

A The life of John Picus Erle of Hyrاندula, a great Lorde of Italy, an excellent conyng man in all sciences, & vertuous of liuing: with diuers epistles & other woorkes of y^e sayd John Picus, full of greate science, vertue, and wisdom: whose life and woorkes bene woorthy and digne to be read, and often to be had in memory.

B Translated out of latin into English by maister Thomas More.

Unto his right entlerly beloned siffer in Christ, Joyeuce Leigh, Thomas More greting in our lord.

More, and of lōge tyme hath been my well beloned siffer: custome in the beginning of the new yere, frendes to sende betwene, presents or gyftes, as the wittnesnes of their loue and frendship, & also signifying, that thei desire eche to other that yere a good continuance and prosperous ende of that lucky beginnyng. But commonly all those presentes, that are vsed customably all in this maner betwene frendes to be sent: be such thinges as pertaine only vnto the body, either to be fed, or to be clad, or some other wise delited: by whiche it seemeth, that their frendship is but fleshly, and stretcheth in maner to the body only. But for asmuch as the loue & amittie of christen folke should be rather ghostly frendship then bodily: sith that all faithfull people are rather spirituall then carnall. (For, as thapostle saith: we be not now in flesh, but in spirit, if Christ abide in vs.) Therefore myne hertely beloned siffer, in good lucke of this new yere, haue sent you suche a present, as maie beare witnesse of my tender loue and zeale to the happy cōtinuance & graciouse encrease of vertue in your soule. And whereas the gyftes of other folke declare that thei wissh their frendes to be worldly fortunat: myne testifieth, that I desire to haue you godly prosperous. These woorkes more profitable the

The intēt of meanynge of new yeres gyftes.

Presentes bodily.

Christ loue.

Com. 8.

large, were made in latine by one John Picus Erle of Hyrاندula, a lordship in Italy: of whose conyng and vertue we nedde here nothing to speake: forasmuch as hereafter we peruse the course of his whole life, rather after our litle power slenderly, then after his merites sufficiently. The woorkes are suche, & trewly good siffer, I suppos of the quātitie thereof cometh none in your hande more profitable, neither to thatchieupng of temperance in prosperitie, nor to the purchasing of paciece in aduersitie, nor to the dispising of worldly vanitie, nor to the desiring of heauenly felicitie: which woorkes I wolde require you gladly to receiue: ne were it, that thei be such, that for the godly mater (how so euer thei be translated) maie delite & please any person, that hath any meane desire and loue to God: and that your selfe is such one, as for your vertue and seruent zeale to god, can not but ioyously receiue any thing, that meanely foundeth either to the reproch of vice, commendacion of vertue, or honoure and laude of God, who presentue you.

The profit of his woorkes.

F

The life of John Picus Erle of Hyrاندula.

John Picus of the fathers side, descended of the worthy lineage of themperoure Constantine, by a neuewe of the sayde Emperour called Picus, by whō al the auncelers of this John Picus, vndoutedly beare that name. But we shall lette his auncelers passe, to whom (though they were right excellent) he gaue agayn as much honour, as he receiued: & we shall speake of him self, rehearsing in part his learning, & his vertue. For these be the thinges, whiche we may accōpt for our owne: of which every man is more properly to be comēded, the noblenesse of his auncelers: whose honour maketh vs not honozable. For either they were themself verteouse or not: if not, the had thei none honour the self: had thei neuer so great possessiōs: for honour is the reward of vertue. And howe maie they clayme the rewarde & properly longeth to vertue: if they lacke the vertue, that the rewarde longeth to: Then if the selfe

The linage of J. Picus.

Noblenesse of auncelers.

Honour.

a. j. had

Honour and
vertue come
not by inhe-
ritance.

A had none honour: how might they leaue to their heires that thing which they had not theselues? On the other syde, if they be vertuouse, & so consequently honorable: yet maye they not leaue theyr honour to vs as inheritantes, no moze then the vertue that theselve wer honorable for. For neuer the moze noble be we for theyr noblenes, if our selfe lacke those thinges for which they were noble: But rather the moze woꝝshipfull that our auncēters wer, the moze vyle and shamefull be we, if we declyne from the steppes of theyr woꝝshipfull liuing: The cleare beautie of whole vertue maketh the darke spot of our vyce the moze euidently to appere and to be the moze marked. But Picus, of whom we spake, was hymself so honorable for the great plenteous abundāce of al such vertues, the possession wherof very honour foloweth (as a shadow foloweth a body) that he was to al them that aspyre to honour a very spectacle: in whose condicions as in a clere polished myrroure, they myght beholde in what poyntes very honour standeth. Whose marueylous cunning and excellent vertue, though my rude learning bee farre vnable sufficiently to expresse: yet for as much as if no man should dooe it, but he that might sufficiently dooe it, no man should dooe it: and better it wer to be vn sufficiently done, then vtterly vndone. I shall therfore (as I can) briefly rehearce you his whole life: at y^e lestwise to geue some other man hereafter (that can dooe it better) occasion to take it in hand, whē it shall happely greue him to see the lyfe of such an excellēt cūting man, so farre vncunninglye wyitten.

Of his parentes, and tyme
of his byrthe.

In the yere of our Lorde God. 1463. Thus the secōde being then y^e generall vicare of Chryste in his churche: and Frederike the thirde of that name ruling the empire, this noble man was boꝝne, the last child of his mother Julia, a woman comen of a noble stocke, his father hight Iohn Frauncise, a Lord of great honour and auzoritie.

Of the wonder that appeared be-
foze his byrthe.

A merueylous sight was there scene befoze his byrth: there appeared a fierye garland standing ouer the chaumber of his mother whyle she traualled & sodainly vanished away: which

apparence was peradventure a token, that he which shoulde that howze in the company of mortal men be boꝝne: in the perfection of vnderstanding shoulde be lyke the perfite figure of that round circle or garlande: and that his excellent name shoulde rounde about the circle of this whole world be magnified, whose mind should alway as the fyre aspyre vpyward to heauenlye thinges. And whose fierye eloquence shoulde with an ardent hert in tyme to come, woꝝship and praise almighty god with al his strength. And as that flame sodainly vanished, so should this fier soone from the eyes of mortall people bee hydde. We haue often times read, that such vnknowne and strange tokēs hath gone befoze, or foloweth the natiuitee of excellent, wyse, and vertuous menne, departing (as it wer, and by Goddes commaundement) leaueing the cradles of such speciall chyldren fro the company of other of the common soꝝte. And shewing that they be boꝝne to the atchieuing of some great thing. But to passe ouer other: The great saūt Ambrose, a swarme of bees flew about his mouth in his cradle, & some entred into his mouth, & after that isuyng out agayne, and sleeyng vpon high, hiding them selfe among the cloudes, escaped both the sight of his fader, and of all the that were present. Which pronosticacione Paulinus making much of, expounded it to signifie to vs the swete honey combs of his plesāt writing: which should shew out the celestiaall giftes of god, and should lifte by the mynd of mē from erth into heauen.

The interpreta-
cion of the
wonder.

Ambrose

S

Of his persone.

He was of stature and shappe seemly, and bewteous, of stature goodly and high, of flesh, tēdre and soft, his visage louely and faire, his colour white, entermengled with comely red-
des, his eyes gray and quicke of loke, his teeth white and euen, his heere yelow, and not to piked.

Vertue in a
comely booy
is moze este-
med.

Of his setting forth to schole, and
Study in humanitie.

Vnder the rule and governance of his mother he was let to masters, and to learning: where with so ardent minde he labored the studies of humanitie, that within thort while he was (and not without a cause) accompted amonge the chiefe oratours & poetes of y^e time, in lernyng merueylously swifte, and

Witte recea-
ueth.
Remembraunce
holdeth.

A & of so redy a wpt, that the verses, which he heard once red: he woulde agayne bothe forwarde and backward, to the great wonder of the herers, reherse, and out that would holde it in sure remembrance: which in other folkes wont commonly to happen contrary. For they that are swifte in taking, be ofte times slowe in remembryng: and they that wyth moze labour and difficultee resceiue it: moze fast and surcly hold it.

Of his studie in Canone.

In the fouretene yere of his age, by the commaundemēt of his mother (which longed very soze to haue him priest) he departed to Bononte to studye in the lawes of the church: which when he had two yere tassed, perceyuing that the facultee leaned to nothing, but only mere tradicions and ordinaunces: his mynde fill from it. Yet lost he not his time therein: for in that. ii. yere, yet being a childe, he compiled abreytary of a summe vpo all the decretals, in which as bryefly as possible was, he comprised the effect of all y whole great volume, & made a boke, no slender thing to right conning and parfite doctours.

The facultie
canone.

Of his studie in philosophie & diuinitee.

After this, as a desirous enserchour of the secretes of nature, he left these common troden pathes, and gaue him self whole to speculatio & Philosophie, as wel humane as diuine. For the purchasing wherof (after y manner of Plato and Apollonius) he scrupulously fought out all the famous doctours of his time, visting studiously al the vniuersitees and scholes, not only through Italy, but also through France. And so insatigable labour gaue he to those studies, that yet a childe, and berdesles, he was both reputed, & was in dede, both a parfet philosophye, and a parfet diuine.

Trauayling
from place to
place woder-
fully increa-
seth know-
lage.

Of his mynde and bainglorious dispitions at Rome.

When had he ben. vii. yere couer-
saunt in these studies, when full
of pride, & desirous of glorie and
mannes praise (for yet was he
not kindled in the loue of god) he went
to Rome, and there (couetinge to make
a shew of his conning, and litle confide-
ring how great enuie he should reise a-
gainst him self) ir. C. questions he pur-
posed, of diuers and sondry maters, as
well in logike and Philosophie as diu-
nitee, with great studie piket & fought
out, as wel of the Latin auctours as the
grekes. And partly set out of the secre-
misteries of the Hebrewes, Caldees, &
Arabies, and many things drawn out
of the olde obscure Philosophie of Pi-
thagoras, Trismegistus, and Orpheus,
and many other thinges strange: & to all
folke (except right few speciall excellent
me) before that day, not vnknowe only:
but also vnerd. Of al which questions
in open places (that thei mighte be to all
people the better knowen) he fastened &
let vp, offering also him self to beate the
costes of all such as would come thither
out of farre countreis to dispute. But
thorough the enuie of his malicouse
nemies (which enuie, like the fire euer
draweth to the highest) he coulde neuer
bring about to haue a daye to his dispi-
cious appointed. For this cause he tar-
ried at Rome an whole yere, in al which
time his enuours neuer durst openly
with open dispitions attempt him, but
rather with craft and sleight, and as it
were with priuie treches enforced to
dermine him, for none other cause, but
for malice, and for they were (as many
men thought) corrupt with a pestilent
enuie. This enuie, as men demed, was
specially raised agaisst him for this
cause: that where there were many, whiche
had many yeres, some for glorie: some for
couetise, geuen them self to learning: thei
thought that it shoulde happely deface
their fame & minishe the opinion of their
connyng, if so pong a man, plentouse of
substance and great doctrine: durst in
the chiefe cite of the world, make a prose
of his wit & his learning, as wel in thinge
naturall as in diuinitee, and in many
such thinges as men many yeres neuer
attayned to. Now when thei perceiued,
that thei coulde not agaisst his connyng
any thing openly preuaile: thei brought
forth the serpentines of false crine. And
cried out, that ther were. xiiij. of his. ir.
C. questions suspect of heresie. Then
foigned thei to them some good simple
foik, that shoulde of zeale to the faith, & pre-
tence of religion, impugne those questi-
ons, as new thinge, & with which their
eares had not be in vce. In which im-
pugnacio though some of them happely
lacked not good minde: yet lacked thei
erudicion and lernyng, which questions,
not with standing before that, not a few
famous doctours of diuinitee had ap-
proued, as good and cleane, and subscri-
bed their names vnder them. But he not
bearing

John Picus
his disputa-
tions at Rome

a. ii. bearing

A bearing the losse of his fame, made a defence for those. xij. questions. A worke of great erudicio and elegant, and filled with the cognition of many things worthy to be lerned: which worke he compiled in. xx. nyghtes. In which it evidently appereth, not only that those conclusions were good, and standyng with the faith: but also that they, which had barred at them: were of folte and rudenesse to be repproued. Which defence, and all other thinges that he should write: he committed (like a good chrissten man) to the most holy iudgemēt of our mother holy church. Which defence received, and the xij. questions duly by deliberacion examined, our holy father the Pope approued Picus and tenderly fauored him, as by a bull of our holy father pope Alexander the. vij. it plainly appereth. But the booke, in which the whole. iij. C. questions, with their conclusions, were conteyned (for as much as they were in them many thinges strange, and not fully declared: and were more mete for secreete communication of lerned men, then for open hearing of common people, which for lacke of connyng might take hurt therby) Picus desired him self, that it should not be readde. And so was the reading thereof forbidden. So, this ende had Picus of his hye mynde & proud purpose: & where he thought to haue gottē perpetuall praise: there had he muche worke to kepe him self byrigh: that he raime not in perpetuall infamy and sclaudre.

Of the change of his life.

As him self told his newlewe, he iudged, & this came thus to passe, by the especiall prouision and singular goodnes of almighty god: that by this false crime, vntrewly put vpon him by his euell willers, he should correct his very errours, and & this should be to him (wandering in darkenesse) as a shining light: in which he might behold & considre, how ferre he had gone out of the waie of truthe. For before this he had been both desyrous of glorie, and kindled in vaine loue, and holden in voluptuose vse of women. The comelynes of his body, with the louely fauoure of his visage, and therewithall his meruelouse fame, his excellēt lerning, great richesse and noble kyndred, set many women as fier on him. From the desire of whom he not abhorring (the waie of life set a side) was somewhat fallen in to watonnesse. But after that he was once with this

The bell of
as all hathe
had a mad-
dyng tyne.

bariaunce wakened: he dzeu backe his mynd flowing in riot, and turned it to Chyist. Whomes blandimentes he chaunged in to the desire of heauyly ioyes, and dispising the blast of vaine glorie, which he before desired, now with all his mind he began to seke the glorie and profite of Chyistes church, and so began he to ordze his condicions, that from thenceforth he might haue ben approued: & though his enemye were his iudge.

Of the fame of his vertue, and the resort vnto him therfore.

Here vpon shortly the fame of his noble cunnyng and excellent vertue, both farre & nigh began gloriously to spring, for which many worthie philosophers (and that were taken in nombze of the most cunning) resorted busely vnto him, as to a market of good doctrine. Some for to moue questions & dispute: somme (that were of more godly mynde) to heare, & to take the hole some lessons and instruction of good liuyng: which lessons were so much the more set by, in how much they came from a more noble man, and a more wise man, & him also, which had him selfe sometime followed the croked hilles of deliciose pleasure. To the fastening of god discipline in the myndes of the hearers, those things seme to be of great effecte: which he both of their owne nature good, and also be spoken of such a matter, as is couerted to the waie of iustice, fro the croked and ragged path of voluptuose liuyng.

A right glorious fame.

The burnyng of wanton booke.

Three booke, that in his youth of wanton verses of loue, with other like fantasies he had made in his vulgare tongue: al together (in detestacion of his vice passed, and lest these trifles might be some euil occasio afterwarde) he burned.

Of his studie and diligence in holy scripture.

As thenceforth he gaue him self daye and night most feruently to the studies of scripture, in which he wrote many noble booke, whiche well testifie both his angelike wit, his ardent labour, and his profounde erudicion: of whiche booke, some we haue, & some (as an inestimable treasure) we haue lost. Great libraries, it is incredible to considre, how meruelouse celeritee he readde throuer, & wrote out what him liked, of the olde fathers of the church, so great know-
lage

A llege he had, as it were harde for him to haue, that hath liued longe, and all his life hath done nothig els, but reade the. **O**f these newer diuines so good iudgement he had, that it might appere, these were nothing in any of them, that were vnknowen to him: but al thing as ripe as though he had al their woakes euer before his eyes. **B**ut of all these new doctours, he specially commendeth saint Thomas, as him that enforceth himself in a sure pillar of trueth. He was verie quicke, wise, and subtil in dispicions, and had great felcitate therein, while he had that high stomak. **B**ut now a great while he had bid such cōsictes fare wel, and euery daie more & more hated them: and so greatly abhorred them, that whē Hercules Estensis, duke of Ferrare, first by messangers, & after by him self: desired him to dispute at Ferrare, because the general chapter of freres prechours was holden there: longe it was or he could be brought therto: but at the instant request of the duke, which very singularly loued him, he came thether: where he so behauid him self, that was wondre to beholde, how all the audiece reioyced to heare him. For it were not possible for a man to bittre neither more cōing, nor more cōingly. **B**ut it was a common saying with him, that suche altercations were for a logician, & not metely for a philosopher. He saide also, that such disputacions greatly profited, as were exercised with a peafible minde to therserching of the truth in secrete cōpany, without great audience: but he saide, y those dispicions did great hurt, that were holden openly to thosentactō of lernyng, and to winne the fauour of the cōmon people, & the commendacion of folies. He thought y vtterly it coulde binne: h be, but y with the despyze of worship (which these gasing disputers gape after) ther is with an inseparablē borde annexed the appetite of his cōfusiō and rebuke, whom thei argue with. whiche appetite is a deadly wōude to the soule, and a mortall porcion to charitie. **T**here was nothing passed hi of those captious subtilties and cauillaciōs of sophistrie. **N**or again, ther was nothing y he more hated and abhorred, cōsidering that thei serued of nought but to the thanning of such other folke as wer in very science much better lerned, and in those triffes ignorant. **A**nd that vnto thenserching of the truth (to which he gaue cōtinuall labour) thei profited litle or nought.

No diuine either olde or new, so I. P. I. cus vnknowē

I. P. I. cus loth to dispute.

Disputaciōs profitabile.

Disputaciōs hurt full.

To correct the rebuke of other stand eth not with charite.

Sophisticall cauillaciōs to what purpose thei serue.

Of his lernyng diuinetally.

B ut because we will holde the reder no lēger in hand, we will speake of his lernyng but a woorde or twaine generally. **S**ome mā hath shined in eloquence, but ignozance of naturall thinges hath dishonested him: **S**ome man hath shodored in the knowlage of diuers straunge languages, but he hath wanted all the cognicion of philosophie. **S**ome man hath read the inuēciōs of the blde philosophers, but he hath not ben exercised in the new scoles. **S**ome man hath sought cōnyng, as wel philosophie as diuinitie, for praise & bayne glozie, & not for any profit or encrease of Christes church. **B**ut **P**ic^o all these thinges id equal study hath so receiued, y thei might seme by heapes, as a plectuouse streame to haue flowen in to him. **F**or he was not of the cōdictiō of some folke (which to be excellent in one thing set al other aside) but he in all sciences profited so excellently: that which of them so euer ye had considered in him, ye wolde haue thought that he had taken that one for his onely studie. **A**nd al these thinges were in him so muche the more meruelouse, in that he canie therto by him self with the strength of his owne witte, for the loue of god and profit of his church, without maisters: so that we maie sape of him, that Epicure the philosopher said of him selfe: **T**hat he was his owne maister.

I. P. I. cus cōnyng & knowlage in lernyng, & bounded in I. P. I. cus.

I. P. I. cus his own maister.

Five causes that in so short tyme brought him to so meruelouse cōnyng.

T he bynyng forth of so wondrous effects in so small time, I cōsidre five causes to haue comt together: **F**irst an incredible wit, secondly a meruelouse fast memorie, thirdly great substance. **B**y the which to the bynyng of his bokes, as wel latin as greke, & other toges, he was especially holpen. **viij. m.** ducates he had laid out in the gathering together of volumes of all maner of literature: **T**he fourth cause was his busy & infatigable studie: **T**he fift was the contempt or dispising of al earthly thinges.

Witte. Memorie. Substance. Studie. Worolp cōnyng temple.

Of his condicions and his vertue.

B ut nowe let vs passe ouer those powers of his soule, which appertaine to vnderstāding and knowlage, and let vs speake of them that beloge to the acheuing of noble actes. **L**et vs as we can, declare his excellent condicions, that his minde enclamd to godward māie appere: **A**nd his riches

God is the
geuer of all
goodnes.

A geuen out to pooze folke maie be vnder-
stande, to the intent that thei, which shall
here his vertue, maie haue occasiō ther-
by to geue especiall laude & thanke ther-
foze to almightie god, of whose infinite
goodnesse al grace and vertue cometh.

Of the sale of his lordshippes
and alme.

Quietnes of
life to godly
is a most plea-
sant possessiō.

There were before his deth (to the end
that all the charge and busines of
rule or lordship set a side, he might
leade his life in rest and peace, wel con-
sidering to what ende this erthly ho-
nour and worldly dignitee cometh) all
his patrimonie and dominions, that is
to say: the third part of the lome of *Sti-*

randula, and of *Concordia*, vnto *Iohn*
Francis his neiew he solde: and that
so good chepe, that it semed rather a gift
then a sale. All that euer he receyued of
this bargaine, partely he gaue out to
pooze folke, partely he bestowd in the
buying of a litle laude, to the finding of
him and his howsholde. And ouer that,
much siluer vessel and plate, with other
precious & costly vtenilses of howshold,
he deuided among pooze people. He was
content with meane fare at his table:
how be it somewhat yet reteyning of the
olde plentie in deintie viande and siluer
vessel. Euery daie at certaine howres

Alme.

Prayer.

He gaue him self to prayer. To pooze me
alwaie, if any came, he plentifully gaue
out his money: and not content only to
geue y he had him selfe ready: he wrote
ouer, to one *Hierome Benineu*, a *Flo-*
rētine, a wel lettred man (whom for his
great lone toward him, and the integri-
tee of his condicions, he singularly fauor-
red) that he should with his own money
euer helpe pooze folke: and geue maides
money to their marriage: & alwaie send
him woozde, what he had laide out, that
he might paie it him again. This office
he committed to him, that he might the
more easely by him, as by a faithfull mes-
senger, releue the necessitie and misery
of pooze nedie people, such as him selfe
happely coulde not come by the know-
lage of.

Of the voluntarie affliction and
payning of his own body.

Ouer all this, many times (which
is not to be kept secret) he gaue
almes of his own bodi: we know
many me, which (as saie *Hierome* saith)
put forth their hande to pooze folke: but
with the pleasure of the flesh thei be ouer-
comen: but he many daies (and namelly

The flesh be-
lourely af-

those daies, which represent vnto vs the sicted for
passion and deth that *Christ* suffred for
our sake) bet and scourged his own flesh
in the remembraunce of that great bene-
fite, & for cleansing of his olde offences.

Of his placabilitee or benigne nature.

He was of chere alwaie mery, and
of so benigne nature, that he was
neuer troubled with angre. And
he said once to his neiew, that what so
euer sholde happen (fell there neuer so
great misadventure) he coulde neuer as
him thought, be moued to wrath: but if
his cheskes perished, in which his booke
laie: that he had with great trauaile and
watch compiled. But for as much as he
considered, that he laboured only for the
loue of God, and profit of his church:
& that he had dedicate vnto him all his
wozkes, his studies, and his doinges: &
sith he saue, that sith god is almighty,
thei coulde not miscary, but if it were
either by his commaundemēt, or by his
sufferaunce: he verily trusted, sith god is
all good: that he wolde not suffre him to
haue that occasion of heauines. A very
happy mynde, whiche none aduersitee
might oppresse, whiche no prosperitee
might enhaunce: not the conning of all
philosophie was able to make hi proud:
not the knowlage of the *Hebrew*, *Chal-*
dei, and *Arabie* language, beside *Grcke*
& *Latin*, coulde make him vainglorious:
not his great substaunce, not his noble,
bloude coulde blow by his heart, not the
bewing of his body, not the great occasiō
of sinne, were able to pull him back in to
the voluptuose brode way, that leadech
to hell. What thing was ther of so mer-
uelouse strength, that might ouertorne
the minde of him (whiche nowe as *Se-*
neke saith) was gotten aboue fortune:
as he, which as well hit fauoure as hit
malice, hath set at nought, that he might
be coupled with a spirituall knot vnto
Christ and his heuenly citelens.

How he eschewed dignitees.

Whan he saue many me with great
labour and money desire, and be-
lely purchase the offices & digni-
ties of the church (which are now
a daies, alas y while, comonly bought
and solde) him self refused to receiue the,
whā two kynges offred them. Whā an
other man offred him great worldly p-
mociō, if he wolde go to the kynges
court: he gaue him suche an answer,
that he sholde wel know, that he neither
desired woizhip, ne worldly riches: but
rather

Angre or
wrath, can
haue no place
in a godly mid.

No misadven-
ture coulde
happen to *J.*
Picus so gre-
uous, as the
losse of his
bookes.

Ambition
subdued.

A rather set them at nought, that he might the moze quietly gene him self to studie, and the seruice of god. This waies he perswaded, that to a philosopher, & him y seeketh for wisdom, it was no praise to gather richesse, but to refuse them.

Of the despising of worldly glorie.

Shadow of glorie.

fame.

Howe much learning ought to be esteemed. The good man trauaileth for the profit of other & not of him self, or for an unceasing of his owne name.

All praise of people, and all earthly glorie, he reputed vtterly for nothing: but in the renaying of this shadow of glorie, he laboured for very glorie, which euermoze foloweth vertue, as an vnseparable seruaunt. He saide, that fame oftentimes did hurt to men while they liue, & neuer good whan they be dead. So much only set he by his learning, in how much he knewe that it was profitable to the church, and to the exterminacion of errors. And ouer that he was come to that pike of perfite humilitie, that he little feared, whether his woakes went out vnder his owne name or not, so that they might as much profite, as if they wer gene out vnder his name. And now set he litte by any other booke, saue only the bible: in the only study of which, he had appointed him self to spende the residewe of his life, sauing that the comon profit pricked him, when he considered to many, and so great woakes as he had conceiued, and longe trauailed vpon, how they were of euery man by and by desired and looked after.

Howe much he set moze by deuotion then conyng.

Deuotion.

The litte affection of an olde man or an olde woman to godwarde (wer it neuer so small) he set moze by, then by all his owne knowlage, as well of natural thinges as godly. And oftentimes in communicacion he would admonishe his familiar frendes, howe greatly these moztall thinges bowe and drawe to an ende, howe slipper, & howe falling it is, that we liue in now: howe ferme, howe stable it shalbe, that we shal here after liue in, whether we be throwe down in to helle, or lift vp in to heauen. Therfore he exhorted them to turne by their myndes to loue God, which was a thing farre excellling all the conyng that is possible for vs in this life to obtaine. The same thing also in his boke, which he entituled be Ente & Vno, lightsomely he treateth, where he interrupteth the course of his disposition, & turnyng his woordes to Angelus Politianus (to who he dedicateth that boke) he writeth in this wise. But now behold, o my welbelo-

To loue god.

ued Angel, what madnesse holdeth vs. Loue god (while we be in this bodye) we rather maye, than either know him, or by speche vtter him. In louing him also we moze profit our self, we laboure lesse & serue him moze. And yet had we leuer alwaie by knowlage, neuer finde that thing that we seke: then by loue to possede y thing, which also without loue, were in vaine founde.

Of his liberallitie & contempt of richesse.

Liberallitie only in him passed measure: for so farre was he fro the getting of any diligēce to earthly thinges, that he seemed somewhat bespente w the freckell of negligence. His frendes oftentimes admonished him, that he sholde not all vtterly despise richesse, shewing him, that it was his dishonestie and rebuke, whē it was reported (were it true or false) that his negligence, and setting nought by money, gaue his seruauntes occasion of disceit and robberie. Neuer thelesse, that mynde of his (which enuermoze on high cleared sail in contempla- tion, & in thenserching of natures cou- sell) coulde neuer let down it selfe to the consideracion & overseing of these base, abiecte, and vile earthly traisces. His high stewart came on a time to him, and desired him to resceiue his accoūt of suche money as he had in many perces recey- ued of his: and brought forth his booke of rekenyng. He answered him in this wise: My frende (saith he) I knowe well ye haue mought oftentimes, & yet maie des- ceiue me & ye list: wherfore y examina- cion of these expēses shal not neede. Ther- is no moze to doo, if I be ought in your dette, I shall paie you by and by. If ye be in myne, paye me, either now, if ye haue it: or hereafter, if ye be nowe not able.

A hozse ad- dite and a godly.

Of his touyng mynde and vertuous behaueur to his frendes.

His louers and frendes, with great benignitie and curtesie he entrea- ted, whom he used in al secreete com- muning vertuously to exhorte to god- ward, whose godly woordes so effectual- ly wrought in the hearers: that wher a conyng man (but not so god as conyng) came to him on a daie for y great fame of his learning to conuene with him: as they fell in talkyng of vertue, he was w two woordes of Icius so thzoughly per- ceed, that forthwithall he forsoke his ac- customed vice, and reformed his condi- cion. The woordes that he said vnto him, were these. If we had euermoze before

Frendes.

Walke peedig of an earne- sea: & wo- nch effect- uality.

Our eien the painfull death of Christ, which he suffered for the loue of vs: & thā if we wolde agayn think vpo our death, we sholde wel beeware of synne. Heruelouse benignitie & curtesie he shewed vnto them: not whom strength of body or goodes of fortune magnified, but to them, whom learnynge and condicions boude him to fauour. For similitude of maners, is a cause of loue and frēdship. A likenesse of condicions is (as Apollonius saith) an affinitie.

Similitude of maners cause
seth loue.

what he hated, and what he loued.

Pronde pa-
lace.

Wher was nothing more odious, nor more intolerable to him, thā as (Horace saith) the proude palaces of stately lordes, wedding, & worldly busines, he died almost alike. Notwithstandynge, whan he was aered once in sport, whether of thole two burdeyns semed lighter, and which he wold chose, if he shoulde of necessitie be dztuen to that one, and at his election: whiche he sticketh thereat a while, but at the last he shoke his heade, and a litle smilpng he answered, that he had leuer take him to mariage, as that thing in which was lesse seruitude, and not so much ieopardie. Libertie aboue all thing he loued, to which both his owne naturall affection, and the studie of philosophie enclined him: & for that was he alwaie wandering and sitting, & wolde neuer take him selte to any certeyne dwelling.

Libertie.

Of his seruēt ioue to God.

Obseruāces.

Outward obseruāces he gaue no very great force, we speake not of these obseruāces, which the churche commaundeth to be obserued: for i those he was diliget: but we speake of these ceremonies, which folke byzng vpon setting the very seruice of god aside, which is (as Christ saith) to be worshipped in spirite and in truth: But in the inward affectes of the mynde he cleued to god with very seruēt loue, and deuotion. Sometime that meruelouse alacritee languished, and almost fell: and est agayn with great strengh rose vpon to god. In the loue of whō he so seruētly burned, that on a time as he walked w John Fraūcis his neuew in an orchard at Ferrare, in the talkyng of the loue of Christ, he brake out in to these wordes: Neuew saide he, this will I shew the, I warne the kepe it secret: the substaunce that I haue lost, after certaine boke of myne finished, I intende to geue out to poore folke: and sentyng my selte with

Exceeding
seruēt ioue
to Godwarde

the crucifire, bare fote walkyng about the worlde in euery town and castel, & purpose to preche of Christ. Afterward I vnderstande, by the especiall comāndement of god he chaūged that purpose, and appointed to profite him self in the order of seretes prechours.

J. picus incli-
ned to religie

Of his death.

In the yere of our redemption. 1494. whan he had fulfilled the. xxxij. yere of his age, and abode at florence, he was sodeinly taken with a seruēt aris, which so sarre forth crepte into the interior partes of his body, that it despised all medicines, & ouercame all remedie, and compelled him within thre daies to satisfie nature, and repaie her the life which he receined of her.

Of his behaueour in the extremes of his life.

After that he had receuyed the holy body of our sauitour, whan thei offered vnto him the crucifire (that in the image of Christes ineffable passion, suffered for our sake, he might ere he gaue vpon godde, receiue his full draught of loue and compassion in the beholding of that pittifull figure, as a stronge defence against all aduersitee, and a sure portculiouse against wicked spirittes:) the priest demaunded him, whether he spymely beleued that crucifire to be the ymage of him, that was very God and very man, whiche in his godhead was before al tyme begotten of his father, to whom he is also equall in all thing: and which of h holy ghoſt, god also, of him, & of the father coeternally going forth, which. iij. persones be one God, was in the chaffe wombe of our ladye a perpetuall virgine, coceuyed in tyme, which suffered hungar, thyrst, heate, colde, labour, trauaile, and watche: and whiche at the last for washing of oure spottie synne, contracted and dratven vnto vs in the sinne of Adam: for the soueraigne loue that he had to mākinde, in the aulter of the crosse willingly & gladly shede out his most precious bloude. Whē the priest enquired of him these thinges, & such other, as thei be wont to enquire of folke in such case: He answered him, y he not only beleued it, but also certainly knew it. Whā that one Albertus, his sylters sonne, a pong man, both of wit, connyng, and condicions excellent: began to comfort him against death, and by naturall reason to shew him why it was not to be feared, but strongly to be taken, as that only thing which maketh an ende

A constant
faith.

At an ende of al the labour, paine, trouble, and sorow of this thort miserable deadely life: he answered, that this was not the chief thing that should make him cōter to die: because the death determineth the manifolde incōmodities & painfull wretchednes of this life: but rather this cause should make him not cōtent only, but also gladd to die, for that death maketh an ende of synne: in as much as he trusted, the thortnesse of his life should leaue him no space to synne and offende. He asked also all his seruantes for guenesse, if he had euer before that daie offended any of them, for whom he had prouided by his testamēt. viij. yeres before: for some of them meate and drink: for some, money, eche of them after their deseruing. He shewed also to the abouenamēd Albertus, and many other credible psones, that the quene of heauen came to hym that night with a meruelouse fragrant odour, refreshing all his mēbres that were burnt and scalded with that feuer, and promised hym, that he should not vtterly dye. He laye alwaie with a pleasaunt and a mery countenance, and in the very twitches and pāges of death he spake as though he behelde the heauens opē. And all that came to him, and saluted him, offering their seruice: with very louing wordes he receiued, thāked, and kissed. The executour of his moueable goodes, he made one Antony his brother. The heyre of his lādes he made the poore people of the hospitall of Florence. And in this wise in to the handes of our sauour he gaue vp his spirite.

How his death wastaken.

That sorow and heines his departing out of this world was, both to riche & poore, high & lowe, well testifieth the pices of Italie, well witnesseth the cities and people, wel recordeth & great benignitie & singular curtesie of Charles kyng of Fraunce: which as he came to Florence, intending from thence to Rome, and so forth in his biage against the realme of Naples, hearing of y sicknesse of Picus, in all conuenient hast he sent him two of his owne phisicians, as embassadours both to visit him, and to do him al the helpe thei might. And ouer that sent vnto him letters subscribed w his owne hande, full of such humanitie and courteous offres, as the benenolent mynde of suche a noble pince, and the woorthy vertues of Picus required.

Of the state of his soule.

After his death (and not longe after) one Hieronymus a frere, preacher of Ferrare, a mā as wel in connyng, as holynes of luying most famous. In a sermon, which he reherced in the chief church of all Florence, said vnto y people in this wise. Thou Cittee of Florence, I haue a secrete thing to shew the, which is as trew as the gospel of seint John: I wolde haue kept it secret, but I am cōpelled to shew it. For he that hath auctoritē to commāde me, hath bid me publishe it. I suppose verely, y ther be none of you, but ye knew John Picus Erle of Mirandula, a man in whom God had heaped many great gyftes and singular graces: the church had of him an inestimable losse. For I suppose, if he might haue had y space of his life prouged: he should haue excelled (by such woorkes as he should haue left behind him) al them that died this. viij. yere before him. He was wont to be cōuersant with me, and to breake to me the secretes of his heart in which I perceiued, that he was by priuey inspiraciō called of god vnto religion. Wherefore he purposed oftentimes to obey this inspiration, and folow his calling. How be it, not being kind enough for so great benefices of God: or called back by the tendrenes of his flesh (as he was a man of delicate cōplexion) he shrank from the labour, or thinkyng happely that the religion had no neede of hym, differred it for a tyme: how be it, this I speake only by cōiecture. But for this delatē I thretened him two yere together, y he would be punished, if he should that purpose whiche our Lorde had put in his mind. And certainly I prayed to god my selfe (I will not lie therfore) y he might be somewhat beatē, to cōpell him to take that waie, whiche god had from aboue shewed hi. But I desired not th scourge vpo him, that he was beaten with: I looked not for that: but our lord had so decreed, that he should forsake this present life, & leaue a part of that noble crowne, that he should haue had in heauen. For withstanding the most benigne iudge hath dealt mercifullly with him: and for his plentuous almes geuen out with a free and liberall hand vnto poore people, & for the deuout prayers, which he most instantly offred vnto God, this fauour he hath: though his soule be not yet in y bosome of our lorde in the heauely ioye, yet is it not on that other side deputed vnto

what cause
should make
be willing
glad to dye.

Is

Is

C

C

Charles
the
king.

Punishment
desired for a
godly intent.

Is

vnto

Purgatorie. Unto ppetual paine: but he is adiudged for a while to þ fyre of purgatorie, there to suffre paine for a season, which I am the gladder to shew you in this behalfe: to the entēt that thel, which knew him, and suche in especially, as for his manifold benefices are singularly beholden unto him: shoulde now w their prayers, almes, and other suffrages helpe hym.

Prayer & almes auoyde for the dead.

Within a certain time. But the wordes, which Picus had saide in his sickenes, of the appering of our lady, caused him to doute and to feare, lest Picus had be deceiued by some illusion of the deuill, in as much as the promis of our lady seemed to haue been frustrate by his deth. But afterward he vnderstode, that Picus was deceiued in the equiuocaciō of the wordē, while the spake of the seconde death. and euerlasting: & he vndertook her of the first death & temporal. And after this, þ same Hierome shewed to his acquaintaūce, that Picus had after his death appered vnto him, all cōpassed in fire: and shewed vnto him, that he was such wise i purgatorie punished for his negligence, and his vnkindenesse.

C Now sith it is so, that he is ad iudged to that fire, from whiche he shal vndoubtedly depart vnto glozie, and no man is sure how longe it shalbe first: and maie be the shōrter time for our itercessions: Let euery chrylten body shew their charittie vpon him to helpe to spede him thether, where after the long habitacion w the inhabitauntes of this darke world, (to whom his goodly conuersacion gaue great light) and after the darke fyre of purgatorie (in which, veniall offences be clenfed) he maie shōrtly (if he be not already) entre the inaccessible and infinite light of heauen, where he maie in the ptesence of the soueraigne godhed so prae for vs, that we maie the rather by his intercession be parteners of that inspekable tope, which we haue prayed to bring him spedely to. Amen.

Here foloweth thre epistles of þ saide Picus: of which thre, two be written vnto Iohn Frauncis his neuiew, the third vnto one Andrewe Coz neus, a noble man of Italy.

The argument and mater of the first epistle of Picus, vnto his neuiew Iohn Frauncis.



Lappereth by this epistle, that Iohn Frauncis, the neuiew of Picus, had broken his mynde vnto Picus, and had made him of counsell in some secreete godlye purpose,

whiche he entēded to take vpon him: but what this purpose sholde be, vpon this letter, can we not fully perceiue. Now after þ he thus entēded, there fill vnto him many impedimētes, and diuers occasions, which withstode his entēt, and in maner letted him, & pulled him back. wherfore Picus comforteth him in this epistle, & exhōrteth him to perseverāce, by such meanes as are in the epistle euidēt and plainc enough. Notwithstandyng, in the begynnyng of this letter, where he saith, that the flesh shall (but if we take good hede) make vs drōke in the cuppes of Circes, and misshape vs in to the likenes and figure of brute bestes: those wordes, if ye perceiue them not, be in this wise vnderstanden. Ther was sometime in a woman called Circe, which by enchauntemēt (as Circe gil maketh mencion) vsd with a drinke to turne as many men, as receiued it, in to diuers likenes & figures of sōdyr bestes: some into liones, some into beares, some into swyne, some into wolves, which afterward walked euer tante about hir house, and wayted vpo her in such vse or seruice as she list to put vnto them. In the wyne of voluptuose pleasure, or make þ sowl leaue the noble vse of his reaso, and encline vnto sensualitee and affections of the body: thē the flesh chaūgeth vs from the figure of reasonable men in to the likenes of vnrasonable bestes, and that diuersly: after the cōueniēce and similitude betwene our sensuall affections and the brutish propertes of sōdyr bestes. As the proude hersted man in to a lione, the proude beate, the lecherouse in to a gote, the drunken glotten in to a swyne, the rancious

Here endeth the life of Iohn Picus Earle of Mirandula,