidelity, regardless of the cost. When we shall truly see that beautiful Lord, when we shall realize for what our life was given us,—when we shall behold the mansion reserved for our life-work, do you think we shall regret the tools? No, indeed. Let us kneel to receive them now. Let us kiss them. Let us look up to the Crucified and thank Him. With our heart bleeding and our soul in anguish let us take the tool in our hand, in our trembling hand and fashion—OUR BEAUTIFUL LORD!!!”

Yes, the Cross is the tool to use to achieve the supreme masterpiece of our own salvation. St. Louis de Montfort calls it a chisel, fashioning the living stones of the heavenly Jerusalem; a winnowing fan to separate the grain from the chaff; a fire-brand that removes the rust from the iron; a crucible to purify and refine the gold. Expect therefore to be hewn and cut and hacked

with the chisel of the Cross if you wish to be part of the Divine Artisan's heavenly plan.

A cynic once reproached a fervent Catholic with the cutting remark, "But your Way of the Cross is such a narrow way,—it restricts and hems you in, so that your very soul is prevented from its full growth."

But the devout believer quietly replied, "It is in the narrowest part of the defile that the valley begins to broaden and lead to the rich pastures beyond."

Remember, too, that the suffering which you are bearing does not necessarily have to be some traditional form of pain or affliction. To each his own cross . . . God knows best. Nor is His Omnipotence restricted from permitting forms of suffering to appear which are new to humanity.

Just the other day, a news story was filed by a war correspondent in Korea, who described how a totally new type of physical ailment was afflicting pilots in the jet planes. The flight surgeon, Major Bernard Brungardt, told how the greater altitudes at which the planes operated sometimes caused snapping eardrums, sinus attacks and excruciating bends, so that in an instant the pilot would find himself with shoulders and head hunched over like an old man, and a disabling pain commanding his entire body. "Bends"—an attack in which the nitrogen in the human body cannot be kept in place due to improper pressure,—has been known to occur in deep-sea divers. Now this sudden affliction hits men miles above the earth. . . .

Nor must you think that your cross is too unusual

or too great for you to bear. Read this legend of how one woman discovered this truth.

It seems she went to the place where crosses were distributed. The kindly saint in charge pointed out a cumbersome rough cross in the corner. "That's yours," he smiled.

The woman picked it up and started down the road home with it. She was soon back.

"This one is much too wide," she complained. "And it's too heavy and rough and too long."

The saint smiled. (Saints do, you know.) He remembered that she was, after all, a woman, so he suggested that she select the one she thought suited her best. So, like any woman selecting a hat, the woman, first carefully and slowly, then in desperation, tried on one cross after the other. One was much too heavy; another too full of splinters; a third was a monster of rough wood;—and she was ready to give up in frustration when she spied a cross leaning against the wall which she did not remember trying on. It was actually the heaviest one of all,—but strangely enough, she found it just the thing. And was she pleased!

"I'll take this one," she sighed with relief. "This one fits me perfectly. It's just my size and balances nice and I think I can handle it nicely."

The saint actually chuckled this time.

"I'm not surprised," he said.

"You're not?" The woman was astonished. "It's the heaviest cross here!"

"No," smiled the saint, "I'm not surprised at all. You

see, that cross you are carrying happens to be the very one that was chosen for you and which you turned down the first time.”

THE INFINITE VARIETY OF SUFFERING

In recent years we have read much about the horrors of the tortures which human beings have endured in the totalitarian and communistic countries. Fantastic nightmarish devices used to break down the resistance of those who opposed those hellish tyrants of our times: one need only recall the 82 hours of unbroken interrogation which Cardinal Mindszenty went through before his infamous travesty of a trial, or listen to the tales of how a dental drill would be turned loose in a man's mouth without any anaesthetic for minutes at a time, or, a terrible mental torture, how a man's own children would be forced to stand in his presence and accuse him of treason and of how the very people they had befriended and helped would be brought face to face with priests or nuns to relate how they had murdered orphaned Chinese infants in cold blood.

But, in St. Ignatius' day, were there not the cruel iron hooks of the rack, the wild animals, the gibbet and the stake? Were not entire nations, families torn asunder, and sold into brutal slavery by the conquering Romans? We know that after one battle alone, Aemilius Paulus sold 150,000 slaves . . . that the people of Delos, a small island, disposed of 10,000 slaves a day. . . what mental and heart-sick misery for the rest of their lives

for the mothers and fathers who had their little ones torn from their arms!

The amphitheatres of Rome under the Caesars ran red with blood and perverted forms of sadism and carnage. The trees along the imperial roads leading into Rome were hung with the loathsome fruit of corpses of recaptured slaves. Nero poured pitch over the Christians and used them as human torches to illuminate his palace gardens; scourging, branding, flaying, impaling, beheading, grilling on ovens,—these were not confined to the Roman age. True, Titus nailed 3,000 Jews to the trees along the road to Jerusalem, but the savage tribes of his day considered that a form of Roman mercy. . . . And in calling the roll, hideous as it is, of these sufferings, we have not got beyond the first centuries of the Christian era.

Perhaps you are distressed because you are out of work . . . or without a home . . . or without use of your hand or your leg or your tongue or ears . . .

Or you have lost your parents . . . or your wife or husband or children . . . or your friends . . . or your money . . . possessions . . . business . . .

Or sickness has laid you low. You are even paralyzed. Leprosy is eating your very flesh away, bit by bit. Sudden seizures, such as epilepsy, attack you. Food is doled out to you in a distasteful diet, or denied almost altogether, or a substitute is injected into your veins to keep your life somehow still pulsing. . . . Dire remedies are invoked, the surgeons come and cut deep and long, the tissues will not heal. Pain seems to be your portion.

Your particular pain or suffering is your particular

tool put into your hand by God to help you make your life perfect.

Let us see, close-up, just what your suffering actually is.

PERHAPS YOU ARE A FAILURE?

Today, with even the daily newspapers printing full instructions on how to become a worldly success, it bothers many people more than they "let on" that they just do not seem able to "make the grade" and become socially acceptable or well-dressed or have a new car,—all sure indications of the current trend to make of success a fetish, of failure a whisper of contempt.

Well, let us step over to this statue of St. Aloysius and reflect on his life. (Actually his face seems too serene. I am against the sweetening of sacred statuary; the saints endured mortal combat and were battle-scarred on their journey through life. I would have Aloysius rather display features which depict some of the heartaches and mental agonies he endured before he attained his crown).

Anyway, Aloysius was born of a noble family, but turned away from the alluring court life awaiting him and refused all pleas to add to the military glory of his ancestors. Instead he buried himself in an Order of Religious which already was either feared or jeered at through all the aristocratic salons of Europe . . . and even there he never rose to eminence, but remained a humble member and after only six years of this menial toil, died.

By worldly standards, a very complete failure.

Does your case compare with his at all???

Or let us discuss the great Saint of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) . . . in his middle age when he died. His whole life was a record of isolation and of distress. His family was terribly disappointed in his choice of a career. He started to convert the Holy Land,—that resulted in nothing. He was assigned to work at a University. Nothing glorious happened. He was summoned back to be secretary to the Superior General, then was sent to the Indies, but his labors in Goa were deemed just so much “wasted” effort, since he was continuously fighting with the Portugese officials for the right to prevail. His goals always receded before him. The college at Goa . . . his attempts at leading souls to God . . . the mark of achievement was never stamped on anything he undertook. In the words of Archbishop Goodier, Xavier was great “not so much because of what he did as because of what he failed to do.” Even Robert de Nobili, nephew of St. Robert Bellarmine, wrote Xavier to return to his old ways . . . and Francis merely placed the letter at the foot of his crucifix and said nothing. . . .

His incorrupt body is still venerated today . . . the millions of Christians in India and Japan can thank him for planting the seed of the faith . . . FAILURE?

Your suffering as a failure can make you the biggest success in the Recording Angel’s ledgers.

St. Paul even goes so far as to assert that the things that seem to make for worldly profit or advantage are exactly those things which retard our spiritual progress. “The things that were gain to me, the same I have counted

loss for Christ. Furthermore I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ" (PHIL III, 7-8).

Surely the great Apostle to the Gentiles knew what suffering meant, physical and mental. When he came to Macedonia, he says he had no rest: "we had troubles on every side and anxieties within" (II COR. VII,5).

Such little things can make us poor humans feel that we have not made our mark in life! I know of an actual case where the wife explained to the physician who had been called to attend her husband, sick with ulcers, that she felt sure it was all due to the fact his investments had not turned out well and he could not buy a new car . . . and his neighbor had recently started to "sport" the very model the sick man wanted!

Yes, if you have given your heart to Jesus, don't be surprised if He breaks it into a million pieces, to see what it is made of, to see if it has the imperishable material from which He can fashion your sanctity.

Worldly failure is just one of these trials. Think of the great founders of religious orders. How frustration often dogged their every step, prevented them from ever tasting the sweet flavor of success!

What a varied galaxy of sufferers, "star differing from star" in its magnitude! For instance, study the experiences of the founders of the Sisters of Mary Auxiliatrice, Blessed Marie Therese de Soubiran.

Cured miraculously at the age of three of typhoid fever which left her at death's door, the future Beata was

vowed to the Blessed Mother by her own earthly mother. An ardent-souled girl, she asked nothing but to remain hidden in the family or in a convent. But God willed otherwise and had destined her for the tempest and turmoil of such a prolonged life of embattled contest that nobody could have visioned it.

She was 30 years old when she was guided by divine inspiration to begin her Foundation. Then the great trials had their inception.

“God has made the world,” wrote Mother de Soubiran, “and He will turn it upside down solely to make saints.”

Her life has been called a study in failure. Her earthly span was a prolonged period of atonement and suffering, given freely to God. She was past the mortifying of worldly desires. But there remained real sacrifice in going counter to her dearest wish for a life of solitude which she could devote unreservedly to loving familiarity with God, and her craving for a hard life of the strictest poverty so that God would be her only actual possession. The work of being Superior with all the responsibility it entailed was most repugnant to her.

Terrible temptations and interior trials assailed her. Of the 20 years she spent as Superior, she herself wrote: “My soul has found no resting place, compelled always to remain, by a divine impulse, harassed and driven on as if by violence. . . . All was immolation, the most utter sacrifice.”

Her life, edited from her private notes, “tear-stained pages,” recounts the long list of ignominies and afflictions: it was all one long agony of mind.

She found herself actually dismissed from the Society she had founded and another Sister whom she had nurtured as a protégé elevated over her, with the Archbishop accepting her resignation quite apparently without any great concern. The Sister who actually became superior and dismissed her was the same Sister she had helped train and raise to a position of authority!

She was accepted back into the convent where her religious started . . . but out of pity so that humiliation crushed her. Suspicion surrounded her . . . and there were those who wondered at the "secret" in her life that must have caused her downfall from authority. Financial difficulties arose between the new foundation and the convent where the new order had originated: she was plagued with the blame for these. She was cut off from her own foundation, so that she only got news of it from other sisters who had been dismissed like herself. Guess her anguish over the misunderstanding caused by her immediate superiors who watched lest she influence unduly the young girls who actually sought her advice rather than that of their Mistress. She was assigned duties which were beyond her bodily strength and daily exhaustion was her common lot. Her sister was dismissed like herself from the Society . . . and she felt particular pain over this. The last year of her life she had a superior who did not understand her and caused her great suffering. These were the wounds,—over and above her poor health and her lung-trouble and a weakened stomach—which continued to inflict on her constant sorrow and pain that can hardly be described.

To be driven out in disgrace from her own society—would this in itself not be sufficient to crush even a strong spirit, used to the world's buffets? And here was a tender soul that yearned only for the peace and solitude of being in the presence of Jesus, yet was rudely thrust into the very heart of the strife. . . .

The life of St. Euphrasia Pelletier is another interesting story. She belonged at first to the congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge, founded by St. John Eudes. While superior at Angers she conceived the idea that a better form of management could be established by gathering a number of houses into one group under the provincial system, instead of keeping each foundation separate as an independent unit. The project was submitted to the various houses, but was attacked by many of them and the matter came to the attention of the bishops.

Mother Euphrasia, meantime, had to see her intentions misinterpreted, her actions misconstrued and her protestations of submission regarded as duplicity by her bishop to whom she had always proved herself an obedient daughter. She felt convinced, however, that a greater good was at stake and persevered in her idea. She succeeded at last and, as a result, became the foundress of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd who have since spread over the world.

When her cause was introduced, Pius IX asked the Postulator of her cause of beatification, how she had reacted to the opposition of thirteen bishops. He was told that she had accepted it in silence and prayer, that she

had even defended the bishops, saying: "They must in conscience oppose me because they are convinced that I am wrong." At once the Holy Father replied: "Then she must be beatified."

**HAVE YOU BEEN REPUDIATED BY THE VERY
ONES FROM WHOM YOU EXPECTED AID
AND UNDERSTANDING?**

St. Madeleine Sophie, foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart, was one of the gentlest of women. Nevertheless, she was made to suffer severely by one whom she loved. For eight years one of her local superiors and an ambitious young priest made efforts to undermine her authority.

**HAVE YOU BEEN MADE TO FEEL A FAILURE
AND A FOOL FOR EIGHT FULL YEARS?**

Physically more drastic was the treatment that St. Antide Thouret received one day when she presented herself at the mother-house in Besançon, and the door was closed against her. "Then," her biographer tells us, "her heart bled, her tears flowed in abundance." With a gesture of tenderness, grief and resignation, she pressed a loving kiss upon the closed door, then took refuge for the night at the home of a friend. The next day she left the city, never to return.

**DO YOU THINK YOUR SUFFERING
HAS BEEN SO GREAT?**

The Cross finds out each saint and tests the heroicity of

his sanctity. Father Paul of Graymoor was abundantly blessed with the cross. His faith never faltered even when he carried a heavy cross which was most of his life. For when he was not carrying a cross he lived in the shadow of one.

As a novice in the Episcopal order of Holy Cross his life ambition to establish the Society of the Atonement and all his ideas met with constant derision. His novice master taunted him with the words, "You don't even have a religious vocation, not to speak of founding a religious community."

Once the three-quarters of an acre of ground on which stood St. John's Church and St. Francis' Convent was brought up in a lawsuit and the sisters very narrowly escaped eviction. Father Paul bore the cross as a gentleman, bore the cross tactfully in order not to hurt the work for the reunion. It was his former co-religionists who had brought up the suit.

Father Paul's crosses were heavy as he groped about in the dark sincerely seeking the true Church. But his crosses became heavier after he joined the Church.

He once wrote of the sufferings he knew must come: "I believe God has accepted my freewill oblation. I believe I shall taste of His bitter cup; I believe I shall know something of His baptism of blood; but there is one phase of His passion I shrink back from with a nameless fear, and that is the 'treading of the winepress alone,' the exceeding bitter cry—'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'" He then asked prayers to strengthen him, and we know he must have gotten them, for he stood up

under the many trials and tribulations God sent him.

Proverty brings many crosses in its wake. Father Paul like St. Francis, his cherished patron, was wedded to Lady Poverty. In his first hermitage which he called the Palace of Our Lady of Poverty, the roof leaked. When it rained Father Paul cheerfully rose at midnight to say the office, umbrella in one hand and breviary in the other.

Our cruelest crosses often come from those near and dear to us. Was it not one of the twelve, Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss? The heaviest cross of Father Paul's life was brought on by the first priest of the order, Father Francis. This was a deliberate plan to ruin the Society of the Atonement. Imagine the sorrow of Father Paul when he saw all but two of his students being hurried off in taxi cabs, due to the jealousy of Father Francis. All hope of the Society he was to found was seemingly lost. These infamous things and this frightful opprobrium was heaped upon Father Paul by a man he loved and trusted. Years later, Father Francis wrote to Father Paul, asking favors. And in granting them, Father Paul ended his letter with the words: "With prayerful good will for your future, I am—Sincerely yours in Christ—Paul James Francis, S.A."

Those who spoke of Father Paul, both in the Catholic Church and outside of it, as "erratic," "eccentric" and "abnormal" were, as we have seen, persons who had never met him. He once attended a Catholic function and seated at the very same table was a priest who had attacked him in his parish monthly. The priest's name happened to be mentioned at the table, and Father Paul, not realizing

that the priest was sitting there, said to the priests at his table: "My, my, I hope Father _____ soon turns me and The Lamp over on his gridiron for we are quite scorched on one side." By the charm of his personality and humor and the utter lack of any bitterness on his part, Father Paul turned what might have been an unpleasant experience into a joke. It was not until after he left the table that Father Paul learned that the priest who had attacked his life's work had broken bread with him.

The foundress of the Religious of the Cenacle, Blessed Therese Couderc, accepted with absolute humility the episcopal notification of her deposition. For the next 45 years her soul grew ever more great through the extreme humility she underwent. The most menial tasks were hers: sweeping corridors, washing pots and pans, weeding the garden, mending clothes, catechizing children, caring for the sick. The common life of the convent engulfed her. Shadow covered her life. Years later in comforting a young religious who was suffering from some humiliation, she asked: "And do you not think that I too suffered from being set aside?"

Indeed, in the memorable words of the Reverend Edward L. Curran, "the Eucharist was the only light that dissolved the blackness of her suffering."

True, first there was the joy of her life in her home at Le Mas in Sablières, followed by the glory of the founding of the Cenacle. But the years that then carried her onward—more than 40 of them—were sorrowful ones. Prelude to the period of suffering was the death of her co-founder, Father John Terme. The new spiritual

guides assigned to the Cenacle were hasty in their decisions, and the financial standing of the community was actually reported falsely, so that in 1838, twelve years after the humble beginnings of the Cenacle, Mother Couderc found herself stripped of authority, deposed not only as superior, but even refused the title of foundress, and, as we have said just now, assigned to the lowliest community tasks.

The two-score and more years of humiliation and neglect mounted. She, the foundress, was kept always on the "outside" of events. Nobody recognized her true status; nobody consulted her; everyone ignored her. Only on two occasions in those 45 years was she called on to evidence her abilities as organizer and administrator.

She learned to hold fast to the hand of God in these long-drawn out years of trial and test. She mastered the simple lesson of the Cross, so difficult in its very simplicity: "To surrender oneself" she wrote, "is something more than to devote oneself, more than to give oneself; it is even something more than to abandon oneself to God. To surrender oneself is to die to everything and to self, to be no longer concerned with self except to keep it continually turned toward God. Self surrender is no longer to seek self satisfaction in anything but solely God's good pleasure. It should be added that self-surrender is to follow that complete spirit of detachment which holds to nothing, neither to persons nor to things, neither to time nor place. It means to accept everything, to submit to everything."

The trials of all great souls follow the same pattern of dereliction, sadness, anguish. Shall they, shadows of

the Divine Master, be anything different in their lives? An uncomplaining victim indeed was Mother Therese Couderc. Trembling with fright, she yet offered the gift of herself with out reserve to God. A few months later, in 1875, the "Way of the Cross" began for her. It was to end only with her death. She became completely deaf, her members, especially her limbs, were in torture, and finally refused to bear her, so that her priedieu was the wheel-chair in which she moved about. Heroically, she said, "We have only three things to do in this world: to work, to pray, and to suffer. This third thing is never lacking to us."

Abnegation, joyful courage in daily difficulties, abasement of self . . . upon such foundation stones is the mansion of sanctity reared.

On the wall above the tomb in the little chapel at La Louvère in which her body rests can be read these stirring phrases: "Humble amongst the humble,

Her life was lived most humbly."

As the curtain of life drew slowly together on the drama of her life, the honor of being considered the Foundress of the Cenacle was eventually restored to her. What empty honor this was now, for her who had no need of mere human soothments or flattery. God had let her hold His hand during those tempestuous years of anguish: what use were human sympathies to her now? The deep mental and physical sufferings, prolonged over the period of more than 40 years, had lifted her eyes beyond worldly horizons of prestige or vanity to the Eternal Rewarder of all men.

Even had the Cenacle not continued to grow as a flourishing living memorial in many lands to her memory, her work as a sufferer for Jesus was done imperishably.

Can you even think to match her ordeal by moaning about your insignificant trials,—big though they seem to you in your present suffering?

CAN YOU COMPARE YOUR FAILURE WITH HERS?

Or take a different style of cross,—a variation of humiliation. Mother Caroline Friess, First Commissary General of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in America, had made a long and tedious journey to Germany in order to secure a modification of the rule of enclosure. The Superior General received her coldly. For several weeks she was kept in a guest house apart from the community and with no contact allowed with the other Sisters. She had been sent to Europe without the approval of the Superior General and hence was treated like a betrayer of the rule, until God came to her rescue by manifesting His will and bringing her request to a successful issue.

TO BE ELEVATED TO A POSITION OF AUTHORITY AND THEN HAVE THE FINGER OF MOCKERY POINTED BY OTHERS . . .

CAN YOU TRULY SAY YOU HAVE HAD THIS HAPPEN TO YOU?

Other special afflictions have assailed the founders of religious orders. Father Jean Gailhac, who established the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, went through a

most harrowing ordeal. Not only did he suffer from evil gossip and opposition of every kind but he was even accused of poisoning two nuns who died from purely natural causes. "Opposition does not matter," he was wont to say, "if the good be done the works of God are always marked by opposition."

Father Basil Anthony Moreau, the founder of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, fared but little better. He became a victim of the injustice of certain members of his own community, who actually denounced him to the Propaganda in Rome as an autocrat, a despot, and a fool. Amidst the most trying circumstances, which finally led to his resignation as Superior General, he imitated the meekness and the silence of Christ. He showed himself a true lover of the holy Cross by drinking deeply of the chalice of his Master and bearing no resentment against his enemies. From the depths of his sorrow he wrote: "Impenetrable are the designs of Providence, and we must bow our heads in resignation under the most painful blows."

Mother St. Joseph Chanay underwent a secret martyrdom because of the blinded attitude of her spiritual father and that of some of the Sisters of her community. They treated her as one bereft of her senses and even tried to have her sent to an insane asylum. When she wrote to the bishop of Belley for advice and encouragement, she received a letter of severe reproach in return. The sequel indicates how God sometimes makes use of imperfections and misunderstandings in order to purify noble souls and prepare them for some work that He has destined for

them. It was after this heavy trial that Mother St. Joseph founded the community of St. Joseph of Bordeaux.

At times it becomes especially clear that God is helping us on the way to detachment by permitting our friends to misjudge us. This brings the grace to purify the affections of an all too natural attraction. Mother Theodore Voiron, first Provincial of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Brazil, knew well how to profit by an opportunity of this kind. Her beloved Superior General had suspected her of departing from the true religious spirit. Appearances were against her and at so great a distance from France adequate explanations were difficult. She received severe letters from her Mother General, letters which she read upon her knees before the tabernacle. Her superior was convinced of her guilt, her spiritual guides in Brazil abandoned her and she tasted of the agony of Gethsemani. Finally the superior summoned her to France and assembled the council in chapter, where, on her knees, Mother Theodore heard a long list of accusations against her.

She listened humbly and withdrew without attempting to justify herself and God repaid her by sending her a profound interior peace. Throughout the trial she remained a model of docility, humility and obedience. Her admirable conduct finally opened the eyes of the superior to the truth. The accused was restored to confidence and her long way of the Cross ended.

“My dear child,” Mother General said, “I have been very harsh toward you.”

“Have no regrets,” Mother Theodore replied, “the good God has permitted all. I loved you too naturally.

Be assured that I shall always love you, but henceforth it will be in God and for God."

Our consideration of these striking examples of human sorrow in its supernatural import lead inevitably to the conclusion that sufferings are the instruments that can shape our souls for eternity. The theologian Tauler substantiates this idea in the following admonition: "Accept every happening of your existence, whether in the soul or in the outer life, as coming directly from God's hand: come from where it may, be it what it will, look upon it as given to you to help you make ready for His great gifts and for no other purpose whatsoever. Know that only by trial and hardship, whether coming from the evil one or from unruly men, can you attain the supernatural and marvelous perfection to which God has called you."

The contemplation of the human picture with all its complexities of human personality under the fire of suffering will, if we let it, broaden our vision, deepen our sympathies and help to give us the blessed gift of understanding. It will enable us to see many things: how easily we may become entrapped into a wrong attitude toward the conduct of others in its relations with suffering and, on the other hand, how rapidly we may advance under the quickening experience of suffering. To insure this advancement we must refrain especially from two fatal activities: we must never cast the stone of an uncharitable judgment against another; we must never scourge anyone with the lash of an evil tongue. Every human being is a fellow sufferer and actions that we cannot understand are often God's way of accomplishing

some good that our myopic vision cannot see. A little dash of humor, which is after all so close to human kindness, will go far in preparing the way for the sublime charity that thinks no evil. A further cultivation of that which has rightfully been called the saving grace of humor will help us to look upon ourselves with less partial eyes, to see in ourselves a frequent strain upon the nerves of our fellow human beings and to recognize that **WE TOO ARE AMONG THE CROSSES THAT OTHERS MUST BEAR.**

The trying of the metal in the crucible of suffering, obviously, is not an easy process. Holiness means a wholeness of performance, a complete and an unconditional surrender; and this, for nature, is a strenuous giving. In homelier words, not one of us can conquer heaven in a rocking-chair and no one with marrow in his bones would want to have it so. Heaven is a citadel worth storming, and a pearl is worth its price.

DOES SUFFERING STILL BAFFLE YOU?

You need not be the head of a great religious order to find sorrow and suffering battering at your door. We often see sadness shadowing the lives of those least deserving of punishment; we are sometimes shocked to observe how apparently obscure persons of blameless outward life undergo cruel misunderstandings and terrible trials.

The Curé of Ars, the modern saint of the confessional, shows us how to interpret the mystery of suffering. Listen to his own words:

“We must ask to love crosses. That was my experience

for four or five years. I was slandered, contradicted, criticized without mercy. Oh, I had crosses—almost more than I could bear. Then I began to pray for the love of crosses and I was happy. I said to myself: there is really no happiness but in that. One must never consider the quarter from which crosses come to us. It is always God Who gives us this means of proving our love for Him.”

Yes, and the troubles may be of all varieties, physical, mental, physical . . . and in all shades and degrees of magnitude or intensity. God’s tools are infinite. Rodriguez, with the optimism that is of the saints, would lift us to the point of regarding them as gifts:

“As health is a gift of God,” he says, “so also is sickness; and God sends it to try and to correct us—to make us sensible of our weakness, of our dependence upon Him; to detach us from the world and what perishes with it; to check the impetuosity and diminish the strength of our greatest enemy, the flesh; to remind us that we are here in a place of exile, and that Heaven is our true home.”

From this it follows that suffering is the great opportunity of the human race, and a separate challenge of the love of God to the soul of every individual. The complete acceptance of the challenge, the unconditional surrender to the opportunity, has made the saint. “*Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis!*” the Curé of Ars exclaims. “Wonderful is God in His saints!”

Yes, indeed, God is wonderful in His saints, and He has shown us these wonders also within the closer range of our modern time. It would be difficult in any age to find a greater miracle of suffering than was the short

life of St. Gemma Galgani. She endured not only the anguish of both soul and body, attendant upon the stigmata and the other phenomena by which she bore the impress of the Passion of Christ, but every lesser human ill seems to have been crowded into her brief span of 25 years. She suffered bodily sickness and mental torture, the severest temptations against faith and purity, and the humiliation of being refused by not fewer than six different religious communities, all of whom feared the saint-to-be would instead be a genuine heavy liability instead of a definite asset!

Yes, like the inspired utterance in the Office of St. Silverius, Pope and Martyr (June 20,) her cry to God could well be: "I am living on the bread of tribulation and the water of anguish, yet I have not nor shall I relinquish my duty."

Many are the saintly examples of those who patterned their lives upon the Divine Model "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not; but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly." (I PETER II, 23).

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, in contrast, experienced no extraordinary manifestations; but with equal generosity, during her short span of twenty-four years, she profited to the full by the opportunity of suffering. She may well be called the patroness of the nerve-wracked, with special appeal for our own age. Hers was the martyrdom of the spirit, the long and lonely walk through the night of the soul. Hers also was the genius of finding the minutiae of the average day, the small and swarming annoyances that

come upon us all, charged with the possibilities of heroism. Often she could get sleep only in snatches on the straw mattress of the cloister, the cold, damp climate of Lisieux and the physical cold of Carmel tortured her frail body, the habits of others tore at her sensitive nerves. She bore it all; on the negative side without complaint, but with the unceasing affirmation of a fulness of love. For a year and a half after her worst hemorrhage, on the Good Friday of 1896, she felt herself abandoned by God. On August fifteenth, 1897, she received her last holy Communion. For the forty-five days remaining until September thirtieth, the day of her death, there was no Communion, and yet, she died with the favorite ejaculation upon her lips: "Oh, mon Dieu, je Vous aime!" "My God, I love You!"

Well known as these instances are to us, it is profitable to look upon them in both their ordinary and extraordinary qualities, with an ever sharpening awareness. That which is ordinary in them gives us a sense of intimacy. We feel at home. That which is extraordinary will tell us that our own burden, and sometimes our generosity, is small indeed when compared with that of the saints.

Suppose, for instance, that something would happen to you, as it did to St. Margaret Mary, and you were to be treated as one bereft of her senses, or as a being possessed by the devil, "What!" her companions exclaimed, "Sister Margaret Mary has visions!" "Is she crazy?" Or how would you like to walk into the chapel and have three of your sisters in religion sprinkle you in turn with holy water as you passed? How would you relish it if the first

one said: "Lord, have mercy on her and cure her of her insanity!" Or if the second one shuddered as she sprinkled you and pleaded: "Oh! Lord, have mercy on her! Save her from possession by the devil!" How would you feel if the third one wailed: "Lord, pity me for having the disgrace of living with such a person!"

But Margaret Mary had to pass through her ordeal, crushed as He had been, like a worm, before she could become the apostle of the Sacred Heart devotion.

In connection with St. Margaret Mary, it is interesting to glance at an incident in the life of her Jesuit director, Father Claude de la Colombière. We shall find in it something more akin to frequent occurrences in our own lives. To be demoted, shelved as it were, is not an unusual form of suffering, and that is exactly what happened to Father de la Colombière, S.J. He was about to enter upon a position of responsibility for which his capabilities fitted him, when he made a blunder that changed completely the course of his career. Instead of being entrusted with the work in question, he was delegated to serve as chaplain for a community of nuns. He accepted the humiliation and as a result God entrusted to his care the soul of St. Margaret Mary and with it the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Thus God in His masterly way brings good out of evil, especially if the evil as in the case of Bl. Claude de la Colombière, is free from malice.

The story of St. Camillus of Lellis shows us a totally different picture. After his conversion from a life full of escapades and his unsuccessful attempts to enter several

religious communities, he resolved to found an order of his own, devoted to the service of the sick and the dying. Though himself a great sufferer from numerous physical ailments, he did more work than two or three others together. Not only did he never complain, but he was constantly cheerful and was sought after for his amusing conversation. He called his afflictions the five great mercies of God, and regarded them as nothing when compared to the sacrifice of the will of God and to a religious superior.

These are straightforward forms of suffering, comparatively easy to understand. More difficult to grasp are the trials from misunderstandings and suspicions that come from friends or from those who, one has reason to believe, are living close to God. Upon this point St. Clement Hofbauer gives enlightenment when he says: "God will sometimes strike with blindness a hundred saints so that they may not be able to see the virtues of one saint, in order not to spare that one saint misjudgment, opposition and persecution."

This cross has frequently fallen especially to the lot of the founders of religious orders. We must bear in mind, however, that some of these saintly persons, carried away by enthusiasm, have often failed to perceive the lines of demarcation between the essential and the non-essential when formulating their rules, and have therefore over-emphasized details of secondary significance. This attitude is striking in the case of a certain venerable founder who regarded with undue concern the regulation of having the religious habit of the Brothers of the order shorter than

that of the priests, of singing a hymn after the Communion Mass, of keeping certain lesser feasts as half holy days. Examples of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely.

Sometimes the saints, deliberately, coldbloodedly, acted the part of fools,—all towards the saving of souls. How even good Christians whose faith was, however, weak must have muttered or carried the tale of St. Philip Neri behaving like a court jester in the streets of Rome . . . or Don Bosco actually acting in a way sure to make pious souls with no sense of humor curl their lips . . . or St. Ignatius, an expert at “playing the fool” for even one immortal soul, making learned onlookers wonder about the divine inspiration that urged the saint on. . . .

Take the reverse of the picture. Contemplate a shy, silent mystic such as St. John of the Cross. Action and rebellious action was something entirely foreign to his introspective soul. . . . Yet, enlisted by his friend, St. Teresa of Avila in her work to reform the Carmelite Order, he was kidnaped and imprisoned by monks who militated against the crusading of St. Teresa and her quiet-spoken advocate. Immured in the cell of the Carmelite Priory in Toledo for eight months, he was brought out once a day to eat crusts and drink water on the refectory floor, kneeling in complete humiliation and pain while the recalcitrant monks “tried to change his mind” as one chronicler puts it, “walking in a circle around him, lashing his bare back with leather whips.”

Part of the suffering endured at such times is without any question the sensation of being alone. In the Garden of Olives, the loneliness of Jesus surpassed understand-

ing. In lesser degree, His saints have experienced this dreariness of the spirit, when it seems that all the world, if not actively against them, is at least apart from them, wants to have nothing to do with them, shuns them as spiritual or moral lepers.

During the last World War, it was a common psychological procedure for soliders at remote weather stations or desert outposts to be "rotated" or relieved by troops replacing them within certain stated intervals. Not only was the friction of personalities upon one another a severe trial for most men, but the solitude and loneliness in which the military work was carried on was discovered to be an abrading process, reducing many men to mental desolation.

In guardhouses and prisons and concentration camps all over this world of ours, penologists know that the cruelest form of suffering can very often be just solitary confinement. Often indeed men are driven over the border of sanity through this punishment. . . .

ARE YOU LONELY?

Spiritually the religious expects to be a lonely soul. Still, he has the Divine Presence in the Tabernacle to be his companion in even the most isolated moments of the day. However, often God withdraws His consoling presence from the very ones He loves,—further to purify them and prepare them for eternal happiness. But what an ordeal this can be! St. John of the Cross wrote a masterpiece describing the Dark Night of the Soul. In lesser degree, many saints have undergone this trial.

And, saint or sinner, many of us have endured the pain of loneliness in much lesser degree,—something to us appearing unendurable. How else explain how so many advertisements appear urging that lonely people join a LONELY HEARTS CLUB? or enter into a makeshift companionship by mail as PEN PALS? or join one group or the other to help ease the empty hours of the day along. . . . Even the people who consistently gather at the corner grocery or drugstore are seeking for companionship,—they feel the very human need for gregariousness, for being a part “of the herd” and want to kill the silence around them with idle chatter, trite jokes, gossip, anything that will prevent their loneliness from becoming acute.

Even devout souls feel the loneliness of the years on their shoulders. The case comes to my mind of a certain missionary who retired after many years' work in Wisconsin to an old peoples' home, and bought a cemetery plot for himself. He was actually so sure of his impending demise, that he ordered a tombstone for his final resting place. But the grave marker crumbled to dissolution before he did. . . . When I saw him last he said to me, in a voice that had almost lost the resonance of hope, “God has forgotten me. . . .”

Of course, God had not—nobody could ever experience the pangs of complete loneliness in the degree Jesus did. “Then the disciples all leaving Him, fled” (MATT. XXVI, 56). And remember once more the awful loneliness of the Cross. . . .

ARE YOU STILL LONELY?

No matter how isolated your tiny human personality may seem, reflect on the absolute solitude of spirit which Jesus endured . . . down to the last gasp on the Cross, and egotistic indeed must you be to even attempt to weigh your hours of separation from human contact with His.

DO YOU GRIEVE OVER THE DEATH OF LOVED ONES?

We cannot even start to measure the sorrow of the Blessed Mother over the loss of Her Divine Son . . . her heart was literally pierced with swords of anguish. Just take one little detail: she stood below the Cross and watched the centurion thrust a spear into her Boy's body. What mother does not feel simultaneous pain when her little one runs into the house, crying "I've got a splinter." . . . How it tears her heart, how quickly she pours on the mercuriochrome, pulls out the sliver so tiny she often cannot even see it plainly! Can you even dare to compare human grief with Mary's?

During the terrible days of the naval battles between our fleets and enemy vessels, one of the harrowing episodes, shocking the maternal heart of women across the length and breadth of our country, was the loss of all five sons of the Sullivan family in the sinking of one ship. In one brief naval action, all five heroic sons went down with their ship. Imagine the grief of the devoted parents!—Have you lost just one member of your family? Contrast your suffering with the Sullivans. . . .

Or take the case of Bishop Hugh Boyle of Pittsburgh.

Let James A. W. Reeves, writing an epic page in CATHOLIC PITTSBURGH'S 100 YEARS, tell the story:

“When fifteen years of age, and in the first year of college, a crisis shattered the even course of his happy boyhood. The Johnstown flood of May 31, 1889 nearly wiped out the family. Nine members of the family of twelve were carried to their deaths in the waters of that catastrophe, which took the lives of 2,800 people of Johnstown and vicinity. Hugh was at college, the others were at home when the flood broke upon the city. To a genial and intimate household came a sudden loneliness few are compelled to know at so early an age. Hugh, his mother and a brother survived. The joy and the spring of life were never quite the same. Such events sadden life. They also make it appear grave and serious. However, for persons with spiritual and mental resources, disaster stimulates effort and heightens affections. For these no distress warps natural development and enterprise. They work out their histories. No sluggishness narrows their thinking; no distressing state renders them inept. Hence one can trace in retrospect the effort of a crisis in the life of the Bishop. He had been steeled for an exacting future. High qualities of mind and heart, moral and religious excellences have enabled him to work with ease amid the cares and distractions of a public life. . . .”

LET POVERTY PINCH YOUR BODY, NOT YOUR SOUL

Again there are those who continuously whine because whatever they touch turns, not to gold, but to bills and

more bills. Lack of money can be an actual blessing. Jesus could have endowed His new church with wealth beyond man's dreams; He could have set up a "Foundation" beside which modern philanthropic or religious trust funds would appear picayune. The Church was not to be founded on any such shifting base of sand. (Just consider how the mere value of the dollar has dwindled in recent years!)

Jesus blessed His church with poverty from the very outset. True, many people are driven and tossed about in the adverse conditions of poverty: living in slum areas, overcrowding of families, physically unclean and unhealthy environment often contributing to juvenile delinquency, gang-rule, vice-ridden taverns. . . . Yet even in the mere human aspect of it, how many great leaders of society have faced and mastered their early poverty-stricken surroundings, and become standard-bearers for their respective communities.

Just take one case: few children grew up in the miserable sordid atmosphere of dirt and continual debt such as beset Charles Dickens. Yet he did not allow poverty to twist his view of life. From his childhood experiences came unforgettable scenes, penned with a master hand, which eventually abolished debtors' prisons, and helped reform the English schools from their barbarity towards children of the Victorian age.

In a recent book from the pen of various authors, collected by Maisie Ward, "BE NOT SOLICITOUS," the anthologist shows poignantly how money and the lack of it is never in itself the evil we assume it to be. How

many of the characters depicted in this wholesome book tell episodes which actually happened to them—not fiction—which should make many of us turn our heads in shame at the way we have been “carrying on” over the mere fact that “the money isn’t there.”

Remember the stirring exhortation in the Bible (Matt. VI, 28 etc.; Luke XII, 27 etc.): we are urged to observe the lilies of the field and the sparrows . . . “they toil not, neither do they spin, yet My Heavenly Father takes care of them.” How weak and puny must our faith be if we want daily assurance that everything is going to be nicely prepared and ready for us to use, just like an eternal never-failing faucet of good things. . . .

Poverty, or lack of material things in any degree, is after all a comparative thing, as our GIs found out during their invasion of “Fortress Europa.” Time and again our news photographers showed our soldiers, astonished at the stark poverty of the natives of Africa, Italy, and other lands, offering their rations or sweets, knowing that they would soon be issued a fresh ration, but that these poor people literally went hungry day after day. . . .

FAMILY “TROUBLES”

Perhaps you are suffering from trials and grief arising from the very nearest and dearest to you, your own family. Sometimes this is a husband or a wife who drinks to excess, commits infidelities with others, disgraces the entire family with criminal acts, such as stealing, sexual offenses, even going so far as murder. . . . Or it is a wayward daughter who tears her parents’ hearts apart; or a mis-

guided son who splashes the family name in headlines (of the wrong kind) in the newspapers. . . . And, tragedy of tragedies, there are the frequent separations and divorces that blacken the story of our day, with so many children left to the care of utter strangers, tossed on doorsteps, or abandoned in pitiless fashion.

To those who feel that God has allowed them too copious a draught from the chalice of suffering, we would remind them that St. Monica prayed for the conversion of her son, Augustine (later to be the great Saint) for thirty years—and apparently without God hearing her prayer. Finally when he was in Milan, he listened to her plea and went to hear St. Ambrose preach, was led to speak with the famous prelate in private, and so, at long last, at the age of 33, to come to see the error of his ways and have his feet set “upon the path of righteousness.” . . . But what a long, long, seemingly hopeless road it was that St. Monica traversed before God let His mercy be evident! Do you think your personal family trouble outweighs her sorrow all those long years?

PERHAPS YOU SUFFER FROM SICKNESS?

Just what is your disease? Tuberculosis, for instance?

The dreaded “white killer” has not prevented some of the world’s greatest artists and writers from enduring their illness and indeed converting it to a supreme monument to man’s courage and spiritual striving for perfection.

Run down the list of sufferers from this wasting disease:

Here is Fredric Chopin,—immortal wizard of music

that still haunts humanity's ears. . . .

John Keats, magician with words woven in poetic spells that still bewitch us. . . .

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, exquisite sonnet-writer of sentiments all lovers cherish. . . .

Sidney Lanier, the melodious poet of our own Southland. . . .

Feodor Dostoevski, somber creator of massive novels. . . .

Henry David Thoreau, historian of the outdoor life of sanity and naturalness. . . .

Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote to his friend, George Meredith, that he had not enjoyed a day of real health in 14 years, yet had produced what he deemed his most outstanding works in those very years. Yes, he wrote "I was made for a contest and the Powers have so willed that my battlefield should be the dingy, inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle."

Or perhaps you have suffered a stroke or are fastened to your bed with the chains of paralysis.

Well, here is Louis Pasteur, world-famed scientist, doing his greatest work after having suffered a thrombosis of the brain. . . .

Take the epic case of Mary Fallon, known as the most cheerful patient in City Hospital, Welfare Island, New York, for 42 years. Immobile from her neck down, "she never complained," reported Father Francis X. Curley, chaplain at the hospital, "she was completely helpless but never asked for anything. She had to be fed, dressed and clothed, but her complete resignation to her

lot and her constant cheerfulness endeared her to the entire hospital.”

Suffering a spine injury as a girl, her illness, diagnosed in 1929 as a form of arthritis, progressed from the day she entered the hospital in 1909 to her death in January 1952 till she was paralyzed from the neck down. In spite of this she began learning to paint colored designs on scarves and handkerchiefs by holding the paint brush in her teeth and using a special easel. She eventually managed actually to write notes, using a special paint brush.

In 1930 she wrote these words: “The world is a stage on which we play a part. Better times are coming even if we don’t live to see them.”

DO YOU STILL FEEL YOU ARE SUFFERING?

Or consider the story of Mary Ellen Kelly, 31 years old, crippled with arthritis since she was 7. By the time she was 16 her entire body was rigid from head to foot. She went through 10 operations and finally managed to reach the status of using her arms to write.

Today with the help of special equipment she writes 15,000 words a week, edits and publishes a bi-monthly magazine called **SECONDS SANCTIFIED**. She also conducts a league for shut-ins, totaling some 1,500 members in 43 states and 17 foreign countries,—including 24 lepers! She took extension courses in a correspondence school of journalism. She does considerable reading, turning the pages with a stick held between her teeth.

“Suffering brings out a great deal that is hidden in a person,” she says. “And no matter how handicapped, you

can still be of service.”

We shall come back to this idea of using our pain for ultimate good, later in these pages. But now, let us continue to call the roll-call of ailments which have afflicted many of the world's great.

Here is Thomas Carlyle, continuous sufferer from dyspepsia,—and what a shelf of great books he wrote!

Alexander Pope, a hunchback,—and a master of English style. . . .

Edgar Allen Poe, a neurotic,—and a master story teller and weaver of haunting poems. . . .

Wasn't Homer blind? And Milton, whose organ voice still rolls out in PARADISE LOST? And Helen Keller? She was born at Tuscumbia, Alabama, on June 27, 1880. By severe illness at the age of 19 months, she was deprived of sight and hearing and soon became dumb. When she was about 6 years old, she was placed under the instruction of Miss Anne Mansfield Sullivan. Under her constant teaching and with instruction at the Horace Mann School for the Deaf, and the Wright Humanson Oral School, Miss Keller not only learned to read, write and talk, but became exceptionally proficient in the ordinary educational curriculum. In 1900 she entered Radcliffe College and graduated “cum laude” in 1908. The case of Helen Keller is the most extraordinary ever known in the education of blind deaf-mutes, her acquirements including several languages and her general culture being exceptionally wide. She wrote THE STORY OF MY LIFE, OPTIMISM, THE WORLD I LIVE IN, MY RELIGION, and MID-STREAM.—Didn't she use her tremendous obstacles to

become a shining example of fortitude and achievement?

Here too are three deaf giants,—Ampère, electrical genius; Beethoven, master composer; and Edison, who gave the world numberless inventions. . . .

Demosthenes suffered from chronic stuttering; Francis Parkman, from nervous exhaustion and eye trouble so that he managed with the aid of a special wire-device to write only a few lines a day yet became an historian of note; W. Wilberforce, racked with pain for 20 years, kept up his unceasing work for the downtrodden and afflicted in England and pushed important legislation through to completion and enforcement, and helped abolish the slave trade.

In the mental travail of imprisonment, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote his monumental History of the World; John Bunyan edited his peerless PILGRIM'S PROGRESS; Lovelace, the Cavalier poet, penned his most inspiring verse; while the library shelves again and again bear witness to immortal pages which men wrote behind bars. . . .

Exiled, Dante produced his greatest works . . . St. John, from Patmos, handed on to the world the inspired flaming phrases of the APOCALYPSE.

Yes, turning back to the saints, we cannot help pondering on the "sting of the flesh" to which St. Paul alludes . . . an interminable continuous suffering to which he was subject. Whether it was some chronic physical ailment, or epilepsy or migraine headache or some other persistent pain, we shall not perplex ourselves. So great a warrior as St. Paul would not have even mentioned it unless through his casual reference to it he could

give strength to our own weak will when suffering is inflicted on us.

PLAGUED WITH ILLNESS?

SAY, RATHER, BLESSED WITH IT

If contrition means in the literal translation of the Latin word, a "bruising or grinding to powder," then shall we not view suffering as the Divine Pestle which crushes and brays our human selves to atone for sin, to help us attain final perfection of spirit?

What did St. Peter say? "Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought; for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sins" (I PETER IV, 1).

Yes, take courage and behave like men (I KINGS IV, 9) so that your contrition is evident from your suffering which you bear gladly for the sake of Jesus Crucified.

YOUR SUFFERING CAN BE A BLESSING

We know that whoever the Lord loves, He chastiseth, and "He scourges every son whom He receives" (HEBR. XII, 16).

A man bowed down with grief went to his friend, Solon, the great Greek philosopher, seeking consolation. Taking him to the roof of his house, Solon pointed out the palaces of Athens: "How much grief," he asked, "how much sorrow do you think is hidden under the roofs of those buildings? Look around, count the houses, and you will find that there is not one which does not contain at least one person who is more unhappy than you."

Ascend a similar height, in imagination, and review for yourself the lives of others whom you know; soon you will conclude, shamefacedly, that others indeed bear a far heavier burden than you. . . .

What causes such tribulation? Faith answers: Sin. By sin Paradise was lost and through suffering only can it be regained. Yes, only by means of the Cross can our evil inclinations be subdued. It requires God's scourge to raise aloft our hearts, so attached to earth, thus saving our souls from searing hellfire.

Consider, when do the flames of passion mount highest? When does the lukewarm Christian hasten onwards to perdition with the least twinge of compunction? Does not experience teach us that it is when the sun of temporal success shines brightest, when no cross reminds him of the instability and vanity of all earthly things, when pleasures and fat honors stifle the voice of conscience?

Enjoying perfect health, how many have lost all care for salvation of their soul! Then the Lord sent them a painful or dangerous sickness. Prostrated on a bed of pain their eyes were opened. They saw the grave looming before them and their mind was focused on the vast reaches of the ocean of eternity. Then the voice of conscience called loudly to them: "If at this moment you are compelled to exchange the bed of pain for the silent tomb, will your soul be prepared to stand before the judgment seat of God?"

Then the soul, aroused to the eternal truth and to the end of all things, is moved to contrition for its past offenses; then, with deep sorrow it turns and looks up to

the Crucified One. Then hope is revived and the converted soul gives its heart to the heavenly Father and hopes to begin a new life in the service of God.

How many others will you find, whose only god is the world and its vanities! Their hearts are so attached to the world that they turn their thoughts away deliberately from death, judgment, heaven or hell. Suffering? Who wants to think about something that hurts and causes pain?

Their houses, their money, their property are the pillars on which they rely. For religion or the eternal treasures, they have scant notice and their heart rejects such ideas automatically. If, however, their fortune is swept away and their possessions are converted overnight into Dead Sea fruit, empty and without reality, then they see the foundations of their prosperity dwindled into nothing. Then, when the stars of honor or position which formerly shone so brightly over their paths have vanished from their sight, they find themselves standing alone and bereft of human solace in dark misfortune. Then, when all voices of joy are silenced and their knock on the doors of former companions brings no response,—and only then, does their mind accept the glimmer of enlightenment and their thoughts find their true compass-point in God, who governs all things. Then, through suffering and in penance they once more can become good servants, humble children of the Lord.

Truly, afflictions are the staff which God uses to break the flinty hearts of men. They are the trumpet by which the souls who are dead in sin and buried in the grave of

negligence are recalled to life. Afflictions are the two-edged sword with which the Lord cuts asunder the bonds of sinful habits. They are the rungs of the ladder by which we gain perfection and by which we ascend to heaven. Hence St. Ephrem prayed: "Thy scourges, O Lord, are cut from the tree of mercy, and when they strike, it is for our benefit."

Nor does God send sufferings to the sinner only, to convert him and to make him more perfect. The good, like the gold placed in the crucible, must be purified from all imperfections. The wheat must be sifted and cleansed from all chaff before it is stored away. Only in the school of the Cross can we learn this lesson. Here the earnest Christian can practice faith, gain strength in hope, and be inflamed with the fire of divine love. Here he should suffer his purgatory in the exercise of patience. Here he can learn to make his life conformable to that of his Lord by the use of virtues.

We know how all God-fearing souls love the Cross. Did not the Apostles suffer persecution gladly for the name of Jesus? Listen to the chorus of praise rising from the bonfires in which the early martyrs are being burned to death! Hear St. Augustine's voice: "Here, O Lord, here on earth burn and cut, but spare me in eternity." And the strong voice of St. Teresa of Avila can be heard in her daily prayer: "Lord, permit me to suffer or to die." And what did St. Francis Xavier, great apostle of the Indies, say, when overwhelmed with trials,—“Lord, do not take this cross away from me, except to send me a heavier one.”

How the Saints loved sufferings and afflictions! How wise they were! They echo the words of St. Paul: "In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute" (II COR. IV, 8). And again and again comes the refrain of his teaching to the young Church, insisting on the so-important message, so hard for the pagan mind to grasp, that "we are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted and we suffer it. We are blasphemed, and we entreat; we are made as the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all even until now" (I COR. IV, 12).

A missionary tells the story how he asked the crew of a Chinese river-boat to chant their famous river songs as they were rowing along. The crewmen smiled. The captain finally replied for them: "We are taking an empty boat downstream. If we were to chant now, we would be the laughing stock of the whole river."

Only toiling upstream against the fury of the current, passing the dangers of shoals and rocks,—only then could their souls be expected to rouse to the supreme effort, while singing their river chants.

So too with the human soul struggling with the river of life—suffering and struggle with pain and distress stimulate the soul to sing Alleluias to its Maker.

A newspaper recently carried the story of an alcoholic who had found the road to recovery. This woman,—yes, not men alone are victims of this fearful disease,—this woman even feared life so much more than death that twice she sought suicide. Her terror and agony were past bearing. She felt walled in by her suffering. Forsaken!

Alone!

But she goes on to relate how that very suffering, intense as it was, seemed in retrospect necessary to break down her wall of self, to crush her arrogance, so that she sought help . . . and from the depths of her suffering she began to believe in God, and learn that there is no personal abyss of misery or shame or suffering from which His Almighty Hand cannot lift us.

She came to learn, too, that one does not have to be beautiful or gifted or rich or powerful in order to offer a helping hand to other fellow-sufferers.

SO MANY OTHERS SUFFER MORE THAN YOU!

When the Bishops' Fund recently pleaded for help in their international work of helping refugees, the poster describing the need of people all over the world listed statistics which could not be grasped by even intelligent minds. What a nuisance when you must spend even one night away from your own home! or when you must skip a meal! or have some personal possession lost or taken from you! Read these figures and be ashamed.

Out of every 60 people in the world today, ONE is a refugee . . . in Korea and in Indo-China, there are over TEN MILLION outcasts of the "cold war" . . . escapees from tyranny in West Germany and Trieste number TWO MILLION, in Hong Kong and in Formosa THREE MILLION . . . in Germany and Austria there are EIGHT MILLION expellees . . . in Italy there are literally MILLIONS of "surplus" population . . . in the Near East, almost ONE MILLION Arabs are homeless . . . and the

total of DPs has never yet been truly totaled in its entirety!

The astonishing thing is that to attain holiness through suffering is such a simple thing. No magic Einsteinian formula is needed; no trick devices, no scientific balderdash or elaborate hocus-pocus. . . . To acquire holiness . . . just continue to suffer as you are suffering. Only this must be changed,—your heart—your will,—so that you will lovingly accept at every moment the trials that Divine Providence continues to put in your path. Holiness is a simple matter of “FIAT” . . . a plain determination to conform to the expression of God’s holy will. Of course at times, it may seem harsh and exacting. At such times, we should just ask ourselves wherein we could do better than to do the will of God? If our personal desires always harmonized with what we conceive to be God’s will, we should likely be deceiving ourselves in wanting to do only our own will.

A Trappist, writing about the proto-abbey of Gethsemani, describes how for 96 years God permitted it to show nothing but sterility . . . and then in the next four years astonishing fertility proved that the world is saved by those who seemingly do nothing,—nothing but endure and suffer for Jesus’ sake.

The band of 42 men sent from France in 1848 to start the new Trappist foundation in the New World passed through Paris on their way to their ship in an atmosphere most hostile and cynical . . . then they endured the heartache of leaving their native land for ever . . . aboard ship, they were beset with storms of hurricane velocity, culminating in the death of their oldest member,

Frater Benezet, 70 years old, whose funeral could not even be in hallowed ground, but whose body was committed to the watery deep . . . and some of the members wondered, uneasily, "Was God truly pleased with this undertaking?"

The long weary journey overland, their arrival minus three of their community (these had deserted!), lack of heat in chapel, chapter, refectory, or dormitory, in spite of the piercing cold of December, the death of their superior two weeks later . . . can you blame some of the new community that they began to suspect God wanted no foundation of Trappists in America?

· Frost in late spring took their fruit; a long drought killed the potato crop in the summer. The heat scorched their bodies, robed in woolen garments which served as work clothes, sleeping suits and choir costumes. Death struck again, taking three members. Of 13 applicants in the first year only three persevered.

Then the dolors continued.

The first abbot built on such generous lines, that the capitular fathers and he had misunderstandings and he was forced to resign.

The second abbot wanted to redeem promises made when the foundation had first appealed for funds. He began a boys' school and a girls' school. The girls' school led to such complications a local interdict was laid on the abbey. The boys' school was center of such a scandal that the abbey was temporarily repudiated by her Order! The second abbot resigned—ill health brought about by misunderstandings from without was the chief reason.

The third abbot resigned because of misunderstanding from within the community. . . . In the first 50 years NOT ONE NATIVE-BORN POSTULATE PERSEVERED!

In the first century of existence, Gethsemani saw 176 men die there. Unknown by the world, their song of praise overcomes the harsh noises of the world. Trappist silence has a voice indeed . . . it speaks with the tongue of suffering endured for God's sake.

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING AN ACTIVE VIRTUE

To endure suffering patiently, quietly, does not mean you are a do-nothing, a mollycoddle. . . . Take the story of Blessed Henry Suso: he did not lead the life of a quietist. He was accused of robbing a shrine and of faking a miracle; twice he was nearly drowned; an evil woman, whom he had helped, actually accused him of being the father of her fatherless child; his sister fell into sin and he rescued her; he met a murderer and he was accused as a poisoner. What catastrophe befell him, so mystic a poet of divine themes at heart! All his life he shrank from suffering and loved the peace and serenity of union with God. He learned to endure all patiently. In his inspired words, "Let him who desires peace, love with an equal love both success and adversity."

The entire scope of the lives of many of God's elect can be narrated and understood in very simple delineation. Endure—with patience—and the crown will be yours.

Conformity to God's will is a simple formula. But how difficult to attain, you say?

God sent St. Alphonsus terrible temptations: doubts against every article of Faith, vanity and presumption and concupiscence. Did he despair? . . .

St. Rose was afflicted by darkness and a seeming hopelessness of being saved. . . .

These were saints, you say. But they were also humans,—no haloes flying around their fevered brows, no angels assuring them that whatever they did it was the right thing. But by accepting patiently whatever God sent them, by bearing their suffering,—just this, nothing more and nothing less, they conformed to God's will.

Did not St. Francis de Sales say "If at prayer we do nothing but drive away temptations and distractions, our prayer is well made"?

Some sufferings may come from our neighbors,—contempt, reproach, loss of reputation, injustices, theft, and petty persecutions of every kind that rankle and irritate.

"One 'Blessed be God!' in adversity is of greater value than a thousand acts of thanksgiving in prosperity!" assures Ven. John Avila.

When suffering intensely at the hands of a physician who had diagnosed his illness wrongly, St. Ignatius fell into an alarming condition and appeared to the doctor to be indulging sad and gloomy thoughts.

"Sad and gloomy thoughts?", replied the heroic founder of the Jesuit Order. "Could anything happen to me which would be difficult or depressing, or which would deprive me of peace of soul?"

Then, reflecting he went on, "Yes, it would be very

bitter if my life-work of the Jesuit Order would be dissolved. The establishment of my Society has been the object of all my endeavors; it is my joy, my consolation in my declining years, and God's blessing rests upon it. Now, if this work should be suppressed,—oh, how could I endure such a dreadful blow!”

Again he paused, turning thoughts over in his mind, then made this remarkable utterance: “If it were to happen without my guilt, about fifteen minutes of meditation and recollection in prayer would banish all disquietude from my soul, even were the whole Society to be dissolved as salt in water!”

WOULD 15 MINUTES BE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO REGAIN YOUR SERENITY OF SOUL?

Often the trials we read about are such that we declare, with great self-assurance, that we would be able to bear up under them. . . .

But—if they actually happened to you? Are you sure? Would you be as heroic as others? You can be, you know. Endurance of suffering is a matter of “working at it.” As one wise farmer said, “Patience means that when I just can't plow another furrow, I go ahead and do it.”

Mental suffering, with all its wearing and tearing of the unseen fabric of the soul, can be the most intense suffering.

During the Civil War, reports of Mary Lincoln's treason were so persistent that finally the Senate Committee on the Conduct of the War met in secret session to consider them. True, some of her blood relatives were

actually in uniform on the Confederate side. . . .

Without explanation President Lincoln suddenly appeared and stated formally that it was untrue that any member of his family had treasonable dealings with the enemy. Imagine the humiliation and added burden laid upon the shoulders of the "martyr" President that he had to repudiate any reckless or seditious behaviour of his family!

And that trial was followed later by such wild hysterical outbursts on the part of his wife that Lincoln took his wife by the arm, led her to the window of the White House room they were in, pointed out the nearby Insane Asylum, and sternly warned her, if she did not still her cries of grief over the loss of their dead son, he might have to send her there. . . .

Think of the great St. Boniface, so zealous in the work of reclaiming souls, a redoubtable foe of the irregular lives led by many of the clergy in his day . . . and of how his martyrdom was only the culmination of suspicion and misunderstanding and violent conspiracies against him originating among his own brethren!

Or St. Patrick . . . how he suffered from false brethren, so that he was put on trial, deprived of his rank, and "in the midst of the night I saw a writing void of honor beside my name."

Father Eusebio Kino, Jesuit apostle of our own Southwest, was called a liar and a fraud by civil and ecclesiastical authorities. . . .

John Cardinal Newman underwent a long "penance of slander and unpopularity" for 30 years. . . .

St. Vincent de Paul was accused and made out a thief. . . .

Father Damien the hero of Molokai was called "morally depraved" and slandered viciously in the newspapers of his day. . . .

St. John Vianney,—the Curé of Ars,—was so accused and assailed by his enemies that he said: "Those were the days when they (various clerics) let the gospels rest on the altar and preached on me, instead. I was their text."

The Book of Wisdom (3, 6) makes us understand by means of a beautiful symbol: "As gold in the furnace he has proved them." St. John of the Cross (vol. II, p. 247) explains to us the manner of this proving and its ultimate purpose: "This is the way God deals with those whom it is His will to exalt. He permits them to be tempted, afflicted, tormented, inwardly and outwardly, so that He may deify them, that is, unite them to Himself in His wisdom."

It is, therefore, those destined to the most exalted positions in God's great economy and those who are dearest to Him who must be ready to suffer most. No one is dearer to Christ than His sinless Mother, and no one but He has suffered more. No one has been more exalted by the Triune God than the well beloved Son, and no one has ever been a Man of Sorrows such as He.

Yes, suffering is and remains a mystery. It would be well to say with Janet Erskine Stuart of the Society of the Sacred Heart: "I don't know any answer; let us fold our hands and say 'I believe.' I love these unanswerable questions! They make God so great."

If we remain for a few moments in the invigorating air of Mother Stuart's thought, she will help us to overcome any sense of unhappiness that may for some be consequent upon a consideration of suffering. To end in a mood of dejection would be to miss the entire point. Mother Stuart's biographer tells us that she labored to show the essential difference between sorrow and unhappiness, and that she was uncompromising on the question of joy. "Joy," says Mother Stuart, "is a thing peculiarly Christian and Catholic. . . . The Church really has the monopoly of the joy of the world. . . . Error is depressing." Upon another occasion she said: "Remember the depressing side is never the true side," and "The distinctive quality of Christian sorrow is that it is capable of turning into joy."

A quotation from William Langland, who in *PIERS PLOUGHMAN* depicts much of the bad and some of the good in medieval life, fits well into Mother Stuart's "very positive and jubilant" concept of joy:

"Never was there war in this world nor wretchedness
so bitter

That Love, if he liked, might not bring it to laughing."
She often expressed this idea of joy in terms of song: "We must not sing flat in the things of God, dispiritedly, discouragingly. . . . I love to think of your 'making a cheerful noise to God.' . . . Go singing through it, singing in God's arms. . . . Sing in every way you can. . . . God gave song to give heart and courage and joy in life; if not with the voice, sing with the spirit and the understanding; sing by words of courage and hope, praise and

thankfulness. Call out to one another by high thoughts and spiritual ambitions.”

If suffering has proved us and done its best for us, then shall we sing in spirit. We shall gladden the Heart of God, like the youths in the fiery furnace, with canticles of joy and praise.

Our pain shall not be wasted. It shall be for us a treasure immeasurable on the scales weighed by God our Judge.

* * *

~SOMEBODY ELSE

Somebody Else had a heavier cross
Than the one I bear today,
And the path were far too steep for me,
Had not Somebody led the way.

Somebody Else had a sadder heart
Than the weary one in my breast;
Somebody's aching thorn-crowned Head,
Had nowhere to lie in rest.

Somebody Else's tired Hands
And Somebody's wounded Feet
Were never too weary to minister;
And Somebody's smile was sweet.

Somebody Else's Head was bent,
Not with the weight of years;
And the light in Somebody's beautiful Eyes
Was dimmed by many tears.

Somebody Else's love was spent,
And tears were wept in vain;
Shall I, then, count my weeping's cost
Or grudge a little pain?

Somebody Else was left alone,
Beneath an olive tree;
And nobody cared for Somebody Else
More than they do for me.

But away past life's dull gloaming,
Across the Crystal Sea,
Somebody Else and I shall love,
For all Eternity.

Have you read these lines carefully? Then ask yourself in all truthfulness: ARE YOU SUFFERING MORE THAN HE DID?

DON'T WASTE YOUR PAIN!

Did you ever hear of the wonderful little Roman girl who died at the age of 6½ years old in 1937? Antoinetta Meo, affectionately called "Nennolina" by her parents, had a body ravaged by disease. One leg finally had to be amputated but she offered it to Jesus for sinners, for big sinners—for "biggest sinners"—those were the ones she wanted: no small fry for her generous soul. She once told her father, "Papa, pain is like cloth: the stronger and tougher it is, the more value it has." Another of her remarks during her last illness was: "Now I am suffering for love of Jesus, but in Heaven I shall ask for so many

graces and I shall let fall a rain of lilies on souls.”

Yes, don't waste your pain! Offer up your anguish, consecrate your trials.

What tragedy there can be in the torments that we see all about us,—in hospital and sickroom, private homes of the wealthy or sordid slums of the poor,—which are suffered because the stricken invalids must suffer, but which are not transmuted into something eternal through a mere act of yielding to God's will.

Bereavement and abandonment, loneliness and grief,—they can be golden opportunities to seize on. Tell Jesus: “Here I am. Take my suffering, my excruciating pains, my strength too—and my weakness. **ALL IS YOURS.** Change the water of my mere human life into the Wine of Your Precious Blood. Let my tiny trickle of life become another drop in the vast ocean of Your Omnipotence.

“My routine of irritating or tedious duties, the gnat-like worries infesting my day, the slights and scorns from other fault-finding humans around me,—in themselves these are nothing, but if You take them in the spirit of abnegation with which I offer them I know they will have golden merit in the eyes of God.

“Make my uselessness during dark hours of pain and solitude become truly useful to others, by letting me bear my sufferings with patience and to offer my sorrows for the salvation of souls.

“Every minute sinners all over the world are going through the final agony of dying . . . let my suffering be applied towards their final solace by letting Your grace visit their souls. . . .”

ARE YOU A SHUT-IN?

If so, you often, perhaps daily, are aware of your dependent condition, your absolute weakness and frailty. How can I do anything great or meritorious, you may ask,—perhaps even with a sneer.

Listen to Pope Pius XI, a man of stern reality in his outlook on eternity, “The imposing feature in Mission History is the fact that God accomplishes His aims with the aid of human weakness.”

Think of it! Instead of counting on the strong and the mighty of the earth to help His plans become perfected, God deliberately has seen to it that you, the weak, the sick, the bedridden, are the instruments He uses to achieve His goal for mankind!

Our hearts thrill with admiration when we read of St. Paul, or of St. Francis Xavier, or of St. Peter Claver who, with boundless ambition, strove to convert the pagan world. With undaunted courage they faced a thousand dangers, bore ceaseless pain and persecution for the sake of Christ. We find ourselves awestruck at the tale of their incredible efforts and terrible sufferings? “Oh, if I, too, could only be a missionary! Must I remain all the day idle while the privileged few gather in the golden harvest of souls far away?”

But YOU can be a missionary. How?—A few years ago God sent to a forgetful world a young girl who was to teach how every Catholic can be a real missionary and can share in the Divine Romance of winning souls to Christ. This girl never went to pagan lands; she did nothing extraordinary. Yet her influence circled the globe

and touched all lands with its sacred influence. We have the assurance of Christ's own Vicar, the "Pope of the Missions." You have probably guessed that she is none other than the Carmelite nun, ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX, the "Little Flower of Jesus."

One incident in her life reveals her secret: In her last illness Thérèse each day took a short walk. Noticing how much the effort cost her, a Sister said to her, "Therese, you are suffering so much. You would do better to take a rest."—"That is true," Therese replied, "but do you know what gives me strength? I offer each step for some Missionary, thinking that somewhere, far away, one of them is worn out by his apostolic labors; and to lessen his fatigue I offer mine to God."

St. Therese invites you to follow her example, to follow in her footsteps.

Who among us is not faced with daily toils and sufferings? Why not, as the "Little Flower," offer them to God to gain new strength for some far-off Missionary? Therese was a brave little soul, all afire with love for God. When circumstances prevented her from going to distant lands, just as they are preventing you, she did not on that account give up her ideal of becoming a Missionary and a martyr for souls.

How simple to join the CO-MISSIONARY APOSTOLATE! No long forms to fill out, or tedious interviews with anyone. Just send your name in to THE CO-MISSIONARY APOSTOLATE, TECHNY, ILL., or GIRRARD, PA., and express the desire to offer your sufferings for a missionary. No dues, no payments, no meetings to

attend. From that day on, when you have started to offer your trials for a missionary who will be assigned to you, in some foreign mission field or even in mission work here in America, **YOU WILL NOT WASTE YOUR PAIN ANY MORE!**

Sadness and moodiness are corrosive; they rust the talents and abilities God has given you to help you save your soul and the souls of others.

Be cheerful! Offer your pain up . . . you will be seeking joy for your own advantage. Then too you owe joy to your fellow men . . . God rightfully expects joy in His service from us, shut-ins, invalids, paralytic cases, amputees, paraplegics. . . .

Look at the four seasons that visit the earth. The farmer plows and harrows; he seeds and the seeds rot away underground; storms and wind and rain and heat and attacks by worms and insects assail the fledgling growth; the farmer re-appears and prunes and clips and weeds; and only then,—how slow and monotonous the four seasons moved around until the harvest is ready!—only then can the farmer expect to find a rich reward of fruit or grain.

Nobody has ever claimed that the long period of preparation of the soil, seeding, harrowing, and so on is a wasted effort on the farmer's part. Nor need your long-drawn out period of suffering be considered wasted by you. But your pain will be wasted if you do not see the importance of it and offer it voluntarily to God for saving souls.

We know of many a home which harbors an invalid member of the family. Many a convent has an old Sister pinned down to a bed of pain. The rest of the family is "busy with many things" . . . the other community members are active about the affairs of the convent. All to good purpose. Yet perhaps there is more merit from that one sick or bed-ridden member of the group than from all the bustling activities of the others!

It is only when you become "God's Little Nothing" like Mary McGunagle that you can realize the wonderful value of your pain, the treasure of your torment. . . .

Let me tell you the story in brief of this modern Victim Soul.

Mary McGunagle, "God's Little Nothing," is not a personality taken from the dim pages of the past. It was only on August 3, 1942, that she died and was buried in a cemetery on the outskirts of Providence, R.I. Only a short year before her death she found that suffering can become the coin with which souls are purchased by an adopted missionary in the Co-missionary Apostolate. She learned that, as St. Therese wrote, "more souls are saved by suffering than by preaching."

"God's Little Nothing" has had her story written in a booklet with that same title. To narrate it all is not our purpose. However, her pains were not merely physical but also mental and spiritual. There is one category of sufferer which seems to bear an especially heavy cross, that is, the scrupulous soul which seemingly can never come to rest but apparently is forgetful of the Mercy of

God, and which causes untold anguish of spirit both to itself as well as being a very great trial to the spiritual confessor, guide or other adviser committed to direction of such a soul.

In one of the letters which Miss McGunagle penned, she describes how her friends exclaimed over the "new life" she took on since she dropped the word "complain" from her vocabulary. . . . The risings and fallings of her spirit, all her sufferings of body, the deep gloom of her soul, her joys and her sorrows, failures and conquests, all gathered force and streamed forth in a veritable litany of gratitude. Particularly grateful was the bedridden "Little Nothing" that she had managed to rise above her tantrums of melancholy and actually display that joy that, being from God, is of itself a heroic thing.

Glancing through the record of her sufferings, one phrase after another points up her sufferings. . . . Can you truly compare your trials with hers and say you are in greater torment, continuously? Read:

"My daily headache has been the worst in ages. . . . I almost choked to death . . . very, very tired . . . pains in my chest are very bad . . . back is almost breaking . . . nerves all on edge . . . bad moments . . . hysterical . . . tired, exhausted stage again . . . terribly discouraged! . . . so cold, so sick . . . suffering intensely . . . suffering between 4 and 9 P.M. . . . sweats . . . temperatures . . . coughing incessant . . . AND HER LAST WRITTEN WORDS: "No matter what comes . . . How it comes . . . FIAT!"

Above the entrance of a former well-known school for girls in Holidaysburg, Pennsylvania, there is an unusual emblem and inscription: a burning candle, with this wording "TERAR DUM PROSIM" which means, "May I be consumed so long as I am useful."

The life of "God's Little Nothing" can beautifully be foreshadowed in the emblem with the inscription . . . and the life of many a sufferer,—perhaps even you who read this—may receive new meaning and value if you too can follow the inspiration of that message.

Strangely enough the history of the saints does repeat itself,—in pattern if not in actual details. And the sufferings of souls who strove after sanctity . . . these too are, as it were, all stamped out from God's master mold.

The story of Miss McGunagle followed by a year and a half, the finale of the "Red Rose of Suffering," Margaret Nosbisch, whose correspondence with her Missionary is enshrined in the booklet bearing that title. What cheerful letters came from the pen of this sufferer for Christ; what splendid outpourings of her spirit were apparent through the pain of her body as her wasted flesh left the life-tide ebb away! The courageous acceptance of her incessant pain and suffering had merited for the missionary countless graces and peace and poise of soul and had given him strength in unusual trying circumstances.

What vast power resides in the quiet ones on the earth! What tremendous spiritual force is possible in the countless tortured minds, unknown sickbeds, stricken bodies all over the world! And how much of it is wasted. . . .

IF YOU ARE SUFFERING, DON'T WASTE
YOUR PAIN!

See what these humble sister spirits were able to achieve, though they never left their beds of suffering! Pagan souls, thousands of miles away, had their lives affected for the better through the application of the suffering of these devoted victim souls to the saving of those heathen, unknown to them by name or sight. See what your suffering can do for you—and for others. Be generous with your pain!

Now you have seen what joy enters the lives of those who willingly and even cheerfully offer up their hours of agony. Truly, the sick are entitled to be called the troubadours of God, if they accept their crosses with joy. It must have been one sufferer such as we described who wrote this wonderful SONG OF THE SICK.

I really do not know
The pains and sufferings
That cause the saints to grow
Those agile angel wings.

For, as heavily I lie
Upon this matted shelf,
And watch the hours go by,
I think within myself:

I have not felt in me
The sores of Bernadette,
Nor Damien's leprosy,
Nor Jesus' bloody sweat.

Therese's taste of death
Has not yet touched my lips,
Nor Xavier's dying breath,
Nor lion's fatal grip;

A martyrdom in dungeon cell,
The torture of the rack,
An exile in an earthen hell,
A drug-worn mind and back.

Let arms and legs, O Lord,
and eyes and tongue
Be stricken for the sins
against Thy Name;

And bruise my body
like the one that hung
Upon the Cross,
so I may share its shame.

Thy grace will give me
strength to bear the pain
Which Thy sweet love
inflicts upon my soul;

I offer all to Thee
in hope to gain
The joy and glory
of the victor's goal.

—Clement, S.A.

("The Lamp," Nov. 1950)

It was an invalid who penned the following beautiful CREED. When you feel that your suffering, mental or physical or spiritual, is too great for you to bear, say this prayer, or any portion of it which fits your need. You will find renewed strength.

“My God and my ALL!”

I believe, O my God, that in this state of illness, helplessness and impotence, in which I find myself, I procure your glory, I save souls, and I advance the work of my own sanctification.

I BELIEVE—and this is my consolation, my desire and my prayer—I believe, without having any sensible proof of it or without experiencing any solace, that my weakness, my inability and my physical and moral pains will procure health and strength to your priests, to your missionaries so that they will be able to devote themselves to the apostolic and evangelizing work which is confided to them.

I believe that this isolation of heart which causes me so much suffering, will be of benefit to them, by making them feel at home with you, O Holy Trinity, in communion with all the elect of heaven and with all Christians here below.

I believe that my painful sleeplessness will obtain for them a beneficial sleep and a restoration of energy.

I believe that my affliction will obtain this generosity of heart which will render them joyous in your service and cause them to hasten with ardor in the path of your commandments, in the path of abnegation and of apostolic sacrifice.

I believe that my dryness of soul and this wall of iron which is placed between me and the things of the supernatural order will assure them an abundance of consolation at the holy altar and in daily prayer.

I believe that the withdrawal of all pious thought, of all supernatural enthusiasm helpful in undergoing sufferings, will procure for them the great joy of seeing clearly the happy fruits of their labors and of their privations^e in the exercise of apostolic zeal.

I believe, O my God, that the misunderstandings of which I am sometimes the victim, on the part of creatures, will merit for them the gift of attracting hearts in order to lead them to You.

I believe that the lack of sympathy and comfort on the part of persons on whom I should be able to lean in my moral distresses will obtain for them the material aid and spiritual encouragement which they need in order to continue their apostolate with success.

I believe that my peaceful and resigned silence in the sorrow which overwhelms me will render them eloquent when they converse with souls in God's name and will assure them of innumerable spiritual conquests.

I believe that my interior and courageous struggles against secret revolts which threaten to withdraw my soul from abandonment and peace will give them admirable victories in their own spiritual combats and in the wresting of souls from damnation.

I believe that the state of crucifixion in which I languish is God's merciful reply to my ardent desires for holiness and final salvation. Yes, I believe, O my God, that

You have accepted me as a victim offered for the intention of Your priests, of Your missionaries and that it is Yourself Who holds this frail host or Victim on the altar of immolation.

I believe that it is because of Your love for me, O my God, that You take the privilege of crucifying me to sanctify me more surely, and to make me worthy to serve You with my poor sufferings for the salvation of a great number of souls.

I believe that each affliction of soul and body, supported by love for You, will create in me a new capacity for divine love, and that the more empty spaces You thus create in my poor heart, the more place You will have to pour forth Your graces of union and of transformation.

O my well-beloved Father, I have the filial presumption to believe in my turn that, this trial once traversed with Your grace, You will introduce me into Heaven where I shall go, with all the souls that my patience will have acquired for You, to love You without measure and eternally sing Your mercies.

God's Candle

You're just God's old candle burning out,
And you must burn and not complain
Till God in His good time blows out the
flame.

We're all God's Candles,
And some burn just a little while
And then are done.
And others? They burn longer, and
There are some that burn until the end.

And you are one!
God knows why, but to me it seems
That those whom God allows to burn unto
the end
And give the very last they have to Him
Are those whom God loves most,

But anyway ——

YOU'RE JUST
GOD'S
OLD
CANDLE
BURNING OUT

And you must burn
And not complain.

Abandonment and Confidence

O God, I believe in Thy infinite goodness, not only in that goodness which encompasses the world, but in that particular and all personal goodness which extends to the miserable creature that I am, and which disposes of all for my greatest good.

This is why, O Lord, even when I do not see, when I do not understand, when I do not feel, I believe that the situation in which I find myself and all that happens to me is the work of Thy love; and with all my heart I prefer it to any other situation which would be more agreeable to me but which would come less from Thee.

I place myself in Thy hands: do with me as Thou wilt, leaving me but the consolation of obeying Thee.

(Approved by Pius X, June 2, 1914)
100 days ind. each time. Plen. Ind.
once a month. Rome, Dec. 6, 1915.
Benedict XV.