

THE ENGLISH WORKS OF SIR THOMAS MORE

VOLUME THE FIRST

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W. E. CAMPBELL

With Introductions and Philological
Notes by

A. W. REED, M.A., D.Lit.

*Professor of English Languages and Literature,
University of London, King's College*

and

An Essay on "The Authorship of Richard III"

by

R. W. CHAMBERS, M.A., D.Lit., F.B.A.

*Quain Professor of English Languages and Literature,
University of London, University College*

together with an Essay and Collations by

W. A. G. DOYLE-DAVIDSON, B.A.

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THE LIFE OF JOHN PICUS

Earl of Mirandula, a great lord of Italy, an excellent cunning man in all sciences, and virtuous of living; with divers epistles and other works of the said John Picus, full of great science,¹ virtue, and wisdom: whose life and works be worthy and digne to be read and often to be had in memory.

Translated out of Latin into English by Master Thomas More.

Unto his right entirely beloved sister in Christ, Joyeuce Leigh,
Thomas More greeting in our Lord.

It is, and of long time hath been, my well beloved sister, a custom in the beginning of the New Year, friends to send between presents or gifts, as the witnesses of their love and friendship, and also signifying that they desire each to other that year a good continuance and prosperous end of that lucky beginning. But commonly all those presents, that are used customably all in this manner

Presents Bodily.

between friends to be sent, be such things as pertain only unto the body, either to be fed or to be clad or some other wise delighted: by which it seemeth that their friendship is but fleshly and stretcheth in manner to the body only. But forasmuch as the love and

Christian Love.

amity of Christian folk should be rather ghostly² friendship than bodily, since that all faithful people are rather spiritual than carnal (for as the apostle saith: "We be not now in flesh, but in spirit, if Christ abide in us")³ I therefore, mine heartily beloved sister, in good luck of this New Year have sent you such a present as may bear witness of my tender love and zeal to the happy continuance and gracious increase of virtue in your soul; and whereas the gifts of other folk declare that they wish their friends to be worldly fortunate, mine testifieth that I desire to have you godly prosperous. These works, more profitable than

John Picus.

large, were made in Latin by one John Picus, Earl of Mirandula, a lordship in Italy, of whose cunning and virtue we need here nothing to speak, forasmuch as hereafter we peruse the course of his whole life, rather after our little power slenderly, than after

The Profit of his Works.

his merits sufficiently. The works are such that truly, good sister, I suppose of the quantity there cometh none in your hand more profitable, neither to the achieving of temperance in prosperity, nor to the purchasing of patience in adversity, nor to the despising of wordly vanity, nor to the desiring of heavenly felicity: which

¹ knowledge.

² spiritual.

³ Rom. viii. 9.

works I would require you gladly to receive, ne were it ¹ that they be such that for the goodly matter (howsoever they be translated) may delight and please any person that hath any mean ² desire and love to God, and that yourself is such one as for your virtue and fervent zeal to God cannot but joyously receive anything that meanly soundeth either to the reproach of vice, commendation of virtue, or honour and laud of God,—Who preserve you.

¹ were it only.² moderate.

THE LIFE OF JOHN PICUS, EARL OF MIRANDULA

JOHAN PICUS of the father's side descended of the worthy lineage of the Emperor Constantine by a nephew of the said Emperor called Picus, *The Lineage of John Picus.* by whom all the ancestors of this John Picus undoubtedly bear that name. But we shall let his ancestors pass, to whom (though they were right excellent) he gave again as much honour as he received, and we shall speak of himself, rehearsing in part his learning and his virtue. For these be the things which we may account for our *Nobleness of Ancestors.* own, of which every man is more properly to be commended than of the nobleness of his ancestors, whose honour maketh us not honourable. For either they were themselves virtuous or not; if not, then had they none honour themselves, had they never so great possessions: for honour is the reward of virtue. And *Honour.* how may they claim the reward that properly belongeth to virtue, if they lack the virtue that the reward belongeth to? Then, if themselves had none honour, how might they leave to their heirs that thing which they had not themselves? On the other side, *Honour and Virtue Come not by Inheritance.* if they be virtuous and so, consequently, honourable, yet may they not leave their honour to us as inheritants ¹ no more than the virtue that themselves were honourable for. For never the more noble be we for their nobleness, if ourselves lack those things for which they were noble. But rather the more worshipful that our ancestors were, the more vile and shameful be we, if we decline from the steps of their worshipful living, the clear beauty of whose virtue maketh the dark spot of our vice the more evidently to appear and to be the more marked. But Picus, of whom we speak, was himself so honourable, for the great plenteous abundance of all such virtues the possession whereof very ² honour followeth (as a shadow followeth a body) that he was to all them that aspire to honour a very spectacle, ³ in whose conditions, as in a clear polished mirror, they might behold in what points very ² honour standeth: whose marvellous cunning and excellent virtue though my rude learning be far unable sufficiently to express, yet forasmuch as, if no man should do it but he that might sufficiently do it, no man should do it—and better it were to be unsufficiently done than utterly undone—I shall therefore, as I can, briefly rehearse you his whole life: at the leastwise to give some other man hereafter (that can do it better) occasion to take it in hand when it shall haply grieve him to see the life of such an excellent cunning man so far uncunningly written.

¹ heirs.² true.³ a spectacle indeed.

Of his Parents and Time of his Birth. In the year of our Lord God, 1463, Pius II being then the general Vicar of Christ in His Church, and Frederick, the Third of that name, ruling the Empire, this noble man was born, the last child of his mother Julia, a woman come of a noble stock, his father hight John Francis, a lord of great honour and authority.

Of the Wonder that Appeared before his Birth. A marvellous sight was there seen before his birth. There appeared a fiery garland standing over the chamber of his mother while she travailed, and suddenly vanished away : which appearance was peradventure a token that he which should *The Interpretation of the Wonder.* that hour in the company of mortal men be born, in the perfection of understanding should be like the perfect figure of that round circle or garland ; and that his excellent name should round about the circle of this whole world be magnified, whose mind should always as the fire aspire upward to heavenly things, and whose fiery eloquence should, with an ardent heart, in time to come worship and praise almighty God with all his strength : and as that flame suddenly vanished, so should this fire soon from the eyes of mortal people be hid. We have oftentimes read that such unknown and strange tokens hath gone before or followeth the nativity of excellent, wise, and virtuous men, departing ¹ (as it were) and by God's commandment severing the cradles of such special children from the company of other of the common sort, and showing that they be born to the achieving of some great thing. But to pass *Saint Ambrose.* over other, the great Saint Ambrose : a swarm of bees flew about his mouth in his cradle, and some entered into his mouth, and after that issuing out again and flying up on high, hiding themselves among the clouds, escaped both the sight of his father and of all them that were present : which prognostication one Paulinus making much of, expounded it to signify to us the sweet honeycombs of his pleasant writing, which should show out the celestial gifts of God and should lift up the mind of men from earth into heaven.

Of his Person. He was of feature and shape seemly and beauteous, of *Virtue in a Comely Body is more Esteemed.* stature goodly and high, of flesh tender and soft, his visage lovely and fair, his colour white intermingled with comely reds, his eyes grey and quick of look, his teeth white and even, his hair yellow and not too picked.²

Of his Setting Forth to School and Study in Humanity. Under the rule and governance of his mother he was set to masters and to learning, where with so ardent mind he laboured the studies of humanity that within short while he was (and not without a cause) accounted among the chief *Wit receiveth Remembrance bolder.* orators and poets of that time, in learning marvellous swift and of so ready a wit that the verses which he heard once read he would again both forward and backward to the great

¹ dividing.

² elegant, affected. The Latin has *inaffectato*.

wonder of the hearers rehearse, and over that would hold it in sure remembrance ; which in other folks wont commonly to happen contrary, for they that are swift in taking be oftentimes slow in remembering, and they that with more labour and difficulty receive it, more fast and surely hold it.

*Of his Study in Canon.*¹ In the fourteenth year of his age, by the commandment of his mother (which longed very sore to have him priest) he departed to Bononie ² to study in the laws of the Church, which when he had two years tasted, perceiving that the faculty leaned to nothing but only mere traditions and ordinances, his mind fell from it. Yet lost he *The Faculty Canon.* not his time therein, for in that two years, yet being a child, he compiled a breviary or a sum upon all the decretals, in which, as briefly as possible was, he comprised the effect of all that whole great volume and made a book, no slender thing to right cunning and perfect doctors.

Of his Study in Philosophy and Divinity. After this, as a desirous ensearcher of the secrets of nature, he left these common trodden paths and gave himself wholly to speculation and philosophy, as well human as divine. For the purchasing whereof (after the manner of Plato and Apollonius) *Travelling from Place to Place wonderfully increaseth Knowledge.* he scrupulously sought out all the famous doctors of his time, visiting studiously all the universities and schools, not only through Italy but also through France. And so indefatigable labour gave he to those studies that, yet a child and beardless, he was both reputed, and was indeed, both a perfect philosopher and a perfect divine.

Of his Mind, and Vainglorious Disputations at Rome. Now had he been seven years conversant in these studies when, full of pride and desirous of glory and man's praise (for yet was he not kindled in the love of God) he *John Picus his Disputations at Rome.* went to Rome, and there (coveting to make a show of his cunning and little considering how great envy he should raise against himself) nine hundred questions he proposed of divers and sundry matters, as well in logic and philosophy as divinity, with great study picked and sought out as well of the Latin authors as the Greek, and partly fetched out of the secret mysteries of the Hebrews, Chaldees and Arabians, and many things drawn out of the old obscure philosophy of Pythagoras, Trismegistus, and Orpheus, and many other things strange and to all folk (except right few special excellent men) before that day not unknown only but also unheard of. All which questions in open places (that they might be to all people the better known) he fastened and set up, offering also himself to bear the costs of all such as would come thither out of far countries to dispute. But through the *Envy.* envy of his malicious enemies (which envy, like the fire, ever draweth to the highest) he could never bring about to have a day to

¹ Canon Law.

² Bologna.

his disputations appointed. For this cause he tarried at Rome an whole year, in all which time his enviers never durst openly with open disputations attempt¹ him, but rather with craft and sleight and as it were with privy trenches enforced to undermine him, for none other cause but for malice and for they were (as many men thought) corrupt with a pestilent envy.

This envy, as men deemed, was specially raised against him for this cause, that where there were many which had many years, some for glory, some for covetousness, given themselves to learning, they thought that it should haply deface their fame and diminish the opinion of their cunning if so young a man, plenteous of substance and great doctrine, durst in the chief city of the world make a proof of his wit and his learning, as well in things natural as in divinity and in many such things as men many years never attained to. Now when they perceived that they could not against his cunning anything openly prevail, they brought forth the serpentines² of false crime³ and cried out that there were thirteen of his nine hundred questions suspect of heresy. Then joined they to them some good simple folk that should of zeal to the faith and pretence of religion impugn those questions as new things and with which their ears had not been in use. In which impugnacion, though some of them haply lacked not good mind, yet lacked they erudition and learning—which questions notwithstanding, before that, not a few famous doctors of divinity had approved as good and clean, and subscribed their names under them. But he, not bearing the loss of his fame, made a defence for those thirteen questions, a work of great erudition and elegant and stuffed with the cognition of many things worthy to be learned. Which work he compiled in twenty nights; in which it evidently appeareth, not only that those conclusions were good and standing with the Faith, but also that they which had barked at them were of folly and rudeness to be reprov'd. Which defence, and all other things that he should write, he committed (like a good Christian man) to the most holy judgment of our mother, holy Church. Which defence received, and the thirteen questions duly by deliberation examined, our Holy Father the Pope approved Picus and tenderly favoured him, as by a Bull of our Holy Father, Pope Alexander VI, it plainly appeareth. But the book in which the whole nine hundred questions with their conclusions were contained (forasmuch as there were in them many things strange and not fully declared and were more meet for secret communication of learned men than for open hearing of common people, which for lack of cunning might take hurt thereby), Picus desired himself that it should not be read. And so was the reading thereof forbidden. Lo, this end had Picus of his high mind and proud purpose, that where he thought to have gotten perpetual praise, there had he much work to keep himself upright, that he ran not in perpetual infamy and slander.

¹ try, put to the test.² See p. 198 (3. H.1).³ charge, accusation.

Of the Change of his Life. But, as himself told his nephew, he judged that this came thus to pass by the especial provision and singular goodness of almighty God, that by this false crime untruly put upon him by his evil willers, he should correct his very¹ errors, and that this should be to him (wandering in darkness) as a shining light in which he might behold and consider how far he had gone out of the way of truth. For before this he had been both desirous of glory and kindled in vain love and holden in voluptuous use of women. The comeliness of his body with the lovely favour of his visage, and therewithal his marvellous fame, his excellent learning, great riches and noble kindred, set many women afire on him, from the desire of whom he not abhorring (the way of life set aside) was somewhat fallen into wantonness. But after that he was once with this variance wakened, he drew back his mind, flowing in riot, and turned it to Christ. Women's blandishments he changed into the desire of heavenly joys, and despising the blast of vainglory which he before desired, now with all his mind he began to seek the glory and profit of Christ's Church, and so began he to order his conditions that from thenceforth he might have been approved, an though² his enemy were his judge.

Of the Fame of his Virtue and the Resort unto him Therefore. Hereupon shortly the fame of his noble cunning and excellent virtue both far and
A Right Glorious Fame. nigh began gloriously to spring; for which many worthy philosophers (and that were taken in number of the most cunning) resorted busily unto him as to a market of good doctrine, some for to move questions and dispute, some (that were of more godly mind) to hear and to take the wholesome lessons and instruction of good living: which lessons were so much the more set by in how much they came from a more noble man and a more wise man and him also which had himself some time followed the crooked hills of delicious pleasure. To the fastening of good discipline in the minds of the hearers, those things seem to be of great effect which be both of their own nature good and also be spoken of such a master as is converted to the way of justice from the crooked and ragged path of voluptuous living.

The Burning of Wanton Books. Five books that in his youth of wanton
Detestation of Vicious Life passed. verses of love with other like fantasies he had made in his vulgar tongue,³ altogether (in detestation of his vice passed and lest these trifles might be some evil occasion afterwards) he burned.

Of his Study and Diligence in Holy Scripture. From thenceforth he gave himself day and night most fervently to the studies of Scripture, in which he wrote many noble books which well testify both his angelic wit, his ardent labour, and his profound erudition, of which books some we have and some (as an inestimable treasure) we have lost. Great libraries—it is

¹ true, real.² even if.³ Italian.

incredible to consider with how marvellous celerity he read them over and wrote out what him liked. Of the old Fathers of the Church so great knowledge he had, as it were hard for him to have that hath lived long

*No Divine either
Old or New to
J. Picus unknown.*

and all his life hath done nothing else but read them. Of these newer divines so good judgment he had, it might appear there were nothing in any of them that were unknown to him, but all things as ripe as though he had all their works ever before his eyes. But of all these new doctors he specially commendeth Saint Thomas, as him that enforceth himself in a sure pillar of truth. He was very quick, wise, and subtle in disputations and had great felicity therein, while he had that high stomach. But now a great while he had bid such

*J. Picus loth to
dispute.*

conflicts farewell and every day more and more hated them and so greatly abhorred them that, when Hercules Estensis,

Duke of Ferrara, first by messengers and after by himself, desired him to dispute at Ferrara, because the General Chapter of Friars Preachers was held there, long it was ere he could be brought thereto; but at the instant request of the Duke, which very singularly loved him, he came thither, where he so behaved himself that was wonder to behold how all the audience rejoiced to hear him, for it were not possible for a man to utter neither more cunning nor more cunningly. But it was a common saying with him that such altercations were for a logician and not meetly for a

*Disputations
profitable.*

philosopher. He said also that such disputations greatly profited as were exercised with a peaceable mind to the ensearching of the truth in secret company without great audience. But

*Disputations
barful.*

he said that those disputations did great hurt that were held openly to the ostentation of learning and to win the favour of the common people and the commendation of fools. He thought that utterly it could uneth¹ be but that with the desire of worship (which these gazing disputers gape after) there is with an inseparable bond annexed

*To covet the Rebuke
of other standeth
not with Charity.*

the appetite of his confusion and rebuke whom they argue with: which appetite is a deadly wound to the soul and a mortal poison to charity. There was nothing passed him

*Sophistical Cavil-
lations to what
Purpose they serve.*

of those captious subtleties and cavillations of sophistry, nor again there was nothing that he more hated and abhorred, considering that they served of naught but to the shaming of such other folk as were in very science much better learned and in those trifles ignorant, and that unto the ensearching of the truth (to which he gave continual labour) they profited little or naught.

Of his Learning Universally. But because we will hold the reader no longer in hand, we will speak of his learning but a word or twain generally. Some man hath shone in eloquence, but ignorance of natural things hath dishonested him; some man hath flowered in the knowledge of divers

¹ hardly, with difficulty.

strange languages, but he hath wanted all the cognition of philosophy; some man hath read the inventions of the old philosophers, but he hath not been exercised in the new schools; some man hath sought cunning, as well philosophy as divinity, for praise and vainglory and not for any

*All Cunning and
Knowledge in
Learning abounded
in J. Picus.*

profit or increase of Christ's Church. But Picus all these things with equal study hath so received that they might seem by heaps as a plenteous stream to have flowed into him. For he was not of the condition of some folk (which to be excellent in one thing set all other aside) but he in all sciences profited so excellently that which of them soever ye had considered in him, ye would have thought that he had taken that one for his only study.

*J. Picus his own
Master.*

And all these things were in him so much the more marvellous in that he came thereto by himself with the strength of his own wit, for the love of God and profit of His Church, without masters; so that we may say of him that Epicurus the philosopher said of himself, that he was his own master.

Five Causes that in so Short Time brought him to so Marvellous Cunning. To the bringing forth of so wonderful effects in so small time, I consider five causes to have come together: first, an incredible wit; secondly, a marvellous fast memory; thirdly, great substance, by the which, to the buying of his books as well Latin as Greek and other tongues, he was especially helped. Seven thousand ducats he had laid out in the gathering together of volumes of all manner of literature. The fourth cause was his busy and indefatigable study. The fifth was the contempt or despising of all earthly things.

*Wit, Memory,
Substance, Study,
Worldly Con-
tempt.*

Of his Conditions and his Virtue. But now let us pass over those powers of his soul which appertain to understanding and knowledge, and let us speak of them that belong to the achieving of noble acts; let us as we can declare his excellent conditions, that his mind inflamed to Godward may appear and his riches given out to poor folk may be understood, to the intent that they which shall hear his virtue may have occasion thereby to give especial laud and thanks therefor to almighty God, of Whose infinite goodness all grace and virtue cometh.

*God is the Giver of
all Goodness.*

Of the Sale of his Lordships and Alms. Three years before his death (to the end that, all the charge and business of rule or lordship set aside, he might lead his life in rest and peace, well considering to what end this earthly honour and wordly dignity cometh) all his patrimony and dominions, that is to say, the third part of the earldom of Mirandula and of Concordia, unto John Francis, his nephew, he sold, and that so good chepe¹ that it seemed rather a gift than a sale. And all that ever he received of this bargain,

*Quietness of Life to
the Godly is a most
Pleasant Possession.*

¹ bargain. Cf. chapman.

partly he gave out to poor folk, partly he bestowed in the buying of a little land to the finding of him and his household.

Alms.

And over that, much silver vessel and plate with other precious and costly utensils of household he divided among poor people. He was content with mean fare at his table, howbeit somewhat yet retaining of the old plenty in dainty viands and silver vessels. Every

Prayer.

day at certain hours he gave himself to prayer. To poor men always, if any came, he plenteously gave out his money, and, not content only to give that he had himself ready, he wrote over to one Jerome Benivenius, a Florentine, a well lettered man (whom for his great love towards him and the integrity of his conditions he singularly favoured)

O Wonderful Zeal to the relieving of the Poor.

that he should with his own money ever help poor folk and give maidens money to their marriage, and always send him word what he had laid out that he might pay it him again. This office he committed to him that he might the more easily by him as by a faithful messenger relieve the necessity and misery of poor needy people such as himself haply could not come by the knowledge of.

Of the Voluntary Affliction and Paining of his own Body. Over all this, many times (which is not to be kept secret) he gave alms of his own body.

We know many men which (as Saint Jerome saith) put forth their hand to poor folk, but with the pleasure of the flesh they be overcome; but he

The Flesh Voluntarily afflicted for God's Sake.

many days (and namely those days which represent unto us the passion and death that Christ suffered for our sake) beat and scourged his own flesh in the remembrance of that great benefit and for cleansing of his old offences.

Of his Placability or Benign Nature. He was of cheer always merry and

Anger or Wrath can have no Place in a Godly Mind.

of so benign nature that he was never troubled with anger, and he said once to his nephew that whatsoever should happen (fell there never so great misadventure) he could never, as him thought, be moved to wrath, but if his chests perished in

No Misadventure could happen to J. Picus so grievous as the Loss of his Books.

which his books lay that he had with great travail and watch compiled. But forasmuch as he considered that he laboured only for the love of God and profit of His

Church, and that he had dedicated unto Him all his works, his studies and his doings, and since he saw that, since God is almighty, they could not miscarry but if it were either by His commandment or by His sufferance, he verily trusted, since God is all good, that He would not suffer him to have that occasion of heaviness. O very happy mind, which none adversity might oppress, which no prosperity might enhance; not the cunning of all philosophy was able to make him proud, not the knowledge of the Hebrew, Chaldee and Arabic language, besides Greek and Latin, could make him vainglorious; not his great substance, not his noble blood could blow up his heart, not the beauty of his body, not the

great occasion of sin, were able to pull him back into the voluptuous broad way that leadeth to hell. What thing was there of so marvellous strength that might overturn the mind of him, which now (as Seneca saith) was got above fortune?—as he which as well her favour as her malice hath set at naught, that he might be coupled with a spiritual knot unto Christ and His heavenly citizens.

How he eschewed Dignities. When he saw many men with great labour and money desire and busily purchase the offices and dignities of the Church (which are nowadays, alas the while, commonly bought and sold) himself refused to receive them when two kings offered them. When

Ambition subdued. another man offered him great worldly promotion if he

would go to the King's Court, he gave him such an answer that he should well know that he neither desired worship nor worldly riches, but rather set them at naught that he might the more quietly give himself to study and the service of God. This ways¹ he [was] persuaded that to a philosopher and him that seeketh for wisdom it was no praise to gather riches but to refuse them.

Of the despising of Worldly Glory. All praise of people and all earthly

Shadow of Glory. glory he reputed utterly for nothing; but in the renaying² of this shadow of glory he laboured for very glory, which evermore followeth virtue as an inseparable servant. He said that fame

Fame.

oftentimes did hurt to men while they live, and never good when they be dead. So much only set he by his learning,

in how much he knew that it was profitable to the Church and to the

How much Learning ought to be Esteemed.

The Good Man travaileth for the Profit of Others and not of Himself or the Advancement of his own Name.

extermination of errors. And over that, he was come to that prick³ of perfect humility that he little forced⁴ whether his works went out under his own name or not, so that they might as much profit as if they were given out under his name. And now set he little by any other books save only the Bible, in the only study of which he had appointed himself to spend the residue of his life,

saying that the common profit pricked him when he considered so many and so great works as he had conceived and long travailed upon, how they were of every man by and by desired and looked after.

How much he set more by Devotion than Cunning. The little affection of an old man or an old woman to Godward (were it never so small) he set

Devotion. more by than by all his own knowledge as well of natural things as godly. And oftentimes in communication he

would admonish his familiar friends how greatly these mortal things bow and draw to an end; how slipper⁵ and how falling it is that we live in now; how firm, how stable it shall be that we shall hereafter live in,

¹ thus.

⁴ cared.

² denying. Cf. renegade.

⁵ unstable, insecure.

³ acme.

whether we be thrown down into hell or lifted up into heaven. Wherefore he exhorted them to turn up their minds to love God, *To love God.* which was a thing far excelling all the cunning that is possible for us in this life to obtain. The same thing also in his book which he entitled *De Ente et Uno* lightsomely he treateth, where he interrupteth the course of his disputation and turning his words to Angelus Politianus (to whom he dedicateth that book) he writeth in this wise : "But now behold, O my well-beloved Angel, what madness holdeth us. Love God (while we be in this body) we rather may, than either know Him or by speech utter Him. In loving Him also we more profit ourselves, we labour less and serve Him more ; and yet had we liefer always by knowledge never find that thing that we seek, than by love to possess that thing which also, without love, were in vain found."

Of his Liberality and Contempt of Riches. Liberality only in him passed measure : for so far was he from the giving of any diligence to earthly things that he seemed somewhat besprent¹ with the freckle² of negligence. His friends oftentimes admonished him that he should not all utterly despise riches, showing him that it was his dishonesty and rebuke when it was reported (were it true or false) that his negligence and setting naught by money gave his servants occasion of deceit and robbery. Nevertheless, that mind of his (which evermore on high cleaved first in contemplation and in the ensearching of nature's counsel) could never let down itself to the consideration and overseeing of these base, abject, and vile earthly trifles. His high steward came on a time to him and desired him to receive his account of such money as he had in many years received of his : and brought forth his books of reckoning. Picus answered him in this wise, *A Short Audit and a Godly.* "My friend (saith he), I know well ye might have oftentimes and yet may deceive me an ye list ; wherefore the examination of these expenses shall not need. There is no more to do : if I be aught in your debt I shall pay you by and by ; if ye be in mine pay me, either now if ye have it, or hereafter if ye be now not able."

Of his Loving Mind and Virtuous Behaviour to his Friends. His lovers and friends with great benignity and courtesy he entreated, whom he used in all secret communing virtuously to exhort to Godward, *Friends.* whose godly words so effectually wrought in the hearers that where a cunning man (but not so good as cunning) came to him on a day for the great fame of his learning to commune with him, as they fell in talking of virtue he was with two words of Picus so thoroughly pierced that forthwithal he forsook his accustomed vice and reformed his conditions. The words that he said unto him were these : "If we had evermore before our eyes the painful death of Christ which He suffered for the love of us, and then if we would again

¹ besprinkled.² rash.

think upon our death, we should well beware of sin." Marvellous benignity and courtesy he showed unto them, not whom strength of body or goods of fortune magnified, but to them whom learning and conditions bound him to favour. For similitude of manners is a cause of love and friendship : a likeness of conditions is (as Appollonius saith) an affinity. *Similitude of Manners causeth Love.*

What he Hated and what he Loved. There was nothing more odious nor more intolerable to him than (as Horace saith) the proud palaces of stately lords. Wedding and worldly business he fled almost alike. *Proud Palaces.* Notwithstanding, when he was asked once in sport whether of those two burdens seemed lighter and which he would choose if he should of necessity be driven to that one, and at his election ; which he stuck thereat a while, but at the last he shook his head and a little smiling he answered that he had liefer take him to marriage, as that thing in which was less servitude and not so much jeopardy. Liberty above all things he

loved, to which both his own natural affection and the study of philosophy inclined him ; and for that he was always wandering and flitting and would never take himself to any certain dwelling. *Liberty.*

Of his Fervent Love to God. Of outward observances he gave no very great force : we speak not of those observances which the Church commandeth to be observed, for in those he was diligent : but we speak of those ceremonies which folk bring up, setting the very service of God aside, Which is (as Christ saith) to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. But in the inward affections of the mind he cleaved to God with very fervent love and devotion. Sometimes that marvellous alacrity languished and almost fell, and after again with great strength rose up into God. In the love of Whom he so fervently burned that on a time as he walked with John Francis, his nephew, in an orchard at Ferrara, in the talking of the love of Christ, he broke out into these words, *Exercising Ardent Love to Godward.* "Nephew," said he, "this will I show thee, I warn thee keep it secret ; the substance that I have left, after certain books of mine finished, I intend to give out to poor folk, and fencing myself with the crucifix, barefoot walking about the world in every town and castle I purpose to preach of Christ." Afterwards, I understand, by the especial commandment of God, he changed that purpose and *John Picus inclined to Religion.* appointed to profess himself in the order of Friars Preachers.

Of his Death. In the year of our Redemption, 1494, when he had fulfilled the thirty-second year of his age and abode at Florence, he was suddenly taken with a fervent access¹ which so far forth crept into the interior parts of his body, that it despised all medicines and overcame all remedy, and compelled him within three days to satisfy nature and repay her the life which he received of her.

¹ burning attack of fever.

Of his Behaviour in the Extremes of his Life. After that he had received the holy Body of our Saviour, when they offered unto him the crucifix (that in the image of Christ's ineffable passion suffered for our sake, he might ere he gave up the ghost receive his full draught of love and compassion in the beholding of that pitiful figure as a strong defence against all adversity and a sure portcullis against wicked spirits) the priest demanded him whether he firmly believed that crucifix to be the image of Him that was very God and very man: which in His Godhead was before all time begotten of His Father, to Whom He is also equal in all things, and Which of the Holy Ghost, God also, of Him and of the Father coeternally going forth (which three Persons be one God) was in the chaste womb of our Lady, a perpetual virgin, conceived in time; Which suffered hunger, thirst, heat, cold, labour, travail, and watch; and Which at the last for washing of our spotty sin contracted and drawn unto us in the sin of Adam, for the sovereign love that He had to mankind, in the altar of the cross willingly and gladly shed out His most precious blood:—when the priest inquired of him these things and such other as they be wont to inquire of folk in such case, Picus answered him that he not only believed it but also certainly knew it. When that one Albertus, his sister's son, a young man

A Constant Faith.

both of wit, cunning, and conditions excellent, began to comfort him against death and by natural reason to show him why it was not to be feared but strongly to be taken as that only thing which maketh an end of all the labour, pain, trouble, and sorrow of this short, miserable, deadly life, he answered that this was not the chief thing that should make him content to die, because the death determineth the

What Cause should make us Willing and Glad to Die.

manifold incommodities and painful wretchedness of this life; but rather this cause should make him not content only but also glad to die, for that death maketh an end of sin, inasmuch as he trusted the shortness of his life should leave him no space to sin and offend. He asked also all his servants' forgiveness if he had ever before that day offended any of them;—for whom he had provided by his testament eight years before: for some of them meat and drink, for some money, each of them after their deserving. He showed also to the

A Vision.

above-named Albertus and many other credible persons that the Queen of heaven came to him that night with a marvelous fragrant odour, refreshing all his members that were bruised and crushed¹ with that fever, and promised him that he should not utterly die. He lay always with a pleasant and a merry countenance, and in the very twitches and pangs of death he spake as though he beheld the heavens open. And all that came to him and saluted him, offering their service, with very loving words he received, thanked, and kissed. The executor of his moveable goods he made one Antony, his brother. The heir of his lands

¹ crushed.

he made the poor people of the hospital of Florence. And in this wise into the hands of our Saviour he gave up his spirit.

How his Death was taken. What sorrow and heaviness his departing out of this world was, both to rich and poor, high and low, well testifieth the princes of Italy, well witnesseth the cities and people, well recordeth the great benignity and singular courtesy of *Charles, King of France*, King of France, which as he came to Florence, intending from thence to Rome and so forth in his voyage against the realm of Naples, hearing of the sickness of Picus, in all convenient haste he sent him two of his own physicians, as ambassadors both to visit him and to do him all the help they might. And over that sent unto him letters subscribed with his own hand, full of such humanity and courteous offers, as the benevolent mind of such a noble prince and the worthy virtues of Picus required.

Of the State of his Soul. After his death (and not long after) *Jeronimus*,¹ a Friar Preacher of Ferrara, a man as well in cunning as holiness of living most famous, in a sermon which he rehearsed in the chief church of all Florence, said unto the people in this wise: "O thou city of Florence, I have a secret thing to show thee which is as true as the gospel of Saint John. I would have kept it secret but I am compelled to show it, for he that hath authority to command me hath bid me publish it. I suppose verily that there be none of you but ye knew John Picus, Earl of Mirandula, a man in whom God had heaped many great gifts and singular graces: the Church had of him an inestimable loss, for I suppose if he might have had the space of his life prolonged he should have excelled (by such works as he should have left behind him) all them that died this eight hundred years before him. He was wont to be conversant with me and to break to me the secrets of his heart: in which I perceived that he was by privy inspiration called of God unto religion. Wherefore he purposed oftentimes to obey this inspiration and follow his calling. Howbeit, not being kind² enough for so great benefices of God, or called back by the tenderness of his flesh (as he was a man of delicate complexion) he shrank from the labour, or thinking haply that the religion had no need of him, deferred it for a time; howbeit this I speak only by conjecture. But for this delay I threatened him two years together that he would be punished if he forsoothed³ that purpose which our Lord had put in his mind. And certainly I prayed to God myself (I will not lie therefor) that he might be somewhat beaten to compel him to take that way which God had from above showed him. But I desired not this scourge upon him that he was beaten with. I looked not for that. But our Lord had so decreed that he should forsake this present life and leave a part of that noble crown that he should have had in heaven. Notwithstanding, the most benign Judge hath dealt mercifully with him: and for

Punishment desired for a Godly Intent.

¹ Savonarola.

² grateful.

³ neglected.

his plenteous alms given out with a free and liberal hand unto poor people, and for the devout prayers which he most instantly offered unto God, this favour he hath : though his soul be not yet in the bosom of our Lord in the heavenly joy, yet is it not on that other side deputed unto perpetual pain ;

Purgatory. but he is adjudged for a while to the fire of purgatory, there to suffer pain for a season, which I am the gladder to show you in this behalf, to the intent that they which knew him, and such in especially as for his manifold benefices are singularly beholden unto him,

Prayer and Alms Available for the Dead. should now with their prayers, alms, and other suffrages, help him." These things this holy man Jerome, this

servant of God, openly affirmed, and also said that he knew well if he lied in that place he were worthy eternal damnation. And over that he said that he had known all those things within a certain time, but the words which Picus had said in his sickness of the appearing of our Lady caused him to doubt and to fear lest Picus had been deceived by some illusion of the devil, inasmuch as the promise of our Lady seemed to have been frustrated by his death. But afterwards, he understood that Picus was deceived in the equivocation of the word, while she spake of the second death and everlasting, and he undertook ¹ her of the first death and temporal. And after this the same Jerome showed to his acquaintance that Picus had after his death appeared unto him all compassed in fire, and showed unto him that he was such wise in purgatory punished for his negligence and his unkindness.²

Now since it is so that he is adjudged to that fire from which he shall undoubtedly depart unto glory, and no man is sure how long it shall be first, and maybe the shorter time for our intercessions, let every Christian body show their charity upon him to help to speed him thither where, after the long habitation with the inhabitants of this dark world (to whom his goodly conversation gave great light) and after the dark fire of purgatory (in which venial sins be cleansed) he may shortly (if he be not already) enter the inaccessible and infinite light of heaven, where he may in the presence of the sovereign Godhead so pray for us that we may the rather by his intercession be partners of that unspeakable joy which we have prayed to bring him speedily to. Amen.

¶ Here endeth the life of John Picus, Earl of Mirandula.

¹ understood.

² ingratitude.

¶ HERE FOLLOWETH THREE EPISTLES OF THE SAID PICUS ;
OF WHICH THREE, TWO BE WRITTEN UNTO JOHN
FRANCIS, HIS NEPHEW, THE THIRD UNTO ONE
ANDREW CORNEUS, A NOBLEMAN OF ITALY

¶ *The Argument and Matter of the First Epistle of Picus unto his Nephew John Francis.* It appeareth by this epistle that John Francis, the nephew of Picus, had broken his mind unto Picus and had made him of counsel in some secret godly purpose which he intended to take upon him ; but what this purpose should be, upon this letter can we not fully perceive. Now after that he thus intended, there fell unto him many impediments and divers occasions which withstood his intent, and in manner letted ¹ him and pulled him back, wherefore Picus comforteth him in this epistle and exhorteth him to perseverance, by such means as are in the epistle evident and plain enough. Notwithstanding, in the beginning of this letter, where he saith that the flesh shall (but if ² we take good heed) make us drunk in the cups of Circe and misshape us into the likeness and figure of brute beasts : those words, if ye perceive them not, be in this wise anderstood.

Circe. There was sometime in [Aeaea]³ a woman called Circe which by enchantment (as Virgil maketh mention) used with a drink to turn as many men as received it into divers likeness and figures of sundry beasts, some into lions, some into bears, some into swine, some into wolves, which afterwards walked ever tame about her house and waited upon her in such use or service as she list to put unto them. In likewise, the flesh if it make us drunk in the wine of voluptuous pleasure or make the soul leave the noble use of his reason and incline unto sensuality and affections of the body : then the flesh changeth us from the figure of reasonable men into the likeness of unreasonable beasts,

and that diversely, after the convenience and similitude between our sensual affections and the brutish properties of sundry beasts—as the proud-hearted man into a lion, the irous ⁴ into a bear, the lecherous into a goat, the drunken glutton into a swine, the ravenous extortioner into a wolf, the false deceiver into a fox, the mocking jester into an ape. From which beastly shape may we never be restored to our own likeness again unto the time we have cast up again the drink of the bodily affections by which we were into these figures enchanted. When there cometh, sometimes, a

Wittily Said. monstrous beast to the town, we run and are glad to pay some money to have a sight thereof ; but I fear if men

¹ hindered.

² unless.

³ See Notes, p. 199 (10. G.7).

⁴ irascible, angry.

would look upon themselves advisedly they should see a more monstrous beast nearer home ; for they should perceive themselves by the wretched inclination to divers beastly passions changed in their soul not into the shape of one but of many beasts, that is to say, of all them whose brutish appetites they follow. Let us then beware, as Picus counselleth us, that we be not drunken in the cups of Circe, that is to say, in the sensual affections of the flesh, lest we deform the image of God in our souls, after Whose image we be made, and make ourselves worse than idolaters. For if he be odious to God which turneth the image of a beast into God, how much is he more odious which turneth the image of God into a beast ?

¶ *John Picus, Earl of Mirandula, to John Francis his Nephew by his Brother, Health in him that is very*¹ *Health.* That thou hast had many evil occasions after thy departing which trouble thee and stand against the virtuous purpose that thou hast taken, there is no cause, my son, why thou shouldst either marvel thereof, be sorry therefor, or dread it. But rather how great a wonder were this, if only to thee among mortal men the way lay open to heaven without sweat, as though that now at erst² the deceitful world and the cursed devil failed, and as though thou were not yet in the flesh, which coveteth against the spirit³ ; and which false flesh (but if we watch and look well to ourselves) shall make us drunk in the cups of Circe and so deform us into monstrous shapes of brutish and unreasonable beasts. Remember also that of these evil occasions the holy apostle Saint James saith thou hast cause to be glad, writing in this wise : *Gaudete, fratres, quando in tentationes varias incideritis*,—"Be glad," saith he, "my brethren, when ye fall in divers temptations"⁴—and not causeless. For what hope is there of glory if there be none hope of victory ; or what place is there for victory where there is no battle ? He is called to the crown and triumph which is provoked to the conflict, and namely to that conflict in which no

*In the Conflict
against Temptation
no Man is over-
come against his
Will.*

man may be overcome against his will, and in which we need none other strength to vanquish but that we list ourselves to vanquish. Very happy is a Christian man, since that the victory is both put in his own free will and the reward of the victory shall be far greater than we can either hope or wish. Tell me, I pray thee, my most dear son, if there be aught in this life of all those things the delight whereof so vexeth and tosseth these earthly minds. Is

*No Pleasure in this
Life is gotten with-
out Pain.*

there, I say, any of those trifles in the getting of which a man must not suffer many labours, many displeasures, and many miseries ere he get it ? The merchant thinketh himself well served if after ten years failing, after a thousand incommodities, after a thousand jeopardies of his life, he may at last have a little the more gathered together. Of the court and service of this world there

¹ true, real.

² at first.

³ Gal. v. 17.

⁴ James i. 2.

is nothing that I need to write unto thee, the wretchedness whereof the *The Wretchedness of the Court.* experience itself hath taught thee and daily teacheth. In obtaining the favour of the princes, in purchasing the friendship of the company, in ambitious labour for offices and honours, what an heap of heaviness there is ! How great anguish, how much business and trouble, I may rather learn of thee than teach thee, which holding myself content with my books and rest, of a child have learned to live within my degree, and as much as I may dwelling with myself nothing out of myself labour for or long for.

¶ Now then, these earthly things slipper,¹ uncertain, vile, and common also to us and brute beasts, sweating and panting we shall *Pain ought to be taken rather for Heavenly than Earthly Things.* uneath² obtain ; and look³ we then to heavenly things and godly (which neither eye hath seen nor ear hath heard nor heart hath thought)⁴ to be drawn slumbering and sleeping

maugre⁵ our teeth, as though neither God might reign nor those heavenly citizens live without us ? Certainly if this worldly felicity were got to us with idleness and ease, then might some man that shrinketh from labour rather choose to serve the world than God. But now if we be for-

*The Way of Sin
more painful than
the Way of Virtue.*

laboured in the way of sin as much as in the way of God, and much more (whereof the damned wretches cry out, *Lassati sumus in via iniquitatis*—"We be wearied in the way of wickedness")⁶ then must it needs be a point of extreme madness if we had not liefer labour there where we go from labour to reward, than where we go from labour to pain. I pass over how great peace and felicity it is to the mind when a man hath nothing that grudgeth his conscience nor is not appalled with the secret touch of any privy crime. This pleasure undoubtedly far excelleth all the pleasures that in this life may be obtained or desired.

Spiritual Pleasure.

What thing is there to be desired among the delights of this world, which in the seeking weary us, in the having blindeth us, in the losing paineth us ? Doubtest thou, my son, whether the minds of wicked

*The Mind of the
Wicked is never
in quiet.*

men be vexed or not with continual thought and torment ?—it is the word of God, Which neither may deceive nor be deceived : *Cor impii quasi mare fervens quod quiescere non potest*,—"The wicked man's heart is like a stormy sea, that may not rest,"⁷

There is to him nothing sure, nothing peaceable, but all things fearful, all things sorrowful, all things deadly. Shall we then envy these men ? Shall we follow them and forgetting our own country, heaven, and our heavenly Father, where we were free-born, shall we wilfully make ourselves their bondmen, and with them wretchedly living more wretchedly die, and at the last most wretchedly in everlasting fire be punished ? Oh the dark minds of men ! Oh the blind hearts ! Who seeth not more clear than

¹ unstable.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

² scarcely, with difficulty.

⁵ in spite of.

³ expect.

⁷ Is. lviii. 20.

light that all these things be (as they say) truer than truth itself? And yet do we not that that we know is to be done. In vain we would pluck our foot out of the clay, but we stick still. There shall come to thee, my son, doubt it not (in these places namely where thou art conversant) innumerable impediments every hour which might fear¹ thee from the purpose of good and virtuous living and (but if thou beware) shall throw thee down headlong.

But among all things the very deadly pestilence is this: to be conversant day and night among them whose life is not only on every side an allactive² to sin, but over that all set in the expugnation of virtue, under their captain the devil, under the banner of death, under the stipend of hell, fighting against heaven, against our Lord God and against His Christ. But cry thou therefore with the prophet: *Dirumpamus vincula eorum et projiciamus a nobis jugum ipsorum*—"Let us break the bands of them and let us cast off the yoke of them."³ These be they whom (as the glorious apostle Saint Paul saith) our Lord hath delivered into the passions of rebuke and to a reprobable sense, to do those things that are not convenient, full of all iniquity, full of envy, manslaughter, contention, guile, and malice, backbiters, odious to God, contumelious, proud, stately, finders of evil things, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without covenant, without mercy;⁴ which when they daily see the justice of God, yet understand they not that such as these things commit are worthy death—not only they that do such things but also they which consent to the doing. Wherefore, my child, go thou never about to please them whom virtue displeaseth, but evermore let these words of the apostle be before thine eyes: *Oportet magis Deo placere quam hominibus*—"We must rather please God than men."⁵ And remember these words of Saint Paul also: *Si hominibus placerem, servus Christi non essem*—"If I should please men I were not Christ's servant."⁶ Let enter into thine heart an holy pride

A Holy Pride.

and have disdain to take them for masters of thy living which have more need to take thee for a master of theirs. It were far more seeming that they should with thee by good living begin to be men than thou shouldst with them, by the leaving of thy good purpose, shamefully begin to be a beast. There holdeth me sometimes, by almighty God, as it were even a swoon and an insensibility for wonder: when I begin in myself, I wot never whether I shall say, to remember or to sorrow, to marvel or to bewail the appetites of men, or, if I shall more plainly speak, the very madness. For it is verily a great madness not to believe the Gospel, whose truth the blood of martyrs crieth, the voice of apostles soundeth, miracles proveth, reason confirmeth, the world testifieth, the elements speaketh, devils confesseth.

An Extreme Madness.

But a far greater madness is it, if thou doubt not but that the Gospel is true, to live then as though thou doubt not

¹ frighten. ² enticement. ³ Ps. ii. 3. ⁴ Rom. i. 29-31. ⁵ Acts v. 29. ⁶ Gal. i. 10.

but that it were false. For if these words of the Gospel be true, that it is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven,¹ why do we daily then gape after the heaping up of riches? And if this be true, that we should seek for the glory and praise, not that cometh of men, but that cometh of God,² why do we then ever hang upon the judgment and opinion of men, and no man reckoneth whether God like him or not? And if we surely believe that once the time shall come in which our Lord shall say: "Go ye cursed people into everlasting fire"³—and again: "Come ye my blessed children, possess ye the kingdom that hath been prepared for you from the forming of the world"—why is there nothing then that we less fear than hell, or that we less hope for than the kingdom of God? What

Many Christian Men in Name and Few in Deed.

shall we say else, but that there be many Christian men in name but few in deed. But thou, my son, enforce thyself to enter by the strait gate that leadeth to heaven⁴ and take no heed what thing may men do, but what thing the very law of nature, what thing very reason, what thing our Lord Himself sheweth thee to be done. For neither thy glory shall be less if thou be happy with few, nor thy pain more easy if thou be wretched with many. Thou shalt have two specially effectual remedies against the world and the devil, with which two, as with two wings, thou shalt out of this vale of misery be lifted up into heaven; that is to say, almsdeeds and prayer. What may we do without the help of God, or how shall He help us if He be not called upon?

But over that, certainly He shall not hear thee when thou callest on Him, if thou hear not first the poor man when he calleth upon thee. And verily it is according that God should despise thee, being a man, when thou, being a man, despisest a man. For it is written: "In what measure that ye mete, it shall be meted you again."⁵ And in another place of the Gospel it is said: "Blessed be merciful men, for they shall get mercy."⁶ When I stir thee to prayer, I stir thee not to the prayer that standeth in many words, but to that prayer which in the secret chamber of the

Prayer.

mind, in the privy closet of the soul, with very affection speaketh to God, and in the most lightsome darkness of contemplation not only presenteth the mind to the Father but also uniteth it with Him by unspeakable ways which only they know that have essayed. Nor care I not how long or how short thy prayer be, but how effectual, how ardent, and rather interrupted and broken between with sighs than drawn on length with a continual row and number of words. If thou love thine health, if thou desire to be sure from the grins⁷ of the devil, from the storms of this world, from the await of thine enemies; if thou long to be acceptable to

¹ Mark x. 23.
⁵ Matt. vii. 2.

² John xii. 28.
⁶ Matt. v. 7.

³ Matt. xxv. 41, 34.
⁷ snares.

⁴ Matt. vii. 13.

God, if thou covet to be happy at the last—let no day pass thee but thou
No Day without Prayer. once at the leastwise present thyself to God by prayer, and
 falling down before Him flat to the ground with an humble
 affection of devout mind, not from the extremity of thy lips but out of the
 inwardness of thine heart cry these words of the prophet: *Delicta juventutis*
meae et ignorantias meas ne memineris, sed secundum misericordiam tuam memento mei
propter bonitatem tuam Domine—“The offences of my youth and mine
 ignorances remember not, good Lord; but after Thy mercy, Lord, for
 Thy goodness remember me.”¹ What thou shalt in thy prayer ask of
 God, both the Holy Spirit which prayeth for us, and eke thine own necessity,
 shall every hour put in thy mind; and also what thou shalt pray for, thou
 shalt find matter enough in the reading of holy Scripture, which that thou
 wouldst now (setting poets, fables and trifles aside) take ever in thine hand,
 I heartily pray thee. Thou mayest do nothing more pleasant to God,
Reading of Holy Scripture. nothing more profitable to thyself, than if thy hand cease
 not day nor night to turn and read the volumes of holy
 Scripture. There lieth privily in them a certain heavenly strength, quick
 and effectual, which with a marvellous power transformeth and changeth
 the reader’s mind into the love of God, if they be clean and lowly entreated.
 But I have passed now the bounds of a letter, the matter drawing me forth
 and the great love that I have had to thee, both ever before and specially
 since that hour in which I have had first knowledge of thy most holy purpose.

Now to make an end with this one thing, I warn thee (of which when
 we were last together I often talked with thee) that thou never forget these
 two things: that both the Son of God died for thee, and that thou shalt
 also thyself die shortly, live thou never so long. With these twain, as
 with two spurs, that one of fear, that other of love, spur forth thine horse
 through the short way of this momentary life, to the reward of eternal
 felicity, since we neither ought nor may prefix ourselves any other end than
 the endless fruition of the infinite goodness, both to soul and body, in ever-
 lasting peace.

Farewell, and fear God. [Dated from Ferrara, May 15, 1492.]

¶ *The Matter or Argument of the Epistle of Picus to Andrew Corneus.* This
 Andrew, a worshipful man and an especial friend of Picus, had by his
 letters given him counsel to leave the study of philosophy, as a thing in
 which he thought Picus to have spent time enough and which, but if it were
 applied to the use of some actual business, he judged a thing vain and
 unprofitable; wherefore he counselled Picus to surcease of study and put
 himself with some of the great princes of Italy, with whom (as this Andrew
 said) he should be much more fruitfully occupied than always in the study

¹ Ps. xxv. 7.

and learning of philosophy. To whom Picus answered, as in this present
Philosophy. epistle appeareth; where he saith these words: by this it
 should follow that it were either servile or at the leastwise
 not princely to make the study of philosophy other than mercenary,—
Mercenary. thus he meaneth: mercenary, we call all those things which
 we do for hire or reward. Then he maketh philosophy mercen-
 ary and useth it not as cunning but as merchandise which studieth it not
 for pleasure of itself, or for the instruction of his mind in moral virtue, but to
 apply it to such things where he may get some lucre or worldly advantage.

¶ *John Picus Earl of Mirandula to Andrew Corneus, Greeting.* Ye exhort me
 by your letters to the civil and active life, saying that in vain, and in manner
 to my rebuke and shame, have I so long studied in philosophy, but if I
 would at the last exercise that learning in the entreating of some profitable
 acts and outward business. Certainly, my well-beloved Andrew, I had cast
 away both cost and labour of my study if I were so minded that I could find
 in my heart in this matter to assent unto you and follow your counsel.

A Monstrous Persuasion touching the Study of Philosophy. This is a very deadly and monstrous persuasion which hath
 entered the minds of men, believing that the studies of
 philosophy are of estates¹ and princes either utterly not to
 be touched, or at leastwise with extreme lips to be sipped, and rather to the
 pomp and ostentation of their wit than to the culture and profit of their
 minds to be little and easily tasted. The words of Neoptolemus they hold
 utterly for a sure decree, that philosophy is to be studied either never or
 not long; but the sayings of wise men they repute for japes and very fables,
 that sure and steadfast felicity standeth only in the goodness
Felicity. of the mind and that these outward things of the body or of
 fortune little or naught pertain unto us. But here ye will say to me thus:

“I am content ye study, but I would have you outwardly occupied also.
 And I desire you not so to embrace Martha that ye should utterly forsake
 Mary. Love them and use them both, as well study as worldly occupa-
 tion.” Truly, my well-beloved friend, in this point I gainsay you not;
 they that so do I find no fault in nor I blame them not, but certainly it is
 not all one to say we do well if we do so, and to say we do evil but if²
 we do so. This is far out of the way, to think that from contemplation

Contemplation. to the active living—that is to say, from the better to the
 worse—is none error to decline, and to think that it were
 shame to abide still in the better and not decline. Shall a man then be
 rebuked because that he desireth and ensueth³ virtue only for itself, because
 he studieth the mysteries of God, because he ensearcheth the counsel of
 nature, because he useth continually this pleasant ease and rest, seeking none
 outward thing, despising all other thing, since those things are able suffi-

¹ lords, princes.

² unless.

³ followeth.

ciently to satisfy the desire of their followers? By this reckoning it is a thing either servile, or at the leastwise not princely, to make the study of wisdom other than mercenary. Who may well hear this, who may suffer it? Certainly he never studied for wisdom which so studied

The Study of Wisdom never to be Omitted.

therefor that in time to come either he might not or would not study therefor. This man rather exercised the study of merchandise than of wisdom. Ye write unto me that it

is time for me now to put myself in household with some of the great princes of Italy, but I see well that as yet ye have not known the opinion that philosophers have of themselves, which (as Horace

Philosophers.

saith) repute themselves kings of kings¹; they love liberty; they cannot bear the proud manners of estates²; they cannot serve. They dwell with themselves and be content with the tranquillity of their own mind; they suffice themselves and more; they

seek nothing out of themselves; the things that are had in honour among the common people, among them be not held honourable. All that ever the voluptuous desire of men thirsteth for, or ambition seeketh for, they set at naught and despise. Which while it belongeth to all men, yet undoubtedly it pertaineth most properly to them whom fortune hath so liberally favoured that they may live not only well and plenteously but also

High Estate.

nobly. These great fortunes lift up a man high and set him out to the show, but oftentimes as a fierce and a skittish

horse they cast off their master. Certainly always they grieve and vex him and rather tear him than bear him. The golden mediocrity, the mean

Mean Estate.

estate, is to be desired, which shall bear us as it were in hands³ more easily, which shall obey us and not master us.

I therefore, abiding firmly in this opinion, set more by my little house, my study, the pleasure of my books, the rest and peace of my mind, than by all your kings' palaces, all your common business, all your glory, all the advantage that ye hawk after, and all the favour of the court. Nor I look

The Right Fruit of Study.

not for this fruit of my study, that I may thereby hereafter be tossed in the flood and rumbling of your worldly business, but that I may once bring forth the children that I travail on; that I may give out some books of mine own to the common profit which may somewhat savour if not of cunning yet at the leastwise of wit and diligence.

And because ye shall not think that my travail and diligence in study is anything remitted or slackened, I give you knowledge that after great fervent labour with much watch and indefatigable travail I have learned both the Hebrew language and the Chaldee, and now have I set hand to overcome the great difficulty of the Arabic tongue. These, my dear friend, be things which do appertain to a noble prince, I have ever thought and yet

¹ Hor. Ep. 1. i. ad finem.

² princes.

³ uti manus, like a draught-horse. In More's edition of the Latin the word was probably spelt manus.

think. Fare ye well. Written at Paris the xv. day of October, the year of grace M.cccc.lxxxij.¹

¶ *The Argument of the Epistle following.* After that John Francis, the nephew of Picus, had (as it appeareth in the first epistle of Picus to him) begun a change in his living, it seemeth by this letter that the company of the Court where he was conversant, diversely (as it is their unmannerly manner) descanted thereof to his rebuke, as them thought, but, as truth was, unto their own. Some of them judged it folly, some called it hypocrisy, some scorned him, some slandered him; all of which demeanour (as we may of this epistle conjecture) he wrote unto this Earl Picus, his uncle, which in this letter comforteth and encourageth him, as it is in the course thereof evident.

¶ *John Picus Earl of Mirandula to Francis his Nephew Greeting in the Lord.*

Happy art thou, my son, when that our Lord not only giveth thee grace well to live, but also that while thou livest well He giveth thee grace to bear evil words of evil people for thy living well. Certainly, as great a praise as it is to be commended of them that are commendable, as great

It is a Commendation to be Reproved of the Reprovable.

a commendation it is to be reprov'd of them that are reprobable. Notwithstanding, my son, I call thee not therefore happy because this false reproof is worshipful and

glorious unto thee, but for because that our Lord Jesu Christ (Which is not only true but also truth itself) affirmeth that our reward shall be plenteous in heaven when men speak evil to us and speak all evil against us lying for

An Apostle's Dignity.

His name.² This is an apostle's dignity: to be reputed digne³ afore God, to be defamed of wicked folk for His

name. For we read in the gospel of Luke that the apostles went joyful and glad from the council house of the Jews because God had accepted them as worthy to suffer wrong and reproof for His sake.⁴ Let us therefore joy and be glad if we be worthy so great worship⁵ before God that His worship⁶ be showed in our rebuke. And if we suffer of the world anything that is grievous or bitter, let this sweet voice of our Lord be our consolation: Si mundus vos odio habet, scitote quia priorem me vobis odio habuit—"If the world," saith our Lord, "hate you, know ye that it hated Me before you."⁷ If the world, then, hated Him by Whom the world was made, we most vile and simple men, and worthy (if we consider our wretched living well) all shame and reproof, if folk backbite us and say evil of us, shall we so grievously take it that lest they should [say evil we should] begin to do evil? Let us rather gladly receive these evil words, and if we be not so happy to suffer for virtue and truth as the old saints suffered beatings,

¹ Persuade xv. Octo Mccc.lxxxvi. More makes two mistakes.

² worthy.

⁴ Acts v. 41.

⁵ honour.

³ Matt. v. 10.

⁶ John xv. 18.

binding, prison, swords, and death, let us think at the leastwise we be well served if we have the grace to suffer chiding, detraction, and hatred of wicked men, lest that if all occasion of deserving be taken away, there be left us none hope of reward. If men for thy good living praise thee, thy virtue certainly, in that it is virtue, maketh thee like unto Christ; but in that it is praised it maketh thee unlike Him, Which for the reward of His virtue received the opprobrious death of the cross; for which, as the apostle saith, God hath exalted Him and given Him a name that is above all names.¹ More desireful is it, then, to be condemned of the world and exalted of God, than to be exalted of the world and condemned of God. The world condemneth to life, God exalteth to glory: the world exalteth to a fall, God condemneth to the fire of hell. Finally, if the world fawn upon thee, underneath² it may be but that thy virtue (which all lifted upward should have God alone to please) shall somewhat unto the blandishing of the world and favour of the people incline. And so, though it lose nothing of the integrity of our perfection, yet it loseth of the reward; which reward while it beginneth to be paid in the world where all thing is little, it shall be less in heaven, where all thing is great. O happy rebukes, which make

Happy Rebukes.

us sure that neither the flower of our virtue shall wither with the pestilence blast of vainglory, nor our eternal reward be diminished for the vain promotion of a little popular fame! Let us, my son, love these rebukes, and only of the ignominy and reproof of our Lord's cross let us like faithful servants with an holy ambition be proud. "We," saith Saint Paul, "preach Christ crucified, which is unto the Jews despite, unto the Gentiles folly, unto us the virtue and wisdom of God."³ The wisdom of this world is foolishness afore God, and the folly of Christ is that by which He hath overcome the wisdom of the world, by which it hath pleased God to make His believing people safe.

If that you doubt not but that they be mad which backbite thy virtue, which the Christian living, that is very wisdom, reputeth for madness, consider then how much were thy madness if thou shouldst for the judgment of mad men swerve from the good institution of thy life, namely since all error is with amendment to be taken away and not with imitation and following to be increased. Let them therefore neigh, let them bawl, let them bark, go thou boldly forth thy journey as thou hast begun, and of⁴ their wickedness and misery consider how much thyself art beholden to God, Which hath illumined thee sitting in the shadow of death, and translating thee out of the company of them which like drunken men without a guide wander hither and thither, in obscure darkness, hath associated thee to the children of light. Let that same sweet voice of our Lord always sound in thine ears: *Sive mortuos sepelire mortuos suos, tu me sequere*,—"Let dead

¹ Phil. ii. 9.

² 1 Cor. i. 23-4.

³ scarcely.

⁴ from.

men alone with dead men, follow thou me."¹ Dead be they that live not to God and in the space of this temporal death laboriously purchase themselves eternal death. Of whom if thou ask whereto they draw, whereto they refer their studies, their works, and their business, and finally what end they have appointed themselves in the adoption whereof they should be happy, either they shall have utterly nothing to answer or they shall bring forth words repugnant in themselves and contrary each to other, like the raving of Bedlam people. Nor they wot never themselves what they do, but like them that swim in swift floods, they be borne forth with the violence of evil custom as it were with the

boisterous course of the stream. And their wickedness
Evil Custom.

blinding them on this side, and the devil pricking them forward on that side, they run forth headlong into all mischief, as blind guides of blind men, till that death set on them unawares, and till that it be said unto them that Christ saith in the Gospel: "My friend, this night the devils shall take thy soul from thee."² These goods then that thou hast gathered, whose shall they be? Then shall they envy them whom they despised, then shall they commend them that they mocked, then shall they covet to ensue³ them in living when they may not, whom when they might have ensued they pursued. Stop therefore thine ears, my most dear son, and whatsoever men say of thee, whatsoever men think on thee, account it for nothing, but regard only the judgment of God,—Which shall yield every man after his own works when He shall show Himself from heaven with the angels of His virtue, in flame of fire, doing vengeance upon them that have not known God nor obeyed His Gospel, which (as the apostle saith) shall suffer in death eternal pain, from the face of our Lord and from the glory of His virtue, when He shall come to be glorified of His saints and to be made marvellous in all them that have believed. It is written: *Nolite timere qui corpus possunt occidere, sed qui animam potest mittere in gehennam*.—"Fear not them," saith our Lord, "that may slay the body; but fear Him that may cast the soul into hell."⁴ How much less, then, be they to be feared that may neither hurt soul nor body? Which if they now backbite thee living virtuously, they shall do the same nevertheless if (virtue forsaken) thou were overwhelmed with vice,—nor for that vice displeaseth them but for that the vice of backbiting always pleaseth them. Flee if thou love thine health, flee as far as thou mayest their company and, returning to thyself, oftentimes secretly pray unto the most benign Father of heaven, crying with the prophet: *Ad te Domine levavi animam meam: Deus meus in te confido, non erubescam, etiam si irrideant me inimici mei. Etenim universi qui sperant in te non confundentur. Confundantur iniqua agentes super-vacue. Vias tuas Domine demonstra mihi, et semitas tuas edoce me. Dirige me in veritate tua, et doce me: quia tu es Deus Salvator meus, et in te sperabo tota die,*

¹ Matt. viii. 22.

² Luke xii. 20.

³ follow.

⁴ Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 5.

—that is to say, “To Thee, Lord, I lift up my soul : in Thee I trust, I shall not be ashamed, an though mine enemies mock me. Certainly all they that trust in Thee shall not be ashamed. Let them be ashamed that work wickedness in vain. Thy ways, good Lord, show me, and Thy paths teach me. Direct me in Thy truth, and teach me : for Thou art God, my Saviour ; in Thee shall I trust all the day.”¹ Remember also, my son, that the death lieth at hand. Remember that all the time of our life is

Our Life is less than a Moment. The Devil, the World, the Flesh.

but a moment and yet less than a moment. Remember how cursed our old enemy is, which offereth us the kingdoms of this world that he might bereave us the kingdom of heaven ; how false the fleshly pleasures which therefore embrace us that they might strangle us ; how deceitful these worldly honours which therefore lift us up that they might throw us down ;

Honour. Riches.

how deadly these riches which the more they feed us the more they poison us ; how short, how uncertain, how shadow-like, false, imaginary it is that all these things together may bring us, an though they flow to us as we would wish them. Remember again how great things be promised and prepared for them which, despising these present things, desire and long for that country whose king is the Godhead, whose law is charity, whose measure is eternity. Occupy thy mind with these meditations and such other that may waken thee when thou sleepest, kindle thee when thou waxest cold, confirm thee when thou waverest, and exhibit the wings of the love of God while thou labourest to heavenward, that when thou comest home to us (which with great desire we look for) we may see not only him that we covet but also such a manner one as we covet. Farewell, and love God, Whom of old thou hast begun to fear. At Ferrara, the second day of July, the year of our Redemption, MCCCClxxxiii.

*The Interpretation of John Picus upon this Psalm, “Conserva Me Domine.”*²—*Conserva me Domine quoniam speravi in te. Dixi Domino : Deus meus es Tu, quoniam bonorum meorum non eges. Sanctis qui sunt in terra ejus mirificavit voluntates suas. Multiplicatae sunt infirmitates eorum postea acceleraverunt. Non congregabo conventicula eorum de sanguinibus : nec memor ero nominum eorum per labia mea. Dominus pars hereditatis meae et calicis mei : tu es qui restitues hereditatem meam mihi. Funes ceciderunt mihi in praeclaris : etenim hereditas mea praeclara est mihi. Benedicam Dominum qui tribuit mihi intellectum : insuper et usque ad noctem increpuerunt me renes mei. Providebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper, quoniam a dextris est mihi ne commovear. Propter hoc laetatum est cor meum et exultavit lingua mea, insuper et caro mea requiescet in spe. Quoniam non derelinques animam meam in inferno : nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem.*

¹ Ps. xxv. 1–5.

² Ps. xv. (Vulgate).

Notas mihi fecisti vias vitae : adimplebis me laetitia cum vultu tuo. Delectationes in dextera tua usque in finem.

Conserva me Domine—“Keep me, good Lord.” If any perfect man look upon his own estate there is one peril therein, that is to wit, lest he wax proud of his virtue, and therefore David, speaking in the person of a righteous man of his estate, beginneth with these words, *Conserva me Domine*, that is to say, “Keep me, good Lord” ; which word ‘Keep me,’ if it be well considered, taketh away all occasion of pride. For he that is able of himself anything to get is able of himself that same thing to keep. He that asketh then of God, to be kept in the state of virtue signifieth in that asking that from the beginning he got not that virtue by himself. He, then, which remembereth that he attained his virtue not by his own power but by the power of God may not be proud thereof but rather humbled before God, after those words of the apostle : *Quid habes quod non accepisti?*—“What hast thou that thou hast not received ?”¹ And if thou hast received it, why art thou proud thereof, as though thou hadst not received it ? Two words, then, be there which we should ever have in our mouth : that one, *Miserere mei Deus*—“Have mercy on me, Lord,” when we remember our vice ; that other, *Conserva me Deus*,—“Keep me, good Lord,” when we remember our virtue.

Quoniam speravi in te—“For I have trusted in Thee.” This one thing is it that maketh us obtain of God our petition, that is to wit, when we have a full hope and trust that we shall speed.² And if we observe these two things in our requests, that is to wit, that we require nothing but that which is good for us, and that we require it ardently with a sure hope that God shall hear us, our prayers shall never be void. Wherefore, when we miss the effect of our petition, either it is for that we ask such thing as is noxious³ unto us, for (as Christ saith) we wot never what we ask. And Jesus said : “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, it shall be given you.”⁴ This name Jesus signifieth a saviour, and therefore there is nothing asked in the name of Jesus but that is wholesome and helping to the salvation of the asker, or else God heareth not our prayer because that though the thing that we require be good yet we ask it not well, for we ask it with little hope. And he that asketh doubtingly, asketh coldly. And therefore Saint James biddeth us ask in faith, nothing doubting.⁵

Dixi Domino : Deus meus es tu—“I have said to our Lord : my God art Thou.” After that he hath warded and fenced himself against pride, he describeth in these words his estate. All the estate of a righteous man standeth in these words, *Dixi Domino, Deus meus es tu*—“I have said to our Lord, my God art Thou.” Which words though they seem common to

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

² succeed.

³ hurtful.

⁴ John xiv. 13.

⁵ James i. 6.

all folk, yet are there very few that may say them truly. That thing a man taketh for his god that he taketh for his chief good; and that thing taketh he for his chief good, which only had, though all other things lack, he thinketh himself happy, and which only lacking, though he have all other things, he thinketh himself unhappy.

The Niggard's God is Money. The niggard, then, saith to his money, *Deus meus es tu*—“My god art Thou.” For though honour fail, and health and strength and friends, so he have money he thinketh himself well.

The Glutton's God is Fleeshly Lust. And if he have all those things that we have spoken of, if money fail, he thinketh himself unhappy. The glutton saith unto his fleshly lust, the ambitious man saith to his vainglory:

The Ambitious Man's God is Vain-glory. “My god art Thou.” See then how few may truly say these words, “I have said to our Lord, my God art Thou.”

For only he may truly say it which is content with God alone; so that if there were offered him all the kingdoms of the world and all the good that is in earth and all the good that is in heaven, he would not once offend God to have them all. In these words, then, “I have said to our Lord, my God art Thou,” standeth all the state of a righteous man.

Quoniam bonorum meorum non eges—“For Thou hast no need of my goods.” In these words he sheweth the cause why he saith only to our Lord, *Deus meus es tu*—“My God art Thou.” The cause is for that only our Lord hath no need of our goods. There is no creature but that it needeth other creatures, an though they be of less perfection than itself, as philosophers and divines prove: for if these more imperfect creatures were not, the other that are more perfect could not be. For if any part of the whole university of creatures were destroyed and fallen to naught, all the whole were subverted. For certainly one part of that university perishing, all parties perish, and all creatures be parts of that university; of which university God is no part, but He is the beginning, nothing thereupon depending. For nothing truly won He by the creation of this world, nor nothing should He lose if the world were annihilated and turned to naught again. Then only God is He which hath no need of our good. Well ought we certainly to be ashamed to take such thing for God as hath need of us—and such is every creature. Moreover, we should not accept for God, that is to say, for the chief goodness, but only that thing which is the most sovereign goodness of all things—and that is not the goodness of any creature. Only therefore to our Lord ought we to say, “My God art Thou.”

Sanctis qui sunt in terra ejus mirificavit voluntates suas—“To his saints that are in the land of Him, He hath made marvellous His wills.” After God should we specially love them which are nearest joined unto God, as be the holy angels and blessed saints that are in their country of heaven. Therefore, after that he had said to our Lord, “My God art Thou,” he addeth thereunto that our Lord hath made marvellous His wills, that is to say, He

hath made marvellous His loves and His desires towards His saints that are in the land of Him, that is to wit, in the country of heaven, which is called the land of God and the land of living people. And verily

Heaven.

if we inwardly consider how great is the felicity of that country and how much is the misery of this world, how great is the goodness and charity of those blessed citizens, we shall continually desire to be hence, that we were there. These things and such other when we remember, we should evermore take heed that our meditations be not unfruitful, but

Of every Meditation to Purchase a Virtue. that of every meditation we should always purchase one virtue or other; as, for example, by this meditation of the goodness of that heavenly country we should win this

virtue, that we should not only strongly suffer death and patiently, when our time cometh, or if it were put unto us for the faith of Christ, but also we should willingly and gladly long therefor, desiring to be departed out of this vale of wretchedness, that we may reign in that heavenly country with God and His holy saints.

Multiplicatae sunt infirmitates eorum, postea acceleraverunt—“Their infirmities be multiplied, and after they hastened.” These words the prophet speaketh of wicked men. By infirmities he understandeth idols, and so it is in the *Wicked People* Hebrew text. For as good folk have but one God whom *Worship many Gods.* they worship, so evil folk have many gods and idols, for they have many voluptuous pleasures, many vain desires, many divers passions, which they serve. And wherefore seek they many sundry pleasures? Certainly for because they can find none that can set their heart at rest, and for that (as the prophet saith) wicked men walk about in a circuit or compass whereof there is none end. Now after these words, “Their idols be multiplied,” it followeth, “After they hastened,” that is to say, ‘after their idols:’ after their passions and beastly desires they run forth headlong unadvisedly, without any consideration. And in this be we taught that we should as speedily run to virtue as they run to vice, and that we should with no less diligence serve our Lord God than they serve their lord the devil. The just man considering the estate of evil folk determineth firmly with himself (as we should also) that utterly he will in no wise follow them; and therefore he saith: *Non congregabo conventicula eorum de sanguinibus: nec memor ero nominum eorum*—“I shall not gather the congregation of them

from the blood, nor I shall not remember their names.”

Blood.

He saith ‘from the blood’ both because idolaters were wont to gather the blood of their sacrifice together and thereabout to do their ceremonies; and also for that all the life of evil men forsake reason, which standeth all in the soul, and follow sensuality, that standeth all in the tilood. The prophet saith not only that he will not gather their congrega-
bon together from the blood, that is to say, that he would do no sacrifice

to those idols, but also that he would not remember their names, that is to say, that he would not talk nor speak of the voluptuous delights which are evil peoples' gods, which we might yet lawfully do : showing us by that that a perfect man should abstain, not only from unlawful pleasures, but also from lawful, to the end that he may altogether wholly have his mind into heavenward and the more purely intend unto the contemplation of heavenly things. And forasmuch as some man would peradventure think that it were folly for a man utterly to deprive himself from all pleasures, therefore the prophet addeth, *Dominus pars hereditatis meae*—"Our Lord is the part of mine inheritance," as though he would say : 'Marvel not though I forsake all thing to the intent that I may have the possession of God, in Whom all other things also be possessed.' This should be the voice of every good Christian man : *Dominus pars hereditatis meae*—"God is the part of mine inheritance." For certainly we Christian people, to whom God is promised for an inheritance, ought to be ashamed to desire anything besides Him. But for that some man might haply repute it for a great presumption that a man should promise himself God for his inheritance, therefore the prophet putteth thereto, *Tu es qui restitues hereditatem meam mihi*—"Thou, good Lord, art He that shall restore mine inheritance unto me," as though he would say, 'O good Lord, my God, I know well that I am nothing in respect of Thee, I wot well I am unable to ascend by mine own strength so high to have Thee in possession, but Thou art He that shalt draw me to Thee by Thy grace, Thou art He that shalt give Thyself in possession unto me.' Let a righteous man then consider how great a felicity it is to have God fall unto him as his inheritance.

It followeth in the psalm : *Funes ceciderunt mihi in praeclaris*—"The cords have fallen to me nobly." The parts and lots of inheritances were of old time meted out and divided by cords or ropes. These words, then, 'the ropes or cords have fallen to me nobly,' be as much to say, as the part or lot of mine inheritance is noble. But forasmuch as there be many men which though they be called to this great felicity (as indeed all Christian people are) yet they set little thereby and oftentimes change it for a small simple delight, therefore the prophet saith seemingly, *Hereditas mea praeclara est mihi*—"Mine inheritance is noble to me," as though he would say, that as it is noble in itself so it is noble to me, that is to say, I repute it noble, and all other things in respect of it I repute (as Saint Paul saith) for dung. But forasmuch as to have this light of understanding whereby a man may know this gift that is given him of God to be the gift of God, therefor the prophet suingly¹ saith, *Benedicam Dominum qui tribuit mihi intellectum*—that is to say, "I shall bless our Lord,

¹ Following thereupon, next.

Which hath given me understanding." But insomuch as a man oftentimes intendeth after reason to serve God, and, that notwithstanding, yet sensuality and the flesh repugneth,¹ then is a man perfect when that not his soul only but also his flesh draw forth to Godward, after those words of the prophet in another psalm : *Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum*—that is to say, "My mind and my flesh both have joyed in the living God."² And for this the prophet saith here suingly,³ *Et usque ad noctem increpauerunt me renes mei*—"My reins (or kidneys) hath chidden me unto the night," that is to say, my reins, in which is wont to be the greatest inclination to concupiscence, not only now inclineth me not to sin but also chideth me, that is to say, withdraw me from sin unto the night, that is to say, they so far forth withdraw me from sin that willingly they afflict and pain my body. Affliction is in Scripture oftentimes signified by the night, because it is the most discomfortable season. Then suingly³ the prophet showeth what is the root of this privation or taking away of fleshly concupiscence in man, saying, *Providebam Deum semper in conspectu meo*—"I provided God always before my sight." For if a man had God always before his eyes as a ruler of all his works, and in all his works should neither seek his own lucre, his glory, nor his own pleasure, but only the pleasure of God, he should shortly be perfect. And forasmuch as he that so doth prospereth in all things, therefore it followeth, *Ipse a dextris est mihi ne commovear*—"He is on my right hand that I be not moved or troubled." Then the prophet declareth how great is the felicity of a just man, which shall be everlastingly blessed both in body and in soul ; and therefore he saith, *Laetatum est cor meum*—"My soul is glad," knowing that after death heaven is made ready for him. *Et caro mea requiescet in spe*—"And my flesh shall rest in hope," that is to say, that though it joy not by and by, as in receiving his glorious estate immediately after the death, yet it resteth in the sepulchre with this hope, that it shall arise in the Day of Judgment immortal and shining with his soul. And also the prophet more expressly declareth in the verse following, for where he said thus, "My soul is glad," he addeth the cause, saying, *Quoniam non derelinques animam meam in inferno*—"For Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell." Also where the prophet said that his flesh should rest in hope, he sheweth the cause, saying, *Nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem*—"Nor Thou shalt not suffer Thy Saint to see corruption," that is to say, 'Thou shalt not suffer the flesh of a good man to be corrupted.' For that that was corruptible shall arise incorruptible. And forasmuch as Christ was the first which entered paradise and opened the life unto us, and was the first that rose again and the cause of our resurrection, therefore these words that we have spoken of

¹ resist.

² Ps. lxxxiv. 2.

³ next.

the resurrection be principally understood of Christ, as Saint Peter, the apostle, hath declared ; and secondarily, they may be understood of us, in that we be the members of Christ, Which only never saw corruption, for His holy body was in His sepulchre nothing putrefied. Forasmuch, then, as the way of good living bringeth us to perpetual life of soul and body, therefore the prophet saith, *Notas mihi fecisti vias vite*—"Thou hast made the ways of life known unto me." And because that all the felicity of that standeth in the clear beholding and fruition of God, therefore it followeth, *Adimplebis me laetitia cum vultu tuo*—"Thou shalt fill me full of gladness with Thy cheer." And for that our felicity shall be everlasting, therefore he saith, *Delectationes in dextera tua usque in finem*—"Delectation and joy shall be on Thy right hand for ever";—he saith 'on Thy right hand' because that our felicity is fulfilled in the vision and fruition of the humanity of Christ, Which sitteth in heaven on the right hand of His Father's majesty, after the words of Saint John, *Haec est tota merces, ut videamus Deum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum*¹—"This is all our reward, that we may behold God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent": to which reward He bring us That sitteth there and prayeth for us. **Amen.**

¹ John xvii. 3.

¶ TWELVE RULES OF JOHN PICUS EARL OF MIRANDULA, PARTLY EXCITING, PARTLY DIRECTING A MAN IN SPIRITUAL BATTLE

*If We refuse the Way of Virtue for that it is Painful, for the Like Cause ought We to
refuse the Way of Sin.*

Whoso to virtue esteemeth hard the way
Because we must have war continual
Against the world, the flesh, the devil, that aye
Enforce themselves to make us bond and thrall,
Let him remember that choose what may he shall
Even after the world, yet must he need sustain
Sorrow, adversity, labour, grief, and pain.

¶ The Second Rule.

Think in this wretched world's busy woe
The battle more sharp and longer is I wis
With more labour and less fruit also
In which the end of labour labour is :
And when the world hath left us after this
Void of all virtue : the reward when we die
Is nought but fire and pain perpetually.

¶ The Third Rule.

Consider well that folly it is and vain
To look for heaven with pleasure and delight.
Since Christ our Lord and sovereign captain
Ascended never but by manly fight
And bitter passion ; then were it no right
That any servant, ye will yourself record,
Should stand in better condition than his lord.¹

¶ The Fourth Rule.

Think how that we not only should not grudge
But eke be glad and joyful of this fight,
And long therefor although we could not judge
How that thereby redound unto us might

¹ Matt. ii. 22.

Any profit, but only for delight
To be conformed and like in some behaviour
To Jesu Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour.

As often as thou dost war and strive,
By the resistance of any sinful motion,
Against any of thy sensual wittès five,
Cast in thy mind as oft with good devotion
How thou resemblest Christ : as with sour potion
If thou pain thy taste : remember therewithal
How Christ for thee tasted eysell and gall.¹

If thou withdraw thine handès and forbear
The ravin of anything : remember then
How His innocent handès nailèd were.
If thou be tempt with pride : think how that when
He was in form of God, yet of a bondman ²
He took the shape and humbled Himself for thee
To the most odious and vile death of a tree.

Consider when thou art movèd to be wroth
He Who that was God, and of all men the best,
Seeing Himself scornèd and scourgèd both,
And as a thief between two thievès threst ³
With all rebuke and shame : yet from his breast
Came never sign of wrath or of disdain,
But patiently endurèd all the pain.

Thus every snare and engine of the devil
If thou this wise peruse them by and by :
There can be none so cursèd or so evil
But to some virtue thou mayst it apply.
For oft thou shalt, resisting valiantly
The fiendès might and subtle fiery dart,
Our Saviour Christ resemble in some part.

¶ *The Fifth Rule.*

Remember well that we in no wise must
Neither in the foresaid espiritual armour,
Nor any other remedy put our trust,
But only in the virtue of our Saviour :

¹ Matt. xxvii. 34 ; Mark xv. 23 ; John xix. 29.

³ Mark xv. 27 ; Luke xxiii. 32 ; John xix. 18.

² Phil. ii. 7.

For He it is by Whose mighty power
The world was vanquished and his prince cast out
Which reigned before in all the earth about.

In Him let us trust to overcome all evil,
In Him let us put our hope and confidence
To subdue the flesh and master the devil,
To Him be all honour and lowly reverence ;
Oft should we require with all our diligence
With prayer, with tears, and lamentable plaints
The aid of His grace and His holy saints.

¶ *The Sixth Rule.*

One sin vanquished, look thou not tarry,
But lie in await for another very hour,
For as a wood ¹ lion, the fiend, our adversary,
Runneth about seeking whom he may devour ;
Wherefore continually upon thy tower,
Lest he thee unpurveyed and unready catch,
Thou must with the prophet stand and keep watch.

¶ *The Seventh Rule.*

Enforce thyself not only for to stand
Unvanquishèd against the devil's might,
But over that take valiantly on hand
To vanquish him and put him unto flight :
And that is when of the same deed, thought or sight
By which he would have thee with sin contract,
Thou takest occasion of some good virtuous act.

Sometime he secretly casteth in thy mind
Some laudable deed to stir thee to pride,
As vainglory maketh many a man blind.
But let humility be thy sure guide,
Thy good work to God let it be applied,
Think it not thine but a gift of His
Of Whose grace undoubtedly all goodness is.

¹ mad ; 1 Pet. v. 8.

¶ *The Eighth Rule.*

In time of battle so put thyself in preace¹
As though thou shouldst after that victory
Enjoy for ever a perpetual peace :
For God of His goodness and liberal mercy
May grant the gift, and eke thy proud enemy,
Confounded and rebuked by thy battle,
Shall thee no more haply for very shame assail.

But when thou mayest once the triumph obtain
Prepare thyself and trim thee in thy gear
As thou shouldst incontinent fight again,
For if thou be ready the devil will thee fear :
Wherefore in any wise so even thou thee bear
That thou remember and have ever in memory
In victory battle, in battle victory.

¶ *The Ninth Rule.*

If thou think thyself well fenced and sure
Against every subtle suggestion of vice,
Consider frail glass may no distress endure,
And great adventurers oft curse the dice :
Jeopard not too far therefore an ye be wise,
But evermore eschew the occasions of sin,
For he that loveth peril shall perish therein.

¶ *The Tenth Rule.*

In all temptation withstand the beginning :
The cursèd infants of wretched Babylon
To suffer them wax is a jeopardous thing :
Beat out their brains therefore at the stone :²
Perilous is the canker that catcheth the bone :
Too late cometh the medicine if thou let the sore
By long continuance increase more and more.

¶ *The Eleventh Rule.*

Though in the time of the battle and war
The conflict seem bitter, sharp and sour,
Yet consider it is more pleasure far
Over the devil to be a conqueror
Than is in the use of thy beastly pleasure :
Of virtue more joy the conscience hath within
Than outward the body of all his filthy sin.

¹ trim, fighting condition.

² Ps. cxxxvii. 9.

In this point many men err for negligence
For they compare not the joy of the victory
To the sensual pleasure of their concupiscence,
But like rude beasts unadvisedly
Lacking discretion they compare and apply
Of their foul sin the voluptuous delight
To the labourous travail of the conflict and fight.

And yet alas he that oft hath known
What grief it is by long experience
Of his cruel enemy to be overthrown,
Should once at the leastwise do his diligence
To prove and essay with manly defence
What pleasure there is, what honour, peace and rest
In glorious victory, triumph and conquest.

¶ *The Twelfth Rule.*

Though thou be tempted, despair thee nothing :
Remember the glorious apostle Saint Paul
When he had seen God in His perfect being,
Lest such revelation should his heart extol,
His flesh was suffered rebel against his soul :
This did almighty God of His goodness provide
To preserve His servant from the danger of pride.

And here take heed that he whom God did love,
And for His most especial vessel chose,
Ravished into the third heaven above,
Yet stood in peril lest pride might him depose :
Well ought we then our heartes fence and
Against vainglory, the mother of reproof,¹
The very crop and root of all mischief.

Against this pomp and wretched worldes gloss
Consider how Christ the Lord, sovereign power,
Humbled Himself for us unto the cross :
And peradventure death within one hour
Shall us bereave wealth, riches and honour :
And bring us down full low both small and great
To vile carrion and wretched wormes meat.

¹ reproof.

¶ THE TWELVE WEAPONS OF SPIRITUAL BATTLE, WHICH EVERY
MAN SHOULD HAVE AT HAND WHEN THE PLEASURE OF
A SINFUL TEMPTATION COMETH TO MIND

The pleasure little and short.	The nature and dignity of man.
The followers grief and heaviness.	The peace of a good mind.
The loss of a better thing.	The great benefits of God.
This life a dream and a shadow.	The painful cross of Christ.
The death at our hand and unaware.	The witness of martyrs and
The fear of impenitent departing.	example of saints.
Eternal joy, eternal pain.	

The Twelve Weapons have we more ¹ at length Declared as Followeth.

¶ *The Pleasure Little and Short.*

Consider well the pleasure that thou hast,
Stand it in touching or in wanton sight,
In vain smell or in thy licorous taste,
Or finally, in whatsoever delight
Occupied is thy wretched appetite :
Thou shalt it find, when thou hast all cast,
Little, simple, short and suddenly past.

¶ *The Followers Grief and Heaviness.*

Any good work if thou with labour do,
The labour goeth, the goodness doth remain :
If thou do evil with pleasure joined thereto,
The pleasure which thine evil work doth contain
Glideth his way, thou must him not restrain :
The evil then in thy breast cleaveth behind
With grudge of heart and heaviness of mind.

¶ *The Loss of a Better Thing.*

When thou labourest thy pleasure for to buy
Upon the price look thou well thee advise,
Thou sellest thy soul therefor even by and by
To thy most utter despiteous enemies :
O mad merchant, O foolish merchandise,
To buy a trifle, O childish reckoning,
And pay therefore so dear a precious thing !

¹ This is More's own addition to Pico. Note, perhaps, the play on the words "We More."

¶ *This Life a Dream and a Shadow.*

This wretched life, the trust and confidence
Of whose continuance maketh us bold to sin,
Thou perceivest well by experience,
Since that hour in which it did begin,
It holdeth on the course and will not lin,¹
But fast it runneth on and passen shall
As doth a dream or shadow on the wall.

¶ *Death at our Hand and Unaware.*

Consider well that ever night and day,
While that we busily provide and care
For our disport, revel, mirth and play,
For pleasant melody and dainty fare,
Death stealeth on full slyly and unaware :
He lieth at hand and shall us enterprise
We wot not how soon nor in what manner wise.

¶ *Fear of Impenitent Departing.*

If thou shouldst God offend, think how therefor
Thou were forthwith in very jeopardous case :
For haply thou shouldst not live an hour more
Thy sin to cleanse, and though thou haddest space,
Yet peradventure shouldst thou lack the grace :
Well ought we then be feared to do offence
Impenitent lest we departen hence.

¶ *Eternal Reward, Eternal Pain.*

Thou seest this world is but a thoroughfare,
See thou behave thee wisely with thine host ;
Hence must thou needs depart naked and bare,
And after thy desert look to what cost
Thou art conveyed at such time as thy ghost
From this wretched carcase shall dis sever :
Be it joy or pain, endure it shall for ever.

¶ *The Nature and Dignity of Man.*

Remember how God hath made thee reasonable
Like unto His image and figure,
And for thee suffered pains intolerable
That He for angel never would endure.

¹ cease.

Regard, O man, thine excellent nature ;
Thou that with angel art made to be equal,
For very shame be not the devil's thrall.

¶ *The Peace of a Good Mind.*

Why lovest thou so this brittle world's joy ?
Take all the mirth, take all the fantasies,
Take every game, take every wanton toy,
Take every sport that men can thee devise :
And among them all on warrantise
Thou shalt no pleasure comparable find
To th' inward gladness of a virtuous mind.

¶ *The Great Benefits of God.*

Beside that God thee bought and formèd both
Many a benefit hast thou received of His :
Though thou have moved Him often to be wroth
Yet He thee kept hath and brought thee up to this,
And daily calleth upon thee to His bliss :
How mayst thou then to Him unloving be
That ever hath been so loving unto thee ?

¶ *The Painful Cross of Christ.*

When thou in flame of the temptation friest
Think on the very lamentable pain,
Think on the piteous cross of woeful Christ,
Think on His blood beat out at every vein,
Think on His precious heart carvèd in twain,
Think how for thy redemption all was wrought :
Let Him not lose thee that He so dear hath bought.

¶ *The Witness of Martyrs and Example of Saints.*

Sin to withstand say not thou lackest might :
Such allegations folly it is to use ;
The witness of saints, and martyrs' constant sight
Shall thee of slothful cowardice accuse :
God will thee help if thou do not refuse :
If other have stand or this thou mayst eftsoon :
Nothing impossible is that hath been done.

¶ THE TWELVE PROPERTIES OR CONDITIONS OF A LOVER

To love one alone and contemn all other for that one.
To think him unhappy that is not with his love.
To adorn himself for the pleasure of his love.
To suffer all thing, though it were death, to be with his love.
To desire also to suffer harm for his love, and to think that hurt sweet.
To be with his love ever as he may, if not in deed, yet in thought.
To love all thing that pertaineth unto his love.
To covet the praise of his love, and not to suffer any dispraise.
To believe of his love all things excellent, and to desire that all folk should think the same.
To weep often with his love : in presence for joy, in absence for sorrow.
To languish ever, and ever to burn in the desire of his love.
To serve his love, nothing thinking of any reward or profit.

¶ *The Twelve Properties we have at length more openly Expressed in
Balade as it Followeth.*

The first point is to love but one alone,
And for that one all other to forsake :
For whoso loveth many loveth none :
The flood that is in many channels take
In each of them shall feeble streames make :
The love that is divided among many
Uneath¹ sufficeth that any part have any.

So thou that hast thy love set unto God
In thy remembrance this imprint and grave :
As He in sovereign dignity is odd,²
So will He in love no parting fellows have :
Love Him therefore with all that He thee gave :
For body, soul, wit, cunning, mind and thought,
Part will He none, but either all or naught.

¶ *The Second Property.*

Of his love, lo, the sight and company
To the lover so glad and pleasant is,
That whoso hath the grace to come thereby
He judgeth him in perfect joy and bliss :
And whoso of that company doth miss,
Live he in never so prosperous estate,
He thinketh him wretched and infortunate.

¹ hardly.

² unique.

So should the lover of God esteem that he
Which all the pleasure hath, mirth and disport,
That in this world is possible to be,
Yet till the time that he may once resort
Unto that blessed, joyful, heavenly port
Where he of God may have the glorious sight,
Is void of perfect joy and sure delight.

¶ *The Third Property.*

The third point of a perfect lover is
To make him fresh to see that all thing been
Appointed well and nothing set amiss
But all well fashioned, proper, goodly, clean :
That in his person there be nothing seen
In speech, apparel, gesture, look or pace
That may offend or minish any grace.

So thou that wilt with God get into favour
Garnish thyself up in as goodly wise
As comely be, as honest in behaviour,
As it is possible for thee to devise :
I mean not hereby that thou shouldest arise
And in the glass upon thy body prowl,¹
But with fair virtue to adorn thy soul.

¶ *The Fourth Property.*

If love be strong, hot, mighty and fervent,
There may no trouble, grief, or sorrow fall,
But that the lover would be well content
All to endure and think it eke too small,
Though it were death, so he might therewithal
The joyful presence of that person get
On whom he hath his heart and love yset.

Thus should of God the lover be content
Any distress or sorrow to endure,
Rather than to be from God absent,
And glad to die, so that he may be sure
By his departing hence for to procure,
After this valley dark, the heavenly light,
And of his love the glorious blessed sight.

¹ *mirror, look carefully.*

¶ *The Fifth Property.*

Not only a lover content is in his heart
But coveteth eke and longeth to sustain
Some labour, incommodity, or smart,
Loss, adversity, trouble, grief, or pain :
And of his sorrow joyful is and fain,
And happy thinketh himself that he may take
Some misadventure for his lover's sake.

Thus shouldest thou, that lovest God also,
In thine heart wish, covet and be glad
For Him to suffer trouble, pain and woe :
For Whom if thou be never so woe bestead,
Yet thou ne shalt sustain (be not adread)
Half the dolour, grief and adversity
That He already suffered hath for thee.

¶ *The Sixth Property.*

The perfect lover longeth for to be
In presence of his love both night and day,
And if it haply so befall that he
May not as he would, he will yet as he may
Ever be with his love, that is to say,
Where his heavy body nil¹ be brought
He will be conversant in mind and thought.

Lo in like manner the lover of God should,
At the least in such wise as he may,
If he may not in such wise as he would,
Be present with God and conversant alway ;
For certes, whoso list, he may purvey,
Though all the world would him therefrom bereaven
To bear his body in earth, his mind in heaven.

¶ *The Seventh Property.*

There is no page or servant, most or least,
That doth upon his love attend and wait,
There is no little worm, no simple beast,
Ne none so small a trifle or conceit,
Lace, girdle, point,² or proper glove strait,
But that if to his love it have been near,
The lover hath it precious, lief and dear.

¹ *will not.*

² *fastening.*

So every relic, image or picture
That doth pertain to God's magnificence,
The lover of God should with all busy cure
Have it in love, honour and reverence
And specially give them pre-eminence
Which daily done His blessed body wurche,¹
The quick relics, the ministers of His Church.

¶ *The Eighth Property.*

A very lover above all earthly thing
Coveteth and longeth evermore to hear
The honour, laud, commendation and praising,
And everything that may the fame clear
Of his love : he may in no manner
Endure to hear that therefrom mighten vary
Or anything sound into the contrary.

The lover of God should covet in like wise
To hear His honour, worship, laud and praise,
Whose sovereign goodness none heart may comprise,
Whom hell, earth, and all the heaven obeys,
Whose perfect lover ought by no manner ways
To suffer the cursed words of blasphemy,
Or anything spoken of God unreverently.

¶ *The Ninth Property.*

A very lover believeth in his mind
On whomsoever he hath his heart ybent,
That in that person men may nothing find
But honourable, worthy and excellent,
And eke surmounting far in his entent
All other that he hath known by sight or name :
And would that every man should think the same.

Of God likewise so wonderful and high
All thing esteem and judge his lover ought,
So reverence, worship, honour and magnify,
That all the creatures in this world ywrought
In comparison should he set at nought,
And glad be if he might the mean devise
That all the world would think in like wise.

¹ cause to work, become active.

¶ *The Tenth Property.*

The lover is of colour dead and pale ;
There will no sleep into his eyes stalk ;
He favoureth neither meat, wine, nor ale ;
He mindeth not what men about him talk ;
But eat he, drink he, sit, lie down or walk,
He burneth ever as it were with a fire
In the fervent heat of his desire.

Here should the lover of God ensample take
To have Him continually in remembrance,
With him in prayer and meditation wake,
While other play, revel, sing, and dance :
None earthly joy, disport, or vain plesance
Should him delight, or anything remove
His ardent mind from God, his heavenly love.

¶ *The Eleventh Property.*

Diversely passioned is the lover's heart :
Now pleasant hope, now dread and grievous fear,
Now perfect bliss, now bitter sorrow smart ;
And whether his love be with him or elsewhere,
Oft from his eyes there falleth many a tear,—
For very joy, when they together be ;
When they be sundered, for adversity.

Like affections feeleth eke the breast
Of God's lover in prayer and meditation :
When that his love liketh in him rest
With inward gladness of pleasant contemplation,
Out break the tears for joy and delectation ;
And when his love list eft to part him fro,
Out break the tears again for pain and woe.

¶ *The Twelfth Property.*

A very lover will his love obey :
His joy it is and all his appetite
To pain himself in all that ever he may,
That person in whom he set hath his delight
Diligently to serve both day and night
For very love, without any regard
To any profit, guerdon or reward.

So thou likewise that hast thine heart yset
 Upward to God, so well thyself endeavour,
 So studiously that nothing may thee let
 Not for His service any wise disserve :
 Freely look eke thou serve that thereto never
 Trust of reward or profit do thee bind,
 But only faithful heart and loving mind.



Wageless to serve, three things may us move :
 First, if the service self be desirable :
 Second, if they whom that we serve and love
 Be very good and very amiable :
 Thirdly, of reason be we serviceable
 Without the gaping after any more
 To such as have done much for us before.

Serve God for love, then, not for hope of meed :
 What service may so desirable be
 As where all turneth to thine own speed ?
 Who is so good, so lovely eke as He
 Who hath already done so much for thee,
 As He that first thee made, and on the rood
 Eft thee redeemed with His precious blood ?

A PRAYER OF PICUS MIRANDULA UNTO GOD

O holy God of dreadful majesty,
 Verily one in three and three in one,
 Whom angels serve, Whose work all creatures be,
 Which heaven and earth directest all alone :
 We Thee beseech, good Lord, with woeful moan,
 Spare us wretches and wash away our guilt
 That we be not by Thy just anger spilt.

In strait balance of rigorous judgment
 If Thou shouldst our sin ponder and weigh,
 Who able were to bear Thy punishment ?
 The whole engine of all this world, I say,
 The engine that endure shall for aye,
 With such examination might not stand
 Space of a moment in Thine angry hand.

Who is not born in sin original ?
 Who doth not actual sin in sundry wise ?
 But thou, good Lord, art He that sparest all,
 With piteous mercy tempering justice ;
 For as Thou dost reward us devise
 Above our merit, so dost Thou dispense
 Thy punishment far under our offence.

More is Thy mercy far than all our sin :
 To give them also that unworthy be
 More godly is, and more mercy therein.
 Howbeit, worthy enough are they, pardee,
 Be they never so unworthy, whom that He
 List to accept : which wheresoever He taketh
 Whom He unworthy findeth worthy maketh.

Wherefore, good Lord, that aye merciful art,
 Unto Thy grace and sovereign dignity
 We silly¹ wretches cry with humble heart :
 Our sins forget and our malignity ;
 With piteous eyes of Thy benignity
 Friendly look on us once, Thine own, we be,
 Servants or sinners whether it liketh Thee.

Sinners, if Thou our crime behold, certain,
 Our crime the work of our uncourteous mind,
 But if Thy gifts Thou behold again,
 Thy gifts noble, wonderful and kind,
 Thou shalt us then the same persons find
 Which are to Thee, and have be long space
 Servants by nature, children by Thy grace.

But this Thy goodness wringeth us, alas,
 For we whom grace had made Thy children dear,
 Are made Thy guilty folk by our trespass ;
 Sin hath us guilty made this many a year.
 But let Thy grace, Thy grace that hath no peer,
 Of our offence surmounten all the preace,²
 That in our sin Thine honour may increase.

For though Thy wisdom, though Thy sovereign power,
 May otherwise appear sufficiently
 As thinges which Thy creatures every hour
 All with one voice declare and testify,
 Thy goodness yet, Thy singular mercy,

¹ simple.

² burden. pressure.

Thy piteous heart, Thy gracious indulgence
Nothing so clearly sheweth as our offence.

What but our sin hath showed that mighty love
Which able was Thy dreadful majesty
To draw down into earth from heaven above
And crucify God, that we, poor wretches we,
Should from our filthy sin ycleansèd be
With blood and water of Thine own side,
That streamèd from Thy blessed woundès wide ?

Thy love and pity, thus, O heavenly King,
Our evil maketh matter of Thy goodness,
O love, O pity, our wealth aye providing,
O goodness serving Thy servants in distress,
O love, O pity, well nigh now thankless,
O goodness, mighty, gracious and wise,
And yet almost vanquished with our vice.

Grant, I Thee pray, such heat into mine heart
That to this love of Thine may be equal ;
Grant me from Satan's service to astart,
With whom me rueth so longe to have be thrall ;
Grant me, good Lord and Creator of all,
The flame to quench of all sinful desire
And in Thy love set all mine heart afire ;

That when the journey of this deadly life
My silly ghost hath finishèd, and thence
Departen must without his fleshly wife,
Alone into his Lordès high presence,
He may Thee find, O well of indulgence,
In Thy lordship not as a lord, but rather
As a very tender loving father.

Amen.