

BOOK III.

The Third and Last Book of Consolation and Comfort in Tribulation.

VINCENT.—SOMEWHAT have I tarried the longer, uncle, partly for that I was loth to come over soon lest my soon coming might have happed to have made you wake too soon: but specially by the reason that I was letted with one that shewed me a letter

dated at Constantinople, by which letter it appeareth, that the Great Turk prepareth a marvellous mighty army, and yet whither he will therewith, that can there yet no man tell. But I fear in good faith, uncle, that his voyage shall be hither. Howbeit, he that wrote the letter, saith that it is secretly said in Constantinople, that great part of his army shall be shipped and sent either into Naples, or into Sicily.

ANTONY.—It may fortune, cousin, that the letter of the Venetian dated at Constantinople, was devised at Venice. From thence come there some among, and sometime from Rome too, and sometime also from other places, letters all found full of such tidings, that the Turk is ready to do some great exploit. Which tidings they blow about for the furtherance of some such affairs, as they then have themselves in hand. The Turk hath also so many men of arms in his retinne at his continual charge, that lest they should lie still and do nothing, but peradventure fall in devising of some novelties among themselves, he is fain yearly to make some assemblies and some changing of them from one place

There be more great Turks than one.

and the novelties are sometimes blown abroad.

unto another, and past time sort asunder, that they wax not over well acquainted by dwelling over long together. By these ways also he maketh those that he mindeth suddenly to invade indeed, the less to look therefor, and thereby the less preparation to make before, while they see him so many times make a great visage of war when he mindeth it not; but then at one time or other they suddenly feel it, when they fear it not. Howbeit, full likely, cousin, it is of very truth, that unto this realm of Hungary he will not fail to come. For neither is there any country through Christendom, that lieth for him so meet, nor never was there any time till now, in which he might so well and surely win it. For now call we him in ourself (God save us!) as Æsop telleth, that the sheep took in the wolf unto them, to keep them from the dogs.

Note the parable, and beware the wolf.

VINCENT.—Then are there very like, good uncle, all these tribulations to fall upon us here, that I spake of in the beginning of our first communication here the other day.

ANTONY.—Very trnth it is, cousin, that so there will of likelihood in a while, but not forthwith all at the first. For while he cometh under the colour of aid for the one against the other, he will somewhat see the proof, before he fully shew himself. But in conclusion, if he be able to get it for him, you shall see him so handle it, that he shall not fail to get it from him, and that forthwith out of hand, ere ever he suffer him settle himself over snre therein.

This is the right practice of heretics.

VINCENT.—Yet say they, uncle, that he useth not to force any man to forsake his faith.

ANTONY.—Not any man, cousin? They say more than they can make good, that tell you so. He maketh a solemn oath among the ceremonies of that feast, in which he first taketh upon him his authority, that he shall, in all that he possibly may, minish the faith of Christ, and dilate the faith of Mahomet. But yet hath he not used to force every whole country at once to forsake their faith. For of some countries hath he been content only to take a tribute

The Turk's oath.

yearly, and let them live there as they list. Out of some he taketh the whole people away, dispersing them for slaves among many sundry countries of his, very far from their own, without any suffrance of regress. Some country so great and populous, that they cannot well be carried and conveyed thence, he destroyeth the gentlemen, and giveth their lands, part to such as he bringeth, and part to such as willingly will deny their faith, and keepeth the other in such misery, that they were in manner as good to be dead at once. In rest he suffereth also no Christian man almost, but those that resort as merchants, or those that offer themselves to serve him in his war.

But as for those Christian countries, that he useth not for only tributaries, as he doth Chio, Cyprus, or Candy, but reckoneth for clear conquest, and utterly taketh for his own, as Morea, Greece, and Macedonia, and such other like (and as I verily think, he will Hungary, if he get it), in all those useth he Christian people after sundry fashions. He letteth them dwell there indeed, because

they were too many to carry all away, and too many to kill them all too; but if he should either leave the land dispeopled and desolate, or else some other countries of his own, from whence he should (which would not well be done) convey the people thither, to people that land withal: there, lo, those that will not be turned from their faith, of which God keepeth (lauded be his holy name!) very many, he suffereth to dwell still in peace. But yet is their peace for all that not very peaceable. For lands he suffereth them to have none of their own; office or honest room they bear none: with occasions of his wars he filleth them with taxes and tollages unto the bare bones, their children he chooseth where he list in their youth, and taketh them from their parents, conveying them whither he list, where their friends never see them after, and abuseth them as he list. Some young maids he maketh harlots, some young men he bringeth up in war, and some young children he causeth to be gelded, not their stones cut out, as the custom was of old,

*Mabe not other
Turks done all
the same too?*

*Why Chris-
tian Catholic
folk be spared
sometimes, and
in some coun-
tries.*

but cutteth off their whole members by the body: how few scape and live, he little forceth; for he will have enough. And all that he so taketh young to any use of his own, are betaken unto such Turks or false renegades to keep, that they be turned from the faith of Christ every one, or else so handled, that as for this world they come to an evil chieving. For beside many other contumelies and despites that the Turks and the false renegade Christians many times do to good Christian people that still persevere and abide by the faith; they find the mean sometime to make some false shrews say, that they heard such a Christian man speak opprobrious words against Mahomet, and upon that point falsely testified, will they take occasion to compel him forsake the faith of Christ, and turn unto the profession of their shameful superstitious sect, or else will they put him to death with cruel intolerable torments.

*Note this prac-
tice practised
also now.*

VINCENT.—Our Lord, uncle, for his mighty mercy keep those wretches hence! For by my troth, if they hap to come hither, methink I see many more tokens than one, that we shall have of our own folk here ready to fall in unto them. For like as before a great storm the sea beginneth sometime to work and roar in itself, ere ever the winds wax boisterous; so methink I hear at mine ear, some of our own here among us, which within these few years could no more have borne the name of a Turk, than the name of a devil, begin now to find little fault therein, yea and some to praise them too, little and little as they may, more glad to find fault, at every state of Christendom, priests, princes, rites, ceremonies, sacraments, laws, and customs, spiritual, and temporal, and ail.

*A good simili-
tude.*

*The worst folk
do most find
and least amend
faults.*

ANTONY.—In good faith, cousin, so begin we to fare here indeed, and that but even now of late. For since the title of the Crown hath come in question, the good rule of this realm hath very sore decayed, as little while as it is. And undoubtedly Hungary shall never do well, as long as it standeth in this case, that men's minds hearken after novelties, and have their

*A deep point of
wisdom for
rulers to consi-
der.*

hearts hanging upon a change. And much the worse I like it, when their words walk so large toward the favour of the Turk's sect, which they were ever wont to have in so great abomination, as every true minded Christian man, and Christian woman too, must have. I am of such age as you see, and verily from as far as I can remember, it hath been marked and often proved true, that when children have in Buda fallen in a phantasy by themselves to draw together, and in their playing make as it were corsers carried to church, and sing after their childish fashion the tune of the *Dirige*, there hath great death there shortly followed after. And twice or thrice I may remember in my days, when children in divers parts of this realm have gathered themselves in sundry companies, and made, as it were, parties and battles, and after their battles in sport, wherein some children have yet taken great hurt, there hath fallen very battle and very deadly war indeed.

These tokens were somewhat like your ensample of the sea, sith they be (of things that after follow) tokens foregoing through some secret motion or instinct, whereof the cause is unknown. But by St. Mary! cousin, these

Note the like bold favour borne to the Turks inlanders.

tokens like I much worse, these tokens, I say, not of children's plays, nor of children's songs, but old shrews' large open words, so boldly spoken in the favour of Mahomet's sect, in this realm of Hungary that hath been ever hitherto a very sure key of Christendom. And out of doubt, if Hungary be lost, and that the Turk have it once fast in his possession, he shall ere it be long after, have an open ready way into almost the remnant of all Christendom: though he win it not all in a week, the great part will be won after, I fear me, within very few years.

VINCENT.—But yet evermore I trust in Christ, good uncle, that he shall not suffer that abominable sect of his mortal enemies in such wise to prevail against his Christian countries.

ANTONY.—That is very well said, cousin. Let us have our sure hope in him, and then shall we be very sure,

that we shall not be deceived. For either shall we have the thing that we hope for, or a better thing in the stead. For as for the thing itself that we pray for, and hope to have, God will not alway send us. And therefore, as I said in our first communication, in all thing (save only for heaven) our prayer nor our hope may never be too precise, although the thing be lawful to require. Verily if we people of the Christian nations were such, as would God we were! I would little fear all the preparations that the Great Turk could make; no nor yet being as bad as we be, I nothing doubt at all, but that in conclusion, how base soever Christendom be brought, it shall spring up again, till the time be come very near to the day of doom, whereof some tokens as methinketh are not come yet. But somewhat before that time shall Christendom

For all that Turks and heretics can do, Christendom and Catholic faith shall spring up again.

be straited sore, and brought into so narrow a compass, that according unto Christ's words, *Filius hominis veniens, putas, inveniet fidem in terra?*—When the Son of Man shall come again,* that is to wit, to the day of general judgment, weenest thou that he shall find faith in the earth? As who say, but a little. For as appeareth in the Apocalypse † and other places of Scripture, ‡ the faith shall be at that time so far faded, that he shall for the love of his elect, lest they should fall and perish too, abridge those days and accelerate his coming. But, as I say, methink I miss yet in my mind some of those tokens that shall by the Scripture come a good while before that. And among other the coming of the Jews, and the dilating of Christendom again before the world come to that straight. So that, I say, for mine own mind, I little doubt, but that this ungracious sect of Mahomet shall have a foul fall, Christendom spring and spread, flower, and increase again. Howbeit that pleasure and comfort shall they see, that shall be born after that we be buried (I fear me) both twain. For God giveth us great likelihood, that for our sinful wretched living, he goeth about to make these infidels, that are his

Both Turks and heretics shall have a fall at last.

Turks and heretics are God's scourge.

* Luc. xviii.

† Apocal. i.

‡ Matth. xxiv.

open professed enemies, the sorrowful scourge of correction over evil Christian people, that should be faithful, and of truth are his falsely professed friends. And surely, cousin, albeit that methinketh I see divers evil tokens of this misery coming to us, yet can there not in my mind be a worse prognostication thereof, than this ungracious token that you note here yourself. For undoubtedly, cousin, this new manner here of men's favourable fashion in their language toward these ungracious Turks, declareth plainly, that not only their minds giveth them, that hither in shall he come, but also that they can be content, both to live under him, and over that, from the true faith of Christ to fall into Mahomet's false abominable sect.

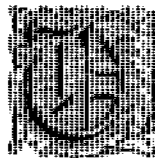
VINCENT.—Verily, my uncle, as I go more about than An heavy hearing indeed. you, so must I needs more hear (which is an heavy hearing in my ear) the manner of men in this matter, which increaseth about as here. I trust in other places of this realm by God's grace it is otherwise. But in this quarter here about us, many of these fellows that are met for the war, first were wont, as it were in sport, and in a while after half between game and earnest, and by our Lady! now not far from fair flat earnest These Turks have had, and have now their day. indeed, talk as though they looked for a day, when with a turn unto the Turk's faith they should be made masters here of true Christian men's bodies, and owners of all their goods.

ANTONY.—Though I go little abroad, cousin, yet hear I sometime, when I say little, almost as much as that. But while there is no man to complain to for the redress, what remedy but patience, and fain to sit still, and hold my peace? For of these two that strive whether of them both shall reign upon us, and each of them calleth himself king, and both twain put the people to pain: the one is, you wot well, too far from our quarter here to help us Mark what ensueth, when Christian princes use Turks' and heretics' aid. in this behalf. And the other, while he looketh for the Turk's aid, either will not, or well dare not (I ween) find any fault with them that favour the Turk and his sect. For of Turks natural this country lacketh none now, which

are here conversant under diverse pretexts, and of every thing advertise the Great Turk full surely. And therefore, cousin, albeit that I would advise every man, pray still and call unto God to hold his gracious hand over us, and keep away this wretchedness, if his pleasure be: yet would I farther advise every good Christian body to remember and consider, that it is very likely to come, and therefore make his reckoning and cast his pennyworths before, and every man and every Good to foresee and forecast the worst. woman appoint with God's help in their own mind before hand, what thing they intend to do, if the very worst fall.

CHAPTER I.

Whether a man should cast in his mind and appoint in his heart before, that if he were taken with Turks, he would rather die than forsake the faith.



INCENT. — WELL fare your heart, good uncle, for this good counsel of yours. For surely methinketh that this is marvellous good. But yet heard I once a right cunning and a very good man say, that it were great folly, and very perilous too,

that a man should think upon any such thing, or imagine any such case in his mind, for fear of double peril that may follow thereupon. For either shall he be likely to answer himself to the case put by himself, that he will rather suffer any painful death, than forsake his faith, and by that bold appointment, should he fall in the fault of St. Peter * that of oversight made a proud promise, and soon had a foul fall; or else were he likely to think that rather than abide the pain, he would forsake God indeed, and by that mind should he sin deadly through his own folly, whereas he needeth not, as he that shall peradventure never come in the peril to be put thereunto. And that therefore it were most wisdom never to think upon any such manner case.

ANTONY.—I believe well, cousin, that you have heard some man that would so say. For I can shew almost as much as that left of a good man and a great solemn doctor in writing. But yet, cousin, although I should

* Johan. xiii. ; Luc. xxii.

hap to find one or two more, as good men and as learned too, that would both twain say and write the same, yet would I not fear for my part to counsel my friend to the contrary. For, cousin, if his mind answer him, as St. Peter answered Christ, that he will rather die than forsake him, though he say therein more unto himself, than he should be peradventure able to make good, if it came to the point, yet perceive I not that he doth in that thought any deadly displeasure unto God, nor St. Peter, though he said more than he did perform, yet in his so saying offended not God greatly neither. But his offence was, when he did not after so well, as he said before. But now may this man be likely never to fall in the peril of breaking that appointment, sith of some ten thousand that so shall examine themselves, never one shall fall in that peril, and yet to have that good purpose all their life, seemeth me no more harm the while, than a poor beggar that hath never a penny, to think that if he had great substance, he would give great alms for God's sake.

But now is all the peril, if the man answer himself, that he would in such case rather forsake the faith of Christ with his mouth, and keep it still in his heart, than for the confessing of it to endure a painful death. For by this mind falleth he in deadly sin, which while he never cometh in the case indeed, if he never had put himself the case he never had fallen in. But in good faith methinketh, that he which upon that case put unto himself by himself, will make himself that answer, hath the habit of faith so faint and so cold, that to the better knowledge of himself, and of his necessity to pray for more strength of grace, he had need to have the question put him, either by himself, or some other man.

Besides this, to counsel a man never to think on the case, is in my mind as much reason as the medicine that I have heard taught one for the tooth-ache, to go thrice about a churchyard, and never think upon a fox-tail. For if the counsel be not given them, it cannot serve them; and if it be given them, it must put

One or two
doctors' mind
is not alway to
be trusted.

Such cold and
faint faith is
too common
now.

A medicine for
the tooth-ache.

that point of the matter in their mind, which by and by to reject, and think therein neither one thing or other, is a thing that may be sooner bidden than obeyed. I ween also that very few men can escape it, but that though they would never think thereon by themselves, yet in one place or other, where they shall hap to come in company, they shall have the question by adventure so proposed and put forth, that like as while he heareth one talking to him, he may well wink if he will but he cannot make himself sleep: so shall he, whether he will or no, think one thing or other therein.

Finally, when Christ spake so often and so plain of the matter, that every man should upon pain of damnation, openly confess his faith,* if men took him and by dread of death would drive him to the contrary; it seemeth me in a manner implied therein, that we be bound conditionally to have evermore that mind, actually sometime, and evermore habitually, that if the case so should fall, then, (with God's help), so we would. And where they find in the thinking thereon, their hearts agrise, and shrink in the remembrance of the pain that their imagination representeth to the mind, then must they call to mind and remember the great pain and torment that Christ suffered for them, and heartily pray for grace that if the case should so fall, God should give them strength to stand. And thus with exercise of such meditation, though men should never stand full out of fear of falling, yet must they persevere in good hope, and in full purpose of standing.

And this seemeth me, cousin, so far forth the mind, that every Christian man and woman must needs have, that methinketh that every curate should often counsel all his parishioners, and every man and woman, their servants and their children, even beginning in their tender youth, to know this point, and to think thereon, and little and little from their very childhood to accustom them dulcely and pleasantly in the meditation

Men think some time and cannot sleep.

If heretics think they must die for their faith, what must Christian Catholics think and do for theirs?

Note this duty of curates and others.

thereof, whereby the goodness of God shall not fail so to aspire the grace of his Holy Spirit into their hearts in reward of that virtuous diligence, that through such actual meditation, he shall confirm them in such a sure habit of spiritual faithful strength, that all the devils in hell with all the wrestling that they can make, shall never be able to wrest it out of their heart.

VINCENT.—By my troth, uncle, methinketh you say very well.

ANTONY.—I say surely, cousin, as I think. And yet all this have I said, concerning them that dwell in such places, as they be never like in their lives to come in the danger to be put to the proof. Howbeit many a man may ween himself farther therefrom, that yet may fortune by some one chance or other, to fall in the case that either for the truth of faith, or for the truth of justice (which go almost alike) he may fall in the case. But now be you and I, cousin, and all our friends here, far in another point. For we be so likely to fall in the experience thereof so soon, that it had been more time for us (all other things set aside) to have devised upon this matter, and firmly to have settled ourself upon a fast point long ago, than to begin to commune and counsel upon it now.

VINCENT.—In good faith, uncle, you say therein very truth, and would God it had come sooner in my mind; but better is yet late, than never. And I trust God shall yet give us respite and time, whereof, uncle, that we lose no part, I pray you proceed now with your good counsel therein.

ANTONY.—Very gladly, cousin, shall I now go forth in the fourth temptation, which only remaineth to be treated of, and properly pertaineth whole unto this present purpose.

How many are now fallen in the case, yea and fallen too?

Persecution for faith or justice, much alike.

* Matth. x.; Luc. xii.

CHAPTER II.

Of the fourth temptation, which is persecution for the faith, touched in these words of the prophet, Ab incurso et dæmonio meridiano.



THE fourth temptation, cousin, that the prophet speaketh of in the foreremembered psalm, *Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi*, &c. is plain open persecution, which is touched in these words, *Ab incurso et dæmonio meridiano*. And of all his temptations

This temptation most perilous, etc.

this is the most perilous, the most bitter, sharp, and most rigorous. For whereas in other temptations he useth either pleasant affectives unto sin, or other secret sleights and trains, and cometh in the night and stealeth on in the dark unaware, or in some other part of the day flieth and passeth by like an arrow, so shaping himself sometime in one fashion, sometime in another, and so dissimulating himself and his high mortal malice, that a man is thereby so blinded and beguiled, that he may not sometime perceive well what he is. In

Who seeth not now the rage of this furious midday devil?

this plain open persecution for the faith, he cometh even in the very mid-day, that is to wit, even upon them that have an high light of faith shining in their heart, and openly suffereth himself so plainly be perceived, by his fierce, furious, malicious persecution against the faithful Christian, for hatred of Christ's true Catholic faith, that no man having faith can doubt what he is. For in this temptation he sheweth himself such as the prophet nameth him, *Dæmonium meridianum*,—the midday devil:

he may be so lightsomely seen with the eye of a faithful soul, by his fierce furious assault and incursion. For therefore saith the prophet, that the truth of God shall compass that man round about, that dwelleth in the faithful hope of his help with a paviour, *Ab incurso et dæmonio meridiano*,—from the incursion and the devil of the midday, because this kind of persecution is not a wily temptation, but a furious force and a terrible incursion.* In other of his temptations he stealeth on like a fox: but in this Turk's persecution for the faith he runneth on roaring with assault like a ramping lion indeed.

This temptation is of all temptations also the most perilous. For whereas in temptations of prosperity, he useth only delectable affectives to move a man to sin, and in other kinds of tribulations and adversity he useth only grief and pain to pull a man into murmur, impatience, and blasphemy: in this kind of persecution for the faith of Christ he useth both twain, that is to wit, both his affectives of quiet and rest by deliverance from death and pain, with other pleasures also of this present life: and beside that, the terror and infliction of intolerable pain and torment. In other tribulation, as loss, or sickness, or death of our friends, though the pain be peradventure as great and sometime greater too; yet is not the peril nowhere nigh half so much. For in other tribulations, as I said before, the necessity that the man must of fine force abide and endure the pain, wax he never so wroth and impatient therewith, is a great reason and occasion to move him to keep his patience therein, and be content therewith, and thank God thereof, and of necessity to make a virtue that he may be rewarded for. But in this temptation, this persecution for the faith (I mean, not by fight in the field, by which the faithful man standeth at his defense, and putteth the faithless in half the fear, and half the harm too), but where he is taken and in hold, and may for the forswearing or the denying of his faith be delivered and suffer to live in rest, and sometime in great worldly wealth also: in this case, I say, this thing,

* 1 Pet. v.

that he needeth not to suffer this trouble and pain but he will, is a marvellous great occasion for him, to fall into the sin that the devil would drive him to, that is to wit, the forsaking of his faith. And therefore as I say, of all the devil's temptations is this temptation, this persecution for the faith, the most perilous.

VINCENT.—The more perilous, uncle, that this temptation is (as indeed of all temptations the most perilous it is) the more need have they that stand in peril thereof, to be before with substantial advice and good counsel well armed against it, that we may with the comfort and consolation thereof the better bear that tribulation when it cometh, and the better withstand the temptation.

ANTONY.—You say, cousin Vincent, therein very truth, and I am content to fall therefor in hand therewith. But forasmuch, cousin, as methinketh, that of this tribulation somewhat you be more frail than I, and of truth somewhat more excusable it is in you, than it were in me, my age considered, and the sorrow that I have suffered already with some other considerations on my part beside: rehearse you therefore the griefs and pains that you think in this tribulation possible to fall unto you: and I shall against each of them give you counsel and rehearse you such occasion of comfort and consolation, as my poor wit and learning can call to my mind.

VINCENT.—In good faith, uncle, I am not all thing afraid in this case only for myself, but well you wot I have cause to care also for many more, and that folk of sundry sorts men and women both, and that not all of one age.

ANTONY.—All that you have cause to fear for, cousin, for all them have I cause to fear with you too, sith all your kinsfolks and allies within a little be likewise unto me. Howbeit to say the truth, every man hath cause in this case to fear, both for himself and also for every other. For sith, as the Scripture saith, *Unicuique dedit Deus curam de proximo suo*,—God hath given every man cure and charge of his neighbour,* there is no man that hath any spark

of Christian love and charity in his breast, but that in a matter of such peril as this is, wherein the soul of man standeth in so great danger to be lost, he must needs care and take thought, not for his friends only, but also for his very foes. We shall therefore, cousin, not ^{to his chari-} rehearse your harms or mine that may befall ^{table said.} in this persecution, but all the great harms in general, as near as we can call to mind, that may hap unto any man.

^{a good care for}
kinsfolk and
friends.

* Eccles. xvii.

CHAPTER III.



WITH a man is made of the body and the soul, all the harm that any man may take, it must needs be in one of these two; either immediately, or by the mean of some such thing as serveth for the pleasure, weal, or commodity of the one of these two.

As for the soul, first we shall need no rehearsal of any harm, that by this kind tribulation may attain thereto: but if that by some inordinate love and affection that

The harm of the soul. the soul bear to the body, she consent to slide from the faith, and thereby do her harm herself. Now remain there the body, and these outward things of fortune, which serve for the maintenance of the body, and minister matter of pleasure to the soul also, through the delight that she hath in the body, for the while that she is matched therewith. Consider then first the loss of these outward things, as somewhat the less in weight, than is the body itself. In them what may a man lose, and thereby what pain may he suffer?

All these losses and harms men have and suffer now. VINCENT.—He may lose, uncle (of which I should somewhat lose myself), money, plate, and other moveable substance. Those offices, authority, and finally all the lands of his inheritance for ever, that himself and his heirs perpetually might else enjoy. And of all these things, uncle, you wot well, that myself have some, little in respect of that that some other have here, but somewhat more yet, than he that hath most here would be well content to lose. Upon the loss of these things follow neediness and poverty, the pain of lacking, the shame of begging: of which twain I wot not well which is the most wretched necessity, be-

side the grief and heaviness of heart in beholding good men and faithful, and his dear friends, bewrapped in like misery, and ungracious wretches and infidels, and his most mortal enemies, enjoy the commodities that himself and his friends have lost. Now for the body very few words shall serve us. For therein I see none other harm but loss of liberty, labour, imprisonment, painful and shameful death.

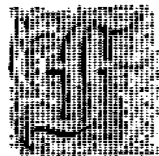
ANTONY.—There needeth not much more, cousin, as the world is now. For I fear me that less than a fourth part of this will make many a man so stagger in his faith, and some man fall quite therefrom, that yet at this day, before he come to the proof, weeneth himself that he How true is this tried now? would stand very fast. And I beseech our Lord, that all they that so think, and would yet, when they were brought to the point, fall therefrom for fear or for pain, may get of God the grace to ween still as they do, and not to be brought to the assay, where pain or fear should shew them then (as it shewed St. Peter*) how far they be deceived now. But now, cousin, against these terrible things, what way shall we take in giving men counsel or comfort?

If the faith were in our days as fervent as it hath been ere this in times past, little counsel and little The fervent faith of old time. comfort would suffice. We should not much need with words and reasoning to extenuate and minish the vigour and asperity of the pains; but the greater, the more bitter that the passion were, the more ready was of old time the fervour of faith to suffer it. And surely, cousin, I doubt it little in my mind, but that if a man had in his heart so deep a desire and love; longing to be with God in heaven, to have the fruition of his glorious face, as had these holy men that were martyrs in the old time, he would no more now stick at the pain that he must pass between, than at that time those old holy martyrs did. But alas! our faint and feeble faith with our love to God, less than The faint and feeble faith now. lukewarm, by the fiery affection that we bear to our own filthy flesh, maketh us so dull in the desire of

* Luc. xxii.

heaven that the sudden dread of every bodily pain woundeth us to the heart, and striketh our devotion stark dead. And therefore doth there every man, cousin (as I said before), much the more need to think upon this thing many a time and oft aforehand, ere any such peril fall : and by much devising thereupon, before they see the cause to fear it, while the thing shall not appear so terrible unto them, reason shall better enter, and through grace working with their diligence, engender and set sure, not a sudden slight affection of sniffrance for God's sake, but by a long continuance a strong deep-rooted habit, not like a reed ready to wave with every wind, nor like a rootless tree, scant set up on end, in a loose heap of light sand, that will with a blast or two be blown down.

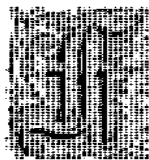
CHAPTER IV.



OR if we now consider, cousin, these causes of terror and dread that you have recited, which in his persecution for the Faith this midday devil may by these Turks rear against us, to make his incursion with : we shall well perceive, weighing them well with reason, that albeit somewhat they be indeed, yet every part of the matter pondered, they shall well appear in conclusion things nothing so much to be dread and fled from, as to folk at the first sight they do suddenly seem.

CHAPTER V.

Of the loss of the goods of fortune



OR first to begin at these outward goods, that neither are the proper goods of the soul, nor of the body, but are called the goods of fortune, that serve for the sustenance and commodity of man for the short season of this present life, as worldly substance, offices, honour, and authority, what great good is there in these things of themselves, for which they were worthy so much as to bear the name, by which the world of a worldly favour customably calleth them? For if the having of strength make a man strong, and the having of heat make a man hot, and the having of virtue make a man virtuous: how can these things be verily and truly good, which he that hath them, may by the having of them as well be the worse as the better, and (as experience proveth) more often is the worse than the better? When should a good man greatly rejoice in that, that he daily seeth most abound in the hands of many that be nought? Do not now this great Turk and his bassas in all these advancements of fortune, surmount very far above any Christian estate, and any lords living under him? And was there not yet hence upon a twenty year ago, the great Soudan of Syria, which many a year together bare as great a part as the great Turk, and after in one summer unto the great Turk that whole empire was lost? And so may all his empire now, and shall hereafter by

The goods of fortune.

That great Turkish bassas do mount aloft now!

God send once
that day!

God's grace be lost unto Christian men's hands likewise, when Christian people shall be mended, and grow into God's favour again. But when that whole kingdom and mighty great empires are of so little surety to stand, and be so soon translated from one man unto another; what great thing can you or I, yea, or any lord the greatest in this land, reckon himself to have by the possession of an heap of silver or gold, white and yellow metal, not so profitable of their own nature (save for a little glistening) as the rude rusty metal of iron?

CHAPTER VI.

Of the unsurety of lands and possessions.

LANDS and possessions many men yet much more esteem than money, because the lands seem not so casual as money is or plate, for that though their other substance may be stolen and taken away, yet evermore they think that their land will lie still where it lay. But what are we the better, that our land cannot be stirred, but will lie still where it lay, while ourself may be removed, and not suffered to come near it? What great difference is there to us, whether our substance be moveable or immoveable, sith we be so moveable ourself, that we may be removed from them both, and lose them both twain, saving that sometime in the money is the surety somewhat more. For when we be fain ourself to flee, we may make shift to carry some of our money with us, where of our land we cannot carry one inch. If our land be a thing of more surety than our money, how happeth it then, that in this persecution, we be more afraid to lose it? For if it be a thing of more surety, then can it not soon be lost. In the translation of these two great empires, Greece first, sith myself was born, and after, Syria, since you were born too, the land was lost before the money was found.

Oh! cousin Vincent, if the whole world were animated with a reasonable soul, as Plato had weened it were, and that it had wit and understanding to

Land and possessions.

Money better than land sometime.

A proper fiction.

mark and perceive all thing: Lord God! how the ground, on which a prince buildeth his palace, would loud laugh his lord to scorn, when he saw him proud of his possession, and heard him boast himself that he and his blood are for ever the very lords and owners of that land! For then would the ground think the while in himself: Oh, thou silly poor soul, that weenest thou were half a god, and art amid thy glory but a man in a gay gown: I that am the ground here, over whom thou art so proud, have had an hundred such owners of me as thou callest thyself, more than ever thou hast heard the names of. And Handed men's state. some of them that proudly went over my head, lie now low in my belly, and my side lieth over them: and many one shall, as thou doest now, call himself mine owner after thee, that neither shall be sib to thy blood, nor any word bear of thy name. Who aught your castle, cousin, three thousand years ago?

VINCENT.—Three thousand, uncle! Nay, nay, in anything Christian, or heathen, you may strike off a third part of that well enough, and as far as I ween half of the remnant too. In far fewer years than three thousand it may well fortune, that a poor ploughman's blood may come up to a kingdom, and a king's right royal kin on the other side fall down to the plough and cart: and neither that king know that ever he came from the cart, nor that carter know that ever he came from the crown.

ANTONY.—We find, cousin Vincent, in full authentic stories, many strange chances as marvellous as that, come about in the compass of very few years in effect. And be such things then in reason so greatly to be set by, that we should esteem the loss so great, when we see that in the keeping our surety is so little?

VINCENT.—Marry, uncle, but the less surety that we have to keep it, sith it is a great commodity to have it, the fearder by so much, and the more loth we be to forego it.

ANTONY.—That reason shall I, cousin, turn against yourself. For if it be so, as you say, that sith the things be commodious, the less surety that you see you have of

the keeping, the more cause you have to be afraid of the losing; then on the other side, the more that a thing is of his nature such, that the commodity thereof bringeth a man little surety, and much fear, that thing of reason the less have we cause to love. And then the less cause that we have to love a thing, the less cause have we to care therefor, or fear the loss thereof, or be loth to go therefrom.

CHAPTER VII.

These outward goods or gifts of fortune are two manner . wise to be considered.



I shall yet, cousin, consider in these outward goods of fortune, as riches, good name, honest estimation, honourable fame and authority: in all these things we shall, I say, consider, that either we love them and set by them, as by things commodious unto us for the state and condition of this present life, or else as things that we purpose by the good use thereof to make them matter of our merit with God's help in the life after to come. Let us then first consider them as things set by and beloved for the pleasure and commodity of them for this present life.

CHAPTER VIII.

The little commodity of riches being set by, but for this present life.



Riches loved and set by for such, if we consider it well, the commodity that we take thereof is not so great, as our own fond affection and phantasy maketh us imagine it. It maketh us, I say not nay, so much more gay and glorious in sight,

Gay apparel.

garnished with silk, but cloth is within a little as warm. It maketh us have great plenty of many kind of delicate and delicious victual, and thereby to make more excess. But less exquisite,

Delicate fare.

and less superfluous fare, with fewer surfeits and fewer fevers growing thereon to, were within a little as wholesome. Then the labour in the getting, the fear in the keeping, the pain in the parting from, do more than counterpoise a great part of all the pleasure and commodity that they bring. Besides this, the riches is the thing that taketh many times from his master, all his pleasure and his life too. For many a man is for his riches slain, and some that keep their riches as a thing pleasant and commodious for their life, take none other pleasure in a manner thereof in all their life, than as though they bare the key of another man's coffer, and rather are content to live in neediness miserably all their days, than they could find in their heart to *hoarders and* diminish their hoard, they have such phantasy *holders of money.* to look thereon. Yea and some men for fear lest thieves

should steal it from them, be their own thieves and steal it from themselves, while they dare not so much as let it lie where themselves may look thereon, but put it in a pot, and hide it in the ground, and there let it lie safe till they die, and sometime seven year after. From which place if the pot had been stolen away five year before his death, all the same five year that he lived after, weening alway that his pot lay safe still, what had he been the poorer, while he never occupied it after?

VINCENT.—By my troth, uncle, not one penny, for aught that I perceive.

CHAPTER IX.

The little commodity of fame being desired but for worldly pleasures.



ANTONY.—LET us now consider good name, honest estimation, and honourable fame. For these three things are of their own nature one, and take their difference, in effect, but of the manner of the common speech in diversity of degrees. For a good name may a man have, be he never so poor. Honest estimation in the common taking of the people belongeth not unto any man but him that is taken for one of some countenance and behaviour, and among his neighbours had in some reputation. In the word of honourable fame, folk conceive the renown of great estates, much and far spoken of by reason of their laudable acres. Now all this gear used as a thing pleasant and commodious for this present life, pleasant it may seem to him that fasteneth his phantasy therein, but of the nature of the thing itself, I perceive no great commodity that it hath. I say, of the nature of the thing itself; because it may be by chance some occasion of commodity, as if it hap that for the good name the poor man hath, as for the honest estimation that a man of some haviour and substance standeth in among his neighbours, or for the honourable fame wherewith the great estate is renowned, if it hap, I say, that any man bearing them better, will therefore do them therefor any good. And yet as for that, like as it may sometime so hap (and sometime so happeth it indeed) so

may it hap sometime on the other side (and on the other side so it sometime happeth indeed) that such folk are of some other envied and hated, and as readily ^{envy and hate} by them that envy them and hate them take ^{follow fame.} harm, as they take by them that love them, good.

But now to speak of the thing itself in his own proper nature, what is it but a blast of another man's mouth, as soon passed, as spoken? Whereupon he that setteth his delight, feedeth himself but with wind, whereof be he never so full, he hath little substance therein: and many times shall he much deceive himself. For he shall ween that many praise him, that never speak word of him, and they that do, say yet much less than he weeneth, and far more seldom too. For they spend not all the day, he may be sure, in talking of him alone, and whoso commend him most, will yet, I ween, in every four and twenty hours, wink and forget him at once. Besides this, that while one talketh well of him in one place, another sitteth and sayeth as shrewdly of him in another; and finally some that most praise him in his presence, behind his back mock him as fast, and loud laugh him to scorn, and sometime slyly to his own face too. And yet are there some fools so fed with this fond phantasy of fame, ^{Oh glorious} that they rejoyce and glory to think how they ^{fools.} be continually praised all about, as though all the world did nothing else day nor night but ever sit and sing, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*, upon them.

CHAPTER X.

Of Flattery.

FIND unto this pleasant phrenzy of much foolish vain-glory, be there some men brought sometime by such as themselves do in a manner bide to flatter them; and would not be content if a man should do otherwise, but would be right angry, not only if a man told them truth when they do nought indeed, but also if they praise it but slenderly.

VINCENT.—Forsooth, uncle, this is very truth. I have been ere this, not very long ago, where I saw so proper experience of this point, that I must stop your tale for so long, while I tell you mine.

ANTONY.—I pray you, cousin, tell on.

VINCENT.—When I was first in Almaine, uncle, it happed me to be somewhat favoured with a great man of the church, and a great state, one of the greatest in all that country there. And indeed whosoever might spend as much as he might in one thing and other, were a right great state in any country of Christendom. But glorious was he very far above all measure, and that was great pity, for it did harm, and made him abuse many great gifts that God had given him. Never was he satiate of hearing his own praise. So happed it one day, that he had in a great audience, made an oration in a certain manner, wherein he liked himself so well, that at his dinner he sat him thought on thorns, till he might hear how they that sat

A notable example of flattery.

with him at his board, would commend it. And when he had sitten musing a while, devising (as I thought after) on some pretty proper way, to bring it in withal; at last, for lack of a better (lest he should have letted the matter too long) he brought it even bluntly forth, and asked us all that set at his board's end (for at his own mess in the midst there set but himself alone), how well we liked his oration that he had made that day. But in faith, uncle, when that problem was once proposed, till it was full answered, no man I ween eat one morsel of meat more: every man was fallen in so deep a study, for the finding of some exquisite praise. For he that should have brought out but a vulgar and common commendation, would have thought himself shamed for ever.

Then said we our sentences by row as we sat, from the lowest unto the highest in good order, as it had been a great matter of the common weal in a right solemn council. When it came to my part (I will not say it for no boast, uncle), methought, by our Lady! for my part I quit myself pretty well. And I liked myself the better, because methought my words (being but a stranger) went yet with some grace in the Almaine tongue, wherein, letting my Latin alone, me listed to shew my cunning. And I hoped to be liked the better, because I saw that be that sat next me, and should say his sentence after me, was an unlearned priest: for he could speak no Latin at all. But when he came forth for his part with my lord's commendation, the wily fox had been so well accustomed in court with the craft of flattery, that he went beyond me too far. And then might I see by him, what excellency a right mean wit may come to in one craft, that in all his whole life studieth and busieth his wit about no more but that one. But I made after a solemn vow to myself, that if ever he and I were matched together at that board again, when we should fall to our flattery I would flatter in Latin, that he should not contend with me no more. For though I could be content to be outrun of a horse, yet would I no more abide it to be outrun of an ass. But, uncle, here began now the game: he that sat highest, and was to speak the last,

flattery accustomed in court.

was a great beneficed man, and not a doctor only, but also somewhat learned indeed in the laws of the church. A world it was to see, how he marked every man's word that spake before him, and it seemed that every word, the more proper that it was the worse he liked it, for the cumbrance that he had to study out a better to pass it. The man even sweat with the labour, so that he was fain in the while now and then to wipe his face. Howbeit in conclusion, when it came to his course, we that had spoken before him, had so taken all up among us before, that we had not left him one wise word to speak after.

ANTONY.—Alas! good man, among so many of you, some good fellow should have lent him one.

VINCENT.—It needed not, as hap was, uncle, for he found out such a shift, that in his flattering he passed us all the many.

ANTONY.—Why, what said he, cousin?

VINCENT.—By our Lady! uncle, not one word. But like, as I trow, Plinius telleth,* that when Timanthes, the painter, in the table that he painted of the sacrifice and the death of Iphigenia, had in the making of the sorrowful countenances of the other noblemen of Greece that beheld it, spent out so much of his craft and his cunning, that when he came to make the countenance of king Agamemnon her father, which he reserved for the last, lest if he had made his visage before, he must in some of the other after, either have made the visage less dolorous than he could, and thereby have forborne some part of his praise, or doing the uttermost of his craft, might have happed to make some other look more heavily for the pity of her pain than her own father, which had been yet a far greater fault in his painting, when he come, I say, to the making of his face therefore last of all, he could devise no manner of new heavy cheer and countenance for her father, but that he had made there already in some of the other a much more heavy before, and therefore to the intent that no man should see what manner countenance it was that her father had, the painter was fain to paint him, holding his face in his handkercher: the like

* Natural. Hist. lib. 35, cap. 10.

pageant in a manner played us here this good ancient honourable flatterer. For when he saw that he could find no word of praise that would pass ^{flattery well assembled to painting.} all that had been spoken before already, the wily fox would speak never a word, but as he were ravished unto heavenward with the wonder of the wisdom and eloquence that my lord's grace had uttered in that oration, he fet a long sigh with an oh! from the bottom of his breast, and held up both his hands, and lifted up his head, and cast both his eyes up into the welkin, and wept.

ANTONY.—Forsooth, cousin, he played his part very properly. But was that great prelate's oration any thing praiseworthy? For you can tell, I see, well. For you would not, I ween, play as Juvenal* merrily describeth the blind senator, one of the flatterers of Tiberius the emperor, that among the remnant so magnified the great fish that the emperor had sent for them to sbew them, which this blind senator (Montanus, I trow, ^{Montanus.} they called him), marvelled of as much as any that marvelled most: and many things he spake thereof, with some of his words directed thereunto, looking himself toward the left side, while the fish lay on his right side: you would not, I trow, cousin, have taken upon you to praise it so, but if you had heard it.

VINCENT.—I heard it, uncle, indeed, and to say the truth it was not to dispraise. Howbeit surely somewhat less praise might have served it, by more a great deal than the half. But this am I sure, had it been the worst that ever was made, the praise had not been the less of one here. For they that used to praise him to his face, never considered how much the thing deserved, but how great a laud and praise themselves could give his good grace.

ANTONY.—Surely, cousin, as Terence saith,† such folks make men of fools even stark mad, and much cause have their lords to be right angry with them.

VINCENT.—God hath indeed, and is, I ween: but as for their lords, uncle, if they would after wax angry with them therefor, they should in my mind do them very great

* Satyr. 4.

† In Eunucbo.

wrong, when it is one of the things that they specially keep them for. For those that are of such vainglorious mind (be they lords, or be they meaner men) can be much better content to have their devices commended, then amended; and require their servants and their friend never so specially to tell them the very truth, yet shall he better please them if he speak them fair, than if he tell them truth. For they be in the case that Martial speaketh of, in an epigram unto a friend of his that required his judgment, how he liked his verses, but he prayed him in any wise, to tell him even the very truth. To whom Martial* made answer in this wise:—

“The very truth of me thou dost require.
The very truth is this, my friend dear,
The very truth thou wouldst not gladly hear.”

And in good faith, uncle, the selfsame prelate that I told you my tale of, I dare be bold to swear it (I know it so surely) had on a time made of his own drawing a certain treaty, that should serve for a league between that country and a great prince. In which treaty, himself thought that he had devised his articles so wisely, and indited them so well, that all the world would allow them. Whereupon longing sore to be praised, he called unto him a friend of his, a man well learned, and of good worship, and very well expert in those matters, as he that had been divers times ambassador for that country, and had made many such treaties himself. When he took him the treaty, and that he had read it, he asked him how he liked it, and said: But I pray you heartily tell me the very truth. And that he spake so heartily, that the tother had weened he would fain have heard the truth, and in trust thereof he told him a fault therein. At the bearing whereof, he swore in great anger, By the mass! thou art a very fool. The other afterward told me, that he would never tell him truth again.

ANTONY.—Without question, cousin, I cannot greatly blame him: and thus themselves make every man mock

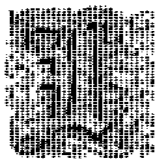
* Martialis, lib. 8, ad Gallicum.

them, flatter them, and deceive them: those, I say, that are of such vainglorious mind. For if they be content to bear the truth, let them then make much of those that tell them the truth, and withdraw their care from them that falsely flatter them, and they shall be more truly served than with twenty requests, praying men to tell them truth. King Ladislaus, our Lord assoil his soul, used much this manner among his servants. When any of them praised any deed of his, or any condition in him, if he perceived that they said but the truth, he would let it pass by uncontrolled. But when he saw that they set to a gloss upon it for his praise of their own making beside, then would he shortly say unto them: “I pray thee, good fellow, when thou sayest grace at my board, never bring in *Gloria Patri* without a *sicut erat*; that is to wit, even as it was, and none otherwise: and lift me not up with no lies, for I love it not.” If men would use this way with them, that this noble king used, it would diminish much of their false flattery.

I can well allow, that men should commend (keeping them within the bounds of truth) such things as they see praiseworthy in other men, to give them the greater courage to the increase thereof. For men keep still in that point one condition of children, that praise must prick them forth; but better it were to do well, and look for none. Howbeit, they that cannot find in their heart to commend another man's good deed, shew themselves either envious, or else of nature very cold and dull. But out of question, he that putteth his pleasure in the praise of the people hath but a fond phantasy. For if his finger do but ache of an hot blain, a great many men's mouths blowing out his praise, will scanty do him among them all half so much ease, as to have one little boy to blow upon his finger.

CHAPTER XI.

The little commodity that men have of rooms, offices, and authority, if they desire them but for their worldly commodity.



ET us now consider in likewise, what great worldly wealth ariseth unto men by great offices, rooms, and authority: to those worldly-disposed people, I say that desire them for no better purpose. For of them that desire them for better, we shall speak

Offices and rooms.

after anon. The great thing that they chief like all therein, is that they may bear a rule, command and control other men, and live uncommanded and uncontrolled themselves. And yet this commodity took I so little heed of, that I never was ware it was so great, till a

a merry tale.

good friend of ours merrily told me once, that his wife once in a great anger taught it him. For when her husband had no list to grow greatly upward in the world, nor neither would labour for office of authority, and over that forsook a right worshipful room when it was offered him, she fell in hand with him (he told me) and all to rated him, and asked him; "What will you do, that you list not to put forth yourself, as other folks do? Will you sit still by the fire, and make goslings in the ashes with a stick, as children do? Would God I were a man, and look what I would do!" "Why, wife," quoth her husband, "what would you do?" "What? By God! go forward with the best of them. For, as my mother was wont to say (God have mercy on

her soul!) it is ever better to rule, than to be ruled. And therefore by God! I would not, I warrant you, ^{Women love} be so foolish to be ruled where I might rule." ^{rule.}

"By my troth, wife," quoth her husband, "in this, I dare say, you say truth. For I never found you willing to be ruled yet."

VINCENT.—Well, uncle, I wot where you be now well enough. She is indeed a stout master woman: and in good faith for aught that I can see, ^{Ambition is indeed but womanish.} even that same womanish mind of hers is the greatest commodity that men reckon upon, in rooms and offices of authority.

ANTONY.—By my troth and methinketh very few there are of them that attain any great commodity therein. For first there is in every kingdom but one that can have an office of such authority, that no man may command him or control him. No officer can there ^{Commander's commodities.} stand in that case, but the king himself, which only uncontrolled or uncommanded, may control and command all. Now of all the remnant, each is under him: and yet beside him almost every one is under more commanders and comptrollers too, than one. And some man that is in a great office, commandeth fewer things and less labour to many men that are under him, than some one, that is over him, commandeth him alone.

VINCENT.—Yet it doth them good, uncle, that men must make courtesy to them, and salute them with reverence, and stand barehead before him, or to some of them kneel peradventure too.

ANTONY.—Well, cousin, in some part they do but play at gleek, receive reverence, and to their cost pay honour again therefor. For except, as I said, only a king, the greatest in authority under him, receiveth not so much reverence of no man, as according to reason himself doth honour to him. Nor twenty men's courtesies do him not so much pleasure as his own once kneeling doth him pain, if his knee hap to be sore. And I wist once a great officer of the king's say (and in good faith, I ween, he said but as he thought) that twenty men standing barehead before him, kept not his head half so warm, as to

keep on his own cap. Nor he never took so much ease with their being barehead before him, as he caught once grief with a cough that came upon him, by standing barehead long before the king.

But let it be, yet that these commodities be somewhat such as they be, yet then consider whether that any incommo-

*Commanders' incommo-
dities.*

dities be so joined therewith, that a man were almost as good lack both, as have both. Goeth all thing evermore as every one of them would have it? That were as hard as to please all the people at once with one weather, while in one house the husband would have fair weather for his corn, and his wife would have rain for her leeks. So while they that are in authority be not all evermore of one mind, but sometime variance among them, either for the respect of profit, or for contention of rule, or for maintenance of matters, sundry parts for their sundry friends: it cannot be that both the parts can have their own mind, nor often are they content which see their conclusion quail, but ten times they take the missing of their mind more displeasantly than other poor men do. And this goeth not only to men of mean authority, but unto the very greatest. The princes themself cannot have, you wot well, all their will. For how were it possible, while each of them almost would, if he might, be lord over the remnant? Then many men under their princes in authority are in the case, that privy

*privy malice in
courts.*

malice and envy many bear them in heart, that falsely speak them fair, and praise them with their mouths, which when there happeth any great fall unto them, bawl, and bark, and bite upon them like dogs.

Finally, the cost and charge, the danger and peril of war, wherein their part is more than a poor man's is, sith the matter more dependeth upon them, and many a poor ploughman may sit still by the fire, while they must rise and walk. And sometime their authority falleth by change of their master's mind: and of that see we daily in one place or other ensamples such, and so many, that

*Princes' ser-
vants be but
counters.*

the parable of the philosopher can lack no testimony, which likened the servants of great princes unto the counters with which men do

cast a count. For like as the counter that standeth sometime for a farthing, is suddenly set up and standeth for a thousand pound, and after as soon set down, and eftsoon beneath to stand for a farthing again: so fareth it, lo! sometime with those that seek the way to rise and grow up in authority, by the favour of great princes, that as they rise up high, so fall down again as <sup>Who is up
aloft now?</sup> low.

Howbeit, though a man escape all such adventures, and abide in great authority till he die, yet then at the leastwise every man must leave at the last: and that which we call at last, hath no very long time to it. Let a man reckon his years that are passed of his age, ere ever he can get up aloft; and let him when he hath it <sup>a sure reckon-
ing.</sup> first in his fist, reckon how long he shall be like to live after, and I ween, that then the most part shall have little cause to rejoyce, they shall see the time likely to be so short that their honour and authority by nature shall endure, beside the manifold chances whereby they may lose it more soon. And then when they see that they must needs leave it, the thing which they did much more set their heart upon, than ever they had reasonable cause: what sorrow they take therefor, that shall I not need to tell you.

And thus it seemeth unto me, cousin, in good faith, that sith in the having the profit is not great, and the displeasures neither small nor few, and of the losing so many sundry chances, and that by no mean a man can keep it long, and that to part therefrom is such a painful grief: I can see no very great cause, for which, as an high worldly commodity, men should greatly desire it.

CHAPTER XII.

That these outward goods desired but for worldly wealth, be not only little good for the body, but are also much harm for the soul.



AND thus far have we considered hitherto, in these outward goods that are called the gifts of fortune, no farther but the slender commodity that worldly-minded men have by them. But now if we consider farther what harm to the soul they take by them that desire them but only for the wretched wealth of this world: then shall we well perceive, how far more happy is he that well loseth them, than he that evil findeth them.

These things though they be such, as are of their own nature indifferent, that is to wit, of themselves, things neither good nor bad, but are matter that may serve to the one or the other, after as men will use them: yet need we little to doubt it, but that they that desire them but for their worldly pleasure, and for no farther godly purpose, the devil shall soon turn them from things indifferent unto them, and make them things very nought. For

Things indifferent be not so in use.

though that they be indifferent of their nature, yet cannot the use of them lightly stand indifferent, but determinately must either be good or bad. And therefore he that desireth them but for worldly pleasure, desireth them not for any good. And for better purpose than he desireth them, to better use is he not likely to put them: and therefore not unto good, but consequently to naught.

As for ensample, first consider it in riches: he that longeth for them, as for things of temporal commodity, and not for any godly purpose, what good they shall do him St. Paul declareth, where he writeth unto Timothy:—*Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem, et in laqueum diaboli, et desideria multa inutilia et nociva, quae mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem,*—They that long to be rich, fall into temptation, and into the grin of the devil, and into many desires unprofitable and noxious, which drown men into death and perdition.* And the Holy Scripture saith also in the book of the Proverbs: *Qui congregat thesauros, impingetur ad laqueos mortis,*—He that gathereth treasure, shall be shoved into the grins of death.† So that whereas by the mouth of St. Paul God saith, that they shall fall into the devil's grin, he saith in the tother place, that they shall be pushed and shoved in by violence. And of truth, while a man desireth riches not for any good godly purpose, but for only worldly wealth, it must needs be, that he shall have little conscience in the getting, but by all evil ways that he can invent, shall labour to get them. And then shall he either niggardly heap them up together, which is (you wot well) damnable, or wastefully misspend them about worldly pomp, pride, and gluttony, with occasion of many sins more, and that is yet much more damnable.

As for fame and glory desired but for worldly pleasure, doth unto the soul nestimable harm. For that setteth men's hearts upon high devices and desires of such things as are immoderate and outrageous, and by the help of false flatteries puff up a man in pride, and make a brittle man lately made of earth, and that shall again shortly be laid full low in earth, and there lie and rot, and turn again into earth, take himself in the meantime for a god here upon earth, and ween to win himself to be lord of all the earth. This maketh battles between these great princes, and with much trouble to much people and great effusion of blood, one king to look to reign in five realms, that cannot well rule one. For how many hath now this great

See these carthy goods now.

The root of wars.

* 1 Tim. vi.

† Cap. xxi.

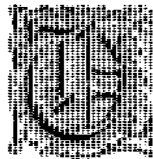
Turk, and yet aspireth to more? And those that he hath, he ordereth evil, and yet himself worse.

These offices and rooms of authority, if men desire them only for their worldly phantasies, who can look that ever they shall occupy them well, but abuse their authority, and do thereby great hurt? For then shall they fall from indifferency, and maintaiu false matters of their friends, bear up their servants and such as depend upon them, with bearing down of other innocent folk, not so able to do hurt, as easy to take harm.

Abusing of laws. Then the laws that are made against malefactors shall they make as an old philosopher said, to be much like unto cobwebs, in which the little gnats and flies stick still and hang fast, but the great bumble bees break them and fly quite through. And then the laws that are made as a buckler in the defence of innocents, those shall they make serve for a sword to cut and sore wound them with, and therewith wound they their own souls sorer. And thus you see, cousin, that of all these outward goods, which men call the goods of fortune, there is never one that unto them which long therefor, not for any godly purpose but only for their worldly wealth, hath any great commodity to the body, and yet are they all in such case (besides that) very deadly destruction unto the soul.

CHAPTER XIII.

Whether men desire these outward goods for their only worldly wealth, or for any good virtuous purpose, this persecution of the Turk against the faith will declare, and the comfort that both twain may take in the losing them thus.



INNOCENT.—VERILY, good uncle, this thing is so plainly true, that no man may with any good reason deny it, and I ween, uncle, also, that there will be no man say nay. For I see no man that will for very shame confess, that he desireth riches, honour, and renown, offices and rooms of authority, for his own worldly pleasure. For every man would fain seem as holy as a horse. And therefore will every man say, and would it were so believed too, that he desireth these things (though for his worldly wealth a little so) yet principally to merit thereby through doing some good therewith.

Each man would seem holy.

ANTONY.—This is, cousin, very sure so, that so doth every man say. But first he that in the desire thereof hath his respect therein unto his worldly wealth (as you say) but a little so, so much (as himself weeneth were but a little) may soon prove a Very true. great deal too much. And many men will say so too, that have indeed their principal respect unto their worldly commodity, and unto godward therein little or nothing at all. And yet they pretend the contrary, and that unto their own harm, *Quia Deus non irridetur*,—God cannot

be mocked.* And some peradventure know not well their own affection themselves, but there lieth more imperfection secrete in their affection than themselves are well ware of, which only God beholdeth. And therefore saith the prophet unto God, *Imperfectum meum viderunt oculi tui*,—Mine imperfection have thine eyes beholden.† For which the prophet prayeth, *Ab occultis meis munda me, Domine*,—From my hid sins cleanse thou me, good Lord.‡

But now, cousin, this tribulation of the Turk, if he so persecute us for the faith, that those that will forsake their faith shall keep their goods, and those shall lose their goods that will not leave their faith: this manner of persecution, lo, shall like a touchstone try them, and shew the feigned from the true-minded, and teach also them, that ween they mean better than they do indeed, better to discern themselves. For some there are that ween they mean well, while they frame themselves a conscience, and ever keep still a great heap of superfluous substance by them, thinking ever still that they will bethink themselves upon some good deed, whereon they will well bestow it once, or else their executors shall. But now if they lie not unto themselves, but keep their goods for any good purpose to the pleasure of God indeed, then shall they in this persecution for the pleasure of God, in the keeping of his faith, be glad to depart from them.

And therefore as for all those things, the loss, I mean, of all those outward things that men call the gifts of fortune, this is methinketh in this Turk's persecution for the faith, consolation great and sufficient, that sith every man that hath them, either setteth by them for the world or for God: he that setteth by them for the world hath (as I have shewed you) little profit by them to the body, and great harm unto the soul; and therefore may well, if he be wise, reckon that he winneth by the loss, although he lost them but by some common chance; and much more happy then, while he loseth them by such a meritorious mean.

* Gal. vi.

† Psal. cxxxviii.

‡ Ibidem, xviii.

And on the tother side, he that keepeth them for some good purpose, intending to bestow them for the pleasure of God, the loss of them in this Turk's persecution for keeping of the faith, can be no manner grief unto him; sith that by his so parting from them, he bestoweth them in such wise unto God's pleasure, that at that time when he loseth them, by no way could he bestow them unto his high pleasure better. For though it had been peradventure better to have bestowed them well before, yet sith he kept them for some good purpose, he would not have left them unbestowed if he had forknawn the chance. But being now prevented so by persecution, that he cannot bestow them in that other good way that he would, yet while he parteth from them because he will not part from the faith, though the devil's escheator violently take them from him, yet willingly he giveth them to God.

The devil's escheators.

CHAPTER XIV.

Another cause, for which any man should be content to forego his goods in the Turk's said persecution.



VINCENT.—I CANNOT in good faith, uncle, say nay to none of this. And indeed unto them that by the Turk's overrunning of the country were happed to be spoiled and robbed, and all their substance, moveable and unmoveable, bereft and lost already, their persons only fled and safe: I think that these considerations (considered therewith that, as you lately said, their sorrow could not amend their chance) might unto them be good occasion of comfort, and cause them, as you said, to make a virtue of necessity. But in the case, uncle, that we now speak of, that is to wit, where they have yet their substance untouched in their own hands, and that the keeping or the losing shall hang both in their own hands by the Turk's offer upon the retaining or renouncing of the Christian faith: here, uncle, I find it, as you said, that this temptation is most sore and most perilous. For I fear me that we shall find few such found, the more plig. few (of such as have much to lose) that shall find in their hearts so suddenly to forsake their goods with all those other things afore rehearsed, whereupon all their worldly wealth dependeth.

ANTONY.—That fear I much, cousin, too. But thereby shall it well, as I said, appear, that seemed they never so good and virtuous before, and flattered they themselves with never so gay a gloss of good and gracious purpose

that they kept their goods for, yet were their hearts inwardly in the deep sight of God, not sound and sure, such as they should be, and as peradventure God's sight pierceth deep. some had themselves weened they had been, but like a purse-ring of Paris, hollow, light, and counterfeit indeed. And yet they being such, this would I fain ask one of them, and I pray you, cousin, take you his person upon you, and in this case answer for him; what letteth, would I ask you (for we will take no small man for a sample in this part, nor him that had little to lose, for such one were methink so far from all fame, that would cast away God for a little, that he were not worthy to talk with), what letteth I say but few many such are now. therefore your lordship, that you be not gladly content, without any deliberation at all, in this kind of persecution, rather than to leave your faith, to let go all that ever you have at once?

VINCENT.—Sith you put it, uncle, unto me: to make the matter more plain, that I should play that great man's part that is so wealthy, and hath so much to lose; albeit I cannot be very sure of another man's mind, nor what another man would say, yet as far as my own mind can conjecture, I shall answer in his person what I wend would be his let. And therefore to your question I answer, that there letteth me the thing that yourself may lightly guess, the losing of the manifold commodities which I now have: riches and substance, lands and great possessions of inheritance, with great rule and authority here in my country. All which things the great Turk granteth me to keep still in peace, and have them enhanced too, so that I will forsake the faith of Christ. Yea, I may say to you, I have a motion secretly made me farther, to keep all this yet better cheap, that is to wit, the right practice used also now. not be compelled utterly to forsake Christ, nor all the whole Christian faith, but only some such parts thereof, as may not stand with Mahomet's law, and only granting Mahomet for a true prophet, and serving the Turk truly in his wars against all Christian kings, I shall not be letted to praise Christ also, and to call him a good man, and worship him and serve him too.

ANTONY.—Nay, nay, my lord, Christ hath not so great need of your lordship, as rather than to lose your service, he would fall at such covenants with you, to take your service at halves, to serve him and his enemy both. He hath given you plain warning already by St. Paul, that he will have in your service no parting fellow. *Quæ societas lucis ad tenebras? Quæ autem conventio Christi ad Belial?*—What fellowship is there between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial?* And he hath also plainly shewed you himself by his own mouth: *Nemo potest duobus dominis servire*;—No man may serve two lords at once.† He will have you believe all that he telleth you, and do all that he biddeth you, and forbear all that he forbiddeth you, without any manner exception. Break one of his commandments, and break all. Forsake one point of his faith, and forsake all, as for any thank you get for the remnant. And therefore if you devise as it were indentures between God and you, what thing you will do for him, and what thing you will not do, as though he should hold him content with such service of yours, as yourself list to appoint him: if you make, I say, such indentures, you shall seal both the parts yourself, and you get thereto none agreement of him. And this I say though the Turk would make such an appointment with you as you speak of, and would when he had made it, keep it, whereas he would not, I warrant you, leave you so, when he had brought you so far forth, but would little and little after ere he left you, make you deny Christ altogether, and take Mahomet in his stead. And so doth he in the beginning, when he will not have you believe him to be God. For surely if he were not God, he were no good man neither, while he plainly said he was God. But though he would never go so far forth with you, yet Christ will (as I said) not take your service to halves, but will that you should love him with all your whole heart. And because that while he was living here fifteen hundred year ago, he foresaw this mind of yours that you have

God's service
geth not at
halves.

Indentures
with God.

And have they
not done so?

* 2 Cor. vi.

† Luc. vi.

now, with which you would fain serve him in some such fashion, as you might keep your worldly substance still, and rather forsake his service, than put all your substance from you: he telleth you plain fifteen hundred year ago his own mouth, that he will no such service of you, saying, *Non potestis Deo servire, et Mammonæ*,—You cannot serve both God and your riches together.*

And therefore this thing stablished for a plain conclusion, which you must needs grant, if you have faith, (and if you be gone from that ground of faith already then is all your disputation, you wot well, at an end. For whereto should you then rather lose your goods than forsake your faith, if you have lost your faith and let it go already?) this point, I say therefore, put first for a ground between us both twain agreed, that you have yet the faith still, and intend to keep it alway still in your heart, and are but in doubt, whether you will lose all your worldly substance rather than forsake your faith in your only word: now shall I reply to the point of your answer, wherein you tell me the loathness of the loss, and the comfort of the keeping letteth you to forego them, and moveth you rather to forsake your faith. I let pass all that I have spoken of the small commodity of them unto your body, and of the great harm that the having of them doth to your soul. And sith the promise of the Turk, made unto you for the keeping of them, is the thing that moveth you and maketh you thus to doubt, I ask you first, whereby you wot that when you have done all that he will have you do against Christ to the harm of your soul, whereby you wot you, I say, that he will keep you his promise in these things that he promiseth you, concerning the retaining of your well-beloved worldly wealth for the pleasure of your body?

VINCENT.—What surety can a man have of such a great prince but his promise, which for his own honour it cannot become him to break?

ANTONY.—I have known him, and his father before him too, break more promises than five, as The Turk's great as this is that he should here make with promise.

* Matth. vi.

you. Who shall come and cast it in his teeth, and tell him it is a shame for him to be so fickle and so false of his promise? And then what careth he for those words, that he wotteth well he shall never hear? Not very much, although they were told him to. If you might come after and complain your grief unto his own person yourself, you should find him as shamefast as a friend of mine (a merchant) found once the Soudan of Syria, to whom (being certain years about his merchandise in that ^{more such} country) he gave a great sum of money for a ^{Soudans note.} certain office meet for him there for the while, which he scant had granted him and put in his hand, but that ere ever it were ought worth unto him the Soudan suddenly sold it to another of his own sect, and put our Hungarian out. Then came he to him, and humbly put him in remembrance of his grant passed his own mouth and signed with his own hand. Whereunto the Soudan answered him with a grim countenance: "I will thou wit it, losel, that neither my mouth nor my hand shall be master over me, to bind all my body at their pleasure, but I will so be lord and master over them both, that whatsoever the one say, or the other wit, I will be at mine own liberty to do what me list myself, and ask ^{Such lords and} them both no leave. And therefore go get ^{masters be} thee hence out of my countries, knave." Ween ^{many nob.} you now, my lord, that Soudan and this Turk, being both of our false sect, you may not find them both like false of their promise?

VINCENT.—That must I needs jeopard, for other surety can there none be had.

ANTONY.—An unwise jeoparding, to put ^{An unwise jeoparding to trust} your soul in peril of damnation for the keep- ^{Turkish promises.} ing of your bodily pleasures, and yet without surety thereof must jeopard them too. But yet go a little farther, lo; suppose me that ye might be very sure, that the Turk would break no promise with you: are you then sure enough to retain all your substance still?

VINCENT.—Yea, then.

ANTONY.—What if a man should ask you, how long?

VINCENT.—How long? As long as I live.

ANTONY.—Well, let it be so then. But yet as far as I can see, though the great Turk favour you never so much, and let you keep your goods as long as ever you live, yet if it hap, that you be at this day fifty year old, all the favour that he can shew you cannot make you one day younger to-morrow, but every day shall you wax older than other. And then within a while must you, for all his favour, lose all.

VINCENT.—Well, a man would be glad for all that, to be sure not to lack while he liveth. ^{A great reason with most men nob.}

ANTONY.—Well then, if the great Turk give you your good, can there then in all your life no other take them from you again?

VINCENT.—Verily, I suppose, no.

ANTONY.—May he not lose this country again unto Christian men, and you with the taking of this way fall in the same peril then, that you would now eschew?

VINCENT.—Forsooth, I think, that if he get it once, he will never after lose it again in our days.

ANTONY.—Yes, by God's grace: but yet if he lose it after your days, there goeth your children's inheritance away again. But be it now that he could never lose it; could none take your substance from you then?

VINCENT.—No, in good faith, none.

ANTONY.—No? None at all? Not God?

VINCENT.—God? What, yes, pardie: who doubteth of that?

ANTONY.—Who? Marry he that doubteth whether there be any God, or no. And that there lacketh not some such the prophet testifieth, where he saith: *Dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus.*—The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.* With the mouth the most foolish will forbear to say it unto other folk, but in the heart they let not to say it softly to themselves. And I fear me there be many more such fools than ^{Many be such fools.} every man would ween there were, and would not let to say it openly too, if they forbore it not more for dread of shame of men, than for any fear of God.

* Psal. xiii. et xxxii.

But now those that are so frantic foolish as to ween there were no God, and yet in their words confess him (though that as Paul saith,* in their deeds they deny him) we shall let them pass, till it please God to shew himself unto them, either inwardly betime, by his merciful grace, or else outwardly (but over late for them) by this terrible judgment. But unto you, my lord, sith you believe and confess (like as a wise man should) that though the Turk keep you promise in letting you keep your substance, because you do him pleasure in the forsaking of your faith; yet God (whose faith you forsake, and therein do him displeasure) may so take them from you, that the great Turk with all the power he hath, is not able to keep you: then why will you be so unwise, with the loss of your soul to please the great Turk for your goods, while you wot well, that God, whom you displease therewith, may take them from you too?

Beside this, sith you believe there is a God, you cannot but believe therewith, that the great Turk cannot take your good from you without his will or sufferance, no more than the devil could from Job. And think you then, that if he will suffer the Turk take away your good, albeit that by the keeping and confessing of his faith you please him; he will when you displease him by forsaking his faith, suffer you of those goods that you get or keep, thereby to rejoice and enjoy any beuefit?

VINCENT.—God is gracious, and though that men offend him, yet he suffereth them many times to live in prosperity long after.

ANTONY.—Long after? Nay by my troth, my lord, that doth he no man. For how can that be, that he should suffer you live in prosperity long after, when your whole life is but short in all together, and either almost half thereof, or more than half (you think yourself, I dare say), spent out already before? Can you burn out half a short candle, and then have a long one left of the remnant? There cannot in this world be a worse mind, than a man to delight and take

* Titum i.

comfort in any commodity that he taketh by sinful mean. For it is very straight way toward the taking of boldness and conrage in sin, and finally to fall into infidelity, and think that God careth not nor regardeth not what thing men do here, nor what mind we be of. But, unto such minded folk speaketh Holy Scripture in this wise; *Noli dicere, peccavi, et nihil mihi accidit tristi: patiens enim redditor est Dominus.*—Say not, I have sinned, and yet hath happed me no harm: for God suffereth before he strike.* But, as St. Austin saith, the longer that he tarryeth ere he strike, the sorer is the stroke when he striketh. And therefore if ye will well do, reckon yourself very sure, that when you deadly displease God for the getting or the keeping of your good, God shall not suffer those goods to do you good, but either shall he take them shortly from you, or suffer you to keep them for a little while to your more harm: and after shall he, when you east look therefor, take you away from them. And then what an heap of heaviness will there enter into your heart, when you shall see that you shall so suddenly go from your goods and leave them here in the earth in one place, and that your body shall be pnt in the earth in another place: and (which then shall be most heaviness of all) when you shall fear (and not without great cause) that your soul shall first forthwith, and after that (at the final judgment) your body too, be driven down deep toward the centre of the earth into the fiery pit and dungeon of the devil of hell, there to tarry in torment world without end? What goods of this world can any man imagine, whereof the pleasure and commodity could be such in a thousand year, as were able to recompense that intolerable pain that there is to be suffered in one year, yea in one day or in one hour either? And then what a madness is it, for the poor pleasure of your worldly goods of so few years, to cast yourself both body and soul into the everlasting fire of hell, whereof is not minished the mountenance of a moment by the lying there the space of an hundred thousand years! And therefore our Saviour in few words concluded and confuted all

* Eccles. v.

these follies of them, that for the short use of this worldly substance forsake him and his faith, and sell their souls unto the devil for ever, where he saith: *Quid prodest homini, si univrsum mundum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?*—What availeth it a man, if he won all the whole world, and lost his soul? * This were, methinketh, cause and occasion enough to him that had never so much part of this world in his hand, to be content rather to lose it all, than for the retaining or increasing of his worldly goods, to lose and destroy his soul?

VINCENT.—This is, good uncle, in good faith very true, and what other thing any of them (that would not for this be content) have for to allege in reason for the defence of their folly, that cau I not imagine, nor list not in this matter to play their part no longer. But I pray God give me the grace to play the contrary part indeed, and that I never for any goods or substance of this wretched world, forsake my faith toward God, neither in heart, nor tongue, as I trust in his great goodness I never shall.

* Matth. xvi., Marc. viii., Luc. ix.

CHAPTER XV.

This kind of Tribulation trieth what mind men have to their goods, which they that are wise will at the fame thereof see well and wisely laid up safe before.



ANTONY.—METHINKETH, cousin, that this persecution shall not only, as I said before, try men's hearts when it cometh, and make them know their own affections, whether they have a corrupt, greedy, covetous mind, or not: but also the very fame and expectation thereof may teach them this lesson, ere ever the thing fall upon them itself, to their no little fruit, if they have the wit and the grace to take it in time while they may. For now may they find sure places to lay their treasures in, so that all the Turk's army shall never find it out.

VINCENT.—Marry, uncle, that way they will, I warrant you, not forget, as near as their wits will serve them. But yet have I known some, that have ere this thought that they had hid their money safe and sure enough, digging full deep in the ground, and have missed it yet when they came again, and have found it digged out, and carried away to their hands.

ANTONY.—Nay, from their hands, I ween you would say. And it was no marvel. For some such have I known too, but they have hid their goods foolishly, in such places as they were well warned before that they should not. And that were they warned by him, that they well knew for such one, as wist well enough what would come thereon.

VINCENT.—Then were they more than mad. But did

he tell them too, where they should have hid it to have it sure?

ANTONY.—Yea, by St. Mary, did he. For else had he told them but half a tale. But he told them a whole tale, bidding them, that they should in no wise hide their treasure in the ground. And he shewed them a good cause: for there thieves use to dig it out, and steal it away.

VINCENT.—Why, where should they hide it then, said he? For thieves may hap to find it out in any place.

ANTONY.—Forsooth he counselled them to hide their treasure in heaven, and there lay it up, for there it shall lie safe. For thither he said there can no thief

Only true men come to heaven. come, till he have left his theft and be waxen a true man first. And he that gave this counsel, wist what he said well enough. For it was our Saviour himself, which in the Gospel of St. Matthew saith: *Nolite thesaurare vobis thesauros in terra, ubi ærugo et tinea demolitur, et ubi fures effodiunt et furantur. Thesaurizate autem vobis thesauros in cælo, ubi neque ærugo, neque tinea demolitur, et ubi fures non effodiunt nec furantur. Ubi enim est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum.*—Hoard not up for you treasures in earth, where the rust and the moth fret it out, and where the thieves dig it out, and steal it away. But hoard up your treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth fret them out, and where thieves dig them not out, nor steal them away. For where as is thy treasure, there is thy heart too.* If we would well consider these words of our Saviour Christ, we should, as methink, need no more counsel at all, nor no more comfort neither, concerning the loss of our temporal substance in this Turk's persecution for the faith. For here our Lord in these words teacheth us where we may lay up our substance safe, before the persecution come.

A safe and sure place for treasure. If we put it into the poor men's bosoms, there shall it lie safe. For who would go search a beggar's bag for money? If we deliver it to the poor for Christ's sake, we deliver it unto Christ himself. And then what persecutor can there be so strong, as to take it out of his hand?

* Matth. vi.

VINCENT.—These things are, uncle, undoubtedly so true, that no man may with words wrestle therewith. But yet ever there hangeth in a man's heart a loathness to lack a living.

Lack of liking a sore temptation.

ANTONY.—There doth indeed, in theirs, that either never or but seldom hear any good counsel there against. And when they hear it, hearken it but as they would an idle tale, rather for a pastime, or for the manner sake, than for any substantial intent or purpose to follow good advertisement, and take any fruit thereby. But verily, if we would not only lay our ear, but also our heart thereto, and consider that the saying of our Saviour Christ is not a poet's fable, nor an harper's song, but the very holy word of Almighty God himself, we would, and well we might, be full sore ashamed in ourself, and full sorry too, when we felt in our affection those words to have in our hearts no more strength and weight, but that we remain still of the same dull mind, as we did before we heard them.

The right hearing of God's word.

This manner of ours, in whose breasts the great good counsel of God no better setteth nor taketh no better root, may well declare us that the thorns, and the briars, and the brambles of our worldly substance grow so thick, and spring up so high in the ground of our hearts, that they strangle, as the Gospel saith,* the word of God that was sown therein. And therefore is God very good Lord unto us, when he canseth like a good husbandman his folk to come afield (for the persecutors be his folk to this purpose) and with their hooks and their stocking-irons grub up these wicked weeds and bushes of our earthly substance, and carry them quite away from us, that the word of God sown in our hearts may have room therein, and a glade round about for the warm sun of grace to come to it and make it grow. For surely these words of our Saviour shall we find full true: *Ubi thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum.*—Where as thy treasure is, there is also thy heart.† If we lay up our treasure in earth, in earth shall be our hearts. If we send our treasure into heaven, in heaven shall we

God is God's weeding and grubbing time.

* Matth. xiii.

† Ibidem vi.

Greatest comfort. have our hearts. And surely the greatest comfort that any may have in this tribulation, is to have his heart in heaven. If thy heart were indeed out of this world and in heaven, all the kinds of torment that all this world could devise, could put thee to no pain here. Let us then send our hearts hence thither, in such manner as we may (by sending thither our worldly substance) please God. And let us never doubt it but we shall (that once done) find our hearts so conversant in heaven, with the glad consideration of our following the gracious counsel of Christ, that the comfort of his Holy Spirit (inspired us therefor) shall mitigate, minish, assuage, and in a manner quench the great furious fervour of the pain that we shall hap to have by his loving sufferance for our farther merit in our tribulation.

A good similitude, and true both ways. And therefore, like as if we saw that we should be within a while driven out of this land, and fain to flee into another, we would ween that man were mad, which would not be content to forbear his goods here for the while, and send them into that land before him, where he should live all the remnant of his life: so may we verily think yet ourself much more mad (seeing that we be sure it cannot be long ere we shall be sent spite of our teeth out of this world) if the fear of a little lack, or the love to see our goods here about us, and the loathness to part from them for this little while which we may keep them here, shall be able to let us from that sure sending them before us into the tother world, in which we may be sure to live wealthy with them, if we send them thither, or else shortly leave them here behind us, and then stand in great jeopardy, there to live wretches for ever.

VINCENT.—In good faith, uncle, methink that concerning the loss of these outward things, these considerations are so sufficient comforts, that for mine own part, save only grace well to remember them, I would methink desire no more.

CHAPTER XVI.

Another Comfort and Courage against the loss of worldly Substance.

ANTONY.—MUCH less than this may serve, cousin, with calling and trusting upon God's help, without which, much more than this cannot serve. But the fervour of the Christian faith so sore fainteth nowadays, and decayeth, coming from hot unto lukewarm, and from lukewarm almost to **Faith sore decayed.** key-cold, that men must now be fain as at a fire that is almost out, to lay many dry sticks thereto, and use much blowing thereat. But else would I ween by my troth, that unto a warm faithful man one thing alone, whereof we spake yet not a word, were comfort enough in this kind of persecution against the loss of all his goods.

VINCENT.—What thing may that be, uncle?

ANTONY.—In good faith, cousin, even the **Christ's willful poverty.** bare remembrance of the poverty that our Saviour willingly suffered for us. For I verily suppose, that if there were a great king that had so tender love to a servant of his, that he had (to help him out of danger) forsaken and left of all his worldly wealth and royalty, and become poor and needy for his sake: the servant could scant be found that were of such an unkind villain courage, that if himself came **Such vile villain servants be many now.** after to some substance, would not with better will lose it all again, than shamefully to forsake such a master. And therefore, as I say, I do surely suppose,

that if we would well remember and inwardly consider the great goodness of our Saviour Christ toward us, not yet being his poor sinful servants, but rather his adversaries and his enemies, and what wealth of this world that he willingly forsook for our sake, being indeed universal king thereof, and so having the power in his own hand to have used it, if he had would, instead whereof (to make us rich in heaven) he lived here in neediness and poverty all his life, and neither would have authority, nor keep neither lands nor goods: the deep consideration and earnest advisement of this one point alone, were able to make any kind Christian man or woman well content rather for his sake again to give up all that ever God hath lent them (and lent them hath he all that ever they have) than unkindly and unfaithfully to forsake him. And him they forsake, if that for fear they forsake the confession of his Christian faith.

All is but lent
to us.

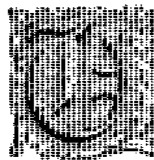
forsaking of
Christ.

And therefore to finish this piece withal, concerning the dread of losing our outward worldly goods, let us consider the slender commodity that they bring, with what labour they be bought, how little they abide with whomsoever they be longest, what pain their pleasure is mingled withal, what harm the love of them doth unto the soul, what loss is in the keeping (Christ's faith refused for them), what winning in the loss, if we lose them for God's sake, how much more profitable they be well given than evil kept, and finally, what unkindness it were, if we would not rather forsake them for Christ's sake, than unfaithfully forsake Christ for them, which, while he lived, for our sake forsook all the world, beside the suffering of shameful and painful death, whereof we shall speak after: if we these things, I say, will consider well, and will pray God with his holy hand to print them in our hearts, and will abide and dwell still in the hope of his help: his truth shall (as the prophet saith) so compass us about with a pavice, that we shall not need to be afraid *ab incurso et demonio meridiano*,—of this incursion of the mid-day devil, this open plain persecution of the Turk, for any loss that we can take by the bereaving from

us of our worldly goods, for whose short and small pleasure in this life forborne, we shall be with heavenly substance everlastingly recompensed of God in joyful bliss and glory.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of bodily Pain, and that a man hath no cause to take discomfort in persecution, though he feel himself in an horror at the thinking upon the bodily pain.



INCENT.—FORSOOTH, uncle, as for these outward goods, you have so farforth said, that no man can be sure what strength he shall have, or how faint and how feeble he may hap to find himself when he shall hap to come to the point, and therefore I can make no warrantise of myself, seeing that St. Peter so suddenly fainted at a woman's word and so cowardly forsook his master, for whom he had so boldly fought within so few hours afore, and by that fall in forsaking well perceived that he had been rash in his promise, and was well worthy to take a fall for putting so full trust in himself: yet in good faith methinketh now (and God shall I trust help me to keep this thought still), that if the Turk should take all that I have unto my very shirt (except I would forsake my faith) and offer it me all again with five times as much thereto to fall into his sect, I would not once stick thereat, rather to forsake it every whit than of Christ's holy faith to forsake any one point. But surely, good uncle, when I bethink me farther on the

grief and the pain that may turn nnto my flesh, here find I the fear that forceth my heart to tremble.

ANTONY.—Neither have I cause to marvel thereof, nor you, cousin, cause to be dismayed therefor. The great horror and fear that our Saviour had in his own flesh against his painful passion, maketh me little to marvel, and may well make you take that comfort too, that for no such manner of grudging felt in your sensnal parts, the flesh shrinking at the meditation of pain and death, your reason shall give over, but resist it and manly master it. And though you would fain flee from the painful death, and be loth to come thereto; yet may the

meditation of Christ's agony. meditation of his great grievous agony move you, and himself shall, if you so desire him, not fail to work with you therein, and get and give you the grace, that you shall submit and conform your will therein unto his, as he did unto his Father, and shall thereupon be so comforted with the secret inward inspiration of his Holy Spirit, as he was with the personal presence of the angel that after his agony came and comforted him,* that you shall as his true disciple follow him, and with good will without grudge do as he did, and take your cross of pain and passion on your back, and die for the truth with him, and thereby reign with him crowned in eternal glory. And this, I say, to give you warning of the thing that is truth, to the intent when a man feels such an horror of death in his heart, he should not thereby stand in outrageous fear that he were falling. For many a such man standeth for all that fear full fast, and finally better abideth the brunt, when God is so good unto him as to bring him thereto, and encourage him therein, than doth some other that in the beginning feeleth no fear at all. And yet may it be, and most often so it is, that God having many mansions, and all wonderful wealthful in his Father's house,† exalteth not every good

Every man not meet to be a martyr. man up to the glory of a martyr, bnt foreseeing their infirmity, that though they be of good will before, and peradventure of right good courage too, would yet play St. Peter, if they were brought

* Luc. xxii.

† Johan. xiv.

to the point, and thereby bring their souls into the peril of eternal damnation: he provideth otherwise for them, before they come thereat, and either findeth a God wonderfully disposeth. way that men shall not have the mind to lay any hands upon them, as he found for his disciples,* when himself was willingly taken, or that if they set hand on them, they shall have no power to hold them, as he found for St. John the Evangelist,† which let his sheet fall from him, whereupon they caught hold, and fled himself naked away, and scaped from them; or, though they hold him and bring him to prison too, yet God sometime delivereth them thence, as he did St. Peter,‡ and sometime he taketh them to him, out of prison into heaven, and suffereth them not to come to their torment at all, as he hath done by many a good holy man. And some he suffereth to be brought into the torments, and yet he suffereth them not to die therein, but live many years after, and die their natural death, as he did by St. John the Evangelist and by many another more, as we may well see both in sundry stories,§ and in the epistles of St. Cyprian also.||

And therefore which way God will take with us, we cannot tell: but surely if we be true Christian men, this can we well tell, that without any bold warrantise of ourself, or foolish trust in our strength, we be bound upon pain of damnation, that we be not of the contrary mind, but that we will with his help (how loth soever we feel our flesh thereto) rather yet than forsake him or his faith afore the world (which if we do, he hath promised to forsake us before his Father,¶) and all the holy company of heaven), rather, I say, than we would so do, we would with bis help endure and sustain for his sake all the tormentry that the devil with all his faithless tormentors in this world could devise. And then when we be of this mind, and submit our will unto his, and call and pray for his grace, we can tell well enough that he will never suffer

* Matth. xxvi.

† Marc. xiv.

‡ Actor. xii.

§ Theodor. Hist. lib. iii. c. 16; Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. c. 25; De Blandina et aliis, Hist. Eccl. lib. v. cap. 2.

|| Lib. ii. epist. 6, et lib. iv. epist. 5.

¶ Luc. xii.

them to put more upon us than his grace will make us able to bear, but will also with their temptation provide for us a sure way. A sure way.

For *Fidelis Deus* (saith St. Paul) *qui non patitur vos tentari, supra id quod potestis, sed dat etiam cum tentatione proventum*,—God is, saith the apostle, faithful, which suffereth you not to be tempted above that you may bear, but giveth also with the temptation a way out.* For either, as I said, he will keep us out of their hands (though he before suffer us to be feared with them to prove our faith withal, that we may have by the examination of our own mind, some comfort in hope of his grace, and some fear of our own frailty to drive us to call for grace), or else if we fall in their hands, so that we fall not from him, nor cease to call for his help, his truth shall, as the prophet saith, so compass us about with a pavice, that we shall need not to fear this incursion of this midday devil. For either shall these Turk's tormentors that shall enter into this land and persecute us, either they shall, I say, not have the power to touch our bodies at all, or else the short pain that they shall put into our bodies, shall turn us to eternal profit both in our souls and in our bodies too.

And therefore, cousin, to begin with, let us be of good comfort. For sith we be by our faith very sure that Holy Scripture is the very word of God, and that the word of God cannot be but very true, and that we see that both by the mouth of his holy prophet, and by the mouth of his blessed apostle also, God hath made us so faithful promise, both that he will not suffer us to be tempted above our power, but will both provide a way out for us, and that he will also round about so compass us with his pavice, and defend us, that we shall have no cause to fear this midday devil with all his persecution: we cannot now but be very sure (except we be very shamefully cowardous of heart, and toward God in faith out of measure faint, and in love less than lukewarm, or waxen even key-cold), we may be very sure, I say, that either God shall not suffer the Turks to invade this land,

* 1 Cor. x.

or, if they do, God shall provide such resistance that they shall not prevail: or, if they do prevail, yet if we take the way that I have told you, we shall by their persecution take little harm or rather no harm at all, but that that shall seem harm, shall indeed be to us no harm at all, but good. For if God make us and keep us good men (as he hath promised to do, if we pray therefor) then saith Holy Scripture: *Bonis omnia cooperantur in bonum*,—Unto good folk all things turn them to good.*

And therefore, cousin, sith that God knoweth what shall hap, and not we, let us in the meanwhile with a good hope in the help of God's grace, have a good purpose with us of sure standing by his holy faith against all persecutions. From which if we should (which our Lord forbid) hereafter either for fear of pain, or for lack of grace (lost in our own default) mishap to decline: yet had we both won the well-spent time in this good purpose before, to the minishment of our pain, and were also much the more likely, that God should lift us up after our fall, and give us his grace again. Howbeit, if this persecution come, we be by this meditation and well-continued intent and purpose before, the better strengthened and confirmed, and much the more likely for to stand indeed. And if it so fortune (as with God's grace at men's good prayers and amendment of our evil lives, it may fortune full well) that the Turk shall either be well withstanden and vanquished, or peradventure not invade us at all: then shall we, pardie, by this good purpose get ourself of God a very good cheap thank. And on the other side, while we now think thereon (as not to think thereon, in so great likelihood thereof, I ween no wise man can) if we should for the fear of worldly loss, or bodily pain, framed in our own minds, think that we would give over, and to save our goods and our lives, forsake our Saviour by denial of his faith, then whether the Turk come, or come not, we be gone from God the while. And then if they come not indeed, or come and be driven to flight, what a shame should this

* Rom. viii.

The way to
withstand
Turks and
heretics.

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) thraldom, imprisonment, painful and
 shameful death. And first let us, as reason is, begin with
 the thraldom, 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