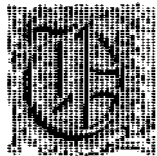


BOOK II.



VINCENT.—It is to me, good uncle, no little comfort, that as I came in here I heard of your folk, that you have had since my last being here (God be thanked!) meetly good rest, and your stomach somewhat more come to you. For verily, albeit I had heard before, that in respect of the great grief that for a month's space had holden you, you were a little before my last coming to you somewhat eased and relieved (for else would not I for no good have put you to the pain to talk so much as you then did); yet after my departing from you, remembering how long we tarried together, and that while we were all that while in talking all the labour was yours, in talking so long together without interpausing between, and that of matter studious and displeasing, all of disease and sickness, and other pain and tribulation; I was in good faith very sorry, and not a little wroth with myself for mine own oversight, that I had so little considered your pain, and very feared I was (till I heard other word) lest you should have waxen weaker, and more sick thereafter. But now I thank our Lord that hath sent the contrary: for else a little casting back were in this great age of yours no little danger and peril.

ANTONY.—Nay, nay, good cousin, to talk much (except some other pain let me) is to me little grief. A fond old man is often as full of words as a woman. It is, you wot well, as some poets paint us, all the last of an old fool's

life to sit well and warm with a cup and a roasted crab, and drivel, and drink, and talk. But in earnest, cousin, our talking was to me great comfort, and nothing displeasing at all. For though we commenced of sorrow and heaviness, yet was the thing that we chiefly thought upon, not the tribulation itself, but the comfort that may grow thereon. And therefore am I now very glad that you be come to finish up the remnant.

VINCENT.—Of truth, my good uncle, it was comfortable to me, and hath been since to some other of your friends, to whom, as my poor wit and remembrance would serve me, I did, and not needless, report and rehearse your most comfortable counsel. And now come I for the remnant, and am very joyful that I find you so well refreshed, and so ready thereto. But this one thing, good uncle, I beseech you heartily, that if for delight to hear you speak in the matter I forget myself and you both, and put you to too much pain, remember you your own ease, and when you lust to leave, command me to go my way and to seek some other time.

ANTONY.—Forsooth, cousin, many words, if a man were weak, spoken, as you said right now, without interpausing, would peradventure at length somewhat weary him. And therefore wished I the last time after you were gone, when I felt myself (to say the truth) even a little weary, that I had not so told you still a long tale alone, but that we had more often interchanged words, and parted the talking between us, with often interpausing upon your part, in such manner as learned men use between the persons whom they devise disputing in their famed dialogues. But yet in that point I soon excused you, and laid the lack even where I found it, and that was even upon mine own neck. For I remembered that between you and me it fared, as it did once between a nun and her brother. Very virtuous was ^{a merry tale} this lady, and of a very virtuous place in a close religion, and therein had been long, in all which time she had never seen her brother, which was likewise very virtuous, and had been far off at an university, and had there taken the degree of doctor in divinity.

When he was come home he went to see his sister, as he that highly rejoiced in her virtue. So came she to the grate that they call, I trow, the locutory, and after their holy watch-word spoken on both sides, after the manner used in that place, the one took the other by the tip of the finger (for hand would there be none wrongen through the grate), and forthwith began my lady to give her brother a sermon of the wretchedness of this world, and the frailty of the flesh, and the subtle flights of the wicked fiend, and gave him surely good counsel, saving somewhat too long, how he should be well ware in his living, and master well his body for saving of his soul; and yet, ere her own tale came all at an end, she began to find a little fault with him, and said: "In good faith, brother, I do somewhat marvel that you, that have been at learning so long, and are doctor, and so learned in the law of God, do not now at our meeting (seeing we meet so seldom), to me that am your sister and a simple unlearned soul, give of your charity some fruitful exhortation. For I doubt not but you can say some good thing yourself." "By my troth, good sister," quoth her brother, "I can not for you. For your tongue hath never ceased, but said enough for us both." And so, cousin, I remember, that when I was fallen in, I left you little space to say aught between. But now, will I, therefore, take another way with you; for I shall of our talking drive you to the one-half.

VINCENT.—Now forsooth, uncle, this was a merry tale. But now if you make me talk the one-half, then shall you be contented far otherwise than there was of late a kinswoman of your own, but which I will not tell you; guess her an you can. Her husband ^{another merry} had much pleasure in the manner and beha-^{viour} viour of another honest man, and kept him therefore much company; by the reason whereof he was at his mealtimes the more often from home. So happened it on a time, that his wife and he together dined or supped with that neighbour of theirs, and then she made a merry quarrel to him for making her husband so good cheer out a-door, that she could not have him at home. "For-

sooth, mistress," quoth he (as he was a dry merry man), "in my company nothing keepeth him but one; serve you him with the same, and he will never be from you." "What gay thing may that be?" quoth our cousin then. "Forsooth mistress," quoth he, "your husband loveth well to talk, and when he sitteth with me, I let him have all the words." "All the words!" quoth she. "Marry that I am content, he shall have all the words with a good will, as he hath ever had. For I speak them not all to myself, but give them all to him; and for aught that I care for them, he shall have them still. But otherwise to say, that he shall have them all, you shall rather keep him still, than he shall get the one-half at my hands."

ANTONY.—Forsooth, cousin, I can soon guess which of our kin she was. I would we had none therein (for all her merry words) that less would let their husbands to talk.

VINCENT.—Forsooth she is not so merry, but she is as good. But where you find fault, nuncle, that I speak not enough, I was in good faith ashamed, that I spake so much, and moved you such questions, as I found upon your answer (might better have been spared) they were so little worth. But now sith I see you be so well content, that I shall not forbear boldly to shew my folly, I will be no more shamefast, but ask you what me list.

CHAPTER I.

Whether a man may not in Tribulation use some worldly recreation for his Comfort.



AND first, good uncle, ere we proceed farther, I will be hold to move you one thing more of that we talked when I was here before. For when I revolved in my mind again the things that were concluded here by yon, methought ye would in nowise, that in any tribulation men should seek for comfort either in worldly thing or fleshly, which mind, uncle, of yours, seemeth somewhat hard. For a merry tale with a friend refresheth a man much, and without any harm lighteth his mind, and amendeth his courage and stomach; so that it seemeth but well done to take such recreation. And Solomon saith, I trow, that men should in heaviness give the sorry man wine, to make him forget his sorrow.* And St. Thomas saith, that proper pleasant talking, which is called *ἐντραπέλια*,† is a good virtue, serving to refresh the mind, and make it quick and lusty to labour and study again, where continual fatigation would make it dull and deadly.

ANTONY.—Cousin, I forgat not that point, but I longed not much to touch it. For neither might I well utterly forbid it, where the cause might hap to fall that it should not hurt; and on the other side if the case so should fall, methought yet I should little need to give any counsel to it. Folk are prone enough to such fantasies of their

* Proverb. xxxi.

† Secund. 2, q. 168, art. 2.

own mind. You may see this by ourself, which coming now together, to talk of is earnest sad matter as men can devise, were fallen yet even at the first into wanton idle tales. And of truth, cousin, as you know very well, myself are of nature even half a gigglet and more. I would I could as easily mend my fault, as I can well know it; but scant can I refrain it, as old a fool as I am.

Howbeit so partial will I not be to my fault, as to praise it; but for that you require my mind in the matter, whether men in tribulation may not lawfully seek recreation, and comfort themselves with some honest mirth: first, agree that our chief comfort must be in God, and that with him we must begin, and with him continue, and with him end also: a man to take now and then ^{of honest} some honest worldly mirth, I dare not be so ^{worldly mirth.} sore as utterly to forbid it, sith good men and well-learned have in some case allowed it, specially for the diversity of divers men's minds. For else, if we were all such, as would God we were! and such as natural wisdom would we should be, and is not all clean excusable that we be not in deed: I would then put no doubt, but that unto any man the most comfortable talking that could be were to hear of heaven: ^{Our most comfortable talk should be of God and heaven.} whereas now, God help us! our wretchedness is such, that in talking a while thereof, men wax almost weary, and as though to hear of heaven were an heavy burden, they must refresh themselves after with a foolish tale. Our affection toward heavenly joys waxeth wonderful cold. If dread of hell were as far gone, very few would fear God: but that yet a little sticketh in our stomachs. Mark me, cousin, at the sermon, and commonly towards the end, somewhat the preacher speaketh of hell and heaven. Now, while he preacheth of the pains of hell, still they stand yet and give him the hearing; but as soon as he cometh to the joys of heaven, they be buskiing them backward and flock-meal fall away. It is in the soul somewhat as it is in the body. Some are there of stature, or of evil custom, come to that point, that a worse thing sometime steadeth them more than

a better. Some man, if he be sick, can away with no wholesome meat, nor no medicine can go down with him, but if it be tempered with some such thing for his fantasy, as maketh the meat or the medicine less wholesome than it should be. And yet while it will be no better, we must let him have it so. Cassianus, that very virtuous man, rehearseth in a certain collection of his,* that a certain holy father, in making of a sermon, spake of heaven and heavenly things so celestially, that much of his audience with the sweet sound thereof began to forget all the world, and fall asleep. Which, when the father beheld, he dissembled their sleeping, and suddenly said unto them, I shall tell you a merry tale. At which word, they lifted up their heads and harkened unto that. And after the sleep therewith broken, heard him tell on of heaven again. In what wise that good father rebuked them their untoward minds, so dull unto the thing that all our life we labour for, and so quick and lusty toward other trifles, I neither bear in mind, nor shall here need to rehearse. But thus much of the matter sufficeth for our purpose, that whereas you demand me whether in tribulation men may not sometime refresh themselves with worldly mirth and recreation; I can no more say, but he that cannot long endure to hold up his head and hear talking of heaven, except he be now and then between (as though to hear of heaven were heaviness) refreshed with a merry foolish tale, there is none other remedy, but you must let him have it. Better would I wish it, but I cannot help it.

Howbeit, let us by mine advice at the leastwise make those kinds of recreation as short and as seldom as we can. Let them serve us but for sauce, and make them not our meat: and let us pray unto God, and all our good friends for us, that we may feel such a savour in the delight of heaven, that in respect of the talking of the joys thereof, all worldly recreation be but a grief to think on. And be sure, cousin, that if we might once purchase the grace to come to that point, we never found of worldly recreation so much comfort in

* Lib. v. cap. 31.

a year, as we should find in the bethinking us of heaven in less than half an hour.

VINCENT.—In faith, uncle, I can well agree to this: and I pray God bring us once to take such a savour in it. And surely, as you began the other day, by faith must we come to it, and to faith, by prayer. But now I pray you, good uncle, vouchsafe to proceed in our principal matter.

CHAPTER II.

Of the short uncertain life in extreme age or sickness.



ANTONY.—COUSIN, I have bethought me somewhat upon this matter since we were last together. And I find it, if we should go some way to work, a thing that would require many more days to treat thereof than we shall haply find meet thereto, in so few as myself ween that I have now to live, while every time is not like with me, and among many painful, in which I look every day to depart, my mending days coming very seld and are very shortly gone. For surely, a very good similitude. cousin, I cannot liken my life more meetly now than to the snuff of a candle that burneth within the candlestick's nose. For as the snuff sometime burneth down so low, that whoso looketh on it would ween it were quite out, and yet suddenly lifteth a flame half an inch above the nose and giveth a pretty short light again, and thus playeth divers times, till at last ere it be looked for out it goeth altogether: so have I, cousin, divers such days together, as every day of them I look even for to die: and yet have I then after that time such few days again, as you see me now to have yourself, in which a man would ween that I might yet well continue. But I know my lingering not likely to last long, but out will my snuff suddenly some day within a while, and therefore will I with God's help, seem I never so well amended, nevertheless reckon every day for my last. a proverb. For though that to the repressing of the bold courage of blind youth, there is a very true proverb, that

as soon cometh a young sheep's skin to the market as an old; yet this difference there is at least between them, that as the young man may hap sometime to die soon, so the old man can never live long. And therefore, cousin, in one matter here, leaving out many things that I would else treat of, I shall for this time speak but of very few. Howbeit, if God hereafter send me moe such days, then will we, when you list, farther talk of moe.

CHAPTER III.

He divideth Tribulation into three kinds, of which three the last he passeth shortly over.

ALL manner of tribulation, cousin, that any man can have, as far as for this time cometh to my mind, falleth under some one at the least of these three kinds, either it is such as himself willingly taketh, or secondly such as himself willingly suffereth, or finally such as he cannot put from him. This third kind I purpose not much more to speak of now. For thereof shall, as for this time, suffice those things, that we treated between us this other day. What kind of tribulation this is, I am sure yourself perceive. For sickness, imprisonment, loss of goods, loss of friends, or such bodily harm as a man hath already caught, and can in nowise avoid, these things and such like are the third kind of tribulation that I speak of, which a man neither willingly taketh in the beginning, nor can, though he would, put afterward away. Now think I, that as to the man that lacketh wit and faith, no comfort can serve, whatsoever counsel be given: so to them that have both, I have as for this kind said in manner enough already. And considering, that suffer it needs he must, while he can by no manner of mean put it from him, the very necessity is half counsel enough, to take it in good worth and bear it patiently, and rather of his patience to take both ease and thank, than by fretting and fuming to increase his present pain, and by murmur and grudge fall in farther danger after by displeasing of God with his froward behaviour. And yet, albeit that I think that that which is said sufficeth, yet here and there shall I, in the second kind, shew some such comfort as shall well serve unto this last kind too.

*Necessity
maketh
virtue.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE first kind also will I shortly pass over too. For the tribulation that a man willingly taketh himself, which no man putteth upon him against his own will, is (you wot well) as I somewhat touched the last day, such affliction of the flesh, or expense of his goods, as a man taketh himself, or willingly bestoweth in punishment of his own sin and for devotion to God. Now in this tribulation needeth he no man to comfort him. For while no man troubleth him but himself, which feeleth him far forth he may conveniently hear, and of reason and good discretion shall not pass that, wherein if any doubt arise, counsel needeth, and not comfort; the courage that for God's sake and his soul's health kindleth his heart and enflameth it thereto, shall by the same grace that put it in his mind, give him such comfort and joy therein that the pleasure of his soul shall pass the pain of his body: yea, and while he hath in heart also some great heaviness for his sin, yet when he considereth the joy that shall come of it, his soul shall not fail to feel then that strange case, which my body felt once in a great fever.

VINCENT.—What strange case was that, uncle?

ANTONY.—Forsooth, cousin, even in this same bed (it is now more than fifteen years ago) I lay in a tertian, and had passed, I trow, three or four fits: but after fell there one fit on me out of course, so strange and so ^{a strange fit of} marvellous, that I would in good faith have ^{a fever.} thought it impossible. For I suddenly felt myself verily both hot and cold throughout all my body, hot in some

part the one, and in some part the other, for that had been, you wot well, no very strange thing to feel the head hot while the hands were cold; but the self-same parts, I say, so God my soul save! I sensibly felt, and right painfully too, all in one instant both hot and cold at once.

VINCENT.—By my troth, uncle, this was a wonderful thing, and such as I never heard happen any man else in my days; and few men are there, of whose mouths I could have believed it.

ANTONY.—Courtesy, cousin, peradventure, letteth you to say, that you believe it not yet of my mouth neither; and surely for fear of that, you should not have heard it of me neither, had there not another thing happed me soon after.

VINCENT.—I pray you, what was that, good uncle?

ANTONY.—Forsooth, cousin, this I asked a physician or twain, that then looked unto me, how this should be possible; and they twain told me both that it could not be so, but that I was fallen into some slumber, and dreamed that I felt it so.

VINCENT.—This hap, hold I, little causeth you to tell the tale the more boldly.

ANTONY.—No, cousin, that is true, lo. But then happed there another, that a young girl here in this town, whom a kinsman of hers had begun to teach physic, told me, that there was such a kind of fever indeed.

VINCENT.—By our Lady! uncle, save for the credence of you, that tale would I not yet tell again upon that hap of a maid. For though I know her now for such as I durst well believe her, it might hap her very well at that time to lie, because she would you should take her for cunning.

ANTONY.—Yea, but there happed there yet another hap thereon, cousin, that a work of Galen, *De Differentiis Februm*, is ready to be sold in the booksellers' shops. In which work she shewed me then that chapter where Galen saith the same.

VINCENT.—Marry, uncle, as you say, that hap happed well; and that maid hath (as hap was) in that one point more cunning than had both our physicians besides, and hath, I ween, at this day in many points more.

ANTONY.—In faith so ween I too: and that is well wared on her; for she is very wise and well learned, and very virtuous too. But see now, what age is, lo! I have been so long in my tale, that I have almost forgotten for what purpose I told it. Oh! now I remember me, lo. Likewise I say, as myself felt my body then both hot and cold at once; so he, that is contrite and heavy for his sin, shall have cause for to be, and shall indeed be, both sad and glad, and both twain at once, and shall do, as I remember holy St. Hierome biddeth: *Et doleas, et de dolore gaudeas*. Both be thou sorry, saith he, and be thou of thy sorrow joyful also.

And thus, as I began to say, of comfort to be given unto him that is in this tribulation, that is to wit, in fruitful heaviness and penaunce for his sin, shall we none heed to give other than only to remember and consider well the goodness of God's excellent mercy, that infinitely passeth the malice of all men's sin, by which he is ready to receive every man, and did spread his arms abroad upon the cross, lovingly to embrace all them that will come, and even there accepted the thief at his last end that turned not to God till he might steal no longer, and yet maketh more feast in heaven at one that from sin turneth, than of ninety and nine good men that sinned not at all.* And therefore of that first kind will I make no longer tale.

* Luc. xv.

CHAPTER V.

An Objection concerning them that turn not to God, till they come at the last cast.



INCENT.—FORSOOTH, uncle, this is unto that kind comfort very great, and so great also, that it may make many a man bold to abide in his sin, even unto his last end, trusting to be then saved, as that thief was.

ANTONY.—Very sooth you say, cousin, that some wretches are there such, that in such wise abuse the great goodness of God, that the better that he is, the worse again be they. But, cousin, though there be more joy made of his turning that from the point of perdition cometh to salvation, for pity that God had and his saints all, of the peril of perishing that the man stood in: yet is he not set in like state in heaven as he should have been, if he had lived better before, except it so fall that he live so well after, and do so much good, that he therein outrun in the shorter time those good folk that yet did not so much in much longer, as is proved in the blessed apostle St. Paul,* which of a persecutor became an apostle, and last of all came in unto that office, and yet in the labour of sowing the seed of Christ's faith, outran all the remnant so far forth, that he letted not to say of himself, *Abundantius illis omnibus laboravi*,—I have laboured more than all the remnant have. But yet, my cousin, though God (I doubt not) be so merciful unto them, that at any time in their life turn and ask his

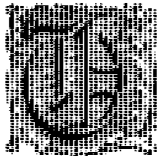
* 1 Cor. xv.

mercy and trust therein, though it be at the last end of a man's life, and hireth him as well for heaven, that cometh to work in his vineyard toward night, at such time as workmen leave work and go home (being then in will to work if the time would serve), as he hireth him that cometh in the morning: yet may there no man upon the trust of this parable be bold all his life to lie still in sin. For let him remember, that into God's vineyard there goeth no man, but he that is called thither. Now, he that in hope to be called toward night, will sleep out the morning, and drink out the day, is full likely to pass at night unspoken to, and then shall he with shrewd rest go supperless to bed.

They tell of one that was wont always to say, that all the while he lived he would do what he list, for three words, when he died, should make all safe enough. But then so happed it, that long ere he were old, his horse once stumpled upon a broken bridge, and as he laboured to recover him, when he saw it would not be, but down into the flood headlong needs he should: in a sudden flight he cried out in the falling, Have all to the devil! And there was he drowned with his three words ere he died, whereon his hope hung all his wretched life. And, therefore, let no man sin in hope of grace: for grace cometh but at God's will, and that mind may be the let, that grace of fruitful repenting shall never after be offered him, but that he shall either graceless go linger on careless, or with a care fruitless, fall into despair.

CHAPTER VI.

An Objection of them that say, that Tribulation of penance needeth not, but is a superstitious folly.



A right description of heretics and libertines of our time.

INCENT.—FORSOOTH, uncle, in this point methinketh you say very well. But there are they some again that say on the tother side, that heaviness of our sins we shall need none at all, but only change our purpose and intend to do better, and for all that which is passed, take no thought at all. And as for fasting or other affliction of the body, they say we should not do it but only to tame the flesh, when we feel it wax wanton and begin to rebel. For fasting, they say, serveth to keep the body in a temperance. But for to fast for penance, or to do any other good work, alms-deed and other, toward satisfaction for our own sin; this thing they call plain injury to the passion of Christ, by which only are our sins forgiven freely without any recompense of our own. And they that would do penance for their own sins, look to be their own Christs, and pay their own ransoms, and save their souls themselves. And with these reasons in Saxony, many cast fasting off, and all other bodily affliction, save only where need requireth to bring the body to temperance. For other good, they say, can it none do to ourself; and then to our neighbour can it do none at all, and therefore they condemn it for superstitious folly. Now, heaviness of heart and weeping for our sins, this they reckon shame almost and womanish peevishness. Howbeit

These reasons reign now in no places than Saxony.

(thanked be God!) their women wax there now so mannish, that they be not peevish, nor so poor of spirit, but that they can sin on as men do, and be neither afraid, nor ashamed, nor weep for their sins at all. And surely, mine uncle, I have marvelled much the less ever since that I heard the manner of their preachers there. For, as you remember, when I was in Saxony, these matters were in manner but in a mammering, nor Luther was not then wed yet, nor religious men out of their habit, but suffered (where those were that would be of the sect) freely to preach what they would to the people. And forsooth, I heard a religious man there myself, one that had been reputed and taken for very good, and which, as far as the folk perceived, was of his own living somewhat austere and sharp, but his preaching was wonderful. Methink I hear him yet, his voice was so loud and shrill, his learning less than mean. But whereas his matter was much part against fasting and all affliction for any penance, which he called men's inventions, he cried ever out upon them, to keep well the laws of Christ. Let go their peevish penance, and purpose then to mend, and seek nothing to salvation but the death of Christ. For he is our justice, and he is our Saviour, and our whole satisfaction for all our deadly sins. He did full penance for us all upon his painful cross, he washed us there all clean with the water of his sweet side, and brought us out of the devil's danger with his dear precious blood. Leave, therefore, leave, I beseech you, these inventions of men, your foolish Lenten fasts, and your peevish penance, minish never Christ's thank, nor look to save yourself. It is Christ's death, I tell you, that must save us all: Christ's death, I tell you, yet again, and not your own deeds. Leave your own fasting, therefore, and lean to Christ alone, good Christian people, for Christ's dear bitter passion.

Now so loud and so shrill he cried Christ in their ears, and so thick he came forth with Christ's bitter passion, and that so bitterly

Such mannish women are not in Saxony only.

A right Protestant preaching.

These be they that say, lo! here is Christ, and there is Christ.

Such preachers beguile the people by pretence of Christ's passion.

spoken, with the sweat dropping down his cheeks, that I marvelled not though I saw the poor women weep. For he made my own hair stand up upon my head; and with such preaching were the people so brought in, that some fell to break their fasts on the fasting days, not of frailty or of malice first, but almost of devotion, lest they should take from Christ the thank of his bitter passion. But when they were a while nused in that point first, they could abide and endure after many things more, with which had he then begun, they would have pulled him down.

ANTONY.—Consin, God amend that man, whatsoever he be, and God keep all good folk from such manner of preachers! Such one preacher much more abnseth the name of Christ and of his bitter passion, than five hundred hazarders that in their idle business swear and forswear themselves by his holy bitter passion at dice. They carry the minds of the people from the perceiving of their craft, by the continual naming of the name of Christ: and crying his passion so shrill into their ears, they forget that the Church hath ever taught them, that all our penance without Christ's passion were not worth a pease. And they make the people ween, that we would be saved by our own deeds without Christ's death: where we confess, that his only passion meriteth incomparably more for us, than all our own deeds do: but his pleasure is, that we shall also take pain our own self with him, and therefore he biddeth all that will be his disciples, take their crosses upon their backs as he did, and with their crosses follow him.*

And where they say, that fasting serveth but for temperance, to tame the flesh and keep it from wantonness, I would in good faith have weened that Moses had not been so wild,† that for the taming of his flesh he should have need to fast whole forty days together.‡ No nor holy neither, nor yet our Saviour himself which began,

* Marc. xv. Matth. xvi. Luc. ix.

† Exod. xxxiv.

‡ 3 Reg. xix.

and the apostles followed, and all Christendom have kept the Lenten forty days fast, that these folk call now so foolish. King Achab* was not disposed to be wanton in his flesh, when he fasted and went clothed in sackcloth and all besprent with ashes. Nor no more was in Ninive the king and all the city,† but they wailed, and did painful penance for their sin, to procure God to pity them and withdraw his indignation. Anna‡ that in her widowhood abode so many years with fasting and praying in the Temple till the birth of Christ, was not, I ween, in her old age so sore disposed to the wantonness of her flesh, that she fasted all therefor. Nor St. Paul§ that fasted so much, fasted not all therefor neither. The Scripture is full of places that prove fasting not to be the invention of man, but the institution of God, and that it hath many mo profits than one. And that the fasting of one man may do good to another, our Saviour sheweth himself, where he saith, that some kind of devils cannot be by one man cast out of another, *Nisi in oratione et jejuni*,—without prayer and fasting.||

And therefore I marvel that they take this way against fasting and other bodily penance, and yet much more I marvel, that they mislike the sorrow and heaviness and displeasure of mind that a man should take in forethinking of his sin. The prophet saith: *Scindite corda vestra, et non vestimenta*,—Tear your hearts (he saith) and not your clothes.¶ And the prophet David saith: *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias*,—A contrite heart and an humbled,** that is to say, a heart broken, torn, and with tribulation of heaviness for his sins laid alow under foot, shalt thou not, good Lord, despise. He saith also of his own contrition: *Laboravi in gemitu meo, lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum, lachrymis meis stratum meum rigabo*,—I have laboured in my weeping, I shall every night wash my bed with my tears, my couch will I water.†† But what should I need in this matter to lay forth one place or twain? The Scripture is full of those places, by which it plainly appeareth, that

* 3 Reg. xii.

† Jonæ iii.

‡ Luc. iii.

§ 2 Cor. xi.

|| Marc. ix.

¶ Joel ii.

** Psal. i.

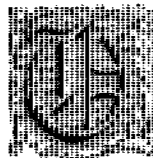
†† Psal. vi.

God looketh of duty, not only that we should amend and be better in the time to come, but also be sorry, and weep, and bewail our sins committed before, and all the holy doctors be full and whole of that mind, that men must have (for their sins) contrition and sorrow in heart.

God willeth us of duty, to weep and bewail our sins.

CHAPTER VII.

What if a man cannot weep, nor in his heart be sorry for his sin.



INCIDENT.—FORSOOTH, uncle, yet seemeth me this thing somewhat a sore sentence, not for that I think otherwise, but that there is good cause and great, wherefore a man so should: but for that of truth some man cannot be sorry and heavy for his sin that he hath done, though he never so fain would. But though he can be content for God's sake, to forbear it from thenceforth, yet for every sin that is passed can he not only not weep, but some were haply so wanton, that when he happeth to remember them, he can scanty forbear to laugh. Now, if contrition and sorrow of heart be requisite of necessity to remission; many a man should stand, as it seemeth, in a very perilous case.

ANTONY.—Many so should indeed, cousin, and indeed many so do. And the old saints write very sore in this point. Howbeit, *Misericordia Domini super omnia opera ejus*,—The mercy of God is above all his works,* and he standeth bound to no common rule. *Et ipse cognovit figmentum suum, et propitiatur infirmitatibus nostris*.—And he knoweth the frailty of this earthen vessel that is of his own making, and is merciful, and hath pity and compassion upon our feeble infirmities,† and shall not exact of us above that thing that we may do. But yet, cousin, he that findeth himself in that case, ^{rate well this} in that he is minded to do well hereafter, let ^{good counsel.}

* Psal. cxliv.

† Psal. cii.

him give God thanks that he is no worse: but in that he cannot be sorry for his sin past, let him be sorry hardly that he is no better. And as St. Jerome biddeth him that for his sin sorroweth in his heart, be glad and rejoice in his sorrow: so would I counsel him that cannot be sad for his sin, to be sorry yet at the least that he cannot be sorry.

Besides this, though I would in nowise any man should despair, yet would I counsel such a man, while that affection lasteth, not to be too bold of courage, but live in double fear. First, for it is a token either of faint faith, or of a dull diligence. For surely if we believe in God, and therewith deeply consider his High Majesty with the peril of our sin, and the great goodness of God also: either should dread make us tremble and break our stony heart, or love should for sorrow relent it into tears. Besides this, I can scant believe, but sith so little misliking of our old sin is an affection not very pure and clean, and none unclean thing shall enter into heaven; cleansed shall it be and purified, before that we come thither. And, therefore, would I farther advise one in that case, the counsel which M. Gerson giveth every man, that sith the body and the soul together make the whole man, the less affliction that he feeleth in his soul, the more pain in recompense let him put upon his body, and purge the spirit by the affliction of the flesh. And he that so doth, I dare lay my life, shall have his hard heart after relent into tears, and his soul in an wholesome heaviness and heavenly gladness too, specially if, which must be joined with every good thing, he join faithfull prayer therewith.

But, cousin, as I told yon the other day before, in these matters with these new men will I not dispute. But surely for mine own part I cannot well hold with them. For, as far as mine own poor wit can perceive, the Holy Scripture of God is very plain against them, and the whole corps of Christendom in every Christian region, and the very places in which they dwell themselves, have ever unto their own days clearly believed against them, and all the old holy doctors

have evermore taught against them, and all the old holy interpreters have construed the Scripture against them. And, therefore, if these men have now perceived so late, that the Scripture hath been misunderstanden all this while, and that of all those old holy doctors no man could understand it; then am I too old at this age to begin to study it now. And trust these men's cunning, cousin, that dare I not, in nowise, sith I cannot see nor perceive no cause, wherefore I should think, that these men might not now in the understanding of Scripture, as well be deceived themselves, as they bear us ^{Mark well this reason.} in hand, that all those other have been all this while before.

Howbeit, cousin, if so it be, that their way be not wrong, but that they have found out so easy a way to heaven, as to take no thought, but make merry, nor take no penance at all, but sit them down and drink well for our Saviour's sake, sit cock-a-hoop and fill in all the cups at once, and then let Christ's passion pay for all the shot, I am not he that will envy their good hap, but surely counsel dare I give no man, to adventure that way with them. But such as fear lest that way be not sure, and take upon them willingly tribulation of penance, what comfort they do take and well may take therein, that have I somewhat told you already. And sith these other folk sit so merry without such tribulation; we need to talk to them, you wot well, of no such manner comfort. And therefore of this kind of tribulation will I make an end.

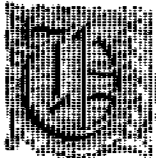
*Good counsel
hath to make
ourselves sorry
for our sins.*

*Christ himself
saith, that the
way to heaven
is not so easy,
but narrow and
hard.*

*No wisdom to
hold with new
opinions, and
why.*

CHAPTER VIII.

Of that kind of Tribulation which, though they not willingly take, yet they willingly suffer.



INCENT.—**VERILY**, good uncle, so may you well do : for you have brought it unto very good pass. And now I require you to come to that other kind, of which you purposed alway to treat last.

ANTONY.—That shall I, cousin, very gladly do. The other kind is this, which I rehearsed second, and sorting out the other twain, have kept it for the last. This kind of tribulation is, you wot well, of them that willingly suffer tribulation, though of their own choice they took it not at the first.

This kind, cousin, divide we shall into Temptation. twain. The first might we call temptation : Persecution. the second, persecution. But here must you consider that I mean not every kind of persecution, but that kind only which, though the sufferer would be loth to fall in, yet will he rather abide it and suffer, than by the flitting from it fall in the displeasure of God, or leave God's pleasure unprocured. Howbeit, if we consider these two things well, temptation and persecution, we may find that either of them is incident to the other. For both by temptation the devil persecuteth us, and by persecution the devil also tempteth us ; and as persecution is tribulation to every man, so is temptation tribulation to a good man. Now, though the devil, our spiritual enemy, fight against man in both, yet this difference hath the

common temptation from the persecution, that temptation is, as it were, the fiend's train, and persecution his plain open fight. And, therefore, will I now call all this kind of tribulation here by the name of temptation, and that shall I divide into two parts. The first shall I call the devil's trains ; the other, his open fight.

How temptation differs from persecution.

CHAPTER IX.

First, of Temptation in general as it is common to both.



O speak of every kind of temptation particularly by itself, this were, you wot well, in manner an infinite thing. For under that, as I told you, fall persecutions and all. And the devil hath of his trains a thousand subtle ways, and of his open fight as many sundry poisoned darts. He tempteth us by the world, he tempteth us by our own flesh, he tempteth us by pleasure, he tempteth us by pain, he tempteth us by our foes, he tempteth us by our friends, and, under colour of kindred, he maketh many times our next friends our most foes. For as our Saviour saith, *Inimici hominis, domestici ejus*,—A man's own familiar friends are his enemies.* But in all manner of so divers temptations, one marvellous comfort is this, that with the more we be tempted, the gladder have we cause to be. For St. James saith, *Omne gaudium existimate, fratres mei, quum in tentationes varias incideritis*,—Esteem it and take it, saith he, my brethren, for a thing of all joy, when you fall into divers and sundry manner of temptations.† And no marvel; for there is in this world set up as it were a game of wrestling, wherein the people of God come in on the one side, and on the tother side come mighty strong wrestlers and wily, that is, to wit, the devils, the cursed proud damned spirits. For it is not our flesh alone that we must wrestle with, but with the devil too. *Non*

* Matth. x.

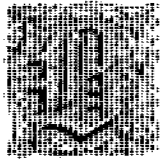
† Jacobi i.

est nobis colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed adversus principes et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae in caelestibus,—Our wrestling is not here, saith St. Paul, against flesh and blood, but against the princes and potentates of these dark regions, against the spiritual ghosts of the air.* But as God (unto them that on his part give his adversary the fall) hath prepared a crown: so he that will not wrestle, shall none have. For, as St. Paul saith: *Qui certat in agone, non coronabitur, nisi qui legitime certaverit*,—There shall no man have the crown, but he that doth his devoir therefor,† according to the law of the game. And then, as holy St. Bernard saith:—How couldest thou fight or wrestle therefor, if there were no challenger against thee, that would provoke thee thereto? And, therefore, may it be a great comfort, as St. James saith, to every man that feeleth himself challenged and provoked by temptation; for thereby perceiveth he, that it cometh to his course to wrestle, which shall be (but if he willingly will play the coward or the fool) the matter of his eternal reward in heaven.

* Ephes. vi.

† 2 Tim. ii.

CHAPTER X.

A special Comfort in all Temptation.

U now must this needs be to man an inestimable comfort in all temptation, if his faith fail him not, that is, to wit, that he may be sure that God is always ready to give him strength against the devil's might, and wisdom against the devil's trains. For as the prophet saith: *Fortitudo mea et laus mea Dominus, et factus est mihi in salutem.*—My strength and my praise is our Lord; he hath been my safeguard.* And the Scripture saith: *Pete a Deo sapientiam et dabit tibi.*—Ask wisdom of God, and he shall give it thee.† *Ut possitis* (as St. Paul saith) *deprehendere omnes artes.*—That you may spy and perceive all the crafts. A great comfort may this be in all kinds of temptation, that God hath so his hand upon him that is willing to stand, and will trust in him, and call upon him, that he hath made him sure by many faithful promises in holy Scripture, that either he shall not fall, or if he sometime through faintness of faith stagger and hap to fall, yet if he call upon God betimes, his fall shall be no sore bruising to him, but as the Scripture saith: *Justus si ceciderit, non collidetur, quia Dominus supponit manum suam.*—The just man, though he fall, shall not be bruised, for our Lord holdeth under his hand.‡

The prophet expresseth a plain comfortable promise

* Psal. cxvii.

† Jacobi i.

‡ Psal. xxxvii.

of God against all temptation, where he saith: *Qui habitat in adiutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei caeli commorabitur.*—Whoso dwelleth in the help of the highest God, he shall abide in the protection or defence of the God of heaven.* Who dwelleth now, good cousin, in the help of the high God? Surely he that through a good faith abideth in the trust and confidence of God's help, and neither for lack of that faith and trust in his help falleth desperate of all help, nor departeth from the hope of his help to seek himself help (as I told you the other day) of the flesh, the world, or the devil.

Now, he then that by fast faith and sure hope dwelleth in God's help, and hangeth always thereupon, never falling from that hope; he shall, saith the prophet, ever abide and dwell in God's defence and protection; that is to say, that while he faileth not to believe well and hope well, God will never fail in all temptation to defend him. For unto such a faithful well-hoping man the prophet in the same psalm saith farther: *Scapulis suis obumbrabit tibi, et sub pennis ejus sperabis.*—With his shoulders shall he shadow thee, and under his feathers shalt thou trust.† Lo, here hath every faithful man a sure promise, that in the fervent heat of temptation or tribulation, for (as I have said divers times before) they be in such wise coincident, that every tribulation the devil useth for temptation to bring us to impatience, and thereby to murmur, grudge, and blaspheme, and every kind of temptation is to a good man that fighteth against it, and will not follow it, a very painful tribulation. In the fervent heat, I say therefore, of every temptation, God giveth the faithful man (that hopeth in him) the shadow of his holy shoulders, which are broad and large, sufficient to refrigerate and refresh the man in that heat, and in every tribulation he putteth his shoulders for a defence between. And then what weapon of the devil may give us any deadly wound, while that impentable pance of the shoulder of God standeth always between?‡

* Psal. xc.

† Psal. xc.

Then goeth the verse farther, and saith unto such a faithful man, *et sub pennis ejus sperabis*,—thy hope shall be under his feathers; that is, to wit, for the good hope thou hast in his help, he will take thee so near him into his protection, that as the hen, to keep her young chickens from the kite, nestleth them together under her own wings: so fro the devil's claws, the ravenous kite of this dark air, the God of heaven will gather his faithful trusting folk near unto his own sides, and set them in surety very well and warm under the covering of his own heavenly wings. And of this defence and protection our Saviour spake himself unto the Jews (as mention is made in the Gospel of St. Matthew), to whom he said in this wise: *Hierusalem, Hierusalem, quæ occidis prophetas, et lapidas eos qui ad te missi sunt, quoties volui congregare te sicut gallina congregat pullos suos sub alas, et noluisti?*—That is to say,—Hierusalem, Hierusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest to death them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee together, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not?*

Words of great comfort. Here are words, cousin Vincent, words of no little comfort unto every Christian man: by which we may see, with how tender affection God of his great goodness longeth to gather under the protection of his wings, and how often like a loving hen he clocketh home unto him even those chickens of his that wilfully walk abroad in the kite's danger, and will not come at his clocking, but ever the more he clocketh for them, the farther they go from him. And, therefore, can we not doubt, if we will follow him, and with faithful hope come run unto him, but that he shall in all matter of temptation take us near unto him, and set us even under his wings, and then are we safe, if we will tarry there. For against our will can there no power pull us thence, nor hurt our souls there. *Pone me* (saith the prophet) *juxta te, et cujusvis manus pugnet contra me*,—Set me near unto thee, and fight against me whose hand that will.† And to shew the great safeguard and surety

* Matth. xxiii.

† Job xvii.

that we shall have, while we sit under his heavenly feathers, the prophet saith yet a great deal farther: *In velamento alarum tuarum exultatio*, that is, to wit, that we shall not only (when we sit by his sweet side under his holy wing) sit in safeguard; but that we shall also under the covering of his heavenly wings, with great exultation rejoice.*

* Psal. xxi.

CHAPTER XI.

Of four kinds of Temptations, and therein both the parts of that kind of Tribulation that men willingly suffer, touched in two verses of the Psalter.



DIVINE in the two next verses following, the prophet briefly comprehendeth four kinds of temptation, and therein all the tribulations that we shall now speak of, and also some part of that which we have spoken of before. And therefore I shall peradventure, except any farther thing fall in our way, with the treating of those two verses, finish and end all our matter. The prophet saith in the psalm: *Scuto circundabit te veritas ejus, non timebis a timore nocturno. A sagitta volante in die, a negotio perambulante in tenebris, ab incursu et daemonio meridiano*:—The truth of God shall compass thee about with a pavice, thou shalt not be afraid of the night's fear, nor of the arrow flying in the day, nor of the business walking about in darknesses, nor of the incursion or invasion of the devil in the mid-day.* First, cousin, in these words—The truth of God shall compass thee about with a pavice,—the prophet for the comfort of every good man in all temptation and in all tribulation, beside those other things that he said before, that the shoulders of God shall shadow them, and that also they should sit under his wing, here saith he farther,—The truth of God shall compass thee with a pavice, that is, to wit, that as God hath faithfully promised to protect and defend those that faithfully will dwell in the trust of

* Psal. xc.

his help; so will he truly perform it. And thou that such one art, will the truth of his promise defend, not with a little round buckler that scant can cover the head, but with a long large pavice that covereth all along the body, made, as holy St. Bernard saith,* broad above with the Godhead, and narrow beneath with the manhead, so that this pavice is our Saviour Christ himself. And yet is this pavice not like other pavices of this world, which are not made but in such wise as, while they defend one part, the man may be wounded upon another: but this pavice is such, that (as the prophet saith) it shall round about inclose and compass thee, so that thine enemy shall hurt thy soul on no side. For, *scuto* (saith he) *circundabit te veritas ejus*,—with a pavice shall his truth environ and compass thee round about. And then continually following, to the intent that we should see that it is not without necessity that the pavice of God should compass us about upon every side, he sheweth in what wise we be by the devil with trains and assanits, by four kinds of temptations and tribulations, environed upon every side. Against all which compass of temptations and tribulations, that round compassing pavice of God's truth, shall in such wise defend us and keep us safe, that we shall need to dread none of them all.

* Bernard, in Psal. xc.

CHAPTER XII.

The first kind of the four Temptations.

FIRST he saith: *Non timebis timore nocturno*,—Thou shalt not be afraid of the fear of the night. By the night is there in Scripture some time understood tribulation, as appeareth in the xxxivth chapter of Job: *Novit enim Deus opera eorum, idcirco inducet noctem*,—God hath known the works of them, and therefore shall he bring night upon them, that is, to wit, tribulation for their wickedness.* And well you wot, that the night is of the nature of itself very discomfortable and full of fear. And therefore by the night's fear, here I understand that tribulation by which the devil, through the sufferance of God, either by himself, or other that are his instruments, tempteth good folk to impatience, as he did Job. But he that, as the prophet saith, dwelleth and continueth faithfully in the hope of God's help, shall so be beclipped in on every side with the shield or pavice of God, that he shall have no need to be afear'd of such tribulation that is here called the night's fear.

The night's fear. And it may be also conveniently called the night's fear for two causes. The one, for that many times the cause of his tribulation is unto him that suffereth it dark and unknown; and therein varieth it and differeth from that tribulation, by which the devil tempteth a man with open fight and assault for a known good thing, from which he would withdraw him, or for

* Job xxxiv.

some known evil thing, into which he would drive him by force of such persecution. Another cause, for which it is called the night's fear, may be for that the night is so far out of courage, and naturally so casteth folk in fear, that of every thing whereof they perceive any manner dread, their phantasy doubleth their fear, and maketh them often ween that it were much worse than indeed it is. The prophet saith in the Psalter: *Posuisti tenebras et facta est nox, in ipsa pertransibunt omnes bestiae sylvarum. Catuli leonum rugientes, quærentes a Deo escam sibi*:—Thou hast, good Lord, set the darkness, and made was the night, and in the night walk all the beasts of the wood. The whelps of the lions roaring and calling unto God for their meat.*

Now, though that the lions' whelps walk about roaring in the night and seek for their prey, yet can they not get such meat as they would alway, but must hold themselves content with such as God suffereth to fall in their way. And though they be not ware thereof, yet of God they ask it, and of him they have it.

And this may be comfort to all good men in their night's fear, in their dark tribulation, that though they fall into the claws or the teeth of those lions' whelps, yet shall all that they can do not pass beyond the body, which is but as the garment of the soul. For the soul itself, which is the substance of the man, is so surely fenced in round about with the shield or pavice of God, that as long as he will abide faithfully in *adjutorio Altissimi* (in the hope of God's help), the lions' whelps shall not be able to hurt it. For the great lion himself could never be suffered to go farther in the tribulation of Job,† than God from time to time gave him leave. And therefore the deep darkness of the midnight maketh men that stand out of faith and out of good hope in God, to be in their tribulation far in the greater fear, for lack of the light of faith, whereby they might perceive that the uttermost of their peril is a far less thing than they take it for. But we be so wont to set so much by our

* Psal. ciii.

† Job i.

body which we see and feel, and in the feeding and fostering whereof we set our delight and our wealth, and so little, alas! and so self we think on our soul, because we cannot see that but by spiritual understanding, and most specially by the eye of our faith (in the meditation whereof we bestow, God wot, little time), that the loss of our body we take for a sorer thing and for a greater tribulation a great deal than we do the loss of our soul.

And whereas our Saviour biddeth us,* that we should not fear these lions' whelps that can but kill our bodies, and when that is done, have no farther thing in their power wherewith they can do us harm, but biddeth us stand in dread of him, which when he hath slain the body, is able then beside to cast the soul into everlasting fire; we be so blind in the dark night of tribulation, for the lack of full and fast belief of God's word, that whereas in the day of prosperity we very little fear God for our soul, our night's fear of adversity maketh us very sore to fear the lion and his whelps, for dread of loss of our bodies. And whereas St. Paul in sundry places sheweth us, that our body is but as the garment of the soul; yet the faintness of our faith to the Scripture of God maketh us with the night's fear of tribulation more to dread, not only the loss of our body than of our soul: that is, to wit, of the clothing, than of the substance that is clothed therewith: but also of the very outward goods that serve for the clothing of the body. And much more foolish are

This is great foolishness indeed. we in that dark night's fear, than were he that could forget the saving of his body, for fear of losing his old rain-beaten cloak, that is but the covering of his gown or his coat.

Now consider farther yet, that the prophet in the fore-remembered verses saith not, that in the night walk only the lions' whelps, but also, *omnes bestie sylvarum*,—all the beasts of the wood. Now wot you well, that if a man walk through the wood in the night, many things may make him afraid, which in the day he would not be afraid a whit, for in the night every bush to him that waxeth once afraid, seemeth a thief.

* Matth. x.

I remember, that when I was a young man, I was once in the war with the king, then my master (God assoil his soul!) and we were camped within the Turk's ground many a mile beyond Belgrade, which would God were ours now, as well as it was then! But so happed it, that in our camp about midnight, there suddenly rose rumours and a skry that the Turk's whole army was secretly stealing upon us, wherewith our noble host was warned to arm them in haste, and set themselves in array to fight. And then were scurrers of ours that brought these sudden tidings, examined more leisurely by the council, what surety or what likelihood they had perceived therein. Of whom one shewed, that by the glimmering of the moon he had espied and perceived and seen them himself, coming on softly and soberly in a long range, all in good order, not one farther forth than the other in the forefront, but as even as the thread, and in breadth farther than he could see in length. His fellows being examined said that he was somewhat pricked forth before them, and came so fast back to tell it them that they thought it rather time to make haste and give warning to the camp, than to go nearer unto them: for they were not so far off, but that they had yet themselves somewhat an imperfect sight of them too. Thus stood we watching all the remnant of the night, evermore hearkening when we should hear them come, with "Hush, stand still, methink I hear a trampling;" so that at last many of us thought we heard them ourself also. But when the day was sprongen, and that we saw no man, out was our scurrer sent again, and some of our captains with him, to shew them whereabouts the place was in which he perceived them. And when they came thither they found that great fearful army of the Turks so soberly coming on, turned (God be thanked!) into a fair long hedge, standing even stone still.

And thus fareth it in the night's fear of tribulation, in which the devil to bear down and overwhelm with dread the faithful hope that we should have in God, casteth in our imagination much more fear than cause. For while there walk in the night not only the lions' whelps, but

over that, all the beasts of the wood; beside the beasts that we hear roaring in the dark night of tribulation, and fear it for a lion, we sometime find well afterward in the day, that it was no lion at all, but a seely rude roaring ass: and the thing that on the sea seemeth sometime a rock, is indeed nothing else but a mist. Howbeit, as the prophet saith: He that faithfully dwelleth in the hope of God's help, the pavice of his truth shall so fence him in round about, that be it an ass colt, or a lion's whelp, a rock of stone, or a mist, *non timebit a timore nocturno*,—the night's fear thereof shall be nothing dread to fear at all.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Pusillanimity.

HEREFORE find I, that in this night's fear one great part thereof is the fault of Pusillanimity, that is, to wit, feeble and faint stomach, by which a man for faint heart is afraid where he needeth not; by reason whereof he fleeth oftentimes for fear of that thing of which if he fled not, he should take no harm: and some man doth sometime by *Pusillanimity* his fleeing make his enemy bold on him which would (if he fled not, but durst abide thereby) give over and flee from him. This fault of pusillanimity maketh a man in his tribulation for feeble heart first impatient, and afterward oftentimes driveth him by impatience into a contrary affection, making him forwardly stubborn and angry against God, and thereby to fall into blasphemy, as do the damned souls in hell. This fault of pusillanimity and timorous mind letteth a man also many times from the doing of many good things, which (if he took a good stomach to him in the trust of God's help) he were well able to do: but the devil casteth him in a cowardice, and maketh him take it for humility, to think himself innocent and unable thereto, and therefore to leave the good thing undone, whereof God offereth him occasion, and had made him meet and convenient thereto.

But such folk have need to lift up their hearts and call upon God, and by the counsel of other good ghostly folk cast away the cowardice of their own conceit, which the night's fear by the devil hath framed in their phantasy,

and look in the Gospel* upon him which laid up his talent and left it unoccupied, and therefore utterly lost it, with a great reproach of his pusillanimitie, by which he had weened he should have excused himself, in that he was afraid to put it forth in ure and occupy it. And all this fear cometh by the devil's drift, wherein he taketh occasion of the faintness of our good and sure trust in God. And therefore let us faithfully dwell in the good hope of his help, and then shall the pavice of his truth so compass us about, that of this night's fear we shall have no scare at all.

* Matth. xxv.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of the Daughter of Pusillanimitie, a Scrupulous Conscience.

THE pusillanimitie bringeth forth by the night's fear, a very timorous daughter, a wretched girl, and ever puling, that is called Scrupulosity, or a scrupulous conscience. This girl is a meetly good puzzle in a house, never idle, but ever occu-

pied and busy: but albeit she have a very gentle mistress that loveth her well, and is well content with that she doth, or if it be not all well (as all cannot be always well), content to pardon her as she doth other of her fellows, and so letteth her know that she will; yet can this peevish girl never cease whining and puling for fear lest her mistress be alway angry with her, and that she shall shrewdly be shent. Were her mistress, ween you, like to be content with this condition? Nay, verily. I knew such one myself, whose mistress was a very wise woman, and (which thing is in woman rare) very mild, and also meek, and liked very well such service as she did her in her house, but this continual discomfortable fashion of hers she so much disliked, that she would sometime say, "Eh! what aileth this girl? The elvish urchin weeneth I were a devil, I trow. Surely if she did me ten times better service than she doth, yet with this fantastical fear of hers I would be loth to have her in my house."

Thus fareth, lo! the scrupulous person, which frameth himself many times double the fear that he hath cause, and many times a great fear where there is no cause at

all, and of that which is indeed no sin, maketh a venial, and that that is venial, imagineth to be deadly. And yet for all that falleth in them, being namely such of their own nature as no man long liveth without, and then he feareth that he be never full confessed, nor never full contrite, and then that his sins be never full forgiven him; and then he confesseth, and confesseth again, and cumbereth himself and his confessor both; and then every prayer that he saith, though he say it as well as the frail infirmity of the man will suffice, yet is he not satisfied, but if he say it again, and yet after that again. And when he hath said one thing thrice, as little is he satisfied with the last, as with the first; and then is his heart evermore in heaviness, unquiet, and in fear, full of doubt and dullness, without comfort or spiritual consolation.

With this night's fear the devil sore troubleth the mind of many a right good man, and that doth he, to bring him to some great inconvenience: for he will, if he can, drive him so much to the fearful minding of God's rigorous justice, that he will keep him from the comfortable remembrance of God's great mighty mercy, and so make him do all his good works wearily, and without consolation and quickness.

Moreover, he maketh him take for sin something that is none, and for deadly, some such as are but venial, to the intent that, when he shall fall in them, he shall by reason of his scruple sin, where else he should not, or sin deadly (while his conscience in the deed doing so gave him), whereas else indeed he has but offended venially. Yea, and farther, the devil longeth to make all his good works and spiritual exercise so painful and so tedious unto him, that with some other subtle suggestion or false wily doctrine of a false spiritual liberty, he should for the false ease and pleasure that he should suddenly find therein, be easily conveyed from that evil fault into a much worse, and have his conscience as wide and as large after, as ever it was narrow and strait before. For better is yet of truth a conscience a little too strait, than a little too large. My mother had, when I was a little boy, a

good old woman that took heed to her children, they called her Mother Maud: I trow, you have heard of her.

VINCENT.—Yea, yea, very much.

ANTONY.—She was wont, when she sat by ~~mother Maud's~~ the fire with us, to tell us that were children ^{tale} many childish tales. But as Plinius saith, that there is no book lightly so bad, but that some good thing a man may pick out thereof;* so think I there is no tale so foolish, but that yet in one matter or other, to some purpose it may hap to serve. For I remember me that among other of her fond childish tales, she told us once, that the ass and the wolf came on a time to confession to the fox. The poor ass came to shrift in the Shrove-tide, a day or two before Ash Wednesday; but the wolf would not come to confession until he saw first Palm Sunday past, and then foded yet forth farther until Good Friday came. The fox asked the ass before he began *Benedicite*, wherefore he came to confession so soon before Lent began. The poor beast answered him again; for fear of deadly sin, and for fear he should lose his part of any of those prayers that the priest in the cleansing days prayeth for them that are confessed already. There in his shrift he had a marvellous great grudge in his inward conscience, that he had one day given his master a cause of anger, in that that with his rude roaring before his master arose, he had awaked him out of his sleep, and bereaved him out of his rest. The fox for that fault, like a good discreet confessor, charged him to do so no more, but lie still and sleep like a good son himself, till his master were up and ready to go to work, and so should he be sure, that he should not wake him no more.

To tell you all the poor ass's confession, it were a long work, for every thing that he did was deadly sin with him, the poor soul was so scrupulous. But his wise wily confessor accounted them for trifles, as they were indeed, and sware afterward unto the bageard, that he was so weary to sit so long and hear him, that saving for the

* Lib. iii. epist. 5.

manners' sake, he had lever have sitten all the while at breakfast with a good fat goose. But when it came to the penance giving, the fox found that the most weighty sin in all his shrift was gluttony, and therefore he discreetly gave him in penance, that he should never for greediness of his own meat do any other beast any harm or hinderance, and then eat his meat, and study for no more.

Now, as good Mother Maud told us, when the wolf came to confession to Father Reynard (for that was, she said, the fox's name) upon Good Friday, his confessor shook his great pair of beads upon him almost as big as bowls, and asked him wherefore he came so late? "Forsooth, Father Reynard," quoth the wolf, "I must needs tell you the truth: I come (you wot well) therefor, I durst come no sooner, for fear lest you would for my gluttony have given me in penance to fast some part of this Lent." "Nay, nay," quoth Father Fox, "I am not so unreasonable: for I fast none of it myself. For I may say to thee, son, between us twain here in confession, it is no commandment of God this fasting, but an invention of man. The priests make folk fast and put them to pain about the moonshine in the water, and do but make folk fools: but they shall make me no such fool, I warrant thee, son. For I eat flesh all this Lent, myself I. Howbeit, indeed, because I will not be occasion of slander, I therefore eat it secretly in my chamber, out of sight of all such foolish brethren as for their weak scrupulous conscience would wax offended withal, and so would I counsel you to do." "Forsooth, Father Fox," quoth the wolf, "and so I thank God I do, so near as I can. For when I go to my meat, I take none other company with me, but such sure brethren as are of mine own nature, whose consciences are not weak, I warrant you, but their stomachs as strong as mine." "Well then, no force," quoth Father Fox.

Such sure wolfish brethren began all fleshly liberty.

But when he heard after by his confession, that he was so great a ravenor, that he devoured and spent sometime so much victual

at one meal, as the price thereof would well find some poor man with his wife and children almost all the week; then he prudently reprov'd that point in him, and preached him a process of his own temperance, which never used, as he said, to pass upon himself the value of sixpence at a meal, no nor yet so much neither. "For when I bring home a goose," quoth he, "not out of the poulter's shop, where folk find them out of their feathers ready plucked, and see which is the fullest and yet for sixpence buy and choose the best, but out of the housewife's house at the first hand, which may somewhat better cheap afford them, you wot well, than the poulter may, nor yet cannot be suffered to see them plucked, and stand and choose them by day, but am fain by night to take at adventure, and when I come home, am fain to do the labour to pluck her myself: yet for all this, though it be but lean, and I ween not well worth a groat, serveth it me somewhat, for all that, both dinner and supper too. And therefore, as for that you live of raven, therein can I find no fault: you have used it so long, that I think you can do none other. And therefore were it folly to forbid it you, and (to say the truth) against good conscience too. Secret counsel for a wolfish conscience. For live you must, I wot well, and other craft can you none; and therefore, as reason is, must you live by that. But yet, you wot well, too much is too much, and measure is a merry mean, which I perceive by your shrift you have never used to keep. And therefore, surely, this shall be your penance: that you shall all this year now pass upon yourself the price of sixpence at a meal, as near as your conscience can guess the price."

Their shrift have I shewed you, as Mother Maud shewed it to us. But now serveth for our matter the conscience of them both, in the true performing of their penance. The poor ass after his shrift, when he waxed anhungered, saw a sow lie with her pigs well lapped in new straw, and near he drew and thought to have eaten of the straw. But such his scrupulous conscience began therein to grudge him. For while his penance was, that for greediness of his meat he should do none other body harm; he

thought he might not eat one straw thereof, lest for lack of that straw some of those pigs might hap to die for cold. So held he still his hunger, till one brought him meat. But when he should fall thereto, then fell he yet in a far farther scruple; for then it came in his mind that he should yet break his penance, if he should eat any of that either, sith he was commanded by his ghostly father, that he should not for his own meat hinder any other beast. For he thought, that if he eat not that meat, some other beast might hap to have it, and so should he by the eating of it peradventure hinder some other. And thus stood he still fasting, till when he told the cause, his ghostly father came and informed him better, and then he cast off that scruple, and fell mannerly to his meat, and was a right honest ass many a fair day after.

The wolf now coming from shrift clean soiled from his sins, went about to do, as a shrewd wife once told her husband that she would do, when she came from shrift. "Be merry, man," quoth she, "now; ^{a merry jest.} for this day I thank God, was I well shriven, and purpose now therefore to leave off all mine old shrewdness and begin afresh."

VINCENT.—Ah, well, uncle, can you report her so? That word heard I her speak, but she said it in sport to make her good man laugh.

ANTONY.—Indeed it seemed she spake it half in sport. For, that she said she would cast away all her shrewdness, therein I trow she sported; but in that she said she would begin it all afresh, her husband found that good earnest.

VINCENT.—Well, I shall shew her what you say, I warrant you.

ANTONY.—Then will you make me make my word good; but whatsoever she did, at the least wise so fared now this wolf, which had cast out in confession all his old raven, and then hunger pricked him forward, that (as the shrewd wife said) he did indeed begin all afresh. But yet the prick of conscience withdrew and held him back, because he would not for breaking of his penance,

take any prey for his mealtide that should pass the price of sixpence. It happed him then as he walked prowling for his gear about, he came where a man had in few days before cast off two old, lean, and lame horses, so sick, that no flesh was there almost left on them, and the one, when the wolf came by, could scant stand upon his legs, and the other already dead, and his skin ripped off and carried away. And as he looked upon them, suddenly he was first about to feed upon them, and whet his teeth on their bones. But as he looked aside, he spied a fair cow in a close walking with her young calf by her side. And as soon as he saw them, his conscience began to grudge him against both these two horses. And then he sighed, and said unto himself: "Alas! wicked wretch that I am, I had almost broken my penance ere I was ware. For yonder dead borse, because I never saw no dead horse sold in the market, and I should even die therefor, by the way that my sinful soul shall to, I cannot devise what price I should set upon him, but in my conscience I set him far above sixpence, and therefore, I dare not meddle with him. Now, then, is yonder quick horse of likelihood worth a great deal of money: for horses be dear in this country, specially such soft ambiers; for I see by his face he troteth not, nor can scant shift a foot. And therefore, I may not meddle with him, for he very far passeth my sixpence. But kine this country here hath enough, but money have they very little; and therefore, considering the plenty of the kine, and the scarcity of the money, as for yonder peevish cow seemeth unto me in my conscience worth not past a groat, an she be worth so much. Now, then, as for her calf, is not so much as she by half. And therefore, while the cow is in my conscience worth but fourpence, my conscience cannot serve me for sin of my soul to praise her calf above twopence, and so pass they not sixpence between them both. And therefore, them twain may I well eat at this one meal, and break not my penance at all." And therefore, so he did, without any scruple of conscience.

If such beasts could speak now, as Mother Maud said

they could then, some of them would, I ween, tell a tale almost as wise as this. Wherein save for the minishing of old Mother Maud's tale, else would a shorter process have served: but yet as peevish as the parable is, in this it serveth for our purpose, that the night's fear of a conscience somewhat scrupulous, though it be painful and troublous to him that hath it, like as this poor ass had here, is less harm yet, than a conscience over large, or such as for his own fantasy the man list to frame himself, now drawing it narrow, now stretching it in breadth,

A cheverel con-
science.

after the manner of a cheverel point, to serve on every side for his own commodity, as did here the wily wolf. But such folk are out of tribulation, and comfort need they none, and therefore are they out of our matter. But those that are in the night's fear of their own scrupulous conscience, let them be well ware, as I said, that the devil, for weariness of the one, draw them not into the other; and while he would flee from Scylla, drive him into Charybdis. He must do as doth a ship

A good simili-
tude.

that should come into an haven, in the mouth whereof lie secret rocks under the water on both sides. If he by mishap entered in among them that are on the one side, and cannot tell how to get out: he must get a substantial, cunning pilot that so can conduct him from the rocks on that side, that yet he bring him not into those that are on the other side, but can guide him in the midway.

Let them, I say therefore, that are in the troublous fear of their own scrupulous conscience, submit the rule of their conscience to the counsel of some other good man, which, after the variety and the nature of the scruples, may temper his advice. Yea, although a man be very well learned himself, yet let him in this case learn the custom used among physicians. For be one of them never so cunning, yet in his own disease and sickness he never useth to trust all

An example of
physicians.

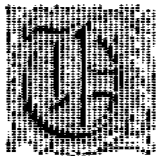
to himself, but sendeth for such of his fellows as he knoweth meet, and putteth himself in their hands for many considerations, whereof they assign the causes, and one of the causes is fear, whereof upon

some tokens he may conceive in his own passion a great deal more than needeth; and then were it good for his health, that for the time he knew no such thing at all. I knew once in this town one of the most cunning men in that faculty, and the best expert, and therewith the most famous too, and he that the greatest cures did upon other men, and yet when he was himself once very sore sick, I heard his fellows that then looked unto him, of all which every one would in their own disease, have used his help before any other man, wish yet that for the time of his own sickness, being so sore as it was, he had known no physic at all, he took so great heed unto every suspicious token, and feared so far the worst, that his fear did him sometime much more harm, than the sickness gave him cause.

And therefore, as I say, whoso hath such a trouble of his scrupulous conscience, let him for a while forbear the judgment of himself, and follow the counsel of some other, whom he knoweth for well learned and virtuous, and specially in the place of confession (for there is God specially present with his grace, assisting his holy sacrament), and let him not doubt to acquiet his mind, and follow that he there is bidden, and think for a while less of the fear of God's justice, and be more merry in the remembrance of his mercy, and persevere in prayer for grace, and abide and dwell faithfully in the sure hope of his help. And then shall he find without any doubt, that the pavice of God's truth shall, as the prophet saith, so compass him about, that he shall not need to dread this night's fear of scrupulosity, but shall have afterward his conscience stablished in good quiet and rest.

CHAPTER XV.

Another kind of the night's fear, another daughter of Pusillanimity, that is, to wit, the horrible temptation, by which some folk are tempted to kill and destroy themselves.



VINCENT.—VERILY, good uncle, you have in my mind, well declared these kinds of the night's fear.

ANTONY.—Surely, cousin, but yet are there many more than I can either remember, or find: howbeit, one yet cometh to my mind now, of which I before nothing thought, and which is yet, in mine opinion, of all other fears the most horrible: that is, to wit, cousin, where the devil tempteth a man to kill and destroy himself.

VINCENT.—Undoubtedly this kind of tribulation is marvellous and strange, and the temptation is of such a sort, that some men have opinion, that such as fall once in that fantasy, can never after full cast it off.

ANTONY.—Yes, yes, cousin, many a hundred, or else God forbid! But the thing that maketh men so say, is because that of those which finally do destroy themselves, there is much speech and much wondering, as it is well worthy: but many a good man, and many a good woman, hath sometime, yea divers years each after other, continually been tempted thereto, and yet have by grace and good counsel, well and virtuously withstanden it, and been in conclusion clearly delivered of it, and their tribulation nothing known abroad, and therefore nothing

talked of. But surely, cousin, an horrible sore trouble it is to any man or woman that the devil tempteth therewith. Many have I heard of, and with some have I talked myself, that have been sore encumbered with that temptation, and marked have I not a little the manner of them.

VINCENT.—I require you, good uncle, shew me somewhat of such things as you perceive therein. For first, where you call this kind of temptation the daughter of Pusillanimity, and thereby so near of kin to the night's fear: methinketh, on the other side, that it is rather a thing that cometh of a great courage and boldness, when they dare their own hands put themselves to death, from which we see almost every man shrink and flee, and that many such, as we know by good proof and plain experience for men of great heart and of an exceeding hardy courage.

ANTONY.—I said, cousin Vincent, that of pusillanimity causeth this temptation, and very truth it is that indeed it so doth. But yet I meant it not, that of only faint heart and fear it cometh and groweth alway. For the devil tempteth sundry folks by sundry ways. But the cause wherefore I spake of none other kind of that temptation, than of only that which is the daughter that the devil begetteth upon Pusillanimity, was for that, that those other kinds of that temptation fall not under the nature of tribulation and fear, and therefore fall they far out of our matter here, and are such temptations as only need counsel, and not comfort or consolation, for that the persons therewith tempted be with that kind of temptation not troubled in their mind, but verily well content, both in the tempting and following. For some have there been, cousin, such, that they have been tempted thereto by mean of a foolish pride, and some by the mean of anger, without any dread at all, and very glad to go thereto: to this I say not nay. But whereas you ween, that none fall thereto by fear, but that they have all a strong mighty stomach: that shall you well see the contrary, and that peradventure in those of whom you would ween the stomach most strong, and their heart and courage most hardy.

The most horrible fear and secret temptation.

What pride and anger worketh sometime.

VINCENT.—Yet is it marvel, uncle, to me, that it should be as you say it is, that this temptation is unto them that do it for pride or for anger no tribulation, nor that they should need, in so great a distress and peril both of body and soul to be lost, no manner of good ghostly comfort at all.

ANTONY.—Let us therefore, consin, consider a sample or two, for thereby shall we the better perceive it. There was here in Buda, in king Ladislaus' days, a good, poor, ^{The carpenter's} bonest man's wife: this woman was so fiendish, ^{wife.} that the devil perceiving her nature, put her in the mind that she should anger her husband so sore, that she might give him occasion to kill her, and then he should be hanged for her.

VINCENT.—This was a strange temptation indeed. What the devil should she be the better then?

ANTONY.—Nothing, but that it eased her shrewd stomach before, to think that her husband should be hanged after. And peradventure if you look about the world and consider it well, you shall find more such stomachs than a few. Have you never heard no furious body plainly say, that to see some such man have a mischief, he would with good will be content to lie as long in hell as God liveth in heaven?

VINCENT.—Forsooth, and some such have I heard of.

ANTONY.—This mind of his was not much less mad than hers, but rather haply the more mad of the twain: for the woman peradventure did not cast so far peril therein. But to tell you now to what good pass her charitable purpose came: as her husband (the man was a carpenter) stood hewing with his chip-axe upon a piece of timber, she began after her old guise so to revile him, that the man waxed wrath at last, and bade her get in or he would lay the helve of his axe about her back, and said also, that it were little sin even with that axe-head to chop off that unhappy head of hers that carried such an ungracious tongue therein. At that word the devil took his time, and whetted her tongue against her teeth, and when it was well sharpened, she sware unto him in very fierce anger: "By the mass, whoreson husband, I would

thou wouldst: here lieth my head, lo! (and therewith down she laid her head upon the same timber log) if thou smite it not off, I beshrew thy whoreson heart." With that, likewise, as the devil stood at her elbow, so stood (as I heard say) his good angel at his, and gave him ghostly courage, and bade him be bold and do it. And so the good man up with his chip-axe, and at a chop chopped off her head indeed. There were standing other folk by, which had a good sport to hear her chide, but little they looked for this chance, till it was done ere they could let it. They said they heard her tongue babble in her head, and call whoreson, whoreson, twice after the head was from the body. At the leastwise afterward unto the king thus they reported all, except only one, and that was a woman, and she said that she heard it not.

VINCENT.—Forsooth, this was a wonderful work. What became, uncle, of the man?

ANTONY.—The king gave him his pardon.

VINCENT.—Verily he might in conscience do no less.

ANTONY.—But then was it farther almost at another point, that there should have been a statute made, that in such case there should never after pardon be granted, but the truth being able to be proved, no husband should need any pardon, but should have leave by the law to follow the sample of the carpenter, and do the same.

VINCENT.—How happed it, uncle, that the good law was left unmade?

ANTONY.—How happed it? As it happeth, cousin, that many more be left unmade as well as it, and within a little as good as it too, both here, and in other countries, and sometime some worse made in their stead.

But (as they say) the let of that law was the ^{Note.} queen's grace, God forgive her soul! it was the greatest thing, I ween, good lady, that she had to answer for when she died. For surely, save for that one thing, she was a full blessed woman. But letting now that law pass, this temptation in procuring her own death was unto this carpenter's wife no tribulation at all, as far as ever men could perceive: for it liked her well to think thereon, and she even longed therefor. And therefore, if she had before

told you or me her mind, and that she would so fain bring it so to pass, we could have had no occasion to comfort her as one that were in tribulation: but marry, counsel her (as I told you before) we well might, to refrain and amend that malicious devilish mind of hers.

VINCENT.—Verily that is truth; but such as are well willing to do any purpose that is so shameful, will never tell their mind to nobody for very shame.

ANTONY.—Some will not indeed, and yet are there some yet whom their heart serveth them to make of their counsel therein. Some of my folk here can Another strange case. tell you, that no longer than even yesterday, one that came out of Vienna shewed us among other talking, that a rich widow (but I forgot to ask him where it happed) having all her life an high proud mind and a fell, as those two virtues are wont alway to keep company together, was at debate with another neighbour of hers in the town, and on a time she made of her counsel a poor neighbour of hers, whom she thought for money she might induce to follow her mind. With him secretly she brake, and offered him ten ducats for his labour, to do so much for her as in a morning early to come to her house, and with an axe unknown privily to strike off her head. And when he had so done, then convey the bloody axe into the house of him with whom she was at debate, in some such manner wise as it might be thought that he had murdered her of malice, and then she thought she should be taken for a martyr. And yet had she further devised, that another sum of money should after be sent to Rome, and that there should be means made to the Pope, that she might in all haste be canonized. This poor man promised, but intended not to perform it. Howbeit, when he deferred it, she provided the axe herself, and he appointed with her the morning when he should come and do it. But then set he such other folk, as he would should know her frantic phantasy, in such place appointed as they might well hear her and him talk together. And after that he had talked with her thereof what he would, so much as he thought was enough, he

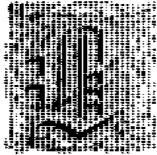
made her lie down, and took up the axe in his one hand, and with the tother hand he felt the edge, and found a fault that it was not sharp, and that, therefore, he would in no wise do it, till that he had ground it sharper; he could not else (he said) for pity, it would put her to so much pain: and so full sore against her will for that time she kept her head still. But because she would not suffer any more to deceive her so and fode her forth with delays, ere it was very long after she hanged herself with her own hands.

VINCENT.—Forsooth, here was a tragical story, whereof I never heard the like.

ANTONY.—Forsooth, the party that told it me, sware that he knew it for a truth. And himself is, I promise you, such as I reckon for right honest, and of substantial truth. Now, here she letted not, as shameful a mind as she had, to make one of her counsel yet: and as I remember, another too, whom she trusted with the money that should procure her canonization. And here, I wot well, that her temptation came not of fear, but of high malice and pride. But then was she so glad in the pleasant device thereof, that (as I shewed you) she took it for no tribulation. And therefore, comforting of her could have no place: but if men should any thing give her toward her help, it must have been (as I told you) good counsel. And therefore, as I said, this kind of temptation to a man's own destruction, which requireth counsel and is out of tribulation, was out of our matter, that is to treat of comfort in tribulation.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of him that were moved to kill himself by illusion of the devil, which he reckoned for a revelation.



Lest you might reject both these samples, weening they were but feigned tales, I shall put you but in remembrance of one, which I reckon yourself have read in the Collations of Cassianus.* And if you have not, there may you soon find it: for myself have half forgotten the thing, it is so long since I read it. But this much I remember, that he telleth there of one that was many days a very holy man in his living, and among the other virtuous monks and ankers that lived there in wilderness was marvellously much esteemed, saving that some were not all out of fear of him, lest his revelations, whereof he told many by himself, would prove illusions of the devil: and so proved it after indeed. For the man was by the devil's subtle suggestions brought into such an high spiritual pride, that in conclusion the devil brought him to that horrible point, that he made him to kill himself, and as far as my mind giveth me now without new sight of the book, he brought him to it by this persuasion, that he made him believe, that it was God's will he should so do, and that thereby should he go straight to heaven. And then if it were by that persuasion, with which he took very great comfort in his own mind himself, then was it (as I said) out of our case here, and needed not comfort, but counsel against giving credence to the devil's persuasion.

* Collat. 2, cap. 5.

But marry, if he made him first perceive, how he had been deluded, and then tempted him to his own death by shame and despair, then was it within our matter, lo. For then was his temptation fallen down from pride to pusillanimity, and was waxen that kind of the night's fear that I spake of, wherein a good part of the counsel that were to be given him, should have need to stand in good comforting; for then was he brought into right sure tribulation.

But as I was about to tell you, strength of heart and courage is there none therein, not only for that very strength, as it hath the name of virtue in a reasonable creature, can never be without prudence; but also for that, as I said, even in them that seem men of most hardiness, it shall well appear to them that well weigh the matter, that the mind, whereby they be led to destroy themselves, groweth out of pusillanimity and very foolish fear. Take for example, Cato Uticensis, who ^{Cato Ut.} in Africa killed himself after the great victory ^{consis.} that Julius Cæsar had. St. Austin well declareth in his work *De Civitate Dei*,* that there was no strength nor magnanimity therein, but plain pusillanimity and impotency of stomach, whereby he was forced to the destruction of himself, because his heart was too feeble to bear the beholding of another man's glory, or the suffering of other calamities, that he feared should fall on himself. So that (as St. Austin well proveth) that humble deed is no act of strength, but an act of the mind either drawn from the consideration of itself with some devilish phantasy, wherein the man hath need to be called home with good counsel, or else oppressed by faint heart and fear, wherein a good part of the counsel must stand in lifting up his courage with good consolation and comfort.

And therefore, if we found any such religious person, as was that father which Cassian writeth of, that were of such austere and apparently ghostly living, that he were with such, as well knew him, reputed for a man of singular virtue, and that it were perceived, that he had many strange visions appearing unto him: if it should

* Lib. i. cap. 22 et 23.

now be perceived after that, that the man went about secretly to destroy himself, who so should hap to come to the knowledge thereof, and intended to do his devoir in the let: first must he find the means to search and find out, whether the man be in his manner and in his countenance, lightsome, glad, and joyful, or dumpish, heavy, and sad: whether he go thereabout, as one that were full of the glad hope of heaven, or as one that had his breast farced full of tediousness and weariness of the world. If he were founden of the first fashion, it were a token that the devil hath by his fantastical apparitions puffed him up in such a peevish pride, that he hath finally persuaded him by some illusion shewed him for the proof, that God's pleasure is that he shall for his sake with his own hands kill himself.

VINCENT.—What if a man so found it, uncle? What counsel should a man give him then?

ANTONY.—That were somewhat out of our purpose, cousin: sith, as I told you before, the man were not then in sorrow and tribulation, whereof our matter speaketh, but in a perilous merry mortal temptation. So that if we should beside our own matter that we have in hand, enter into that too, we might hap to make a longer work between both, than we could well finish this day. Howbeit, to be short, it is soon seen, that therein the sum and effect of the counsel must in maner rest in giving him warning of the devil's sleights, and that must be done under such sweet, pleasant maner, as the man should not abhor to hear it. For while it could lightly be none other, but that the man were rocked and sung asleep by the devil's craft, and thereby his mind occupied as it were in a delectable dream, he should never have good audience of him, that would rudely and boisterously shog him and wake him, and so shake him out thereof. Therefore, must you fair and easily touch him, and with some pleasant speech awake him so, that he wax not wayward, as children do that are waked ere they list to rise. But when a man hath first begun with his praise (for if he be proud, ye shall much better please him with a commendation than with a Dirige), then after favour

won therewithal, a man may little and little insinuate the doubt of such revelations, not at the first as it were for any doubt of his, but of some other that men in some other places talk of. And peradventure it shall not miscontent himself, to shew great perils that may fall therein in another man's case (rather than his own) and shall begin to preach upon it.

Or if you were a man that had not so very a scrupulous conscience of an harmless lie devised to do good withal, which kind St. Anstin, though he take alway for sin, yet he taketh it but for venial, and St. Hierome* (as by divers places in his books appeareth) taketh not fully for so much: then may you feign some secret friend of yours to be in such case, and that yourself somewhat fear his peril, and have made of charity this voyage for his sake to ask this good father's counsel. And in that communication may you bring in these words of St. John: *Nolite omni spiritui credere, sed probate spiritus si ex Deo sunt*,—Give not credence unto every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they be of God:† and these words of St. Paul: *Angelus Sathanae transfiguratur se in angelum lucis*,—The angel of Sathan transfigureth himself into the angel of light.‡ You shall take occasion the better, if they hap to come in on his own side, but yet not lack occasion neither, if those texts (for lack of his offer) come in upon your own; occasion, I say, shall you not lack to inquire, by what sure and undeceivable tokens a man may discern the true revelations from the false illusions, whereof a man shall find many both here and there in divers other authors, and whole together diverse goodly treatises of that good godly doctor, M. John Gerson, entitled, *De Probatione Spirituum*. As, if the party be natural wise, or any thing seem fantastical; or whether the party be poor-spirited, or proud, which will somewhat appear by his delight in his own praise: or if of wiliness, or of another pride for to be praised of hummility, he refuse to hear thereof yet: any little fault found in himself, or diffidence declared, and mistrust of his own revelations, and doubtful tokens told, whereof

* Ad Consent. de Mendac.

† 1 Joan. iv.

‡ 2 Cor. xi.

himself should fear lest they be the devil's illusions: such things (as M. Gerson saith) will make him to spit out somewhat of his spiteful spirit, if the devil lie in his breast.

Or if the devil be yet so subtle, that he keep himself close in his warm den, and blow out never a hot word, yet is it to be considered, what end his revelations draw to, whether to any spiritual profit to himself or other folk, or only to vain marvels and wonders.

Tokens of false illusions.

Also, whether they withdraw him from such other good, virtuous business, as by the common rules of Christendorn, or any rules of his profession, he was wont to use, or was bound to be occupied in. Or whether he

Such illusions have some heretics.

fall into any singularity of opinions against the Scripture of God, or against the common faith of Christ's Catholic Church. Many other tokens are there in that work of M. Gerson spoken of, to consider by, whether the person neither having revelations of God, nor illusions from the devil, do either for winning of money, or worldly favour, feign his revelations himself to delude the people withal.

But now for our purpose, if among any of the marks, by which the true revelations may be known from the false illusions, that man himself bring forth for one mark the doing or teaching of any thing against the Scripture of God, or the common faith of the church; then have you an entry made you, by which when you list you may enter into the special matter, wherein he can never well sit from you. Or else may you yet, if you list, feign that your secret friend, for whose sake you come to him for counsel, is brought into that mind by a certain apparition shewed unto him (as himself saith) by an angel; as you fear, by the devil; that he can be by you none otherwise persuaded as yet, but that the pleasure of God is, that he shall go kill himself: and that if he so do, then shall he be thereby so specially participant of Christ's passion, that he shall forthwith be carried up with angels into heaven. For which he is so joyful, that he firmly purposeth upon it, no less glad to do it, than another man would be glad to void it. And therefore may you desire his good

counsel, to instruct you with some good substantial advice, wherewith you may turn him from his error, that he be not (under hope of God's true revelation) in body and soul destroyed by the devil's false illusion. If he will in this thing study and labour to instruct you, the things that himself shall find out of his own invention, though they be less effectual, shall peradventure more work with himself toward his own amendment, sith he shall of likelihood better like them, than shall double so substantial things told by another man. If he be loth to think upon that side, and therefore shrink from the matter; then is there none other way, but adventure after the plain fashion to fall into the matter and shew what you hear, and to give him counsel and exhortation to the contrary; but if you list to say, that thus and thus hath the matter been reasoned already between your friend and you, and therein may you rehearse such things, as should prove that the vision which moveth him is no true revelation, but a very false illusion.

VINCENT.—Verily, uncle, I well allow this, that a man should as well in this thing, as every other wherein he longeth to do another man good, seek such a pleasant way as the party should be likely to like, or at the leastwise to take well in worth his communication: and not so to enter in thereunto, as he, whom he would help, should abhor him and be loth to hear him, and therefore take no profit by him. But now, uncle, if it come by the one way or the other, to the point that hear me he will, or shall; what be the reasons effectual with which I should by counsel convert him?

ANTONY.—All those, by which you may make him perceive that himself is deceived, and that his visions be no Godly revelations, but very devilish illusions. And those reasons must you gather of the man, of the matter, and of the law of God, or of some one of these.

1. Of the man: if you can peradventure shew him, that in such a point or such, he is waxen worse since such revelations have haunted him than he was before, as in those that are deluded, whose be well acquainted with them shall well mark and perceive. For they wax

more proud, more wayward, more envious, suspicious, credulous tokens of illusions. misjudging, and depraving other men, with the delight of their own praise, and such other spiritual vices of the soul.

2. Of the matter may you gather, if it have happed his revelations before to prove false, or that they be things rather strange than profitable. For that is a good mark between God's miracles and the devil's wonders. For Christ and his saints God's miracles. The devil's wonders. have their miracles always tending to fruit and profit: the devil, and his witches, and necromancers, all their wonderful works draw to no fruitful end, but to a fruitless ostentation and show, as it were a juggler that would, for a show before the people, play masteries at a feast.

3. Of the law of God you must draw your reasons, in shewing by the Scripture that the thing which he weeneth God by his angel biddeth, God hath his own mouth forbidden.* And that is, you wot well, in the case that we speak of, so easy to find, that I need not to rehearse it unto you, sith there is plain among the Ten Commandments forbidden the unlawful killing of any man: and therefore of himself, as St. Austin saith, and all the Church teacheth, except himself be no man.†

VINCENT.—This is very true, good uncle, nor I will not dispute upon any glosing of that prohibition. But sith we find not the contrary, but that God may dispense with that commandment himself, and both license and command also, if himself list, any man to go kill either another man or himself either: this man that is now by such a marvellous vision induced to believe that God so biddeth him, and therefore thinketh himself in that case of that prohibition discharged, and charged with the contrary commandment; with what reason may we make him perceive that his vision is but an illusion, and not a true revelation?

ANTONY.—Nay, cousin Vincent, you shall not need in this case to require those reasons of me: but taking the Scripture of God for a ground in this matter, you know

* Deut. 7.

† August. de Civitat. Dei, lib. i. cap. 26.

very well yourself, you shall go somewhat a shorter way to work, if you ask this question of him, that sith God hath forbidden the thing once himself, though he may dispense therewith if he will, yet sith the devil may feign himself God, and with a marvellous vision delude one, and make as though God did it, and sith the devil also is more likely to speak against God's commandment than God against his own; you shall have good cause, I say, to demand of the man himself, whereby he knoweth that his vision is God's true revelation, and not the devil's false delusion.

VINCENT.—Indeed, uncle, I think, that would be an hard question for him. May a man have, uncle, in such a thing even a very sure knowledge in his own mind?

ANTONY.—Yea, cousin, God may cast into the mind of a man, I suppose, such an inward light and understanding that he cannot fail but be sure thereof. And yet he that is deluded by the devil may think himself as sure, and yet be deceived indeed. And such a difference is there in a manner between them, as The similitude of dreaming and waking. is between the sight of a thing while we be waking and look thereon, and the sight with which we see a thing in our sleep, while we dream thereof.

VINCENT.—This is a pretty similitude, uncle, in this thing; and then is it easy for the monk that we speak of, to declare how he knoweth his vision for a true revelation and not a false delusion, if there be so great difference between them.

ANTONY.—Not so easy, cousin, yet, as you ween it were. For how can you now prove unto me that you be awake?

VINCENT.—Marry lo: do I not now wag my hand, shake my head, and stamp with my feet here in the floor?

ANTONY.—Have you never dreamed ere this, that you have done the same?

VINCENT.—Yes, that have I, and more too than that. For I have ere this in my sleep dreamed that I doubted whether I were awake or asleep, and have in good faith thought that I did thereupon even the same things that

I do now indeed, and thereby determined that I was not asleep. And yet have I dreamed in good faith farther, that I have been afterward at dinner, and there making merry with company, have told the same dream at the table and laughed well thereat, that (while I was asleep) I had by such means of moving the parts of my body, and considering thereof, so verily though myself waking.

ANTONY.—And will you not now as soon, trow you, when you wake and rise, laugh as well at yourself, when you see that you lie now in your warm bed asleep again and dream all this time, while you ween so verily that you be waking and talking of these matters with me?

VINCENT.—God's Lord, uncle, you go now merrily to work with me indeed, when you look and speak so sadly, and would make me ween I were asleep.

ANTONY.—It may be that you be so, for any thing that you can say or do, whereby you may with any reason that you can make drive me to confess, that yourself be sure of the contrary: sith you can do nor say nothing now, whereby you be sure to be waking, but that you have ere this, or hereafter may, think yourself so surely to do the selfsame things indeed, while you be all the while asleep, and nothing do but lie dreaming.

VINCENT.—Well, well, uncle, though I have ere this thought myself awake, while I was indeed asleep: yet for all this I know well enough that I am awake now, and so do you too, though I cannot find the words by which I may with reason enforce you to confess it, but that alway you may drive me off by the sample of my dream.

ANTONY.—This is, cousin, as me seemeth very true. And likewise seemeth me the manner and difference between some kinds of true revelations, and some kind of false illusions, as it standeth between the things that are done waking, and the things that in our dreams seem to be done while we be sleeping: that is, to wit, that he which hath that kind of revelation from God is as sure of the truth, as we be of our own deed while we be waking. And he that is illuded by the devil, is

Mark well this comparison of waking and dreaming, and apply the same as well to true Catholic doctrine, and to false opinions and heresies.

in such wise deceived, and worse too, than be they by their dream, and yet reckoneth himself as sure for the time as the other, saving that the one falsely weeneth and the other truly knoweth. But I say not, cousin, that this kind of sure knowledge cometh in every kind of revelation. For there are many kinds, whereof were too long to talk now: but I say that God doth, or may do, to man in some thing certainly send some such.

VINCENT.—Yet then may this religious man, of whom we speak, when I shew him the Scripture against his revelation (and therefore call it an illusion), bid me with reason go care for myself. For he knoweth well and surely himself, that his revelation is good and true, and not any false illusion, sith for all the general commandment of God in the Scripture, God may dispense where he will, and when he will, and may command him to do the contrary, as he commanded Abraham to kill his own son,* and as Sampson had by inspiration of God commandment to kill himself with pulling down the house on his own head at the feast of the Philistines.† Now, if I would do then, as you bade me right now, go tell him that such apparitions were illusions, and that sith God's word is in the Scripture against him plain for the prohibition, he must prove me the truth of his revelation, whereby I may know that it is not a false illusion; then shall he ask me again whereby that I can prove myself to be awake and talk with him, and not to be asleep and dream so, sith in my dream I may as surely ween so, as I know that I do so. And thus shall he drive me to the same bay, to which I would bring him.

ANTONY.—This is well said, cousin, but yet could he not scape you so. For the dispensation of God's common precept (which dispensation he must say that he hath by his private revelation) is a thing of such sort as sheweth itself nought and false. For it never hath had any sample like since the world began till now, that ever man hath read or heard of among faithful people commended First in Abraham, as touching the death of his son, God intended it not, but only tempted the towardness of the

* Gen. xxii.

† Judic. xvi.

father's obedience. In Sampson all men make not the matter very sure whether he be saved or not, but yet therein some matter and cause appeareth. For the Philistines being enemies to God, and using Sampson for their mocking-stock in scorn of God,* it is well likely that God gave him the mind to bestow his own life upon the revenging of the displeasure that those blasphemous Philistines did unto God. And that appeareth mostly clear by this, that though his strength failed him when he wanted his hair, yet had he not, as it seemeth, that strength evermore at hand while he had his hair, but at such times as it pleased God to give it him. Which thing appeareth by these words that the Scripture in some place of that matter saith: *Irruit virtus Domini in Sampsonem*—the power or might of God rushed into Sampson.† And so therefore, while this thing that he did in the pulling down of the house was done by the special gift of strength then at that point given him by God; it well declareth, that the strength of God, and therewith the spirit of God, entered into him therefor.

St. Austin also rehearseth, that certain holy, virtuous virgins, in time of persecution, being by infidels—God's enemies—pursued upon to be deflowered by force,‡ ran into a water and drowned themselves, rather than they would be bereaved of their virginity. And albeit that he thinketh, that it is not lawful for any other maid to follow their sample, but rather suffer other to do her any manner violence by force, and commit sin of his own upon her against her will, than wilfully, and thereby sinfully, herself become an homicide of herself; yet he thinketh, that in them it happed by the special instinct of the Spirit of God, that (for causes seen unto himself) would rather that they should avoid it with their own temporal death than abide the defiling and violation of their chastity. But now this good man neither hath any of God's enemies to be by his own death revenged on: nor any woman that violently pursueth him by force to bereave him of his virginity: nor never find we, that God

* August. de Civitat. Dei, lib. i. cap. 21.

† Judic. xv.

‡ August. de Civitat. Dei, lib. i. cap. 26.

proved any man's obedient mind by the commandment of his own slaughter of himself. Therefore is his case both plain against God's open precepts, and the dispensation strange and without sample, no cause appearing, nor well imaginable; but if he would think that God could no longer live without him, nor take him to him in such wise as he doth other men, but command him to come by a forbidden way, by which without other cause we never heard that ever he had any man else before.

Now where you think, that if you should after this bid him tell you by what way he knoweth that his intent riseth upon a true revelation, and not upon a false illusion, he would bid you then again tell him by what means you know, that you be talking with him, well waking, and not dream it sleeping: you may tell him again that men thus talk together as you do, and in such manner of wise as they may prove and perceive that they so do by the moving of themselves, and with putting the question thereof unto themselves for their pleasure. And the marking and considering thereof is in waking a daily common thing that every man doth, or may do when he will. And when they do it, they do it but of pleasure. But in sleep it happeth very seld that men dream that they so do, nor in their dream never put they question but for doubt. And therefore it is more reason that sith his revelation is such also that happeth so seld, and after happeth that men dream of such, than have such in deed; therefore it is more reason (you may tell him) that he shew you in such a rare thing, and a thing more like a dream, whereby he knoweth that himself is not asleep, than you in such a common thing among folk that are waking, and so seldom happening in a dream, should need to shew him whereby you know that you be not asleep. Besides this himself, to whom you should shew it, seeth and perceiveth the thing that he would bid you prove, but the thing that he would make you believe (the truth of his revelation which you bid him prove) you see not, he wotteth well himself. And therefore ere you believe it against the Scripture, it were well consonant unto reason that he should shew you whereby he knoweth it for a true

waking revelation, and not for a false dreaming delusion.

VINCENT.—Then shall he peradventure say to me again, that whether I believe him, or not, maketh him no matter: the thing toucheth himself, and not me. And himself is in himself as sure, that it is a true revelation, as that he can tell that he dreameth not but talketh with me waking.

ANTONY.—Without doubt, cousin, if he abide at that point, and can be by no reason brought to do so much as doubt, and can by no means be shogged out of his dead sleep, but will needs take his dream for a very truth, and

Walkers in their sleep. as some by night rise and walk about their chamber in their sleep, will so rise and hang himself: I can then no other ways see, but either bind him fast in his bed, or else essay whether that might hap to help him with which the common tale goeth, that a carver's wife in such a frantic phantasy help her husband. To whom when he told he would upon a Good Friday

The carver that would be crucified. needs have killed himself for Christ's sake, as Christ was killed for him, she would not in vain plead against his mind, but well and wisely put him in remembrance, that if he would die for Christ as Christ died for him, it were then convenient for him to die even after the same fashion. And that might not be by his own hands, but by the hand of some other: for Christ, pardie, killed not himself. And because her husband should need to make no more of counsel (for that would he not in no wise) she offered him, that for God's sake she would secretly herself crucify him on a great cross, that he had made to nail a new carved crucifix upon. Whereof when he was very glad, yet she bethought her, that Christ was bounden to a pillar and beaten first, and after crowned with thorns. Whereupon when she had (by his own assent) bound him fast to a post, she left not beating, with holy exhortation to suffer so much and so long, that ere ever she left work and unbond him, praying him nevertheless that she might put on his head, and drive it well down, a crown of thorns that she had writen for him and brought him: he said, he thought this was enough for that year; he would pray God to for-

bear him of the remnant, till Good Friday come again. But when it came again the next year, then was his lust past: he longed to follow Christ no farther.

VINCENT.—Indeed, uncle, if this help him not, then will nothing help him, I trow.

ANTONY.—And yet, cousin, peradventure the devil might make him toward such a purpose first gladly suffer other pain, yea and minish his feeling too therein, that he may thereby the less fear his death: and yet are there peradventure sometime such things, and many more, to be essayed. For as the devil may hap to make him suffer, so may he hap to miss, namely, if his friends fall to prayer for him against his temptation: for that can himself never do, while he taketh it for none. But for conclusion, if the man be surely proved so inflexibly set upon the purpose to destroy himself as commanded thereto by God, that no good counsel that men can give him, nor any other thing that man may do to him, can refrain him, but that he would surely shortly kill himself: then, except only good prayer made by his friends for him, I can find no farther shift, but either have him ever in sight, or bind him fast in his bed. And so must he needs of reason be content to be ordered. For though himself take his phantasy for a true revelation, yet sith he cannot make us perceive it for such, likewise as he thinketh himself by his secret commandment bounden to follow it, so must he needs agree, that sith it is against the plain open prohibition of God, we be by the plain open precept bound to keep him from it.

VINCENT.—In this point, uncle, I can go no farther. But now if he were on the other side perceived to mind his destruction, and to go thereabout without heaviness of heart, thought and dulness, what way were there to be used with him then?

ANTONY.—Then were his temptation, as I told you before, properly pertaining to our matter. For then were he in a sore tribulation, and a very perilous: for then were it a token, that the devil had either by bringing him into some great sin, brought him into despair, or peradventure by his revela-

Prayer the extreme remedy for this temptation.

A sore and perilous temptation.

great sin, brought him into despair, or peradventure by his revela-

tions founden false and reprov'd, or by some secret sin of his deprehended and divulged, cast him both in despair of heaven through fear, and in a weariness of this life for shame, sith he seeth his estimation lost among other folk, of whose praise he was wont to be proud. And therefore, cousin, in such case as this is, the man is to be fair handled and sweetly, and with dulce and tender loving words to be put in good courage, and comforted in all that men godly may.

*Good counsel
and comfort in
this case.*

And here must they put him in mind, that if he despair not, but pull up his courage and trust in God's great mercy, he shall have in conclusion great cause to be glad of this fall. For before he stood in greater peril than he was ware of, while he took himself for better than he was, and God, for favour that he bare him, hath suffered him to fall deep into the devil's danger, to make him thereby know what he was while he took himself for so sure. And therefore as he suffered him then to fall for a remedy against over-bold pride, so will God now (if the man meeken himself, not with unfruitful despair, but with fruitful penance) so set him up again upon his feet, and so strengthen him with his grace, that for this one fall that the devil has given him, he shall give the devil an hundred.

And here must he be put in remembrance of Mary Magdalen, of the prophet David, and specially of St. Peter, whose high bold courage took a fowl fall, and yet because he despaired not of God's mercy, but wept and called upon it, how highly God took him into his favour again, in his Holy Scripture is well testified, and well through Christendom known. And now shall it be charitably done, if some good virtuous folk, such as himself esteemeth, and hath afore longed to stand in estimation with, do resort sometime unto him, not only to give him counsel, but also to ask advice and counsel of him in some cases of their own conscience, to let him thereby perceive, that they no less esteem him now, but rather more than they did before, sith they think him now by this fall better expert of the devil's craft, and thereby not only better instructed himself, but also better able to give

good advice and counsel to others. This thing will, in my mind, well amend and lift up his courage from the peril of that desperate shame.

VINCENT.—Methinketh, uncle, that this were a perilous thing. For it may peradventure make him set the less by his fall, and thereby cast him into his first pride, or into his other sin again, the falling whereinto drove him into this despair.

ANTONY.—I do not mean, cousin, that every fool shall at adventure fall in hand with him; for so, lo, might it hap to do harm indeed. But, couisiu, if a cunning physician have a man in hand, he can well discern, when, Such a wise physician is much worth. and how long, some certain medicine is necessary, which at another time ministered, or at that time overlong continued, might put the patient in peril. For if he have his patient in an ague, to the cure whereof he needeth his medicines (in their working) cold: yet if he hap, ere that fever be full cured, to fall into some such other disease, as except it were holpen with hot medicines were likely to kill the body before the fever could be cured: he would for awhile have his most care to the cure of that thing wherein were most present peril, and when that were once out of jeopardy, do the more exact diligence after, about the farther cure of the fever. And likewise, if the ship were in peril to fall into Scylla, the fear of falling into Charybdis on the other side shall never let any wise master thereof to draw him from Scylla toward Charybdis the wise ship-master. first of all, in all that ever he may. But when he hath him once so far away from Scylla that he seeth himself safe out of that danger, then will he begin to take good heed to keep him well from the other. And in likewise when this man is falling down to despair and to the final destruction of himself, a good, wise, spiritual leech will first look unto that, and by good comfort lift up his courage: and when he seeth that peril well past, care for the cure of his other faults after. Howbeit, even in the giving of his comfort, he may find ways enough in such wise to temper his words, that the man may take occasion of good courage, and yet far from

occasion giving of new recidivation into his former sin: sith the great part of his counsel shall be to courage him to amendment, and that is, pardie, far from falling to sin again.

VINCENT.—I think, uncle, that folk fall into this ungracious mind through the devil's temptation by many more means than one.

ANTONY.—That is, cousin, very true. For the devil taketh his occasions as he seeth them fall meet for him. Some he stirreth to it through weariness of themself after some great loss, some for fear of bodily harm, and some, as I said, for fear of worldly shame. One wist I myself,

Note this example. which had been long reputed for an honest man, which was fallen in such a phantasy, that he was well near worn away therewith. But what he was tempted to do, that would he tell no man, but he told unto me that he was sore cumbered, and that it alway ran in his mind that folk's phantasies were fallen from him, and that they esteemed not his wit as they were wont to do, but ever his mind gave him that the people began to take him for a fool. And folk, of truth, did nothing so at all, but reputed him both for wise and honest.

Two other examples. Two other knew I that were marvellously afraid that they should kill themself, and could tell me no cause wherefore they so feared it, but only that their own mind so gave them. Neither loss had they any had, nor no such thing toward them, nor none occasion of any worldly shame: the one in body very well liking and lusty, and wondrous weary were they both twain of that mind, and alway they thought that do it they would not for nothing, but nevertheless they ever feared they should. And wherefore they so both feared, neither of them both could tell; and the one, lest he should do it, desired his friends to bind him.

VINCENT.—This is, uncle, a marvellous strange manner.

ANTONY.—Forsooth, cousin, I suppose that many of them are in this case. The devil, as I said before, seeketh his occasions. For as St. Peter saith: *Adversarius vester diabolus quasi leo quærens quem*

devoret:*—Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour. He marketh therefore well the state and the condition that every man standeth in, not only concerning their outward things, as lands, possessions, goods, authority, fame, favour, or hatred of the world, but also men's complexions within them, as health or sickness, good humour or bad, by which they be light-hearted or lumpish, strong-hearted or faint and feeble of spirit, bold, hardy, or timorous, and fearful of courage. And after as these things minister him matter of temptation, so useth he himself in the manner of his temptation.

Now likewise as in such folk that are full of young, warm, lusty blood and other humours, exciting the flesh to filthy, voluptuous living, the devil useth to make these things his instruments in tempting them and in provoking them thereunto: and when he findeth some folk full of hot blood and choler, he maketh those humours his instruments to set their hearts on fire in wrath and very fierce furious anger: so when he findeth some folk which through some dull melancholious humours are naturally disposed to fear, he casteth sometime such a fearful imagination in their mind, that without help of God they can never cast it out of their hearts.

Some, at the sudden falling of some horrible thought into their mind, have not only had a great abomination thereat (which abomination they well and virtuously had thereat), but the devil using their melancholious humour (and thereby their natural inclination to fear) for his instrument, hath caused them to conceive therewith such a deep dread beside, that they ween themself with that abominable thought, to be fallen into such an outrageous sin, that they be ready to fall into despair of grace, weening that God hath given them over for ever: whereas that thought (were it never so horrible and never so abominable) is yet unto them that never like it, but even still abhor it, and strive still there against, matter of conflict and merit, and not any sin at all.

Some have, with holding a knife in their hands, sud-

* 1 Pet. v.

denly thought upon the killing of himself, and forthwith in devising what an horrible thing it were, if they should mishap so to do, have fallen into a fear that they should do so indeed, and have with often thinking thereon imprinted that fear so sore in their imagination, that some of them have not after cast it off without great difficulty, and some could never in their life be rid thereof, but have after in conclusion miserably done it indeed. But likewise as where the devil useth the blood of a man's own body toward his purpose in provoking him to lechery, the man must, and doth, with grace and wisdom, resist it: so must that man do, whose melancholious humours the devil abuseth toward the casting of such a desperate dread into his heart.

VINCENT.—I pray you, uncle, what advice were to be given him in such case?

ANTONY.—Surely methinketh his help standeth in two things,—counsel and prayer. First, as concerning counsel, likewise as it may be that he hath two things that hold him in his temptation; that is, to wit, some evil humours of his own body, and the cursed devil that abuseth them to his pernicious purpose: so must he need against them twain the counsel of two manner of folk: that is, to wit, physicians for the body and physicians for the soul. The bodily physician shall consider what abundance the man hath of these evil humours that the devil maketh his instruments of, in moving the man toward that fearful affection, and as well by diet convenient, and medicines meet therefor, to resist them, as by purgations to disburden the body of them. Nor let no man think strange that I would advise a man to take counsel of a physician for the body in such a spiritual passion. For sith the soul and the body be so knit and joined together, that they both make between them one person; the distemperance of either other engendereth sometime the distemperance of both twain.

And therefore, like as I would advise every man in every sickness of the body, to be shriven and seek of a good spiritual physician the sure health of his soul,

which shall not only serve against peril that may peradventure farther grow by that sickness than in the beginning men would ween were likely: but the comfort thereof and God's favour increasing therewith, shall also do the body good (for which cause the blessed apostle exhorteth men,* that they should in their bodily sickness induce the priests, and saith, that it should do them good both in body and soul), so would I sometime advise some men in some sickness of the soul, beside their spiritual leech, take also some counsel of the physician for the body. Some that are wretchedly disposed, and yet long to be more vicious than they be, go to physicians and poticaries, and inquire what things may serve to make them more lusty to their foul fleshly delight: and were it then any folly upon the other side, if he that feeleth himself against his will much moved unto such uncleanness, should inquire of the physician what things, without minishing of his health, were meet for the minishing of such foul fleshly motion? Of spiritual counsel, the first is to be shriven, that by reason of his other sins the devil have not the more power upon him.

VINCENT.—I have heard some say, uncle, that when such folk have been at shrift, their temptation hath been more brim upon them than it was before.

ANTONY.—That think I very well: but that is a special token that shrift is wholesome for them, while the devil is with that most wroth. You find in some places of the Gospel, that the devil the person (whom he possessed) did most trouble when he saw that Christ would cast him out.† We must else let the devil do what he will, if we fear his anger: for with every good deed will he wax angry. Then is it in his shrift to be shewed him, that he not only feareth more than he needeth, but also feareth where he needeth not, and over that, is sorry of that thing whereof (but if he will willingly turn his good into his harm) he hath more cause to be glad. First, if he have cause to fear, yet feareth he more than he needeth; for there is no devil so diligent to destroy him as God is to preserve him, nor no devil so near

Ghostly and
bodily physic
help each other.

The mean how
to resist this
temptation.

The humours of
the body pro-
voke us to sin.

The virtue of
confession.

* Jacob. v.

† Marc. ix.

him to do him harm as God is to do him good: nor all the devils in hell so strong to invade and assault him as God is to defend him, if he distrust him not, but faithfully put his trust in him. He feareth also when he needeth not. For where he dreadeth that he were out of God's favour, because such horrible thoughts fall into his mind, he must understand that sith they fall into his mind against his will, they be therefore not imputed unto him. He is finally sad of that he may be glad: for sith he taketh such thoughts displeasantly, and striveth and fighteth against them, he hath thereby a good token that he is in God's favour, and that God assisteth him and helpeth him, and may make himself sure, that so will God never cease to do, but if himself fail and fall from him first. And over that, this conflict that he hath against his temptation, shall (if he will not fall where he needeth not) be an occasion of his merit, and a right great reward in heaven: and the pain that he taketh therein shall for so much (as M. Gerson well sheweth) stand him in stead of his purgatory.

This fight standeth in three things chiefly.

The manner of the fight against this temptation must stand in three things: that is, to wit, in resisting and in contemning, and in the invocation of help.

Resist must a man for his own part by reason, considering what a folly it were to fall where he needeth not, while he is not driven to it in avoiding any other pain, or in the hope of winning any manner of pleasure: but contrariwise should by that pain lose everlasting bliss and fall into everlasting pain: and if it were in avoiding of other great pain, yet could he void none so great thereby, as he should thereby fall into. He must also consider, that a great part of this temptation is in effect but the fear of his own phantasy, the dread that he hath lest he shall once be driven to it. Which thing he may be sure, that, but if himself will of his own folly, all the devils in hell can never drive him to, but his own foolish *a similitude of the bridge.* imagination may. For like as some man going over an high bridge, waxeth so afraid through his own phantasy, that he falleth down indeed, which were

else able enough to pass over without any danger; and as some man shall upon such a bridge, if folk call upon him, 'You fall, you fall,' fall with the phantasy that he taketh thereof, which bridge, if folk looked merrily upon him, and said, there is no danger therein, he would pass over well enough, and would not let to run thereon, if it were but a foot from the ground: thus fareth it in this temptation. The devil findeth the man of his own fond phantasy afraid, and then crieth he in the ear of his heart, "Thou fallest, thou fallest," and maketh the fond man afraid, that he should at every foot fall indeed. And the devil so wearie him with that continual fear (if he give the ear of his heart unto him), that at the last he draweth his miud from the due remembrance of God, and then driveth him to that deadly mischief indeed.

Therefore, like as against the vice of the flesh, the victory standeth not all whole in the fight, but sometime also in the flight (saving that it *Flight is good some time.* is indeed the part of a wise warrior's fight, to *A wise warrior.* flee away from his enemies' trains), so must a man in this temptation too, not only resist it alway with reasoning there against, but sometime set it clean at right nought, and cast it off when it cometh, and not once regard it, nor so much as vouchsafe to think thereon. Some folk have been clearly rid of such pestilent phantasies with very full contempt thereof, making a cross upon their hearts and bidding the devil avaunt, and sometime laugh him to scorn too, and then turn their mind unto some other matter. And when the devil hath seen that they have set so little by him, after many essays, made in such times as he thought most meet, he hath given that temptation quite over, both for that the proud spirit cannot endure to be mocked, and also lest with much tempting the man to the same, whereunto he could not in conclusion bring him, he should much thereby increase his merit.

The final fight is by invocation of God both by praying for himself, and desiring others also to pray for him, both poor folk for his alms, and other good folk for their

charity, specially good priests in the holy sacred service of the Mass, and not only them, but also his own good angel, and other holy saints, such as his devotion standeth specially unto. And if he be learned, let him use the Litany with the holy suffrages that follow, which is a prayer in the church of marvellous old antiquity, not made first, as some ween it were, by that holy man St. Gregory, which opinion rose of that, that in the time of a great pestilence in Rome, he caused the whole city to go in solemn procession therewith; but it was in use in the church many years before St. Gregory's days, as well appeareth by the books of other holy doctors and saints that were dead hundreds of years before St. Gregory was born. And holy St. Bernard giveth counsel, that every man should make suit to angels and saints, to pray for him to God in the things that he would have sped at his holy hand.* If any man will stick at that, and say it needs not, because God can hear us himself, and will also say that it is perilous so to do, because they say we be not so counselled by no Scripture; I will not dispute the matter here. He that will not do it, I let him not to leave it undone. But yet for mine own part, I will as well trust to the counsel of St. Bernard, and reckon him for as good and as well learned in the Holy Scripture, as any man that I hear say the contrary: and better dare I jeopard my soul with the soul of St. Bernard than with his that findeth that fault in his doctrine.

Unto God himself every man counselleth to have recourse above all, and in this temptation to have special remembrance of Christ's passion, and pray him for the honour of his death, the ground of man's salvation, to keep the person thus tempted from that damnable death. Special verses may there be drawn out of the Psalter against the devil's wicked temptations, as for example: *Exurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici ejus, et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie ejus*:†—And many others, which are

* Bernard, Serm. de tripl. genere bonorum, et Serm. in Festo Omnium Sanctorum, et aliàs sæpe.
† Psal. lxxii.

in such horrible temptation to God most pleasant, and to the devil very terrible: but none more terrible, nor none more odious to the devil, than the words with which our Saviour drove him away himself:—*Vade Sathana*,*—nor no prayer more acceptable unto God, nor more effectual for the matter, than those words which our Saviour hath taught himself,—*Ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos à malo*.† And I doubt not, by God's grace, but he that in such a temptation will use good counsel and prayer, and keep himself in good virtuous business and good virtuous company, and abide in the faithful hope of God's help, shall have the truth of God (as the prophet saith in the verse afore rehearsed) so compass him about with a pavice, that he shall not need to dread this night's fear of this wicked temptation. And thus will I finish this piece of the night's fear, and glad am I that we be past it, and come once unto the day to those other words of the prophet:—*A sagitta volante in die*: for methinketh I have made it a long night.

* Matth. iv.

† Matth. vi.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of the arrow flying in the day, which is, the spirit of pride in prosperity.



INCENT.—FORSOOTH, uncle, so have you: but we have not slept in it, but been very well occupied. But now I fear, except you make here a pause till you have dined, you shall keep yourself from your dinner over long.

ANTONY.—Nay, my cousin, for both brake I my fast even as you came in, and also you shall find this night and this day like a winter day and a winter night. For as the winter hath short days, and long nights, so shall you find that I made not this fearful night so long, but I shall make you this light courageous day as short. And so shall the matter require well of itself indeed. For in these words of the prophet: *Scuto circumdabit te veritas ejus, a sagitta volante in die*,—The truth of God shall compass thee round about with a pavice, from the arrow flying in the day,*—I understand the arrow of pride, with which the devil tempteth a man, not in the night, that is to wit, in tribulation and adversity (for that time is too discomfortable and too fearful for pride), but in the day, that is, to wit, in prosperity; for that time is lightsome, lusty, and full of courage.

But surely this worldly prosperity, wherein ^{What worldly prosperity is.} a man so rejoiceth, and whereof the devil maketh him so proud, is but even a very short winter day.

* Psal. xc.

For we begin many full poor and cold, and up we fly like an arrow that were shot up into the air: and yet when we be suddenly shot up into the highest, ere we be well warm there, down we come unto the cold ground again, and then even there stick we still. And yet for the short while that we be upward and aloft: Lord! how lusty and how proud we be, buzzing above busily like as a bumble hee flieth about in summer, never ^{The bumble hee.} ware that he shall die in winter: and so fare many of us, God help us! For in the short winter day of worldly wealth and prosperity, this flying arrow of the devil, this high spirit of pride, shot out of the devil's bow and piercing through our heart, beareth us up in our affection aloft into the clouds, where we ween we sit upon the rainbow and overlook all the world under us, accounting in the regard of our own glory such other poor souls, as were peradventure wont to be our fellows, for silly poor pigmies and ants. But this arrow of pride, fly it never so high into the clouds, and be the man that it carrieth up so high, never so joyful thereof: yet let him remember, that be this arrow never so light, it hath yet an heavy iron head. And therefore fly it never so high, down must it needs come at last, and on the ^{Pride will ever} ground must it light, and falleth sometime not ^{have a fall.} in a very cleanly place: and then the pride turneth into rebuke and shame, so that there is then all the glory gone.

Of this arrow speaketh the wise man in the fifth chapter of Sapience, where he saith in the person of them that in pride and vanity passed the time of this present life, and after that so spent, passed hence into hell: *Quid profuit nobis superbia? aut divitiarum jactantia quid contulit nobis? Transierunt omnia illa tanquam umbra, etc. aut tanquam sagitta emissa in locum destinatum: divisus aer continuo in se reclusus est, ut ignoretur transitus illius: sic et nos nati continuo desivimus esse, et virtutis quidem nullum signum valuimus ostendere: in malignitate autem nostra consumpti sumus. Talia dixerunt in inferno hi qui peccaverunt*.*—What hath pride profited us, or what good hath

* Sapien. v.

the glory of our riches done us? Passed are all these things like a shadow, &c., or like an arrow shot out into the place appointed: the air that was divided, is by-and-by returned into the place, and in such wise closed up again, that the way is not perceived in which the arrow went: and in likewise we, as soon as we were born, be by-and-by vanished away, and have left no token of any good virtue behind us, but are consumed, and wasted, and come to nought in our own malignity. They, lo, that have lived here in sin, such words have they spoken when they lay in hell.

Here shall you, good cousin, consider, that whereas the Scripture here speaketh of the arrow shot into his place appointed or intended; in the shooting of this arrow of pride there be divers purposings and appointments. For

Note the shot of pride.

the proud man hath no certain purpose or appointment at any mark, butt, or prick upon the earth whereat be determineth to shoot, and there to stick and tarry: but ever he shooteth as children do that love to shoot up a cope high, to see how high their arrow can fly up. But now doth the devil intend and appoint a certain prick surely set in a place, into which he purposeth (fly this arrow never so high, and the proud heart therein) to have them light both at last: and that place is even in the very pit of hell. There is set the devil's

The mark or butt of pride.

well-acquainted prick, and his very just mark, down upon which prick with his pricking shaft of pride he hath by himself a plain proof and experience that (but if it be stopped by some grace of God in the way) the soul that flieth up therewith, can never fail to fall. For when himself was in heaven, and began to fly up a cope high with that lusty flight of pride, saying: *Ascendam super astra, et ponam solium meum ad latera aquilonis, et similis ero Altissimo,**—I will fly up above the stars, and set my throne on the side of the north, and will be like unto the Highest: long ere he could fly half so high, as in his heart he said he would, he was turned from a glorious bright angel into a black deformed devil; and from flying any farther upward, down was he thrown

* *Isaiah xiv.*

into the deep dark dungeon of hell. Now may it peradventure, cousin, seem, that sith this kind of temptation of pride is no tribulation or pain; Lucifer's fall. all this that we speak of this arrow of pride flying forth in the day of prosperity were beside our matter.

VINCENT.—Verily, mine uncle, and so seemed it unto me, and somewhat was I minded so to say to you too: saving that, were it properly pertaining to the present matter, or somewhat digressing therefrom, good matter methought it was, and such as I had no lust to let.

ANTONY.—But now must you, cousin, consider, that though prosperity be contrary to tribulation, yet unto many a good man the devil's temptation unto pride in prosperity, is a greater tribulation, and more need hath of good counsel and good comfort both, than he, that never felt it, would ween. And that is the thing, cousin, that maketh me speak thereof, as of a thing proper to this matter. For, cousin, as it is a thing right hard to touch pitch,* and never file the fingers, to put flax unto fire, and yet keep it from burning, to keep a serpent in thy bosom, and yet be safe from stinging, to put young men with young women, without danger of foul fleshly desires: so is it hard for any person, either man or woman, wealth is dangerous. in great worldly wealth and much prosperity, so to withstand the temptations of the devil, and the occasions given by the world, that they should keep themselves from the deadly desire of ambitious glory. Whereupon there followeth, if a man fall thereto, an whole flood of all unhappy mischief, arrogant manner, high sullen solemn port, overlooking the poor in word and countenance, displeasent and disdainous behaviour, ravine, extortion, oppression, hatred, and cruelty.

How many a good man, cousin, coming into great authority, casting in his mind the peril of such occasions of pride as the devil taketh of prosperity to make his instruments of, wherewith to move men to such high point of presumption, as engendereth so many great inconveniences, and feeling the devil therewith offering to them—

* *Eccles. xiii.*

self suggestions thereunto, they be sore troubled therewith, and somewhat so fraid thereof, that even in the day of prosperity they fall into the night's fear of pusillanimity, and doubt overmuch lest they should misuse themselves, leave the things undone, wherein they might use themself well, and mistrusting the aid of God in holding them upright in their temptations, give place to the devil in contrary temptations. Whereby for faint heart, they leave off good business wherein they were well occupied, and under pretext (as it seemeth to themself) of humble heart and meekness, and serving God in contemplation and silence, they seek their own ease and earthly rest unaware, wherewith (if it so be) God is not well content. Howbeit, if it so be that a man feel himself such indeed, as by the experience that he hath of himself, he perceiveth that in wealth and authority he doth his own soul harm, and cannot do therein the good that to his part appertaineth, but seeth the things that he should set his hand to sustain decay through his default, and fall to ruin under him, and that to the amendment thereof

Good counsel
in this case. he leaveth his own duty undone; then would I in anywise advise him, to leave off that thing, be it spiritual benefice that he have, parsonage or bishopric, or temporal room and authority, and rather give it over quite, and draw himself aside and serve God, than take the worldly worship and commodity for himself, with the incommodity of them whom his duty were to profit. But on the other side, if he see not the contrary, but that he may do his duty conveniently well, and feareth nothing, but only that the temptation of ambition and pride may turn peradventure his good purpose and make him decline unto sin, I say not nay, but that well done it is, to stand in moderate fear alway, whereof the Scripture saith: *Beatus homo, qui semper est pavidus*—Blessed is the man that is alway fearful:* and St. Paul saith: *Qui stat, videat ne cadat*—He that standeth, let him look that he fall not: † yet is over much fear perilous, and draweth toward the mistrust of God's gracious help, which immo-

* Proverb. xxviii.

† 1 Cor. x.

derate fear and faint heart Holy Scripture forbiddeth, saying: *Noli esse pusillanimis*—Be not feeble hearted or timorous.*

Let such a man therefore temper his fear with good hope, and think, that sith God hath set him in that place (if he think that God hath set him therein), God will assist him with his grace to the well using thereof: howbeit, if he came thereto by simony or by some such evil mean, then were that thing one good reason, wherefore he should the rather leave it off. But else, let him continue in his good business, and against the devil's provocation unto evil, bless himself, and call unto God, and pray; and look what thing the devil tempteth, to lean the more toward the contrary. Let him be piteous and comfortable to those that are in distress and affliction: I mean not, let every malefactor pass forth unpunished, and freely run out and rob at covers, but in his heart be sorry to see, that of necessity for fear of decaying the commonweal, men are driven to put malefactors to pain. And yet where he findeth good tokens and likelihood of amendment, there, in all that he may, help that mercy be had: there shall never lack desperately disposed wretches enough beside, upon whom, for ensample, justice may proceed. Let him think in his own heart every poor beggar his fellow.

VINCENT.—That will be very hard, uncle, for an honourable man to do, when he beholdeth himself richly apparelled, and the beggar rigged in his rags.

ANTONY.—If here were, cousin, two men that were beggars both, and afterward a great rich man would take the one unto him, and tell him, that for a little time he would have him in his house, and thereupon arrayed him in silk, and gave him a great bag by his side filled even full of gold, but giving him this knot therewith, that within a little while, out he should in his old rags again, and bear never a penny with him. If this beggar met his fellow now, while his gay gown were on, might he not for all his gay gear take him for his fellow still? And were he not a very fool, if for a

A proper example of two beggars.

* Eccles. viii.

wealth of a few weeks he would ween himself far his better?

VINCENT.—Yes, by my troth, uncle, if the difference of their state were none other.

ANTONY.—Surely, cousin, methinketh that in this world between the richest and the most poor the difference is scant so much. For let the highest look on the most base, and consider how poor they came both into this world, and then consider farther therewith how rich soever he be now, he shall yet within a while, peradventure less than one week, walk out again as poor as that beggar shall; and then, by my troth, methinketh this rich man much more than mad, if for the wealth of a little while, haply less than one week, he reckon himself in earnest any better than the beggar's fellow. And less than this can no man think that hath any natural wit, and will use it.

But now a Christian man, cousin, that hath the light of faith, cannot fail to think in this thing much farther. For he will think not only upon his bare coming lither, and his bare going hence again, but also upon the dreadful judgment of God, and upon the fearful pains of hell, and the inestimable joys of heaven. And in the considering of these things he will call to remembrance, that peradventure when this beggar and he be both departed hence, the beggar may be suddenly set up in such royalty, that well were himself that ever he was born, if he might be made his fellow. And he that well bethinketh him, cousin, upon these things, I verily think that the arrow of pride flying forth in the day of worldly wealth shall never so wound his heart that ever it shall bear him up one foot.

But now to the intent he may think on such things the better, let him use often to resort to confession, and there open his heart, and by the mouth of some good virtuous ghostly father have such things oft renewed in his remembrance. Let him also choose himself some secret solitary place in his own house, as far from noise and company as he conveniently can, and thither let him sometime secretly resort alone,

No man better
than a beggar's
fellow.

Special good
counsel against
pride, &c.

imagining himself as one going out of the world, even straight unto the giving up of his reckoning unto God of his sinful living. Then let him there before an altar, or some pitiful image of Christ's bitter passion (the beholding whereof may put him in remembrance of the thing, and move him to devout compassion), kneel down or fall prostrate, as at the feet of Almighty God, verily believing him to be there invisibly present, as without any doubt he is. There let him open his heart to God, and confess his faults such as he can call to mind, and pray God of forgiveness. Let him also call to remembrance the benefits that God hath given him either in general among other men, or privately to himself, and give him humble hearty thanks therefor. There let him declare unto God the temptations of the devil, the suggestions of the flesh, the occasions of the world, and of his worldly friends, much worse many times in drawing a man from God than are his most mortal enemies. Which thing our Saviour witnesseth himself, where he saith: *Inimici hominis domestici ejus*,—The enemies of a man are they that are his own familiars.* There let him lament and bewail unto God his own frailty, negligence, and sloth in resisting and withstanding of temptations, his readiness and pronity to fall thereunto. There let him beseech God of his gracious aid and help, to strength his infirmity withal, both in keeping him from falling, and when he by his own fault misfortuneth to fall, then with the helping hand of his merciful grace to lift him up and set him on his feet in the state of his grace again, and let this man not doubt but that God heareth him, and granteth him gladly this boon: and so dwelling in the faithful trust of God's help, he shall well use his prosperity, and persevere in his good profitable business, and shall have therein the truth of God so compass him about with a pavice of his heavenly defence, that of the devil's arrow flying in the day of worldly wealth, he shall not need to dread.

VINCENT.—Forsooth, nuncle, I like this good counsel well, and I would ween that such as are in prosperity and

* Matth. x.

take such order therein, may do both to themself, and other folk about, much good.

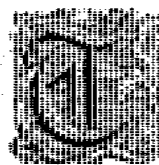
ANTONY.—I beseech our Lord, cousin, put this and better in the mind of every man that needeth it. And now will I touch one word or twain of the third temptation, whereof the prophet speaketh in these words: *A negotio perambulante in tenebris*,—From the business walking in the darkneses: and then will we call for our dinner, leaving the last temptation (that is to wit, *Ab incursu et demonio meridiano*,—From the incursion, and the devil of the mid-day), till afternoon, and then shall we therewith, God willing, make an end of all this matter.

VINCENT.—Our Lord reward you, good uncle, for your good labour with me. But for our Lord's sake take good heed, uncle, that you forbear not your dinner over long.

ANTONY.—Fear not that, cousin, I warrant you, for this piece will I make you but short.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of the devil named Negotium, that is to wit, Business walking about in the darkneses.



THE prophet saith in the said psalm, *Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei celi commorabitur. Scuto circumdabit te veritas ejus, non timebis, &c. A negotio perambulante in tenebris*,—He that dwelleth in the faithful hope of God's help, he shall abide in the protection or safeguard of the God of heaven; and thou that art such one, shall the truth of him so compass about with a pavice, that thou shalt not be afraid of the business walking about in the darkneses. *Negotium* is here, cousin, the name of a devil that is ever full of business, in tempting folk to much evil business. His time of tempting is in the darkneses. For you wot well, that beside the very full night, which is Two darkneses. the deep dark, there are two times of darkneses. The one, ere the morning wax light; the other, when the evening waxeth dark. Two times of like manner darkness are there also in the soul of man: the one, ere the light of grace be well in the heart sprung up; the other, when the light of grace out of the soul beginneth to walk fast away.

In these two darkneses this devil, that is The devil called Business. called Business, walketh about, and such fond folk as will follow him he carrieth about with him, and setteth them a work with many manner bumbling business. He setteth, I say, some to seek the pleasures of the flesh in eating, drinking, and other filthy delight, and some he setteth about the incessant seeking for these

worldly goods: and if such busy folk, whom this devil, called Business (walking about in the darkneses) setteth a work with such business, our Saviour saith in the Gospel, *Qui ambulat in tenebris, nescit quò vadit*,—He that walketh in darkneses witteth not whither he goeth.* And surely in such case are they: for they neither wot which way they go, nor whither. For verily they walk round about, as it were in a round maze; when The mismaze of the world. they ween themself at an end of their business, they be but at the beginning. For is not the going about the serving of the flesh a business that hath no end, but evermore from the end cometh to the beginning again? For go they never so full fed to bed, yet evermore on the morrow as new be they to be fed again as they were the day before. Thus fareth it by the belly; thus fareth it by those parts that are beneath the belly. And as for covetise, it fareth like the fire, the more wood that cometh thereto, the more fervent and the more greedy it is.

But now hath this maze a centre or middle place, into which sometime they be conveyed suddenly when they ween they were not yet far from the brink. The centre or middle place of this maze is hell, and into that place be there busy folk that with this devil of Business walk about this busy maze in the darkneses, suddenly sometime conveyed, nothing ware whither they be going, and even while they ween that they were not far walked from the beginning, and that they had yet a great way to walk about before they should come to the end. But of these fleshly folk walking in this pleasant busy maze, the Scripture declareth the end:—*Ducunt in bonis dies suos, et in puncto ad inferna descendunt*,—They lead their life in pleasure, and at a pop down they descend into hell.† Of the covetous man saith St. Paul: *Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in temptationem et in laqueum diaboli, et desideria multa inutilia et nociva, quæ mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem*,—They that long to be rich do fall into temptation and into the grin of the devil, and

* Johan. xii.

† Joh. xxi.

into many desires unprofitable and harmful, which drown men unto death and into destruction.* So, here is the middle place of this busy maze, the grin of the devil, the place of perdition and destruction that they fall and be caught and drowned in ere they be ware. The covetous rich man also that our Saviour speaketh of in the Gospel, that had so great plenty of corn that his barns would not receive it, but intended to make his barns larger, and said to himself that he would make merry many days, had weened (you wot well) that he had yet a great way yet to walk. But God said unto him, *Stulte, hac nocte tollent a te animam tuam: quæ autem parasti, cujus erunt?*—Fool, this night shall they take thy soul from thee, and then all this good that thou hast gathered, where shall it be?† Here you see that he fell suddenly into the deep centre of this busy maze, so that he was fallen full and whole therein long ere ever he had weened he should have come near thereto.

Now this wot I very well, that those that are walking about in this busy maze take not their business for any tribulation, and yet are many of them forwearied as sore, and as sore panged and pained therein, their pleasures being so short, so little, and so few, and their displeasures and their griefs so great, so continual, and so many, that it maketh me think upon a good worshipful man, which, when he divers times beheld his wife, what pain she took in straight binding up her hair to make her a fair large forehead, and with straight bracing in her body to make her middle small, both twain to her great pain for the pride of a little foolish praise: he said unto her, “Forsooth, madam, if God give you not hell, he shall do you great wrong. For it must needs be your own of very right: for you buy it very dear, and take very great pain therefor.”

They that now lie in hell for their wretched living here, do now perceive their folly in their more pain that they took here for the less pleasure. There confess they now their folly, and cry out, *Lassati sumus in via iniquitatis*,—We have been wearied in the way

* 1 Tim. vi.

† Luc. xii.

How many such labies be there now!

of wickedness.* And yet while they were walking therein, they would not rest themselves, but run on still in their weariness, and put themselves still unto more pain and more, for that little peevish pleasure, short and soon gone, that they took all that labour and pain for, beside the everlasting pain that followed it for their farther advantage after.

a notable saying and a true. So help me God, and none otherwise but as I verily think, that many a man buyeth hell here with so much pain, that he might have heaven with less than the one-half. But yet, as I say, while these fleshly and worldly busy folk are walking about in this round busy maze of the devil that is called Business that walketh about in these two times of darkness, their wits are so by the secret enchantment of the devil bewitched, that they mark not the great long miserable weariness and pain that the devil maketh them take and endure about nought, and therefore they take it for no tribulation: so that they need no comfort. And therefore it is not for their sakes that I speak all this, saving that it may serve them for counsel toward the perceiving of their own foolish misery, through the good help of God's grace beginning to shine upon them again.

But there are very good folk and virtuous that are in the daylight of grace, and yet because the devil tempteth them busily to such fleshly delight, and sith they see plenty of worldly substance fall unto them, and feel the devil in likewise busily tempt them to set their heart thereupon, they be so troubled therewith, and begin to fear thereby, that they be not with God in the light, but with this devil that the prophet calleth *Negotium*, that is to say, Business, walking about in the two times of darkness. Howbeit, as I said before of those good folk and gracious that are in the worldly wealth of great power and authority, and thereby feel the devil's arrow of pride: so say I now here again of these that stand in dread of fleshly foul sin and covetise, sith they be but tempted therewith and follow it not, albeit that they do well to stand ever in moderate fear, lest with waxing over bold,

* Sap. v.

and setting the thing over light, they might peradventure mishap to fall in thereto: yet sore to vex and trouble themselves with the fear of loss of God's favour therefor, is without necessity, and not alway without peril. For, as I said before, it withdraweth the mind of a man far from spiritual consolation of the good hope that he should have in God's help. And as for these temptations, while he that is tempted followeth them not, the fight against them serveth a man for matter of merit and reward in heaven, if he not only flee the deed, the consent and the declaration, but also (in that he conveniently may) flee from all the occasions thereof. And this point is in those fleshly temptations a thing eth to perceive, and meetly plain enough. But in these worldly businesses pertaining unto covetise, thereon is the thing somewhat more dark, and in the perceiving more difficulty, and very great troublous fear doth there oftentimes arise thereof in the hearts of very good folk when the world falleth fast unto them, because of the sore words and terrible threats, that God in Holy Scripture speaketh against those that are rich: as where St. Paul saith: *Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem, et in laqueum diaboli*.—They that will be rich fall into temptation, and into the grin of the devil.* And where our Saviour saith himself: *Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quàm divitem intrare in regnum Dei*.—It is more easy for a camel, or, as some say (for so *camelus* signifieth in the Greek tongue), for a great cable-rope, to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God: † no marvel now though good folk that fear God take occasion of great dread at so dreadful words, when they see worldly goods fall unto them, and some stand in doubt whether it be lawful for them to keep any goods or no. But evermore in all these places of Scriptures, the having of the worldly goods is not the thing that is rebuked and threatened, but the affection the haver unlawfully beareth thereto. For where St. Paul saith, *Qui volunt divites fieri, &c.*—They that will be made rich, &c., he speaketh not of the

Carnal temptations are sooner seen than covetise, envy, &c.

* 1 Tim. vi.

† Luc. xviii.

having, but of the will and desire and affection to have, and the longing for it: for that cannot be lightly without sin. For the thing that folk so sore long for, they will make many shifts to get, and jeopard themselves therefor. And to declare that the having of riches is not forbidden, but the inordinate affection of the mind sore set thereupon, the prophet saith: *Divitiæ si affluent, nolite cor apponere*,—If riches flow unto you, set not your hearts thereupon.* And albeit that our Lord, by the said ensample of the camel, or the cable-ropes, to come through the needle's eye, said that it is not only hard, but also impossible, for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven: yet he declared, that though the rich man cannot get into heaven of himself, yet God, he said, can get him in well enough. For unto man, he said, it was impossible, but not unto God; for unto God, he said, all things are possible. And yet over that, he told of which manner rich men he meant that could not get into the kingdom of heaven, saying: *Filioli, quam difficile est confidentes in pecuniis in regnum Dei introire!*—My babes, how hard is it for them that put their trust and confidence in their money, to enter into the kingdom of God! †

VINCENT.—This is, I suppose, uncle, very true, and else God forbid! For else were the world in a full hard case, if every rich man were in such danger and peril.

ANTONY.—That were it, cousin, indeed; and so, I ween, is it yet. For I fear me that to the multitude, there be very few, but that they long sore to be rich: and of those that long so to be, very few reserved also, but that they set their hearts very sore thereon.

VINCENT.—That is, uncle, I fear me, very true, but yet not the thing that I was about to speak of, but the thing that I would have said was this: that I cannot well perceive (the world being such as it is, and so many poor people therein) how any man may be rich, and keep him rich without any danger of damnation therefor. For all the while that he seeth poor people so many that lack,

* Psal. lxi.

† Marc. x.

while himself hath to give them, and whose necessity (while he hath wherewith) he is bound in such case of duty to relieve, so far forth that holy St. Ambrose saith, that whoso that die for default where we might help them, we kill them ourself:* I cannot see but that every rich man hath great cause to stand in great fear of damnation, nor I cannot perceive, as I say, how he can be delivered of that fear, as long as he keepeth his riches. And therefore though he might keep his riches, if there lacked poor men, and yet stand in God's favour therewith, as Abraham did, and many another holy rich man since; yet in such abundance of poor men as there be now in every country, any man that keepeth any riches, it must needs be that he hath an inordinate affection thereunto, while he giveth it not out unto the poor needy persons, that the duty of charity bindeth and straineth him to. And thus, uncle, in this world at this day, meseemeth your comfort unto good men that are rich and troubled with fear of damnation for the keeping, can very scantily serve.

ANTONY.—Hard it is, cousin, in many manner things, to bid or forbid, affirm or deny, reprove or allow, a matter nakedly proposed and set forth, or precisely to say, this thing is good, or this thing is nought, without consideration of the circumstances. Holy St. Austin telleth of a physician that gave a man a medicine in a certain disease that help him. † The selfsame man, at another time in selfsame disease, took the selfsame medicine himself, and had thereof more harm than good; which thing when he shewed unto the physician, and asked him whereof that harm should hap; "that medicine," quoth he, "did thee no good but harm, because thou tookest it when I gave it thee not." This answer St. Austin very well alloweth, for that though the medicine were one, yet might there be peradventure in the sickness some such difference as the patient perceived not, yea or in the man himself, or in the place, or in the time of the year. Many things might make the lot, for which the physician would not then have given him the selfsame medicine that he gave him before. To peruse every circumstance that might,

* In Luc. lib. viii. cap. 18.

† Ad Marcellinum, Epistola v.

cousin, in this matter be touched, and were to be considered and weighed, would indeed make this part of this devil of Business a very busy piece of work and a long. But I shall a little open the point that you speak of, and shall shew you what I think therein, with as few words as I conveniently can, and then will we go to dinner.

First, cousin, he that is a rich man, and keepeth all his good, he hath, I think, very good cause to be very afraid indeed. And yet I fear me, that such folk fear it

least; for they be very far from the state of The state of them that keep still all. good men sith if they keep still all, then are they very far from charity, and do (you wot well) alms, either little or none at all. But now is our question, cousin, not in what case the rich man standeth that keepeth all, but whether we should suffer men to stand in a perilous dread and fear for the keeping of any great part. For if that by the keeping still of so much as maketh a rich man still, they stand in the state of damnation; then are the curates hounded plainly to tell them so, according to the commandment of God given unto them all in the person of Ezekiel: * *Si dicente me ad impium, morte morieris, non annunciaris ei, &c.*—If when I say to the wicked man, thou shalt die, thou do not shew it to him, nor speak it unto him, that he may be turned from his wicked way and may live, he shall soothly die in his wickedness, and his blood shall I verily require of thy hand.

But, cousin, though God invited men unto the following of himself in wilful poverty, by the leaving of all together at once for his sake, as the thing whereby with being out of the solicitude of worldly business, and far from the desire of earthly commodities, they may the more speedily get and attain the state of spiritual affection, and the hungry desire and longing for celestial things; yet doth he not command every man so to do upon the peril of damnation. For where he saith, † *Qui non renunciarit omnibus quæ possidet non potest esse meus discipulus.*—He that forsaketh not all that ever he hath, cannot be my disciple,

* Ezek. xxxiii.

† Luc. xiv.

he declareth well by other words of his own in the selfsame place a little before, what he meaneth. For there saith he more, *Si quis venit ad me, et non odit patrem suum, et matrem, et uxorem, et filios, et fratres, et sorores, adhuc autem et animum suam, non potest esse meus discipulus.*—He that cometh to me, and hateth not his father, and his mother, and his wife, and his children, and his brethren, and his sisters, yea and his own life too, cannot be my disciple.* Here meaneth our Saviour Christ's true disciple. Christ, that none can be his disciple, but if he love him so far above all his kin, and above his own life too, that for the love of him, rather than to forsake him, he shall forsake them all. And so meaneth he by those other words, that whosoever do not so renounce and forsake all that ever he hath in his own heart and affection, that he will rather lose it all, and let it go every whit, than deadly displease God with the reserving of any one part thereof, he cannot be Christ's disciple; sith Christ teacheth us to love God above all thing. And he loveth not God above all thing, that contrary to God's pleasure keepeth any thing that he hath. That it is to love God above all. For that thing he sheweth himself to set more by than by God, while he is better content to lose God than it. But, as I said, to give away all, or that no man should be rich or have any substance, that find I no commandment of.

There are, as our Saviour saith, in the house of his Father many mansions, † and happy shall he be that shall have the grace to dwell even in the lowest. It seemeth verily by the Gospel, that those, which for God's sake patiently suffer penury, shall not only dwell above those in heaven, that live here in plenty in earth, but also that heaven in some manner of wise more properly belongeth unto them, and is more specially prepared for them, than it is for the rich, by that, that God Heaven prepared specially for the poor. in the Gospel counselleth the rich folk to buy in a manner heaven of them, where he saith unto the rich man, *Facite vobis amicos de Mammona iniquitatis, ut cum defeceritis, recipiant vos in æterna tabernacula.*—Make you

* Luc. xiv.

† Johan. xiv.

friends of the wicked riches, that when you fall here they may receive you into everlasting tabernacles.* But now although this be thus, in respect of the riches and the poverty compared together, yet they being good men both, there may be some other virtue beside, wherein the rich man may so peradventure excel, that he may be in heaven far above the poor man that was here in earth in other virtues far under him, as the proof appeareth clearly in Lazarus and Abraham.†

Nor I say not this, to the intent to comfort rich men in heaping up of riches, for a little comfort is sent enough thereto for them. They be not so proud-hearted and obstinate, but that they would, I ween, to that counsel be with right little exhortation very conformable. But I

Comfort for good rich men. say this, for that those good men, to whom God giveth substance and the mind to dispose it well, and yet not the mind to give it all away at once, but for good causes to keep some substance still, should not despair of God's favours for the not doing of the thing which God hath given them no commandment of, nor drawn by any special calling thereunto.

Of Zaccheus. Zaccheus, lo, that climbed up into the tree for desire that he had to behold our Saviour, at such time as Christ called aloud unto him, and said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for this day must I dwell in thy house,"‡ he was so glad thereof, and so touched inwardly with special grace to the profit of his soul, that whereas all the people murmured much that Christ would call him and be so familiar with him, as of his own offer to come unto his house, considering that

Publicans. they knew him for the chief of the publicans, that were customers or toll-gatherers of the emperor's duties, all which whole company were among the people sore infamed of raven, extortion, and bribery, and then Zaccheus, not only the chief of that fellowship, but also grown greatly rich, whereby the people accounted him in their own opinion, for a man very sinful and nought; he forthwith by the instinct of the Spirit of God, in reproach of all such temerarious bold and blind judg-

* Luc. xvi.

† Ibidem.

‡ Luc. xix.

ment given upon a man, whose inward mind and sudden change they cannot see, shortly proved them all deceived, and that our Lord had at those few words outwardly spoken to him, so touched him, that his grace so wrought in his heart within that whatsoever he was before, he was then unwares unto them all, suddenly waxen good. For he made haste and came down, and gladly received Christ, and said: "Lo, Lord, the one half of my goods here I give unto poor people, and yet over that, if I have in any thing deceived any man, here am I ready to recompense him fourfold as much."

VINCENT.—This was, uncle, a gracious hearing: but yet I marvel me somewhat, wherefore Zaccheus used his words in that manner of order. For methinketh, he should first have spoken of making restitution unto those whom he had beguiled, and then speak of giving his alms after. For restitution is, you wot well, Restitution is duty; and a thing of such necessity, that of duty. in respect of restitution, alms-deed is but voluntary. Therefore it might seem, that to put men in mind of their duty in making restitution first, and doing their alms after, Zaccheus should have said more conveniently, if he had said first, that he would make every man restitution whom he had wronged, and then give half in alms of that that remained after: for only that might he call clearly his own.

ANTONY.—This is true, cousin, where a man hath not enough to suffice for both. But he that hath, is not bound to leave his alms ungiven to the poor man that is at his hand, and peradventure calleth upon him, till he go seek up all his creditors, and all those that he hath wronged, so far peradventure asunder, that leaving the one good deed undone the while, he may before they come together, change that good mind again, and do neither the one nor the other. It is good away, therefore, to be doing some good out of hand, Be ever doing some good out of hand. while we think thereon: grace shall the better stand with us, and increase also to go the farther in the other after. And this I answer, if the man had there done the one out of hand, the giving (I mean) half in alms,

and not so much as speak of restitution, till after; whereas now, though he spake the one in order before the other, and yet all at one time, the thing remained still in his liberty, to put them both in execution after such order as he should then think expedient.

But now, cousin, did the Spirit of God temper the tongue of Zaccheus in the utterance of these words, in such wise, as it may well appear the saying of the wise man to be verified in them, where he saith, *Domini est gubernare linguam*.—To God it belongeth to govern the tongue.* For here when he said he would give half of his whole good unto poor people, and yet beside that, not only recompense any man whom he had wronged, but more than recompense him by three times as much again; he double reprov'd the false suspicion of the people that accounted him for so evil, that they reckoned in their mind all his good gotten in effect with wrong, because he

was grown to substance in that office which was commonly misused extorenciously. But his words declared, that he was rife enough in his reckoning, that if half his goods were given away, yet were he well able to yield every man his duty with the other half, and yet leave himself no beggar neither: for he said not, he would give all away.

Would God, cousin, that every rich Christian man that is reputed right worshipful, yea and (which yet in my mind more is) reckoned for right honest too, would and were able, to do the thing that little Zaccheus the same great publican (were he Jew, or were he Paynim) said! that is to wit, with less than half his goods recompense every man whom he has wronged four times as much; yea, yea, cousin, as much for as much, hardly, and then they that receive it shall be content (I dare promise for them) to let the other thrice as much go, and forgive it, because it was one of the hard points of the old law, whereas Christian men must be full of forgiving, and not use to require and exact their amends to the uttermost.

But now for our purpose here, notwithstanding that he

* Prover. xvi.

promised not, neither to give away all, nor to become a beggar neither, no nor yet to leave of his office neither: which albeit that he had not used before peradventure in every point so pure, as St. John Baptist had taught them the lesson, *Nihil amplius, quàm constitutum est vobis, faciatis*.—Do no more than is appointed unto you; * yet forasmuch as he might both lawfully use his substance that he minded to reserve, and lawfully might use his office too, in receiving the prince's duty according to Christ's express commandment, *Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari*.—Give the emperor those things that are his, †—refusing all extortion and bribery beside, our Lord well allowing his good purpose, and exacting no farther forth of him concerning his worldly behaviour, answered and said, *Hodie salus facta est huic domui, eo quod et ipse filius sit Abrahæ*.—This day is health come to this house, for that he too is the son of Abraham. ‡

But now forget I not, cousin, that in effect thus far you condescend unto me, that a man may be rich, and yet not out of the state of grace, nor out of God's favour. Howbeit you think, that though it may be so at some time, or in some place, yet at this time, and in this place, or any such other like, wherein be so many poor people, upon whom they be (you think) bounden to bestow their good, they can therefore keep no riches with good conscience. Verily, cousin, if that reason would hold, I ween the world was never such anywhere in which any man might have kept any substance without the danger of damnation. As for since Christ's days to the world's end, we have the witness of his own words, that there hath never poor folk shall there never lack. lacked poor men, nor never shall. For he said himself, *Pauperes semper habebitis vobiscum, quibus cum vultis, benefacere potestis*.—Poor men shall you alway have with you, whom, when you will, you may do good unto. § So that, as I tell you, if your rule should hold, then were there, I ween, no place in no time since Christ's days hitherto, nor (as I think) in as long before that neither, nor never shall there hereafter, in which there

* Luc. iii.

† Marc. xii.

‡ Luc. xix.

§ Matth. xxvi.; Marc. xiv.

could any man abide rich without the danger of eternal damnation, even for his riches alone, though he demeaned it never so well. But, cousin, men of substance must there needs be; for else shall you have more beggars, pardie, than there be, and no man left able to relieve another. For this think I in my mind a very sure conclusion, that if all the money that is in this country, were to-morrow next brought together out of every man's hand, and laid all upon one heap, and then divided out unto every man alike, it would be on the morrow after worse than it was the day before. For I suppose when it were all equally thus divided among all, the best should be left little better than a beggar almost is now: and yet he that was a beggar before, all that he shall be the richer for that he should thereby receive, shall not make him much above a beggar still, but many one of the rich men, if their riches stood but in moveable substance, shall be safe enough from riches haply for all their life after.

Men cannot, you wot well, live here in this world, but if that some one man provide a mean of living for some other many. Every man cannot have a ship of his own, nor every man be a merchant without a stock: and these things, you wot well, must needs be had; nor every man cannot have a plough by himself. And who might live by the tailor's craft, if no man were able to put a gown to make? Who by masonry? Or, who could live a carpenter, if no man were able to build neither church, nor house? Who should be makers of any manner of cloth, if there lacked men of substance to set sundry sorts a work? Some man that hath but two ducats in his house, were better forbear them both and leave himself not a farthing, but utterly lose all his own, than that some rich man, by whom he is weekly set a work should of his money lose the one half: for then were himself like to lack work. For surely the rich man's substance is the wellspring of the poor man's living. And therefore here would it fare by the poor man, as it fared by the woman in one of Æsop's fables, which had an hen that laid

There must needs be some rich men.

The rich man's substance is the poor man's living.

The hen that laid golden eggs.

her every day a golden egg; till on a day she thought she would have a great many eggs at once, and therefore she killed her hen, and found but one or twain in her belly, so that for covetise of those few, she lost many.

But now, cousin, to come to your doubt, how it may be that a man may with conscience keep riches with him, when he seeth so many poor men upon whom he may bestow it: verily that might he not with conscience do, if he must bestow it upon as many as he may. And so must of truth every rich man do, if all the poor folk that he seeth be so specially by God's commandment committed unto his charge alone, that because our Saviour saith, *Omni petenti te, da*,—Give every man that asketh thee, therefore should he be bound to give out still to every beggar that will ask him, as long as any penny lasteth in his purse. But verily, cousin, that saying hath (as other places in Scripture have) need of interpretation. For as holy St. Austin saith: Though Christ say, Give every man that asketh thee, he saith not yet, give them all that they will ask thee. But surely all were one, if he meant to bind me by commandment, to give every man without exception somewhat; for so should I leave myself nothing.

Our Saviour in that place of St. Luke, This place of S. Luke truly expounded. speaketh both of the contempt that we should in heart have of these worldly things, and also of the manner that men should use toward their enemies. For there he biddeth us love our enemies, give good words for evil, and not only suffer injuries patiently, both by taking away our goods and harm done unto our bodies, but also be ready to suffer the double and over that, to do them good again, that do us the harm. And among these things, he biddeth us give every man that asketh, meaning, that in the thing that we may conveniently do a man good, we should not refuse it, what manner of man soever he be, though he were our mortal enemy, namely where we see, that but if we help him ourself, the person of the man should stand in peril of perishing. And therefore saith St. Paul, *Si esurierit inimicus tuus, da illi cibum*,—If thine enemy be an hungered give him meat.* But now,

* Rom. xii.

though I be bound to give every manner of man in some manner of his necessity, were he my friend, or my foe, Christian man, or heathen; yet am I not unto all men bound alike, nor unto any man in every case alike. But, as I began to tell you, the differences of the circumstances make great change in the matter.

St. Paul saith, *Qui non providet suis, est infideli deterior*,—He that provideth not for those that are his, is

To these must we first give. worse than an infidel.* Those are ours that are belonging to our charge, either by nature, or law, or any commandment of God. By nature, as our children; by law, as our servants in the household. So that albeit these two sorts be not ours all alike, yet would I think that the least ours of the twain, that is to wit, our

Duty to servants. servants, if they need and lack, we be bounden to look to them, and provide for their need, and see so far forth as we may, that they lack not the things that should serve for their necessity, while they dwell in our service. Meseemeth also, that if they fall sick in our service, so that they cannot do the service that we retain them for; yet may we not in any wise turn them then out of doors, and cast them up comfortless while they be not able to labour and help themselves; for this were a thing against all humanity. And surely, if he were but a wayfaring man that I received into my house as a guest, if he fall sick therein, and his money gone, I

Note. reckon myself bounden to keep him still, and rather to beg about for his relief than cast him out in that case to the peril of his life, what loss soever I should hap to sustain in keeping of him. For when God hath by such chance sent him to me, and there once matched me with him, I reckon myself surely charged with him, till I may without peril of his life be well and conveniently discharged of him.

By God's commandment are in our charge, our parents. For by nature we be in theirs, sith (as St. Paul saith) it is not the children's part to provide for the parents, but the

Duty to children.

parents' to provide for the children:† provide, I mean, conveniently due learning, or good oc-

* Tim. v.

† 2 Cor. xii.

cupations to get their living by, with truth and the favour of God, but not to make provision for them of such manner of living, as to Godward Note well. they should live the worse for; but rather if they see by their manner that too much would make them nought, the father should then give them a great deal the less. But although that nature put not the parents in the charge of the children; yet not only God commaudeth, but the order of nature also compelleth, that the children should both in reverent behaviour honour Duty to parents. their father and mother, and also in their necessity maintain them. And yet as much as God and nature both bindeth us to the sustenance of our own father, his need may be so little, though it be somewhat, and a frem'd man's so great, that both God and nature also would, I should in such unequal need, relieve Note. that urgent necessity of a stranger, yea my foe, and God's enemy too, the very Turk or Saracen, before a little need (and unlikely to do great harm) in my father, and my mother too: for so ought they both train themselves to be well content I should. But now, cousin, out of the case of such extreme needs well perceived and known unto myself, I am not bounden to give every beggar that will ask, nor to believe every faylor that I meet in Discretion in giving alms. the street, that will say himself that he is very sick, nor to reckon all the poor folk committed by God only so to my charge alone, that none other man should give them nothing of his, till I have first given out all mine, nor am not bounden neither to have so evil opinion of all other folk save myself, as to think, that but if I give help the poor folk shall all fail at once; for God hath left in all this quarter no more good folk now, but me. I may think better by my neighbours, and worse by myself than so, and yet come to heaven by God's grace well enough.

VINCENT.—Marry, uncle, but some man will peradventure be right well content in such cases, to think his neighbours very charitable, to the intent that he may think himself at liberty to give nothing at all.

ANTONY.—That is, cousin, very true, so will there some

be content either to think, or make as though they thought. But those are they that are content to give nought, because they be nought. But our question is, cousin, not of them, but of good folk, that by the keeping of worldly goods and keeping thereof may stand with the state of grace. Now think I, cousin, that if a man keep

A damnable state of riches. riches about him for a glory and royalty of the world, in consideration whereof he taketh a great delight, and liketh himself thereof the better, taking the poorer for the lack thereof as one far worse than himself, such a mind is very vain, foolish, proud, and such a man is very naught indeed.

But on the other side, if there be a man

Would God there were many such! such (as would God there were many!) that hath unto riches no love, but having it fall abundantly unto him, taketh to his own part no great pleasure thereof, but as though he had it not, keepeth himself in like abstinence and penance privily, as he would do in case he had it not, and in such things as he doth openly bestow somewhat more liberally upon himself in his house after some manner of the world, lest he should give other folk occasion to marvel and muse and talk of his manner, and misreport him for an hypocrite, therein between God and him doth truly protest and testify, as did the good Queen Hesther,* that he doth it not for any desire thereof in the satisfying of his own pleasure, but would with as good will or better, forbear the possession of riches, saving for the commodity that other men have by its disposing thereof, as percase in keeping of a good household in good Christian order and fashion, and in setting other folk a work with such things as they gain their living the better by his means, this man's having of riches I might (methinketh) in merit match in a manner with another man's forsaking of all, if there were none other circumstances more pleasant unto God farther added unto the forsaking beside, as percase for the more fervent contemplation by reason of the solicitude of all worldly business left off, which was

* Hester. xiv.

the thing that made Mary Magdalene's part the better.* For else would Christ have caused her much more thank, to go about and be busy in helping her sister Martha to dress his dinner, than to take her stool, and sit down at her ease, and do nought.

Now, if he that have this good and riches by him, have not haply fully so perfect mind, but somewhat loveth to keep himself from lack, and not so fully as a pure Christian fashion requireth, determined to abandon his pleasure; well, what will you more? The man is so much the less perfect than I would he were, and haply than himself would wish, if it were as easy to be it, as to wish it. But yet not by

A second and less perfect state in riches.

and bye in the state of damnation, no more than he that forsaking all and entering into religion, is not yet always so clear departed from all worldly affections, as himself would very fain he were and much bewaileth that he is not. Of whom some man that hath in the world willingly forsaken the likelihood of right worshipful rooms, hath afterward had much ado to keep himself from the desire of the office of cellarer or sexton, to bear yet at the leastwise some rule and authority, though it were but among the bells. But God is more merciful to man's imperfection, if the man know it, and knowledge it, and mislike it, and little and little labour to amend it, than to reject and cast off him, that after as his frailty can bear and suffer, hath a general intent and purpose to please him, and to prefer or set by nothing in all this world before him.

And therefore, cousin, to make an end of this piece withal;—*A negotio perambulante in tenebris*,—Of this devil, I mean, that the prophet calleth Business walking in the darkness: if a man have a mind to serve God and please him, and rather lose all the good he hath than wittingly do deadly sin, and would withal murmur or grudge give it every whit away, in case that God should so command him, and intend to take it patiently, if God would take it from him, and glad would be to use it unto God's pleasure, and do his diligence to know and to be taught, what manner

How riches may be kept with salvation.

* Lu. x.

using thereof God would be pleased with; and therein from time to time be glad to follow the counsel of good virtuous men, though he neither give away all at once nor give every man that asketh him neither (let every man fear and think in this world, that all the good that he doth, or can do, is a great deal too little), but yet for all that fear, let him dwell therewith in the faithful hope of God's help. And then shall the truth of God so compass him about (as the prophet saith) with a pavice, that he shall not so need to dread the trains and the temptations of this devil that the prophet calleth Business, walking about in the darkneses, but that he shall for all the having of riches and worldly substance, so avoid his trains and his temptations, that he shall in conclusion by the great and almighty mercy of God, get into heaven well enough. And now was I, cousin, about lo, after this piece thus ended, to bid them bring in our dinner, but now shall I not need, lo; for here they come with it already.

VINCENT.—Forsooth, good uncle, God disposeth and timeth your matter and your dinner both, I trust. For the end of your tale (for which our Lord reward you!) and the beginning here of your good dinner too (from which it were more than pity that you should any longer have tarried) meet even at the close together.

ANTONY.—Well, cousin, now will we say grace, and then for a while will we leave talking, and essay how our dinner shall like us, and how fair we can fall to feeding. Which done, you know my customable guise (for manner I may not call it, because the guise is unmannerly) to bid you not farewell, but steal away from you to sleep. But, you wot well, I am not wont at afternoon to sleep long, but even a little to forget the world. And when I wake, I will again come to you, and then is (God willing) all this long day ours, wherein we shall have time enough, to talk more than shall suffice for the finishing of this one part of our matter, which only now remaineth.

VINCENT.—I pray you, good uncle, keep your customable manner, for manner may you call it well enough. For as it were against good manner, to look that a man

should kneel down for courtesy, when his knee is sore; so is it very good manner, that a man of your age, aggrieved with such sundry sicknesses beside, that suffer you not alway to sleep when you should, let his sleep not slip away, but take it when he may. And I will, uncle, in the meanwhile steal from you too, and speed a little errand, and return to you again.

ANTONY.—Tarry while you will, and when you have dined, go at your pleasure, but I pray you tarry not long.

VINCENT.—You shall not need, uncle, to put me in mind of that; I would as fain have up the remnant of our matter.