

be to us before the face of God, in so shameful cowardous
 wise to forsake him for fear of that pain that
How many such
 cowards be
 there! we never felt, nor never was falling towards
 us?

VINCENT.—By my troth, uncle, I thank you. Me-
 think, that though you never said more in the matter, yet
 have you even with this that you have (of the fear of bodily
 pain in this persecution) spoken here already, marvel-
 lously comforted my heart.

ANTONY.—I am glad, cousin, if your heart have taken
 comfort thereby. But and if you so have, give God the
 thank, and not me, for that work is his, and not mine.
 For neither am I able any good thing to say, but by him,
 nor all the good words in this world, no not the holy
 words of God himself, and spoken also with his own holy
 mouth, can be able to profit the man with the sound
 entering at his ear, but if the spirit of God therewith
 inwardly work in his soul; but that is his goodness ever
 ready to do, except the let be through the untowardness of
 our own froward will.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of Comfort against bodily Pain, and first against Captivity.

AND therefore now being somewhat in com-
 fort and courage before, whereby we may
 the more quietly consider every thing,
 which is somewhat more hard and difficile
 to do, when the heart is before taken up
 and oppressed with the troublous affection
 of heavy sorrowful fear: let us examine the weight and
 substance of these bodily pains, as the sorest part of this
 persecution which you rehearsed before, which were (if I
 remember you right) thralldom, imprisonment, painful and
 shameful death. And first let us, as reason is, begin with
 the thralldom, for that was, I remember, the first.

VINCENT.—I pray you, good uncle, say then somewhat
 thereof. For methinketh, uncle, that captivity
 is a marvellous heavy thing, namely when they Captivity.
 shall, as they most commonly do, carry us far from home,
 into a strange uncouth land.

ANTONY.—I cannot say nay, but that some grief it is,
 cousin, indeed. But yet as unto me not half so much as
 it would be, if they could carry me out into any such
 unknown country, that God could not wit where, nor find
 the mean how to come at me. But in good faith, cousin,
 now, if my transmigration into a strange country should
 be any great grief unto me, the fault should be much in
 myself. For sith I am very sure that whithersoever men
 convey me, God is no more verily here, than he shall be
 there: if I get (as I may, if I will) the grace to set my
 whole heart on him, and long for nothing but him, it can

then make no great matter to my mind, whether they carry me hence or leave me here. And then if I find my mind much offended therewith, that I am not still here in mine own country, I must consider that the cause of my grief is my own wrong imagination, whereby I beguile myself with an untrue persuasion, weening that this were mine own country, whereas of truth it is not so. For as St. Paul saith, *Non habemus hic civitatem manentem, sed futuram inquirimus*.—We have here no city nor dwelling country at all, but we look for one that we shall come to.* And in what country soever we walk in this world, we be but as pilgrims and wayfaring men. And if I should take any country for my own, it must be that country to which I come, and not the country from which I came. That country that shall be to me then for a while so strange, shall yet, ^{which is our own country.} pardie, be no more strange to me, nor longer strange to me neither, than was mine own native country when I came first into it. And therefore if that point of my being far from hence be very grievous to me, and that I find it a great pain, that I am not where I would be: that grief shall great part grow for lack of sure setting and settling my mind in God, where it should be; which fault of mine when I mend, I shall soon ease my grief. Now as for all the other griefs and pains that are in captivity, thralldom, and bondage; I cannot deny but many there are and great. Howbeit they seem yet somewhat (what say I somewhat, I may say a great deal) the more, because we took our former liberty for more or a great deal, than indeed it was. Let us therefore consider the matter thus.

^{that is captivity.} Captivity, bondage, or thralldom, what is it but the violent restraint of a man, being so snbdued under the dominion, rule, and power of another, that he must do what the other list to command him, and may not at his liberty do such things as he list himself. Now when we shall be carried away with a Turk, and be fain to be occupied about such things as he list to set us; here shall we lament the loss of our liberty, and

* Heb. xiii.

think we bear an heavy burden of our servile condition And so to do (I grant well) we shall have many times great occasion. But yet should we, I suppose, set thereby somewhat the less, if we would remember well, what liberty that was that we lost, and take it for no ^{worldly} larger than it was indeed. For we reckon, as ^{liberty.} though we might before do what we would: but therein deceive we onrself.

For what free man is there so free, that can be suffered to do what him list? In many things God hath restrained us by his high commandment, and so many that of those things which else we would do, I ween it be more than the half. Howbeit, because (God forgive us!) we let so little therefor, but do what we list, ^{God's restraint} as though we heard him not, we reckon our ^{leteth little} liberty never the less for that. But then is our liberty much restrained by the laws made by men, for the quiet and politic governance of the people. And these would, I ween, let our liberty but a little neither, were it not for fear of the pains that fall thereupon. Look then whether other men, that have authority over us, command us never no business which we dare not but do, and ^{the slavery of} therefore do it full oft full sore against our wills. ^{the world!} Of which things some service is sometime so painful and so perilous too, that no lord can lightly command his bondman worse, nor seldom doth command him half so sore. Let every free man that reckoneth his liberty to stand in doing what he list, consider well these points, and I ween he shall then find his liberty much less, than he took it for before.

And yet have I left untouched the bondage, that almost every man is in that boasteth himself for free; ^{the bondage of} the bondage, I mean, of sin. Which to be a ^{sin.} very bondage, I shall have our Savionr himself to bear me good record. For he saith: *Omnis qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati*.—Every man that committeth sin, is the thrall, or the bondsman of sin.* And then, if this be thus (as it must needs so be, sith God saith it is so), who is there then that may make so much boast of his

* Johan. viii.

liberty, that he should take it for so sore a thing and so strange, to become through chance of war bond unto a man, while he is already through sin become willingly thrall and bond unto the devil? Let us look well, how many things and of what vile wretched sort the devil driveth us to do daily through the rash braids of our blind affections, which we be for our faultful lack of grace fain to follow, and are too feeble to refrain, and then shall we find in our natural freedom our bond service such, that

That bond service is in natural freedom. never was there any man lord of any so vile a villain, that ever would for very shame command him so shameful service. And let us in

the doing of our service to the man that we be slave unto, remember what we were wont to do about the same time of the day, while we were at our free liberty before, and were well likely, if we were at liberty to do the like again: and we shall peradventure perceive, that it were better for us to do this business than that.

Now shall we have great occasion of comfort, if we consider, that our servitude (though in the count of the world it seem to come by chance of war) cometh yet in very deed unto us, by the provident hand of God, and that for our great good, if we will take it well, both in remission of sins, and also matter of our merit. The greatest grief that is in bondage or captivity is this, as I trow, that we be forced to do such labour as with our good will we would not. But then against that grief Seneca teacheth us a good remedy: *Semper da operam, ne quid invitus facias*,— Endeavour thyself evermore, that thou do nothing against thy will: but the thing that we see we shall needs do, let us use always to put our good will thereto.

VINCENT.—That is, uncle, soon said: but it is hard to do.

Folk are forward unto all goodness. ANTONY.—Our froward mind maketh every good thing hard, and that unto our own more hurt and harm. But in this case, if we will be good Christian men, we shall have great cause gladly to be content for the great comfort that we may take thereby, while we remember that in the patient and glad doing of our service unto the man for God's sake, according to his high

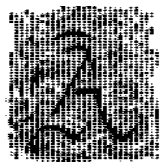
commandment by the mouth of St. Paul,—*Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus*,*—we shall have our thank and our whole reward of God. Finally, if we remember the great humble meekness of our Saviour Christ himself, that he being very Almighty God, *Humiliavit semetipsum, formam servi accipiens*,—Humbled himself, and took the form of a bondman or a slave,† rather than his father should forsake us: we may think ourself very unkind caitives, and very frantic fools too, if rather than to endure this worldly bondage for a while, we would forsake him that hath by his own death delivered us out of everlasting bondage of the devil, and will for our short bondage give us everlasting liberty.

VINCENT.—Well fare you, good uncle, this is very well said. Albeit that bondage is a condition that every man of any courage would be glad to eschew, and very loth to fall in, yet have you well made it open that it is a thing neither so strange, nor so sore, as it before seemed unto me, and specially far from such, as any man that any wit hath, should for fear thereof shrink from the confession of his faith. And now, I pray you, somewhat speak of imprisonment.

* Ephes. vi.

† Philip. ii.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of Imprisonment, and Comfort there against.

ANTONY.—THAT shall I, cousin, with good will. And first, if we would consider, what thing imprisonment is of his own nature, we should not, methink, have so great horror thereof. For of itself it is, pardie, but a restraint of liberty, which letteth a man from going whither he would.

Imprisonment. VINCENT.—Yes, by St. Mary, uncle, methinketh it is much more sorrow than so. For beside the let and restraint of liberty, it hath many more displeasures and very sore griefs knit and adjoined thereunto.

ANTONY.—That is, cousin, very true indeed. And those pains, among many sorer than those, thought I not after to forget. Howbeit, I purposed now, to consider first imprisonment but as imprisonment only, without any other incommodity beside. For a man may be, pardie, imprisoned, and yet not set in the stocks, nor collared fast by the neck, and a man may be let walk at large where he will, and yet a pair of fetters fast riveted on his legs. For in this country, ye wot well, and in Seville and Portingale too, so go there all the slaves. Howbeit, because that for such things men's hearts have such horror thereof, albeit I am not so mad as to go about to prove that bodily pain were no pain; yet sith that because of these manner of pains, we so specially abhor the state and condition of prisoners, we should, methink, well perceive

that a great part of our horror groweth of our own phantasy, if we would call to mind and consider the state and condition of many other folk, in whose state and condition we would wish ourself to stand, taking them for no prisoners at all, that stand yet for all that in much part of the selfsame points that we abhor imprisonment for. Let us therefore consider these things in order.

And first, as I thought to begin, because those other kinds of griefs that come with imprisonment, are but accidents thereunto, and yet neither such kinds of accidents as be either proper thereunto, but that they may (almost all) fall unto a man without it, nor are not such accidents thereunto, as are inseparable therefrom, but that imprisonment may fall to a man, and none of all them therewith: we will, I say, therefore begin with the considering what manner pain or commodity we should reckon imprisonment to be of itself, and of his own nature alone. And then in the course of our communication, you shall, as you list, increase and aggrieve the cause of your horror with the terror of those painful accidents.

VINCENT.—I am sorry that I did interrupt your tale. For you were about, I see well, to take an orderly way therein. And as yourself have devised, so I beseech you proceed. For though I reckon imprisonment much the sorer thing by sore and hard handling therein, yet reckon I not the imprisonment of itself any less than a thing very tedious, all were it used in the most favourable manner that it possibly might. For, uncle, if it were a great prince that were taken prisoner upon the field, and in the hand of a Christian king, which use in such case (for the consideration of their former state, and the mutable chance of the war) to shew much humanity to a prince's imprisonment. them, and in very favourable wise entreat them (for these infidel emperors handle oftentimes the princes that they take more villanously than they do the poorest men, as the great Tamberlane* kept the great Turk when he had taken him, to tread on his back alway while he leapt on horseback); but, as I began to say by the sample of a prince taken prisoner, were the imprisonment never so

* Sabellic. Ænead ix. lib. ix.

favourable, yet were it in my mind no little grief in itself for a man to be pinned up, though not in a narrow chamber, but although his walk were right large, and right fair gardens too therein, it could not but grieve his heart to be restrained by another man within certain limits and bounds, and lose the liberty to be where him list.

ANTONY.—This is, cousin, well considered of you. For in this you perceive well, that imprisonment is of itself, and his own very nature alone, nothing else but the retaining of a man's person within the circuit of a certain space, narrower or larger, as shall be limited to him, restraining his liberty from the further going into any other place.

VINCENT.—Very well said, as methinketh.

ANTONY.—Yet forgot I, cousin, to ask you one question.

VINCENT.—What is that, uncle?

ANTONY.—This, lo: if there be two men kept in two several chambers of one great castle, of which two chambers the one is much more large than the other: whether be they prisoners both, or but the one that hath the lesser room to walk in?

VINCENT.—What question is it, uncle, but that they be prisoners both, as I said myself before, although the one lay fast locked in stocks, and the other had all the whole castle to walk in?

ANTONY.—Methinketh verily, cousin, that you say the truth. And then if imprisonment be such a thing as yourself here agree it is, that is to wit, but a lack of liberty to go whither we list: now would I fain wit of you, what any one man you know, that is at this day out of prison?

VINCENT.—What one man, uncle? Marry I know almost none other. For surely prisoner am I none acquainted with, that I remember.

ANTONY.—Then I see well, you visit poor prisoners seld.

VINCENT.—No by my troth, uncle, I cry God mercy. I send them sometime my alms, but, by my troth, I love not to come myself where I should see such misery.

ANTONY.—In good faith, cousin Vincent, though I say it before you, you have many good conditions: but surely though I say it before you too, that condition is none of them. Which condition if you would amend, then should you have yet the more good conditions by one. And, peradventure, by more than three or four. For I assure you, it is hard to tell how much good to a man's soul the personal visiting of poor prisoners doth. such good in visiting prisoners. But now sith you can name me none of them that are in prison, I pray you name some one of all them, that you be (as you say) better acquainted with, men, I mean, that are out of prison. For I know, methink, as few of them, as you know of the other.

VINCENT.—That were, uncle, a strange case. For every man is, uncle, out of prison, that may go where he will, though he be the poorest beggar in the town. And in good faith, uncle (because you reckon imprisonment so small a matter of itself), the poor beggar that is at his liberty, and may walk where he will, is as me seemeth in better case, than is a king kept in prison, that cannot go but where men give him leave.

ANTONY.—Well, cousin, whether every way-walking beggar be by this reason out of prison or no, we shall consider farther when you will. But in the meanwhile, I can by this reason see no prince that seemeth to be out of prison. For if the lack of liberty to go where a man will, be imprisonment, as yourself say it is, then is the great Turk, by whom we so fear to be put in prison, in prison already himself. For he may not go where he will: for an he might, he would overrun Were not the great Turk in prison, he would overrun all. England, Italy, Spain, France, Almaine, and England, and as far on another quarter too, both Prester John's land and the great Cham's too. Now the beggar that you speak of, if he be, as you say he is by reason of his liberty to go where he will, in much better case than a king kept in prison, because he cannot go but where men give him leave: then is that beggar in better case, not only than a prince in prison, but also than many a prince out of a prison too. For I am sure there is

many a beggar that may without let, walk farther upon other men's ground, than many a prince at his best liberty may walk upon his own. And as for walking out abroad upon other men's, that prince might hap to be said nay, and bolden fast, where that beggar with his bag and his staff would be suffered to go forth and hold on his way. But forasmuch, cousin, as neither the beggar nor the prince is at free liberty to walk where they will, but that if they would walk in some place, neither of them both should be suffered, but men would withstand them and say them nay: therefore if prisonment be (as you grant it is) a lack of liberty to go where we list, I cannot see, but, as I say, the beggar and the prince, whom you reckon both at liberty, be by your own reason restrained in prison both.

VINCENT.—Yea bnt, uncle, the one and the other have way enough to walk: the one in his own ground, the other in other men's, or in the common highway, where they may walk till they be both weary of walking ere any man say them nay.

ANTONY.—So may, cousin, that king that had, as yourself put the case, all the whole castle to walk in; and yet you say not nay, but that he is a prisoner for all that, though not so straitly kept, yet as verily prisoner, as he that lieth in the stocks.

VINCENT.—But they may go at the leastwise to every place that they need, or that is commodious for them, and therefore they do not will to go but where they may go, and therefore be they at liberty to go where they will.

ANTONY.—Me needeth not, cousin, to spend the time about the impugning every part of this answer. For letting pass by, that though a prisoner were with his keeper brought into every place where need required: yet sith he might not when he would, go where he would for his only pleasure, he were, you wot well, a prisoner still; and letting pass over also this, that it were to this beggar need, and to this king commodious, to go into divers places, where neither of them both may come: and letting pass also, that neither of them both is lightly so temperately

determined, but that they both fain so would do indeed, if this reason of yours put them out of prison, and set them at liberty, and make them free (as I will well grant it doth, if they so do) indeed; that it is to wit, if they no will to go, but where they may go indeed: then let us look on our other prisoners, inclosed within a castle, and we shall find that the straitest kept of them both, if he get the wisdom and the grace to quiet his own mind, and hold himself content with that place, and long not (like a woman with child for her lusts) to be gadding out anywhere else, is by the same reason of yours, while his will is not longing to be anywhere else, he is, I say, at his free liberty, to be where he will, and so is out of prison too.

And on the other side, if though his will be not longing to be anywhere else, yet because that if his will so were, he should not so be suffered, he is therefore not at his free liberty, but a prisoner still: so sith your free beggar that you speak of, and the prince that you call out of prison too, though they be (which I ween very few be) by some special wisdom, so temperately disposed, that they have not the will to be, but where they see they may be suffered to be, yet sith that if they would have that will, they could not then be where they would, they lack the effect of free liberty, and be both twain in prison too.

VINCENT.—Well, uncle, if every man universally be by this reason in prison already after the very property of imprisonment, yet to be imprisoned in this special manner, which manner is only commonly called imprisonment, is a thing of great horror and fear, both for the straitness of the keeping and the hard handling that many men have therein, of all which griefs, and pains, and displeasures, in this other general imprisonment that you speak of, we feel nothing at all. And therefore every man abhorreth the one, and would be loth to come into it: and no man abhorreth the other, for they feel no harm, nor find no fault therein. Wherefore, uncle, in faith though I cannot find answers convenient, wherewith to avoid your arguments, yet to be plain with you, and tell you the very

A beggar in
better case than
a prince.

Princes cannot
walk where
they will.

Wisdom and
grace make men
free and out of
prison.

Intemperate
will maketh
men bond and
in prison.

truth, my mind findeth not itself satisfied in this point : but ever methinketh, that these thiugs, wherewith you rather convince and conclude me, than induce a credence and persuade me, that every man is prison already, be but sophistical phantasies: and that (except those that are commonly prisoners) other men are not in prison at all.

ANTONY.—Well fare thy heart, good cousin Vincent. There was in good faith no word that you spake since we talked of those matters, that half so well liked me, as these that you speak now. For if you had assented in words, and in your mind departed nupersuaded, then if the thing be true that I say, yet had you lost the fruit. And if it be peradventure false, and myself deceived therein, then while I should ween that it liked you too, you should have confirmed me in my folly. For in good faith, cousin, such an old fool am I, that this thing, in the persuading whereof unto you, I had weened I had quit me well, and when I have all done, appeareth to your mind but a trifle and a sophistical phantasy, myself have so many years taken for so very substantial trnth, that as yet my mind cannot give me to think it any other. Wherefore lest I play as the French priest played, that had so long used to say *Dominus* with the second syllable long, that at the last he thought it must needs be so, and was ashamed to say it short, to the intent that you may the better perceive me, or I the better myself, we shall here between us a little more consider the thing, and hardily spit well on your hands, and take good hold, and give it not over against your own mind. For then were we never the nearer.

VINCENT.—Nay, by my troth, uncle, that intend I not, nor nothing did yet since we began. And that may you well perceive by some things, which without any great cause, save for the satisfaction of mine own mind, I repeated and debated again.

ANTONY.—That guise, cousin, hold on hardily still. For in this matter I purpose to give over my part, except I make yourself perceive, both that every man nniversally is a very prisoner in very prison, plainly without any sophistication at all; and that there is also no prince

living upon earth, but he is in worse case prisoner by this general imprisonment that I speak of, than is many a lewd simple wretch, by the special imprisonment that you speak of. And over this, that in this general imprisonment that I speak of, men are for the time that they be therein so sore handled and so hardly, and in such painful wise, that men's hearts have with reason great cause as sore to abhor this hard handling that is in this imprisonment, as the other that is in that.

VINCENT.—By my troth, uncle, these things would I fain see well proved.

ANTONY.—Tell me then, cousin, by your troth, if there were a man first attainted of treason or of felony, and after judgment given of his death, and that it were determined that he should die, only the time of his execution delayed till the king's farther pleasure known, and he thereupon delivered to certain keepers, and ^{a very pri-} put up in a sure place, out of which he could ^{soner.} not scape, were this man a prisoner or no?

VINCENT.—This man, quod he? Yea marry that he were in very deed, if ever any man were.

ANTONY.—But now, what if for the time that were mean between his attainder and his execution, he were so favourably handled that he were suffered to do what he would, as he was while he was abroad, and to have the use of his lands and his goods, and his wife and his children license to be with him, and his friends leave at liberty to resort nnto him, and his servants not forbidden to abide about him; and add yet thereunto, that the place were a great castle royal, with parks and other pleasures therein a very great circuit about; yea add yet an ye will, that he were suffered to go and ride also, both when he would, and whither he would, only this one point alway provided and foreseen, that he should ever be sorely seen to and safely kept from scaping, so that took he never so much of his own mind in the meanwhile all other ways, save scaping, yet he well knew that scape he could not, and that when he were called for, to execution and to death he should; now, cousin Vincent, what would you call this man? A prisoner, because he is

kept for execution? Or no prisoner, because he is in the meanwhile so favourably handled, and suffered to do all that he would, save scape? And I bid you not here be hasty in your answer, but advise it well, that you grant no such thing in haste, as you would after mislike by leisure, and think yourself deceived.

VINCENT.—Nay by my troth, uncle, this thing needeth no study at all in my mind, but that for all this favour shewed him, and all his liberty lent him, yet being condemned to death, and being therefor kept, and kept with such sure watch laid upon him, that he cannot scape: he is all that while a very plain prisoner still.

ANTONY.—In good faith, cousin, methinketh you say very true. But then one thing must I yet desire you, cousin, to tell me a little farther. If there were another laid in prison for a fray, and through the jailer's displeasure were bolted and fettered, and laid in a low dungeon in the stocks, where he might hap to lie peradventure for a while, and abide in the mean season some pain, but no danger of death at all, but that out again he should come well enough: whether of these two prisoners stood in worse case, he that hath all this favour, or he that is thus hardly handled?

VINCENT.—By our Lady! uncle, I ween the most part of men, if they should needs choose, had lever be such prisoners in every point, as he that so sorely lieth in the stocks, than in every point such, as he that at such liberty walketh about the park.

ANTONY.—Consider then, cousin, whether this thing seem any sophistry to you, that I shall shew you now. For it shall be such as seemeth in good faith substantially true to me. And if it so hap that you think otherwise, I will be very glad to perceive which of us both is beguiled. For it seemeth to me, cousin, first, that every man coming into this world here upon earth, as he is created by God, so cometh he hither by the providence of God. Is this any sophistry first, or not?

VINCENT.—Nay verily, this is very substantial truth.

ANTONY.—Now take I this also for very truth in my mind, that there cometh no man nor woman hither into

the earth, but that ere ever they come quick into the world out of the mother's womb, God condemneth them unto death by his own sentence all must die once. and judgment for the original sin that they bring with them contracted in the corrupted stock of our forefather Adam. Is this, think you, cousin, verily thus, or not?

VINCENT.—This is, uncle, very true indeed.

ANTONY.—Then seemeth this true farther unto me, that God hath put every man here upon the earth, under so sure and under so safe keeping, that of all the whole people living in this wide world, there is neither man, woman, nor child, would they never so The whole earth is God's prison. far wander about and seek it, whereby they may scape from death. Is this, cousin, a fond imagined fancy, or is it very truth indeed?

VINCENT.—Nay, this is no imagination, uncle, but a thing so clearly proved true, that no man is so mad to say nay.

ANTONY.—Then need I no more, cousin. For then is all the matter plain and open evident truth, which I said I took for truth. Which is yet more a little now, than I told you before, when you took my proof yet but for a sophistical phantasy, and said, that for all my reasoning, that every man is a prisoner, yet you thought, that except those whom the common people call prisoners, there is no man a very prisoner indeed. And now you grant yourself again for very substantial truth, that every man is here (though he be the greatest king upon earth) set here by the ordinance of God in a place, be it never so large, a place, I say, yet (and you say the same) out of which no man can scape, but that therein is every man put under sure and safe keeping, to He be all God's very prisoners. be readily set forth, when God calleth for him, and that then he shall surely die. And is not then, cousin, by your own granting before, every man a very prisoner, when he is put in a place to be kept, to be brought forth when he would not, and himself wot not whither?

VINCENT.—Yes, in good faith, uncle, I cannot but well perceive this to be so.

ANTONY.—This were, you wot well, true, although a

man should be but taken by the arm, and in fair manner led out of this world unto his judgment. But now, while we well know that there is no king so great, but that all the while he walketh here, walk he never so loose, ride he with never so strong an army for his defence, yet himself is very sure (though he seek in the mean season

Pastime cannot put it out still.

some other pastime to put it out of his mind)

—yet is he very sure, I say, that scape can he not; and very well he knoweth, that he hath already sentence given upon him to die, and that verily die he shall, and that himself (though he hope upon long respite of his execution), yet can he not tell how

Fools indeed, that fear not this!

soon. And therefore, but if he be a fool, he can never be without fear, that either on the

morrow, or on the selfsame day, that grisly, cruel hang-

Death the general hangman.

man, Death, which, from his first coming in, hath ever hove aloof, and looked toward him, and ever lain in await on him, shall amid

mong all his royalty, and all his main strength, neither kneel before him, nor make him any reverence, nor with any good manner desire him to come forth; but rigorously and fiercely gripe him by the very breast, and make all his bones rattle, and so by long and divers sore torments,

King and queen must come to this same execution.

strike him stark dead in this prison, and then cause his body to be cast into the ground in a foul pit, within some corner of the same,

there to rot and be eaten with the wretched worms of the earth, sending yet his soul out farther unto a more fearful judgment, whereof at his temporal death his success is uncertain; and therefore, though, by God's

A second and more dreadful judgment for princes and all.

grace, not out of good hope, yet for all that, in the meanwhile, in very sore dread and fear, and peradventure, in peril inevitable of eternal

fire, too.

Methinketh therefore, cousin, that, as I told you, this keeping of every man in this wretched world for execution of death, is a very plain imprisonment indeed, and that as I say such, that the greatest king is, in this prison, in much worse case, in all his wealth, than many a man is by the other imprisonment, that is therein sore

and hardly handled. For where some of those lie not there attainted, nor condemned to death, the greatest man of this world, and the most wealthy in this universal prison, is laid in to be kept undoubtedly for death.

VINCENT.—But yet, uncle, in that case, is the other prisoner too; for he is as sure that he shall die too, pardie.

ANTONY.—That is very truth, cousin, indeed, and well objected too. But then must you consider, that he is not in danger of death by reason of that prison into which he is put, peradventure but for a light fray; but his danger of death is by the other imprisonment, by which he is prisoner in the great prison of this whole earth, in which prison all the princes thereof be prisoners as well as he. If a man condemned to death were put up in a large prison, and while his execution were respited, he were, for fighting with his fellows, put up in a strait place (part of the same), he is in danger of death in the strait prison, but not by the being in that, for therein he is but for the fray, but his deadly imprisonment was the other (the larger, I say) into which he was put for death: so the prisoner that you speak of, is beside that narrow prison, a prisoner of the broad world, and all the princes thereof therein prisoners with him. And by that imprisonment, both they and he in like danger of death, not by that strait imprisonment that is commonly called imprisonment, but by that imprisonment which (because of the large walk) men call it liberty, and which prison you thought therefore but a phantasy sophistical to prove it any prison at all.

But now may you, methinketh, very plainly perceive that this whole earth is not only for all the whole kind of man a very plain prison indeed, but also that every man without exception, even those that are most at their liberty therein, and reckon themselves great lords and possessioners of very great pieces thereof, and thereby wax with wantonness so forgetful of their own state that they when they stand in great wealth,—do stand, for all that indeed, by the reason of their imprisonment in this large prison of the whole earth, in the selfsame

condition that others do stand; which in the narrow prisons, which only be called prisons, and which only be reputed prisons in the opinion of the common people, stand in the most fearful and in the most odious case, that is, to wit, condemned already to death. And now, cousin, if this thing that I tell you seem but a sophistical phantasy to your mind, I would be glad to know what moveth you so to think. For in good faith, as I have told you twice, I am no wiser, but that I verily ween that the thing is thus of very plain truth, in very deed.

Yet felt mark
this truth.

CHAPTER XX.



VINCENT.—IN good faith, uncle, as for thus far forth, I not only can make with any reason no resistance thereagainst, but also see very clearly proved, that it can be none otherwise; but that every man is in this world a very prisoner, sith we be all put here into a sure hold to be kept till we be put to execution, as folk already condemned all to death. But yet, uncle, that strait keeping, collaring, bolting, and stocking, with lying in straw or on the cold ground (which manner of hard handling is used in these special prisonments that only be commonly called by that name), must needs make that imprisonment which only among the people beareth that name, much more odious and dreadful, than the general imprisonment wherewith we be every man universally prisoned at large, walking where we will round about the wide world. In which broad prison, out of those narrow prisons, there is with the prisoners no such hard handling used.

ANTONY.—I said, I trow cousin, that I purposed to prove you farther yet, that in this general prison, the large prison, I mean, of this whole world, folk be for the time that they be therein as sore handled and as hardly, and wrenched and wronged and breaked in such painful wise, that our hearts (save that we consider it not) have with reason good and great cause to grudge thereagainst; and (as far forth as pertaineth only to the respect of pain) as much horror to conceive against the hard handling that is in this prison, as the other that is in that.

VINCENT.—Indeed, uncle, truth it is that this you said you would prove.

ANTONY.—Nay, so much said I not, cousin, but I said I would if I could, and if I could not, then would I therein give over my part. But that trust I, cousin, I shall not need to do, the thing seemeth me so plain. For, cousin, not only the prince and king, but God chief king and tailor. also (though he have both angels and devils that are jailors under him, yet) the chief jailor over this whole broad prison the world, is, as I take it, God. And that, I suppose, you will grant me too.

VINCENT.—That will I not, uncle, deny.

ANTONY.—If a man be, cousin, committed unto prison, for no cause but to be kept, though there lie never so great charge upon him, yet his keeper, if he be good and honest, is neither so cruel that would pain the man of malice, nor so covetous that would put him to pain to make him seek his friends, and to pay for a pennyworth of ease. Else, if the place be such that he be sure to keep him safe otherwise, or that he can get surety for the recompense of more harm than he seeth he should have, if he scaped; he will never handle him in any such hard fashion as we most abhor imprisonment for. But marry, if the place be such as the keeper cannot otherwise be sure, then is he compelled to keep him after the rate the straiter. And also, if the prisoner be unruly, and fall to fighting with his fellows, or do some other manner of shrewd turn, then useth the keeper to punish him sundry wise in some of such fashions as yourself have spoken of. So is it now, cousin, that God, the

chief jailor, as I say, of this broad prison the world, is neither cruel nor covetous. And this prison is also so sure and so subtly builded, that albeit that it lieth open on every side without any wall in the world, yet A sure prison. wander we never so far about therein, the way to get out at shall we never find: so that he needeth neither to collar us, nor to stock us, for any fear of scaping away. And therefore (except he see some other cause than our only keeping for death), he letteth us in the meanwhile (for as long as he list to respite us) walk about in the prison, and do therein what we will, using Reason and revelation declare God's will. ourself in such wise, as he hath (by reason and revelation) from time to time told us his pleasure.

And hereof it cometh, lo, that by reason of this favour Why we forget this prison. for a time we wax, as I said, so wanton, that we forget where we be; weening that we were lords at large, whereas we be indeed (if we would well consider it) even silly poor wretches in prison. For of What canting in prison. truth, our very prison this earth is: and yet thereof we cant us out (partly by covenants that we make among us, and part by fraud, and part by violence too) divers parts diversely to ourself, and change the name thereof from the odious name of prison, and call it our own land and livelihood. Upon our What rule we keep in prison. prison we build, our prison we garnish with gold, and make it glorious. In this prison they buy and sell, in this prison they brawl and chide, in this prison they run together and fight; in this they dice, in this they card, in this they pipe and revel, in this they sing and dance. And in this prison many a man reputed right honest, letteth not for his pleasure in the dark privily to play the knave. And thus while God the king, and our chief jailor too, suffereth us and letteth us alone, we ween ourself at liberty, and we abhor the state of those whom we call prisoners, taking ourselves for no prisoners at all.

In which false persuasion of wealth, and forgetfulness of our own wretched state (which is but a wandering about for a while in this prison of the world, till we be

brought unto the execution of death), while we forget with our folly both ourself and our jail, and our under-jailors, angels and devils both, and our chief-jailor God too,—God that forgetteth not us, but seeth us all the while well enough, and being sore discontent God seeth all well enough, and punisheth his prisoners. to see so shrewd rule kept in the jail (beside that he sendeth the hangman Death, to put to execution here and there, sometimes by the thousands at once), he handleth many of the remnant, whose execution he forbeareth yet unto a farther time, even as hardly, and punisheth them as sore in this common prison of the world, as there are any handled in those special prisons, which for the hard handling used (you say) therein, your heart hath in such horror, and so sore abhorreth.

VINCENT.—The remnant will I not gainsay; for methink I see it so indeed. But that God, our chief jailor in this world, useth any such prisonly fashion of punishment, that point I must needs deny. For I neither see him lay any man in the stocks, or strike fetters on his legs, or so much as shut him up in a chamber either.

ANTONY.—Is he no minstrel, cousin, that playeth not on a harp? Maketh no man melody, but he that playeth on a lute? He may be a minstrel and make melody, you wot well, with some other instrument, some strange-fashioned, peradventure, that never was seen before. God our chief jailor, as himself is invisible, so useth he in his punishment invisible instruments: and therefore not of like fashion as the other jailors do, but yet of like effect, and as painful in feeling, as those. For he layeth one of his prisoners with an hot fever, God's fetters and gages, &c. as evil at his ease in a warm bed, as the other jailor layeth his upon the cold ground. He wringeth by the brows with a megrim, he collareth them by the neck with a quinsy, he bolteth them by the arms with a palsy, that they cannot lift their hands to their heads: he manacleth their hands with the gout in their fingers, he wringeth them by the legs with a cramp in their shins, he bindeth them to the bed-board with the crick in the back, and layeth one there along, and as unable to

rise, as though he lay by the feet fast in the stocks. Some prisoner of another jail singeth, danceth in his two fetters, and feareth not his feet for stumbling at a stone; while God's prisoner, that hath but his one foot fettered with the gout, lieth groaning on a couch, and quaketh and crieth out, if he fear there would fall on his foot no more but a cushion.

And therefore, cousin, as I said, if we consider it well, we shall find this general prison of the whole earth a place in which the prisoners be as sore handled as they be in the other. And even in the other, some make as merry too, as there do some in this that are very merry at large out of that. And surely, like as we ween ourself out of prison now; so if there were some folk born and brought up in a prison, that never came on the wall, nor looked out of the door, nor never heard of other world abroad, but saw some, for shrewd turns done among themselves, locked up in straiter room, and heard them only called prisoners that were so served, and themselves ever called free folk at large; the like opinion would they have there of themselves then, that we have here of ourself now. And when we take ourself for other than prisoners now, as verily we be deceived now as those prisoners should there be then.

VINCENT.—I cannot, uncle, in good faith, say nay, but that you have performed all that you have promised. But yet sith that for all this there appeareth no more, but as they be prisoners, so be we too; and that as some of them be sore haudled, so be some of us too; sith we wot well for all this, that when we come to those prisons, we shall not fail to be in a straiter prison than we be now, and to have a door shut upon us where we have none shut on us now, this shall we be sure of at the least wise, if there come no worse; and then may there come worse, you wot well, it cometh there so commonly: wherefore for all this, it is yet little marvel though men's hearts grudge much thereagainst.

ANTONY.—Surely, cousin, in this you say very well. Howbeit somewhat had your words touched me the nearer, if I had said that imprisonment were no displea-

sure at all. But the thing that I say, cousin, for our comfort therein is, that our phantasy frameth us a false opinion, by which we deceive ourself, and take it for sorer than it is. And that do we, by Our own phantasy deceiveth us. the reason that we take ourself before, for more free than we be, and prisonment for a stranger thing to us than it is indeed. And thus far forth, as I said, have I proved truth in very deed. But now the incommodities that you repeat again (those, I say, that are proper to the imprisonment of their own nature, that is, to wit, to have less room to walk in, and to have the door shut upon us)—these are, methink, so very slender and slight, that in so great a cause as to suffer for God's sake, we might be sore ashamed so much as once to think upon them.

Many a good man there is, you wot well, which without force at all, or any necessity wherefore he should so do, suffereth these two things willingly of his own choice, with much other hardness more,—holy monks, Close prison. I mean, of the Charterhouse order, such as never pass their cells, but only to the church set fast by their cells, and thence to their cells again; and S. Bridget's order; and S. Clare's much like, and, in a manner all close religious houses. And yet ances and ancesses most specially, all whose whole room is less than a merely large chamber; and yet are they there as well content many long years together, as are other men, and better too, that walk about the world. And therefore you may see, that the loathness of less room, and the door shut upon us, while so many folk are so well content therewith, and will for God's love live so to chuse, is but an horror enhanced of our own phantasy.

And indeed I wist a woman once, that came a pretty tale and true. into a prison to visit of her charity a poor prisoner there, whom she found in a chamber (to say the truth) meetly fair, and at the leastwise it was strong enough. But with mats of straw the prisoner had made it so warm, both under the feet and round about the walls, that in these things for the keeping of his health she was on his behalf glad and very well comforted. But

among many other displeasures that for his sake she was sorry for, one she lamented much in her mind, that he should have the chamber door shut upon him by night, and made fast by the jailor that should shut him in. For by my troth, quod she, if the door should be shut upon me, I would ween it would stop up my breath. At that word of hers, the prisoner laughed in his mind; but he durst not laugh aloud, nor say nothing to her, for somewhat indeed he stood in awe of her, and had his finding there much part of her charity for alms; but he could not but laugh inwardly, while he wist well enough that she used on the inside to shut every night full surely her own chamber to her, both door and windows too, and used not to open them of all the long night. And what difference then, as to the stopping of the breath, whether they were shut up within, or without?

And so snrely, cousin, these two things that you speak of, are neither other of so great weight, that in Christ's cause ought to move a Christian man, and the one of the twain is so very a childish phantasy, that in a matter almost of three chips (but if it were in chance of fire) should move any man as much as think thereof.

As for those other accidents of hard handling therein, so mad am I not to say they be no grief; but I say, that our fear may imagine them much greater grief than they be.

And I say, that such as they be, many a man endureth them; yea and many a woman too, that after fare full well.

And then would I wit what determination we take, whether for our Saviour's sake to snffer some pain in our bodies (sith he suffered in his blessed body so great pains for us) or else to give him warning and be at a point, rather utterly to forsake him than suffer any pain at all. He that cometh in his mind unto this latter point (from which kind of unkindness God keep every man!) comfort he none needeth, for he will flee the need; and counsel,

I fear, I availeth him little, if grace be so far gone from him. But on the other side, if rather than forsake our Saviour, we determine ourself to suffer any pain at all; I cannot then see that

*Et grace be gone,
counsel availeth
little.*

the fear of hard handling should any thing stick with us, and make us so to shrink, as we would rather ^{a good determination.} forsake his faith, than to suffer for his sake so much as imprisonment; sith the handling is neither such in prison, but that many men many years, and many women too, live therewith and sustain it, and afterward yet fare full well. And yet that it may well fortune, that beside the very bare imprisonment, there shall happen us no hard handling at all, nor that same haply but for a short while neither, and yet beside all this peradventure not at all. And specially sith, which of all these ways shall be taken with us, lieth all in his will for whom be content to take it, and which for that mind of ours favoureth us, and will suffer no man to put more pain unto us than he well wotteth we shall be well able to bear. For he will give us the strength thereto himself, as you have heard his promise already by the mouth of St. Paul, *Fidelis Deus, qui non patietur vos tentari supra id quod potestis ferre, sed dat etiam cum tentatione proventum*;—God is faithful, which suffereth you not to be tempted above that you may bear, but giveth also with the temptation a way out.* But uow, if we have not lost our faith already, before we come to forsake it for fear; we know very well by our faith, that by the forsaking of our faith, we fall into the state to be cast into the prison of hell, and that can we not tell how soon. But as it may be, that God will suffer us to live a while here upon earth, so may it be, that he will throw us into that dungeon beneath, before the time that the Turk shall once ask us the question. And therefore if we fear imprisonment so sore, we be much more than mad if we fear not most the far more sore. For out of that prison shall uo man never get, and in this other shall no man abide but a while. In prison was Joseph, while his brethren were at large, and yet after were his brethren fain to seek upon him for bread.† In prison was Daniel, and the wild lions about him;‡ and yet even there God kept him harmless, and brought him safe out again. If we think, that he will not do the like for us,

* 1 Cor. x.

† Gen. xxxix. et xlii.

‡ Daniel vi.

let us not doubt but he will do for us either the like, or better. For better may he do for us, if he suffer us there to die.

St. John the Baptist was, ye wot well, in prison,* while Herod and Herodias sat full merry at the feast, and the daughter of Herodias delighted them with her dancing, till with her dancing she danced off St. John's head. And now sitteth he with great feast in heaven at God's board, while Herod and Herodias full heavily sit in hell burning both twain, and to make them sport withal, the devil

More such dancing damsels dance off men's heads.

with the damsel dance in the fire afore them. Finally, cousin, to finish this piece with, our Saviour was himself taken prisoner for our sake, and prisoner was he carried, and prisoner was he kept, and prisoner was he brought forth before Annas.† And prisoner from Annas carried unto Caiphas.‡ Then prisoner was he carried from Caiphas unto Pilate, and prisoner was he sent from Pilate to king Herod: § prisoner from Herod unto Pilate again. || And so kept as prisoner to the end of his passion. The time of his imprisonment, I grant well, was not long; but as for hard handling (which our hearts most abhor) he had as much in that short while, as many men among them all in much longer time. And surely then, if we consider of what estate he was, and therewith that he was prisoner in such wise for our sake, we shall I trow (but if we be worse than wretched beasts) never so shamefully play the unkind cowards, as for fear of imprisonment sinfully to forsake him; nor so foolish neither, as by forsaking of him, to give him the occasion again to forsake us, and

Great folly by fleeing an easy and short prison, to fall into a worse and a longer.

with the avoiding of an easier prison, fall into a worse, and instead of a prison that cannot keep us long, fall into that prison, out of which we can never come, whereas the short imprisonment would win us everlasting liberty.

* Matth. xiv.

§ Luc. xxiii.

† Ibidem xxvi.

|| Matth. xxvii.

‡ Johan. xviii.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Fear of shameful and painful Death.



INCENT.—FORSOOTH, uncle (our Lord reward you therefor!) if we feared not farther beside imprisonment the terrible dart of shameful and painful death; as for imprisonment, I would verily trust, that remembering those things, which I have here heard of you, rather than I should forsake the faith of our Saviour, I would with the help of grace never shrink thereat. But now are we come, uncle, with much work at the last, unto the last and uttermost point, of the dread that maketh *incursum et demonium meridianum*,—this incursion of this midday devil, this open invasion of the Turk, and his persecution against the faith, seem so terrible unto men's minds, that although the respect of God vanquisheth all the remnant of the troubles that we have hitherto perused, as loss of goods, lands and liberty, yet when we remember the terror of shameful and painful death, that point so suddenly putteth us in oblivion of all that should be our comfort, that we feel (all men I fear me for the most part) the fervour of our faith wax so cold, and our hearts so faint, that we find ourself at the point to fall even therefrom for fear.

ANTONY.—To this I say not nay, cousin, but that indeed in this point is the sore pinch. And yet you see for all this, that even this point too taketh increase or minishment of dread after the difference of the affections that are before fixed and

The sorest pinch is in death.

rooted in the mind, so farforth, that you see some man set so much by his worldly substance, that he less feareth the loss of his life than the loss of lands: yea some man shall you see that abideth deadly torment, and such as some other had lever die than endure, rather than he would bring out the money that he hath hid. And I doubt not but you have heard of many by right authentic stories, that (some for one cause, some for another) have not letted willingly to suffer death, divers in divers kinds: and some both with despiteful rebuke and painful torment too. And therefore, as I say, we may see, that the affection of the mind toward the increase or decrease of dread, maketh much of the matter.

Many have and do die for affections, as also heretics do.

Now are the affections of men's minds imprinted by divers means. One way, by the mean of the bodily senses moved by such things, pleasant or displeasent, as are outwardly through sensible worldly things offered and objected unto them. And this manner of receiving the impression of affections is common unto men and beasts. Another manner of receiving affections, is by the mean of reason, which both ordinally tempereth those affections, that the bodily five wits imprint, and also disposeth a man many times to some spiritual virtues, very contrary to those affections that are fleshly and sensual. And those reasonable dispositions be affections spiritual and proper to the nature of man, and above the nature of beasts. Now as our ghostly enemy the devil enforceth himself to make us lean to the sensual affections and beastly;

Good motions from God, and how.

so doth Almighty God of his goodness by his Holy Spirit inspire us good motions, with aid and help of his grace, toward the other affections spiritual, and by sundry means instructeth our reason to lean unto them, and not only to receive them as engendered and planted in our soul, but also in such wise water them with the wise advertisement of godly counsel and continual prayer, that they may be habitually radicate, and surely take deep root therein. And, after as the one

Note this deep divinity, and the fruit of continual prayer, &c.

kind of affection or the other beareth the strength in our heart, so be we stronger or feebler against the terror of death in this cause. And therefore will we, cousin, essay to consider, what things there are for which we have cause in reason to master that affection fearful and sensual: and though we cannot clean avoid it and put it away, yet in such wise to bridle it at the least that it run not out so far, like an headstrong horse, that spite of our teeth it carry us out unto the devil. Let us therefore now consider and weigh well this thing that we dread so sore, that is to wit, shameful and painful death.

CHAPTER XXII.

Of Death, considered by himself alone, as a bare leaving of this life only.

AND first, I perceive well by these two things that you join unto death, that is to wit, shameful and painful; you would esteem death so much the less, if he should come alone without either shame or pain.

VINCENT.—Without doubt, uncle, a great deal the less. But yet though he should come without them both by himself; whatsoever I would, I wot well, many a man would be for all that, very loath to die.

ANTONY.—That I believe well, cousin, and the more pity it is. For that affection happeth in very few, but that either the cause is lack of faith, lack of hope, or finally lack of wit. They that

Three lacks make men loath to die.

believe not the life to come after this, and ween themselves here in wealth, are loath to leave this; for then they think they lose all. And thereof cometh the manifold foolish unfaithful words, which are so rife in over many men's mouths, *This world we know, and the other we know not*, and that some say in sport, and think in earnest, *The devil is not so black as he is painted*, and, *Let him be as black as he will, he is no blacker than a crow*, with many other such foolish phantasies of the same sort.

Some that believe well enough, yet through the lewdness of living, fall out of good hope of salvation, and then though they be loath to die, I very little marvel. Howbeit, some that purpose to mend, and would fain have some time left them longer to bestow somewhat better, may peradventure be loath to die also by-and-by. And that manner loathness (albeit a very good will gladly to die, and to be with God, were in my mind so thankful that it were well able to purchase as full remission both of sin and pain, as peradventure he were like if he lived to purchase in many years' penance), yet will I not say, but that such kind of loathness to die may be before God allowable. Some are there also, that are loath to die, that are yet very glad to die, and long for to be dead.

VINCENT.—That were, uncle, a very strange case.

ANTONY.—The case, I fear me, cousin, falleth not very often, but yet sometime it doth. As where there is any man of that good mind as St. Paul was, which for the longing that he had to be with God, would fain have been dead, but for the profit of other folk was content to live here in pain, and defer and forbear for the while his inestimable bliss in heaven. *Desiderium habens dissolvi et esse cum Christo, multò magis melius: Permanere autem in carne, necessarium propter vos.** But of all these kinds of folk, cousin, that are loath to die (except the first kind only that lacketh faith), there is, I suppose, none but that except the fear of shame, or sharp pain joined unto death, should be the lot, would else for the bare respect of death

* Philip. i.

alone, let to depart hence with good will in this case of the faith, well witting by his faith, that his death taken for the faith should cleanse him clean of all his sins, and send him straight to heaven. And some of these (namely the last kind) are such, that shame and pain both joined unto death were unlikely to make them loath death, or fear death so sore, but that they would suffer death in this case with good will, sith they know well that the refusing of the faith for any cause in this world (were the cause never so good in sight) should yet sever them from God, with whom (save for other folks' profit) they so fain would be. And charity can it not be, for the profit of the whole world, deadly to displease him that made it.

Some are there, I say also, that are loath to die for lack of wit, which albeit that they believe the world that is to come, and hope also to come thither, yet they love so much the wealth of this world, and such things as delight them therein, that they would fain keep them as long as ever they might, even with tooth and nail. And when they may be suffered in no wise to keep it no longer, but that death taketh them therefrom; then if it may be no better, they will agree to be (as soon as they be hence) hanced up unto heaven, and be with God by-and-by. These folk are as very idiot fools, as he that had kept from his childhood a bag full of cherrystones, and cast such a phantasy thereto, that he would not go from it, for a bigger bag filled full of gold.

These folk fare, cousin, as Æsop telleth in a fable that the snail did. For when Jupiter (whom the poets feign for the great God) invited all the poor worms of the earth unto a great solem feast that it pleased him (I have forgotten upon what occasion) upon a time to prepare for them, the snail kept her at home and would not come thereat. And when Jupiter asked her after, wherefore she came not at his feast, where he said she should have been welcome, and have fared well, and should have seen a goodly palace, and been delighted with many goodly pleasures: she answered him, that she loved no place so well as her own

a Turkish and
heathenish land
where such
words walk.

Good will to die
meritorious.

Some loathness
to die allowable.

How many
such things be
now!

A proper fable,
and well ap-
plied.

house. With which answer Jupiter waxed so angry, that he said, sith she loved her house so well, she should never after go from home, but should ever after bear her house upon her back, wheresoever she went. And so hath she done ever since, as they say, and at the least wise I wot well she doth so now, and hath done as long time as I can remember.

VINCENT.—Forsooth, uncle, I would ween the tale were not all feigned. For I think verily, that so much of your tale is true.

ANTONY.—Æsop meant by that feigned fable to touch the folly of such folk, as so set their phantasy upon some small simple pleasure, that they cannot find in their hearts to forbear it, neither for the pleasure of a better man, nor for the gaining of a better thing. By which their fond froward fashion they sometime fall in great indignation, and take thereby no little harm. And surely such Christian folk as by their foolish affection, which they have set like the snail upon their own house here, this earth, cannot for the loathness of leaving that house, find in their heart with their good will to go to the great feast that God prepareth in heaven, and of his goodness so gently calleth them to, be like, I fear me (but if they mend that mind in time), to be served as the snail was, and yet much worse too. For they be like to

Fromward affection.

have their house here (the earth), bound fast upon their backs for ever, and not walk there-with where they will, as the snail creepeth about with hers, but lie fast bound in the midst with the foul fire of hell about them. For into this folly they bring themselves

Drunkards' offences not excusable.

by their own fault, as the drunken man bringeth himself into drunkenness, whereby the evil that he doth in his drunkenness is not forgiven him for his folly, but to his pain imputed to his fault.

VINCENT.—Surely, uncle, this seemeth not unlikely, and by their fault they fall into such folly indeed. And yet if this be folly indeed, there are then some folk fools, that ween themselves right wise.

That folly is it, to be worldly wise!

ANTONY.—That ween themselves wise? Marry, I never saw fool yet that thought himself other than wise. For as it is one spark of soberness left in a drunken head, when he perceiveth himself drunk, and getteth him fair to bed, so if a fool perceive himself a fool, that point is no folly but a little spark of wit. But now, cousin, as for those kind of fools, sith they be loath to die for the love that they bear to their worldly phantasies, which they should by their death leave behind them and forsake; they that would for that cause rather forsake the faith than die, would rather forsake it than lose their worldly goods, though there were offered them no peril of death at all. And then as touching those that are of that mind, we have, you wot well, said as much as yourself thought sufficient this afternoon here before.

Greatest fools think themselves wise.

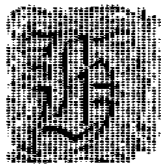
VINCENT.—Verily, that is, uncle, very true: and now have you rehearsed, as far as I can remember, all the other kinds of them that would be loath to die for any other respect, than the grievous qualities of shame and pain joined unto death. And of all those kinds, except the kind of infidelity, whom no comfort can help, but counsel only to the attaining of faith, which faith must be to the receiving of comfort presupposed and made ready before, as you shewed in the beginning of our communication the first day that we talked of the matter; but else, I say, except that one kind, there is none of the remnant of those that were before untouched, which were likely to forsake their faith in this persecution for the fear and dread of death, save for those grievous qualities (pain I mean, and shame), that they see well would come therewith. And therefore, uncle, I pray you give us some comfort against those twain. For in good faith, if death should come without them in such a case as this is, where by the losing of this life we should find a far better: mine own reason giveth me, that save for the other griefs going before the change, there would no man that wit hath, any thing stick at all.

ANTONY.—Yes (peradventure) suddenly before they gather their wits unto them, and therefore well weigh the

matter. But they, cousin, that will consider the matter well, reason grounded upon the foundation of faith, shall shew them very great substantial causes, for which the dread of those grievous qualities that they see shall come with death (shame, I mean, and pain also) shall not so sore abash them, as sinfully to drive them therefrom. For the proof whereof let us first begin at the consideration of the shame.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of the Shame that is joined with the Death in the Persecution for the Faith.



How can any faithful wise man dread the death so sore for any respect of shame, when his reason and his faith together may shortly make him perceive, that there is therein no piece of very shame at all? For how can that death be shameful that is

glorious? Or how can it be but glorious to die for the faith of Christ (if we die both for the faith, and in the faith joined with hope and charity), while the Scripture so plainly saith, *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanc-*

torum ejus,—Precious is in the sight of God, the death of his saints.* Now if the death of his saints be glorious in the sight of God, it can never be shameful in very deed, how shameful so ever it seem here in the sight of men. For here we may see and be sure, that not at the death of

* Psal. cxv.

St. Stephen only* (to whom it liked him to shew himself with the heaven open over his head) but at the death also of every man that so dieth for the faith, God with his heavenly company beholdeth his whole passion, and verily looketh on.†

Now if it so were, cousin, that you should be brought through the broad high street of a great long city, and that all along the way that you were going, there were on the one side of the way a rabble of ragged beggars and madmen that would despise you and dispraise you with all the shameful names that they could call you, and all the villanous words that they could say to you: and that there were then along the other side of the same street where you should come by a goodly company standing in a fair range, a row of wise and worshipful folk, allowing and commending you, more than fifteen times as many as that rabble of ragged beggars and railing madmen are: would you let your way by your will, weening that you went unto your shame for the shameful jesting and railing of those mad foolish wretches, or hold on your way with a good cheer and a glad heart, thinking yourself much honoured by the land and approbation of that other honourable sort?

None but railing rabbles of frantic wretches mock and despise God's martyrs.

VINCENT.—Nay by my troth, uncle, there is no doubt, but I would much regard the commendation of those commendable folk, and not regard of a rush the railing of all these ribalds.

ANTONY.—Then, cousin, can there no man that hath faith, account himself shamed here by any manner death that he suffereth for the faith of Christ, while how vile and how shameful soever it seem in the sight here of a few worldly wretches, it is allowed and approved for very precious and honourable in the sight of God, and all the glorious company of heaven, which as perfectly stand and behold it, as these peevish people do, and are in number more than an hundred to one: and of that hundred, every one an hundred times more to be regarded and esteemed, than of the other an hundred such whole

* Act. vii.

† 1 Cor. iv.

rabblés. And now if a man would be so mad, as for fear of the rebuke that he should have of such rebukeful beasts, he would be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ: then with fleeing from a shadow of shame, he should fall into a very shame and a deadly painful shame indeed. For then hath our Saviour made a sure promise, that he will shew himself ashamed of that man before the Father of Heaven and all his holy angels, saying: *Qui me erubuerit et meos sermones, hunc Filius Hominis erubescet, quum venerit in majestate sua, et Patris, et sanctorum Angelorum*:—He that is ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in the majesty of himself, and of his Father, and of the holy Angels.* And

Here is very shameful shame indeed. what manner a shameful shame shall that be then? If a man's cheeks glow sometimes for shame in this world, they will fall on fire for shame when Christ shall shew himself ashamed of them there.

To suffer the thing for Christ's faith, that we worldly wretched fools ween were villany and shame, the blessed Apostles reckoned for great glory. For they, when they were with despite and shame scourged, and thereupon commanded to speak no more of the name of Christ, went their way from the council joyful and glad that God had vouchsafed to do them the worship, to suffer shameful despite for the name of Jesu. And so proud were they of that shame and villanous pain put unto them, that for all the forbidding of that great council assembled, they ceased not every day to preach out the name of Jesu still, not in the Temple only, out of which they were fet and whipped for the same before, but also to double it with, went preaching that name about from house to house too.

I would, sith we regard so greatly the estimation of worldly folk, we would among many naughty things that they use, regard also some such as are good. For it is a Another comparison. manner among them in many places, that some by handicraft, some by merchandise, some by other kind of living, rise and come forward in the world.

* Luc. ix.

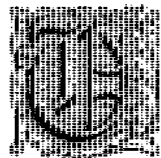
And commonly folk are in youth set forth to convenient masters, under whom they be brought up and grow. But now whensoever they find a servant such, as disdaineth to do such things as he, that his master, did while he was servant himself; that servant every man accounteth for a proud unthrift, never like to come to good proof. Let us so mark and consider this, and weigh well therewithal, that our master Christ, not the master only, but the maker too of all this whole world, was not so proud to disdain for our sakes the most villanous and most shameful death after the worldly account that then was used in the world, and the most despiteful mocking therewith joined to most grievous pain, as crowning him with sharp thorns that the blood ran down about his face: then they gave him a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and kneeled down to him, and saluted him like a king in scorn, and beat then the reed upon the sharp thorns about his holy head. Now saith our Saviour, that the disciple or servant is not above his Master.* And therefore sith our Master endured so many kinds of painful shame, very proud beasts may we well think ourself, if we disdain to do as our Master did: and whereas he through shame ascended into glory,† we would be so mad, that we rather will fall into everlasting shame, both before heaven and hell, than for fear of a short worldly shame, to follow him into everlasting glory.

* Luc. vi.

† Johan. xiii.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of painful Death to be suffered in the Turk's Persecution for the Faith.



VINCENT.—IN good faith, uncle, as for the shame, ye shall need to take no more pain. For I suppose surely, that any man that hath reason in his head shall hold himself satisfied with this. But of truth, uncle, all the pinch is in the pain. For as for shame, I perceive well now, a man may with wisdom so master it, that it shall nothing move him at all, so farforth, that it is almost in every country become a common proverb, that shame is as it is taken. But by God, uncle, all the wisdom in this world can never so master pain, but that pain will be painful, spite of all the wit in this world.

ANTONY.—Truth is it, cousin, that no man can with all the reason he hath, in such wise change the nature of pain, that in the having of pain he feel it not. For, but if it be felt, it is pardie, no pain. And that is the natural cause, cousin, for which a man may have his leg stricken off by the knee and grieve him not, if his head be off hut half an hour before. But reason may make a reasonable man (though he would not be so foolish as causeless to fall therein) yet upon good causes, either of gaining some kind of great profit, or avoiding some kind of great loss, or eschewing thereby the suffering of far greater pain, not to shrink therefrom, and refuse it to his more hurt and harm, but for his far greater advantage and commodity, content and glad to

sustain it. And this doth reason alone in many cases, where it hath much less help to take hold of, than it hath in this matter of faith. For well you wot, to take a sour and a bitter potion is great grief and displeasure, and to be lanced and to have the flesh cut is no little pain. Now when such things shall be ministered unto a child, or to some childish man either, they will by their own wills rather let their sickness or their sore grow on to their more grief till it become incurable, than abide the pain of the cutting in time, and that for faint heart, joined with lack of discretion. But a man that hath more wisdom, though he would without cause no more abide the pain willingly, than would the other: yet sith reason sheweth him what good he shall have by the suffering, and what harm by the refusing, this maketh him well content, and glad also to take it.

Now then, if reason alone be sufficient to move a man to take pain for the gaining of some worldly rest or pleasure, and for the avoiding of another pain, though peradventure more, yet durable but for a short season: why should not reason grounded upon the sure foundation of faith, and holpen also forward with aid of God's grace (as it is ever ready undoubtedly, when folk for a good mind in God's name common together thereon, our Saviour saying himself: *Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi et ego sum in medio eorum*,—Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I also even in the very midst of them*), why should not then reason, I say, thus furthered with faith and grace, be much more able to engender in us first such an affection, and after by long and deep meditation thereof, so to continue that affection, that it shall turn into an habitual fast and deep-rooted purpose of patient suffering the painful death of this body here in earth, for the gaining of everlasting wealthy life in heaven, and avoiding of everlasting painful death in hell?

VINCENT.—By my troth, uncle, words can I none find that should have any reason with them (faith alway presupposed, as you protested in the beginning for a ground),

* Matth. xviii.

How pain is no pain.

Reason can do much by faith and grace.

words, I say, can I none find, wherewith I might reasonably counterplead this that you have said here already.

A fable of Æsop But yet I remember the fable that Æsop telleth of a great old hart that had fled from a little bitch, which had made sure after him, and chased him so long that she had lost him, and as he hoped, more than half given him over. By occasion thereof, having then some time to talk, and meeting with another of his fellows, he fell in deliberation with him, what were best for him to do, whether to run on still and flee farther from her, or turn again and fight with her. Whereunto the other hart advised him to flee no farther lest the bitch might hap to find him again at such time, as he should with the labour of farther fleeing be fallen out of breath and thereby all out of strength too, and so should he be killed lying where he could not stir him, whereas if he would turn and fight he were in no peril at all. For the man with whom she hunteth is more than a mile behind her, and she is but a little body scant half so much as thou, and thy horns may thrust her through before she can touch thy flesh by more than ten times her tooth length. Now by my troth, quod the other hart, I like your counsel well, and methink that the thing is even soothly such as you say. But I fear me, when I hear once that urchin bitch bark, I shall fall to my feet and forget altogether. But yet an you will go back with me, then methink we shall be strong enough against that one bitch, between us both. Whereunto the other hart agreed, and so they both appointed them thereon. (Here it must

Hunting note. be known of some man that can skill of hunting, whether that we mistake not our terms.

For then are we utterly ashamed, ye wot well. And I am so conning, that I cannot tell whether among them a bitch be a bitch or no, but as I remember, she is no bitch, but a brach. This is an high point in a low house. Beware of barking, for there lacketh another hunting term. At a fox it is called crying. I wot not what they call it at an hart, but it shall make no matter.)* But even as they were

* What is within the parentheses does not occur in the folio edition of the author's works.

about to bask them forward to it, the bitch had found the foot again, and on she came yearning toward the place. Whom as soon as the harts heard, they go to both twain apace. And in good faith, uncle, even so I fear me, it would fare by myself and many other too, which Great harts flee from a bitch. though we think it reason that you say, and in our minds agree that we should do as you say, yea and do peradventure think also, that we would indeed do as you say: yet as soon as we should once hear these hell hounds, these Turks come yelping and bawling upon us, our hearts should soon fall as clean from us, as those other harts flee from the hounds.

ANTONY.—Cousin, in those days that Æsop speaketh of, though those harts and other brute beasts more, had (if he say sooth) the power to speak and talk, and in their talking, power to talk reason too: yet to follow reason, and rule themself thereby, thereto had they never given them the power. And in good faith, cousin, as for such things as pertain towards the conducting of reasonable men to salvation, I think without the help of grace, Reason without grace can do little. men's reasoning shall do little more. But then are we sure, as I said afore, that as for grace, if we desire it, God is at such reasoning always Grace is ever ready. present, and very ready to give it: and but if that men will afterward willingly cast it away, he is ever still as ready to keep it, and from time to time glad to increase it. And therefore biddeth us our Lord by the mouth of the prophet, that we should not be like such brutish and unreasonable beasts, as were those harts, and as are horses and mules. Men must be reasonable and not brutish beasts.

Nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus.—Be not like a horse and a mule, that hath no understanding.*

And therefore, cousin, let us never dread but that if we will apply our minds to the gathering of comfort and courage against such persecutions, and hear reason, and let it sink into our heart, and call it not out again, vomit it not up, nor even there choking it up and stifle it with pampering in and stuffing up our stomachs An evil surfeit.

* Psal. xxxi.

with a surfeit of worldly vanities: God shall so well work therewith, that we shall find great strength therein, and not in such wise have all such shameful cowardous hearts, as to forsake our Saviour, and thereby lose our own salvation, and run into eternal fire, for fear of death joined therewith, though bitter and sharp, yet short for all that, and in a manner a momentary pain.

VINCENT.—Every man, uncle, naturally grndgeth at pain, and is very loath to come to it.

ANTONY.—That is very truth, nor no man biddeth any man to go run into it. But that if he be taken, and may not flee, then we say that reason plainly telleth us, that we should rather suffer and endure the loss and the shorter here, than in hell the sorer, and so far the longer too.

VINCENT.—I heard, uncle, of late, where such a reason was made, as you make me now, which reason seemeth undoubted and inevitable unto me: yet heard I late, as I say, a man answer it thus. He said, that if a man in his persecution should stand still in the confession of his faith, and thereby fall into painful tormentry, An objection. he might peradventure hap for the sharpness and bitterness of the pain, to forsake the Saviour even in the midst, and die there with his sin, and so be damned for ever; whereas by the forsaking of the faith in the beginning betime, and for the time, and yet not but in word neither, keeping it still nevertheless in his heart, a man may save himself from that painful death, and after ask mercy, and have it, and live long, and do many good deeds, and be saved as St. Peter was.

ANTONY.—That man's reason, cousin, is like a three-footed stool, so tottering on every side, that whoso sit thereon may soon take a foul fall. For those are the three feet of this tottering stool: fantastical fear, false faith, false flattering hope. fantastical fear. First, this is a fantastical fear, that the man conceiveth that it should be perilous to stand in the confession of the beginning, lest he might afterwards through the bitterness of pain fall to the forsaking, and so die there in the pain therewith out of hand, and thereby be utterly damned: as though that, if a man by

pain were overcome, and so forsook his faith, God could not, or would not, as well give him grace to repent again, and thereupon give him forgiveness, as him that forsook his faith in the beginning, and did set so little by him, that he would rather forsake him than suffer for his sake any manner pain at all: as though the more pain that a man taketh for God's sake, the worse would God be to him. If this reason were not unreasonable, then should our Saviour not have said, as he did: *Nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus, et post hæc non habent amplius quid faciant*,—Fear not them that may kill the body, and after that have nothing that they can do farther.* For he should by this reason have said: Dread and fear them that may slay the body; for they may by the torment of painful death (but if thou forsake me betimes in the beginning and so save thy life, and get of me thy pardon and forgiveness after) make thee peradventure forsake me too late, and so be damned for ever. The second foot of this tottering stool, is a false faith. For it is false and feigned faith. but a feigned faith for a man to say to God secretly that he believeth him, trusteth him, and loveth him; and then openly, where he should to God's honour tell the same tale, and thereby prove that he doth so, there to God's dishonour (as much as in him is) flatter God's enemies, and do them pleasure and worldly worship, with the forsaking of God's faith before the world: and he is either faithless in his heart too, or else wotteth well that he doth God this despite, even before his own face. For except he lack faith, he cannot but know that our Lord is everywhere present; and while he so shamefully forsaketh him, full angrily looketh on.

The third part of this tottering stool, is false false flattering hope. flattering hope. For sith the thing that he doth, when he forsaketh his faith for fear, is by the mouth of God (upon the pain of eternal death) forbidden, though the goodness of God forgiveth many folk the fault, yet to be the bolder in offending for the hope of forgiving, is a very false pestilent hope, wherewith a man flattereth himself toward his own destruction. He that in a sudden braid

* Luc. xii. Matth. x.

a lawfull hope. for fear, or other affection unadvisedly falleth, and after in labouring to rise again, comforteth himself with hope of God's gracious forgiveness, walketh in the ready way toward his salvation. But he that, with the hope of God's mercy to follow, doth encourage himself to sin, and therewith offendeth God first (I have no power to shut the hand of God from giving out his pardon where he list, nor would, if I could, but rather help to pray therefor, but yet) I very sore fear, that such a man may miss the grace to require it in such effectual wise, as to have it granted. Nor I cannot suddenly now remember any sample or promise expressed in Holy Scripture, that the offender in such a kind shall have the grace offered after in such wise to seek for pardon, that God hath (by his other promises of remission promised to the penitents) bound himself to grant it. But

Presumption. this kind of presumption under pretext of hope, seemeth rather to draw near on the one side as despair doth on the other side, toward the abominable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Against which sin concerning either the impossibility, or, at the least, the great difficulty of forgiveness, our Saviour hath shewed himself in the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew, and in the third of St. Mark, where he saith, that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.*

Of St. Peter's fall and rising again. And where the man that you spake of, took in his reason a sample of St. Peter which forsook our Saviour, and gat forgiveness after; let him consider again on the other side, that he forsook him not upon the boldness of any such sinful trust, but was overcome and vanquished upon a sudden fear. And yet by that forsaking St. Peter wan but little. For he did but delay his trouble for a little while, you wot well. For beside that he repented forthwith very sore that he so had done, and wept therefor by-and-by full bitterly, he came forth at the Whitsuntide ensuing, and confessed his Master again,† and soon after that he was imprisoned

* Matth. xii. Marc. iii.

† Act. ii.

therefor: and not ceasing so, was thereupon scourged for the confession of his faith, and yet after that imprisoned again afresh; and being from thence delivered, stinted not to preach on still, until that after manifold labours, marvels, and troubles, he was at Rome crucified, and with cruel torment slain.* And in likewise I ween, I might in a manner well warrant that there shall no man (which denieth our Saviour once, and after attaineth remission) scape through that denying, one penny the better cheap, but that he shall, ere he come in heaven, full surely pay therefor.

VINCENT.—He shall peradventure, uncle, work it out afterward, in the fruitful works of penance, prayer, and almsdeeds done in true faith, and due charity, and attain in such wise forgiveness well enough.

ANTONY.—All his forgiveness goeth, cousin, you see well, but by perhaps. But as it may be, perhaps yea: so it may be, perhaps nay. And where is he then? And yet you wot well, by no manner hap he shall never hap finally to scape from death, for fear of which he forsook his faith.

VINCENT.—No, but he may die his natural death, and scape that violent death, and then he saveth himself from much pain, and so winneth therewith much ease. For evermore a violent death is painful.

ANTONY.—Peradventure he shall not avoid a violent death thereby. For God is without doubt displeased, and can bring him shortly to a death as violent by some other way. Howbeit, I see well that you reckon that whoso dieth a natural death, dieth like a wanton even all at his ease. You make me remember a man that was once in a galley subtle with us on the sea, which while the sea was sore wrought, and the waves rose very high, and he came never on the sea afore, and lay tossed hither and thither, the poor soul groaned sore, and for pain he thought he would very fain be dead, and ever he wished, Would God I were on land, that I might die in rest! The waves so troubled him there, with tossing him up and down, to and fro, that

Of one that would die at ease.

* Act. v.

he thought that trouble letted him to die, because the waves would not let him rest: but if he might get once to land, he thought he should then die there even at his ease.

VINCENT.—Nay, uncle, this is no doubt, but that death is to every man painful. But yet is not the natural death so painful, as the violent.

Of natural and violent death. ANTONY.—By my troth, cousin, methinketh that the death which men call commonly natural, is a violent death to every man whom it fetcheth hence by force against his will, and that is every man which, when he dieth, is loath to die, and fain would yet live longer if he might. Howbeit, how small the pain is in the natural death, cousin, fain would I wit who hath told you. As far as I can perceive, those folk that commonly depart of their natural death, have ever one

The pain of natural death. disease and sickness or other, whereof if the pain of the whole week or twain, in which they lie piuing in their bed, were gathered together into short a time, as a man hath his pain that dieth a violent death; it would, I ween, make double the pain that it is. So that he that naturally dieth, after suffereth more pain than less, though he suffer it in a longer time. And then would maury a man be more loath to suffer so long in lingering pain, than with a sharper to be sooner rid. And yet lieth many a man more days than one in well near as great pain continually, as is the pain that with the violent death riddeth the man in less than half an hour; except a man would ween that whereas the pain is great, to have a knife cut his flesh in the outside from the skin inward, the pain would be much less, if the knife might on the inside begin, and cut from the midst outward. Some we hear in their deathbeds complain, that they think they feel sharp knives cut a-two their heartstrings. Some cry out and think they feel within the brainpan, their head pricked even full of pins. And they that lie in a pleurisy think that every time they cough, they feel a sharp sword swap them to the heart.

CHAPTER XXV.

The consideration of the Pain of Hell, in which we fall, if we forsake our Saviour, may make us set all the painful death of the world at right nought.



HOWBEIT, what should we need to make any such comparison between the natural death and the violent? For the matter that we be in hand with here may put it out of doubt, that he which for fear of the violent death forsaketh the faith of Christ, putteth himself in the peril to find his natural death more painful a thousand times. For his natural death hath his everlasting pain so suddenly knit unto it, that there is not one moment of an hour Of everlasting death and pain. between, but the end of the one is the beginning of the other that after shall never have end. And therefore was it not without great cause, that Christ gave us so good warning before, when he said as St. Lnke rehearseth: *Dico vobis amicis meis, ne terreamini ab iis qui occidunt corpus, et post hæc non habent amplius quid faciant. Ostendam autem vobis quem timeatis. Timete eum, qui postquam occiderit, habet potestatem mittere in gehennam: Ita dico vobis, hunc timeate.*—I say to you that are my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and which when that is done, are able to do no more. But I shall shew you, whom you shall fear: Fear him, that when he hath killed, hath in his power farther to cast him, whom he killeth, into everlasting fire: So I

say to you, be afraid of him.* God meaneth not here, that we should nothing dread at all any man that can but kill the body, but he meaneth that we should not in such wise dread any such, that we should for dread of them, displease him that can everlastingly kill both body and soul with a death ever dying, and that shall yet never die. And therefore he addeth and repeateth in the end again, the fear that we should have of him, and saith: *Ita dico vobis, hunc timeate*.—So I say to you, fear him.

Oh, good God! cousin, if a man would well weigh these words and let them sink, as they should do, down deep into his heart, and often bethink himself thereon, it would, I doubt not, be able enough, to make us set at nought all the great Turk's threats, and esteem him not a straw, but well content to endure all the pain that all the world could put upon us (for so short while as all they were able to make us dwell therein) rather than by the shrinking from those pains (though never so sharp, yet but short) to cast ourself into the pain of hell an hundred thousand times more intolerable, and whereof there shall

never come an end. A woful death is that ^{a woful death.} death, in which folk shall evermore be dying, and never can once be dead. Whereof the Scripture saith, *Desiderabunt mori, et mors fugiet ab eis*.—They shall call, and cry for death, and death shall flee from them.† Oh, good Lord, if one of them were now put in the choice of both, they would rather suffer the whole year together the most terrible death that all the Turks in Turkey could devise, than the death that they lie in for the space of half an hour. In how wretched folly fall then these faithless or feeble faithed folk, that to avoid the pain so far the less and so short, fall in the stead thereof into pain a thousand thousand times more horrible, and of which terrible torment, they be sure they shall never have end! This matter, cousin, lacketh, as I believe, but either full faith or sufficient minding. For I think, on my faith, if we have the grace verily to believe it, and often to think well thereon, the fear of all the Turk's persecution (with all that this midday devil were able to

* Luc. xii.

† Apocal. ix.

make them do in the forcing us to forsake our faith) should never be able to turn us.

VINCENT.—By my troth, uncle, I think it is as you say. For sure if we would as oft think on these pains of hell, as we be very loath to do, and seek us peevish pastimes of purpose to put such heavy things out of our thought: this one point alone were able enough to make, I think, many a martyr.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Consideration of the Joys of Heaven should make us for Christ's sake abide and endure any painful Death.



ANTHONY.—FORSOOTH, cousin, if we were such as we should be, I would scant for very shame (in exhortation to the keeping of Christ's faith) speak of the pains of hell. I would rather put us in mind of the joys of heaven, the pleasure whereof we should be more glad to get, than we should be to flee and scape all the pains in hell. But surely God in that thing, wherein he may seem most rigorous, is marvellous merciful to us, and that is (which many men would little ween) in that he provided hell. For I suppose very surely, cousin, that many a man and woman ^{God mercifull in providing hell.} too, of whom there sit some now, and more shall hereafter sit, full gloriously crowned in heaven, had they not first been afraid of hell, would toward heaven never have set foot forward. But yet undoubtedly were it so, that we could as well conceive in our hearts the

marvellous joys of heaven, as we conceive the fearful pains of hell (howbeit sufficiently we can conceive neither), but if we could in our imagination draw as much toward the perceiving of the one, as we may toward the consideration of the other, we would not fail to be far more moved and stirred to the suffering for Christ's sake in the world, for the winning of those heavenly joys, than for the eschewing of all these infernal pains. But forasmuch as the fleshly pleasures be far less pleasant, than the fleshly pains are painful; therefore we fleshly folk that are so drowned in these fleshly pleasures, and in the desire thereof, that we can have almost no manner savour or taste in any pleasure spiritual, have no cause to marvel that our fleshly affections be more abated and refrained by the dread and terror of hell, than affections spiritual imprinted in us, and pricked forward with the desire and joyful hope of heaven.

Fleshly pleasures let the taste of heavenly joys.

Howbeit if we would somewhat set less by the filthy voluptuous appetites of the flesh, and would by withdrawing from them, with help of prayer through the grace of God, draw nearer to the secret inward pleasure of the spirit, we should by the little sipping that our hearts should have here now, and that sudden taste thereof, have such an estimation of the incomparable and uncogitable joy, that we shall have (if we will) in heaven by the very full draught thereof, whereof it is written, *Satiabor quum apparuerit gloria tua*,—I shall be satiate, satisfied or fulfilled, when thy glory, good Lord, shall appear,* that is to wit, with the fruition of the sight of God's glorious majesty face to face: that the desire, expectation, and heavenly hope thereof, shall more encourage us, and make us strong to suffer and sustain for the love of God and salvation of our soul, than ever we could be moved to suffer here worldly pain by the terrible dread of all the horrible pains that damned wretches have in hell.

Wherefore in the meantime for lack of such experimental taste, as God giveth here sometime to some of his special servants, to the intent we may draw toward the

* Psal. xvi.

spiritual exercise too, for which spiritual exercise God with that gift, as with an earnest-penny of their whole reward after in heaven, comforteth them here in earth: let us not so much with looking to have described what manner of joys they shall be, as with hearing what our Lord telleth us in Holy Scripture,* how marvellous great they shall be, labour by prayer to conceive in our hearts such a fervent longing for them, that we may for attaining to them, utterly set at nought all fleshly delight, all worldly pleasures, all earthly losses, all bodily torments and pain. Howbeit some things are there in Scripture, expressed of the manner of the pleasures and joys that we shall have in heaven, as where, *Fulgebunt justi sicut sol, et qui erudiunt ad justitiam, tanquam scintillæ in arundinetis discurrunt*,—Righteous men shall shine as the sun, and shall run about like sparks of fire among reeds.†

The joys of heaven.

Now tell some carnal-minded man of this manner of pleasure, and he shall take little pleasure therein, and say he careth not to have his flesh shine, he, nor like a spark of fire to skip about in the sky. Tell him, that his body shall be impassible, and never feel harm: yet if he think then therewith, that he shall never be an hungered, nor athirst, and shall thereby forbear all his pleasure of eating and drinking, and that he shall never have lust to sleep, and thereby lose the pleasure that he was wont to take in slugging, and that men and women shall there live together as angels, without any manner mind or motion unto the carnal act of generation, and that he shall thereby not use there his old filthy voluptuous fashion, he will say, he is better at ease already, and would not give this world for that. For as St. Paul saith, *Animalis homo non percipit ea quæ sunt Spiritus Dei, stultitia enim est illi*,—A carnal man feelth not the things that be of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him.‡ But when the time shall come, that these foul filthy pleasures shall be so taken from him, that it shall abhor his heart once to think on them, whereof every

Carnal men set little by the joys of heaven.

How many say so now.

In sickness all pleasures cease.

* Esai. lxiv.; 1 Cor. iv.

† Sap. iii.

‡ 1 Cor. ii.

man hath among a certain shadow of experience in the fervent grief of a sore painful sickness, while the stomach can scant abide to look upon any meat, and as for the acts of the other foul filthy lust, is ready to vomit, if it happen him to think thereon. When men shall, I say, after this life, feel that horrible abomination in their heart at the remembrance of these voluptuous pleasures (of which abomination sickness hath here a shadow) for

which voluptuous pleasures he would here be loath to change with the joys of heaven. When he shall, I say, after this life have his fleshly pleasures in abomination, and shall of those heavenly joys, which be set here so little by, have there a glimmering, though far from a perfect sight: oh, good God! how fain will he then be, with how good will and how glad will he then give this whole world, if it were his, to have the feeling of some little part of these joys! And therefore let us all that we can, conceive now such delight in the consideration of them as we should have often in our eyes by reading, often in our ears by hearing, often in our mouths by rehearsing, often in our hearts by meditation and thinking upon those joyful words of Holy Scripture, by which we learn, how wonderful huge and great those spiritual heavenly joys are, of which our carnal hearts have so feeble and so faint a feeling, and our dull worldly wits so little able to conceive so much as a shadow of the right imagination. A shadow I say: for as for the thing as it is, that cannot only no fleshly carnal phantasy conceive, but over that, no spiritual ghostly person (peradventure) neither, that here is living still in this world. For sith the very substance essential of all the celestial joys standeth in blessed beholding of the glorious Godhead face to face, there may no man presume or look to attain it in this life. For God hath so said himself, *Non videbit me homo, et vivet*, —There shall no man here living, behold me.*

No man can see God, nor know the joys of heaven here.

And therefore we may well know, that for the state of this life, we be not only shut from the fruition of the bliss of heaven, but also that

* Exod. xxxiii.

the very best man living here upon earth (the best man, I mean, being no more but a man) cannot, I ween, attain the right imagination thereof, but those that are very virtuous, are yet in a manner as far therefrom, as the born blind man from the right imagination of colours.

The words that St. Paul rehearseth of the prophet Esay prophesying of Christ's incarnation, may properly be verified by the joys of heaven: *Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus diligentibus se*,* —For surely for the state of this world, the joys of heaven are by man's mouth unspeakable, to man's ears not audible, to man's heart uncogitable, so farforth excel they all that ever any man can by natural possibility think on. And yet where the joys of heaven be such, prepared for every saved soul, our Lord saith yet by the mouth of St. John, that he will give his holy martyrs, that suffer for his sake, many a special kind of joy. For he saith, —*Vincenti dabo edere de ligno vite*, —To him that overcome I shall give him to eat of the tree of life.† And also he that overcome shall be clothed in white clothes, and I shall confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. And also he saith, Fear none of those things that thou shalt suffer, &c.; but be faithful unto the death, and I shall give thee the crown of life. He that overcome, shall not be hurt of the second death. He saith also, *Vincenti dabo manna absconditum, et dabo illi calculum conditum, et in calculo nomen novum scriptum, quod nemo scit nisi qui accipit*, —To him that overcome, will I give manna secret and hid. And I will give him a white suffrage, and in his suffrage a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it. They used of old in Greece (where St. John did write) to elect and choose men unto honourable rooms, and every man's assent was called his suffrage, which in some places was by the voices, in some places by hands, and one kind of those suffrages was by certain things that are in Latin called *calculi*, because that in some places they used thereto

Martyrs have special prerogatives.

‡ suffrag.

* Isaïæ vi. ; 1 Cor. ii.

† Apocal. ii.

round stones. Now saith our Lord that unto him which overcometh he will give a white suffrage.* For those that wore white signified approving, as the black signified reproving. And in these suffrages did they use to write the name of him to whom they gave their voice. And now saith our Lord, that to him that overcometh he will in the suffrage give him a new name, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it. He saith also: He that over-

Martires be pillars in Gods Church.

cometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out thereof. And I shall write upon him the name

of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which descendeth from heaven from my God, and I shall write upon him also my new name. If we would dilate and were able to declare these special gifts, with yet other more specified in the second and third chapter of the Apocalypse; there would it appear how

All these joys pass all worldly comforts.

far these heavenly joys shall surmount above all the comfort that ever came in the mind of any man living here upon earth. The blessed

apostle St. Paul, that suffered so many perils, and so many passions, he that saith of himself that he hath been *In laboribus pluribus, in carceribus abundantius, in plagis, &c.*—In many labours, in prison often than other, in stripes above measure, at point of death often times. Of the Jews had I five times forty stripes save one: thrice have I been beaten with rods, once was I stoned: thrice have I been in shipwreck: a day and a night was I in the depth of the sea: in my journies oft have I been in peril of floods, in peril of thieves, in perils by the Jews, in perils by the Paynims, in perils in the city, in perils in desert, in perils in the sea, in perils by false brethren, in labour and misery, in many nights' watch, in hunger and thirst, in many fastings, in cold and nakedness, beside these things that are outward my daily instant labour, I mean my care and solicitude about all the churches.† And yet saith he more of his tribulations, which for length I let pass. This blessed apostle, I say, for all these tribulations that himself suffered in the continuance of so many

* Apocal. iii.

† 2 Cor. xi.

years, calleth yet all the tribulations of this world but light and short as a moment in respect of the weighty glory that it after this world winneth us. *Id enim quod in presenti est momentaneum, et leve tribulationis nostrae, supra modum in sublimitate aeternum gloriae pondus operatur in nobis, non contemplantibus nobis quae videntur, sed quae non videntur. Quae enim videntur, temporalia sunt, quae autem non videntur, aeterna sunt.*—This same short and momentary tribulation of ours that is in this present time, worketh within us the weight of glory above measure—in sublimitate—on high, we beholding not those things that we see, but those things that we see not. For these things that we see, be but temporal things: but those things that are not seen are eternal.* Now to this great glory can there no man come headless. Our head is Christ,† and therefore to him must we be joined, and as members of his must we follow him, if we will come thither. He is our guide to guide us thither, and is entered in before us. And he therefore that will enter in after, *Debet sicut ille ambulavit, et ipse ambulare.*—The same way that Christ walked, the same way must he walk.‡ And what was the way by which he walked into heaven, himself sheweth what way it was that his Father had provided for him, where he said unto the two disciples, going toward the castle of Emaus, *Nonne haec oportuit pati Christum, et ita intrare in gloriam suam?*—Know ye not that, Christ must suffer passion, and by that way enter into his kingdom?§ Who can for very shame desire to enter into the kingdom of Christ with ease, when he himself entered not into his own without pain.

Christ is followed by tribulation and penance, and not by liking at ease and liberty.

A notable saying.

* 2 Cor. iv.

† Ephes. v.

‡ 1 Johan. ii.

§ Luc. ult.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

The Consideration of the painful Death of Christ is sufficient to make us content to suffer painful Death for his sake.



SURELY, cousin, as I said before, in bearing the loss of worldly goods, in suffering of captivity, thralldom, and imprisonment, and in the glad sustaining of worldly shame, that if we would in all these points deeply ponder the sample of our Saviour himself, it were of itself alone sufficient to encourage every kind Christian man and woman, to refuse none of all those calamities for his sake. So say I now for painful death also, that if we could and would with due compassion conceive in our minds a right imagination and remembrance of Christ's bitter painful passion,* of the many sore bloody strokes that the cruel tormentors with rods and whips gave him upon every part of his holy tender body, the scornful crown of sharp thorns beaten down upon his holy head, so strait and so deep, that on every part his blessed blood issued out and streamed down his lovely limbs drawn and stretched out upon the cross, to the intolerable pain of his forbeaten and sore beaten veins and sinews, new feeling with the cruel stretching and straining pain, far passing any cramp in every part of his blessed body at once: then the great long nails cruelly driven with hammers through his holy hands and feet, and in this horrible pain lift up and let hang with the peise of all his

A brief and good description of Christ's pains.

* Johan. xix. ; Matth. xxvii. ; Marc. xv. ; Luc. xxiii.

body, bearing down upon the painful wounded places, so grievously pierced with nails, and in such torment (without pity, but not without many despites) suffered to be pined and pained the space of more than three long hours, till himself willingly gave up unto his Father his holy soul: after which yet to shew the mightiness of their malice, after his holy soul departed, they pierced his holy heart with a sharp spear, at which issued out the holy blood and water whereof his holy sacraments have inestimable secret strength: if we would, I say, remember these things in such wise, as would God we would, I verily think and suppose that the consideration of his incomparable kindness could not in such wise fail to inflame our key-cold hearts, and set them on fire in his love, that we should find ourself not only content, but also glad and desirous, to suffer death for his sake, that so marvellous lovingly letted not to sustain so far passing painful death for ours.

Would God we would here to the shame of our cold affection again toward God, for such fervent love, and inestimable kindness of God toward us: would God we would, I say, but consider what hot affection many of these fleshly lovers have borne, and daily do ^{fleshly lovers'} bear to those upon whom they doat! ^{affection.} How many of them have not letted to jeopard their lives, and how many have willingly lost their lives indeed without either great kindness shewed them before (and afterward, you wot well, they could nothing win), but even that it contented and satisfied their mind, that by their death their lover should clearly see how faithfully they loved? The delight whereof, imprinted in their phantasy, not assuaged only, but counterpeised also (they thought) all their pain. Of these affections with the wonderful dolorous effects following thereon, not only old written stories, but over that I think in every conuntry Christian and heathen both, experience giveth us proof enough. And is it not then a wonderful shame for us for the dread of temporal death, to forsake our Saviour that willingly suffered so painful death, rather than he would forsake us, considering that beside that he shall for our suffering

so highly reward us with everlasting wealth? Oh! if he that is content to die for her love, of whom he looketh after for no reward, and yet by his death goeth from her, might by his death be sure to come to her, and ever after in delight and pleasure to dwell with her: such a lover would not let here to die for her twice. And how cold lovers be we then unto God, if rather than die for him once we will refuse him and forsake him for ever that both died for us before, and hath also provided that if we die here for him, we shall in heaven everlastingly both live and also reign with him. For, as St. Paul saith, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.*

Many die willingly for fame. How many Romans, how many noble courages of other sundry countries have willingly given their own lives, and suffered great deadly pains, and very painful deaths for their countries, and the respect of winning by their deaths the only reward of worldly renown and fame? And should we then shrink to suffer as much for eternal honour in heaven and everlasting glory?

Obstinate heretics die for vain glory, and Catholics do shrink for true glory. The devil hath some also so obstinate heretics that endure wittingly painful death for vain glory: and is it not more than shame, that Christ shall see his Catholics forsake his faith, rather than suffer the same for heaven and very glory?

Would God, as I many times have said, that the remembrance of Christ's kindness in suffering his passion for us, the consideration of hell that we should fall in by forsaking of him, the joyful meditation of eternal life in heaven, that we shall win with this short temporal death patiently taken for him, had so deep a place in our breast, as reason would they should, and as (if we would do our devoir toward it, and labour for it, and pray therefor) I verily think they should.

A notable point to mark, how to overcome the fear and pain of death. For then should they so take up our mind, and ravish it all another way, that as a man hurt in a fray feeleth not sometime his wound nor yet is not ware thereof, till his mind fall more thereon, so farforth, that sometime another man

* Rom. viii.

sheweth him that he hath lost an hand, before he perceive it himself: so the mind ravished in the thinking deeply of those other things, Christ's death, hell and heaven, were likely to minish and put away of our painful death four parts of the feeling either of the fear, or of the pain. For fear of this am I very sure, if we had the fifteenth part of the love to Christ, that he both had, and hath unto us, all the pain of this Turk's persecution could not keep us from him, but that there would be at this day as many martyrs here in Hungary, as have been afore in other countries of old. And of this point put I no doubt, but that if the Turk stood even here, with all his whole army about him, and every of them all were ready at hand with all the terrible torments that they could imagine, and (but if we would forsake the faith) were setting their torments to us, and to the increase of our terror, fell all at once in a shout, with trumpets, tabrets, and timbrels all blown up at once, and all their guns let go therewith, to make us a fearful noise, if there should suddenly then on the other side the ground quake and rive atwain, and the devils rise out of hell, and shew themselves in such ugly shapes as damned wretches shall see them, and with that hideous howling that those bellhounds should screech, lay hell open on every side round about our feet, that as we stood we should look down into that pestilent pit, and see the swarm of silly souls in the terrible torments there, we would wax so afraid of the sight, that as for the Turk's host, we should scanty remember we saw them. And in good faith for all that, yet think I farther, that if there might then appear the great glory of God, the Trinity in his high marvellous majesty, our Saviour in his glorious manbood, sitting on his throne with his immaculate mother, and all the glorious company calling us there unto them, and that yet our way should be through marvellous painful death, before we could come at them, upon the sight, I say, of that glory there would I ween be no man that once would shrink thereat, but every man would run on toward them, in all that ever he

This very thing happened to the martyrs of old.

Lack of fear of hell makes us fear persecution so much.

Lack of faith of heavenly bliss maketh us shrink to run thitherward.

might, though there lay for malice to kill us by the way, both all the Turk's tormentors, and all the devils too. And therefore, cousin, let us well consider these things, and let us have sure hope in the help of God, and I then doubt not but that we shall be sure, that as the prophet saith, the truth of his promise shall so compass us with a pavice, that of this incursion of this midday devil, this Turk's persecution, we shall never need to fear. For either if we trust in God well, and prepare us therefor, the Turk shall never meddle with us, or else if he do, harm shall he none do us, but instead of harm, inestimable good. Of whose gracious help wherefore should we so sore now despair, except we were so mad men as to ween, that either his power or his mercy were

God can and doth make martyrs now.

now? Or

Some were as tender of old, as we be now.

what excuse can we have by the tenderness of our flesh, when we can be no more tender than were many of them, among whom were not only men of strength, but also weak women and children. And sith the strength of them all stood in the help of God, and that the very strongest of them all was never able of themselves, and with God's help the feeblest of them all was strong enough to stand against all the world, let us prepare ourself with prayer, with our whole trust in his help, without any trust in our own strength; let us think thereon and prepare us in our

We must not seek persecution. A high pride to desire martyrdom.

minds thereto long before; let us therein conform our will unto his, not desiring to be brought unto the peril of persecution (for it seemeth a proud high mind to desire martyrdom) but desiring help and strength of God, if he suffer us to come to the stress, either being sought, formed, or

Who be bound to abide persecution, and not to flee.

brought out against our wills, or else being by his commandment (for the comfort of our cure) bounden to abide, let us fall to fasting, to prayer, to almsdeed in time, and give that unto

God that may be taken from us.
If the devil put in our mind the saving of our land and

our goods, let us remember that we cannot save them long. If he fear us with exile and fleeing from our country, let us remember that we be born into the broad world (and not like a tree to stick still in one place), and that whithersoever we go God shall go with us. If he threaten us with captivity, let us tell him again, better is it to be thrall unto man a while for the pleasure of God, than by displeasing of God be perpetual thrall unto the devil. If he threat us with imprisonment, let us tell him, we will rather be man's prisoners a while here on earth, than by forsaking the faith be his prisoners for ever in hell. If he put in our minds the terror of the Turks, let us consider his false sleight therein; for this tale he telleth us, to make us forget him. But let us remember well, that in respect of himself the Turk is but a shadow, nor all that they can all do, can be but a flea-biting in comparison of the mischief that he goeth about. The Turks are but his tormentors, for himself doth the deed. Our Lord saith in the Apocalypse, *Ecce missurus est diabolus aliquos ex vobis in carcerem, ut tentemini*.—The devil shall send some of you to prison, to tempt you.* He saith not that man shall, but that the devil shall himself. For without question, the devil's own deed it is, to bring us by his temptation with fear and force thereof into eternal damnation. And therefore saith St. Paul, *Non est nobis colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed, &c.*—Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the princes and powers, and ghostly enemies that be rulers of these darknesses, &c.† Thus may we see, that in such persecutions, it is the midday devil himself that maketh such incursion upon us, by the men that are his ministers, to make us fall for fear. The devil himself worketh by ministers.
For till we fall, he can never hurt us. And therefore saith St. James, *Resistite diabolo, et fugiet a vobis*.—Stand against the devil, and he shall flee from you. For he never runneth upon a man to seize on him with his claws, till he see him down on the ground willingly fallen himself. For his fashion is to set his servants against us,

* Apocal. iii.

† Ephes. vi.

and by them to make us for fear, or for impatience to fall, and himself in the meanwhile compasseth us, running and roaring like a rampant lion about us, looking who will fall, that he then may devour him. *Adversarius vester diabolus* (saith St. Peter) *tanquam leo rugiens circuit quærens quem devoret*,—Your adversary the devil like a roaring lion, runneth about in circuit, seeking whom he may devour.* The devil it is therefore, that (if we for fear of men will fall) is ready to run upon us, and devour us. And is it wisdom then, so much to think upon the Turks that we forget the devil?

What madman is he, that when a lion were about to devour him, would vouchsafe to regard the biting of a little foisting cur?

Therefore when he roareth out upon us by the threats of mortal men, let us tell him, that with our inward eye we see him well enough, and intend to stand and fight with him, even hand to hand. If he threaten us, that we be too weak, let us tell him that our captain Christ is with us, and that we shall fight with his strength that hath vanquished him already, and let us fence us with faith, and comfort us with hope, and smite the devil in the face with a firebrand of charity.

For surely if we be of that tender loving mind that our master was, and not hate them that kill us, but pity them and pray for them, with sorrow for the peril that they work to themselves; that fire of charity thrown in his face, striketh the devil suddenly so blind, that he cannot see where to fasten a stroke on us.

When we feel us too bold, remember our own feebleness. When we feel us too faint, remember Christ's strength. In our fear, let us remember Christ's painful agony, that himself would (for our comfort) suffer before his passion, to the intent that no fear should make us despair. And ever call for his help, such as himself list to send us, and then we need never to doubt, but that either he shall keep us from the painful death, or shall not fail so to strengthen us in it, that he

The last and best comfort.

* I Pet. v.

shall joyously bring us to heaven by it. And then doth he much more for us, than if he kept us from it. For as God did more for poor Lazar,* in helping him patiently to die for hunger at the rich man's door, than if he had brought him to the door all the rich glutton's dinner: so though he be gracious to a man, whom he delivereth out of painful trouble, yet doth he much more for a man, if through right painful death he deliver him from this wretched world into eternal bliss. From which whosoever shrink away with forsaking of his faith, and falleth in the peril of everlasting fire, he shall be very sure to repent it ere it be long after. For I ween that whensoever he falleth sick next, he will wish that he had been killed for Christ's sake before.

What folly is it then for fear to flee from that death, which thou seest thou shalt shortly after wish thou hadst died? Yea, I ween, almost every good Christian man would very fain this day, that he had been for Christ's faith cruelly killed yesterday, even for the desire of heaven, though there were no hell. But to fear, while the pain is coming, there is all our let. But then if we would remember hell pain on the other side, into which we fall while we flee from this, then should this short pain be no let at all.

And yet should we be more pricked forward, if we were faithful, by deep considering of the joys of heaven, of which the apostle saith, *Non sunt condignæ passionibus hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam, quæ revelabitur in nobis*,—The passions of this time be not worthy of the glory that is to come, which shall be shewed in us.†

We should not, I ween, cousin, need much more in all this whole matter, than that one text of St. Paul, if we would consider it well. For surely, mine own good cousin, remember that if it were possible for me and you alone, to suffer as much trouble, as the whole world doth together all, that were not worthy of itself to bring us to the joy which we hope to have everlastingly. And therefore I pray you let the consideration of that joy put out all worldly trouble out of

Many have and do wish this.

The greatest let, and remedy against it.

Hope of heavenly joy passeth all trouble.

* Luc. xvi.

† Rom. viii.

your heart, and also pray that it may do the same in me. And even thus will I, good cousin, with these words make a sudden end of my whole tale, and bid you farewell. For now I begin to feel myself somewhat weary.

VINCENT.—Forsooth, good uncle, this is a good end: and it is no marvel though you be waxen weary. For I have this day put you to so much labour, that saving for the comfort that yourself may take of your time so well bestowed, and for the comfort that I have myself taken, and more shall, I trust, for your good counsel given; else would I be very sorry to have put you to so much pain. But now shall our Lord reward and recompense you therefor, and many shall, I trust, pray for you. For to the intent that the more may take profit by you, I purpose, uncle, as my poor wit and learning will serve me, to put your good counsel in remembrance, not in our language only, but in the *Almaine* tongue too. And thus praying God to give me and all other that shall read it, the grace to follow your good counsel therein, I shall commit you to God.

ANTONY.—Sith you be minded, cousin, to bestow so much labour thereon, I would it had happed you to fetch the counsel at some wiser man that could have given you better. But better men may set more things, and better also, thereto. And in the meantime, I beseech our Lord to breathe of his Holy Spirit into the reader's breast, which inwardly may teach him in heart, without whom, little availeth all that all the mouths of the world were able to teach in men's ears. And thus, good cousin, farewell, till God bring us together again, either here, or in heaven! Amen!

F I N I S.