

DONNE JOHN

DEVOTIONS UPON
EMERGENT OCCASIONS;
TOGETHER WITH
DEATH'S DUEL

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Devotions Upon Emergent
Occasions; Together
with Death's Duel

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THE LIFE OF DR. JOHN DONNE

(Taken from the life by Izaak Walton)

Master John Donne was born in London, in the year 1573, of good and virtuous parents: and, though his own learning and other multiplied merits may justly appear sufficient to dignify both himself and his posterity, yet the reader may be pleased to know that his father was masculinely and lineally descended from a very ancient family in Wales, where many of his name now live, that deserve and have great reputation in that country.

By his mother he was descended of the family of the famous and learned Sir Thomas More, sometime Lord Chancellor of England: as also, from that worthy and laborious Judge Rastall, who left posterity the vast Statutes of the Law of this nation most exactly abridged.

He had his first breeding in his father's house, where a private tutor had the care of him, until the tenth year of his age; and, in his eleventh year, was sent to the University of Oxford, having at that time a good command both of the French and Latin tongue. This, and some other of his remarkable abilities, made one then give this censure of him: That this age had brought forth another *Picus Mirandula*; of whom story says, that he was rather born than made wise by study.

There he remained for some years in Hart Hall, having, for the advancement of his studies, tutors of several sciences to attend and instruct him, till time made him capable, and his learning expressed in public exercises, declared him worthy, to receive his first degree in the schools, which he forbore by advice from his friends, who, being for their religion of the Romish persuasion, were conscionably averse to some parts of the oath that is always tendered at those times, and not to be refused by those that expect the titulary honour of their studies.

About the fourteenth year of his age he was transplanted from Oxford to Cambridge, where, that he might receive nourishment from both soils, he staid till his seventeenth year; all which time he was a most laborious student, often changing his studies, but endeavouring to take no degree, for the reasons formerly mentioned.

About the seventeenth year of his age he was removed to London, and then admitted into Lincoln's Inn, with an intent to study the law, where he gave great testimonies of his wit, his

learning, and of his improvement in that profession; which never served him for other use than an ornament and self-satisfaction.

His father died before his admission into this society; and, being a merchant, left him his portion in money. (It was £3,000.) His mother, and those to whose care he was committed, were watchful to improve his knowledge, and to that end appointed him tutors both in the mathematics, and in all the other liberal sciences, to attend him. But, with these arts, they were advised to instil into him particular principles of the Romish Church; of which those tutors professed, though secretly, themselves to be members.

They had almost obliged him to their faith; having for their advantage, besides many opportunities, the example of his dear and pious parents, which was a most powerful persuasion, and did work much upon him, as he professeth in his preface to his "Pseudo-Martyr," a book of which the reader shall have some account in what follows.

He was now entered into the eighteenth year of his age; and at that time had betrothed himself to no religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian. And reason and piety had both persuaded him that there could be no such sin as schism, if an adherence to some visible Church were not necessary.

About the nineteenth year of his age, he, being then unresolved what religion to adhere to, and considering how much it concerned his soul to choose the most orthodox, did therefore,—though his youth and health promised him a long life—to

rectify all scruples that might concern that, presently lay aside all study of the law, and of all other sciences that might give him a denomination; and began seriously to survey and consider the body of Divinity, as it was then controverted betwixt the Reformed and the Roman Church. And, as God's blessed Spirit did then awaken him to the search, and in that industry did never forsake him—they be his own words (in his preface to "Pseudo-Martyr")—so he calls the same Holy Spirit to witness this protestation; that in that disquisition and search he proceeded with humility and diffidence in himself; and by that which he took to be the safest way; namely, frequent prayers, and an indifferent affection to both parties; and, indeed, Truth had too much light about her to be hid from so sharp an inquirer; and he had too much ingenuity not to acknowledge he had found her.

Being to undertake this search, he believed the Cardinal Bellarmine to be the best defender of the Roman cause, and therefore betook himself to the examination of his reasons. The cause was weighty, and wilful delays had been inexcusable both towards God and his own conscience: he therefore proceeded in this search with all moderate haste, and about the twentieth year of his age did show the then Dean of Gloucester—whose name my memory hath now lost—all the Cardinal's works marked with many weighty observations under his own hand; which works were bequeathed by him, at his death, as a legacy to a most dear friend.

About a year following he resolved to travel: and the Earl of

Essex going first to Cales, and after the Island voyages, the first anno 1596, the second 1597, he took the advantage of those opportunities, waited upon his Lordship, and was an eye-witness of those happy and unhappy employments.

But he returned not back into England till he had staid some years, first in Italy and then in Spain, where he made many useful observations of those countries, their laws and manner of government, and returned perfect in their languages.

The time that he spent in Spain was, at his first going into Italy, designed for travelling to the Holy Land, and for viewing Jerusalem and the Sepulchre of our Saviour. But at his being in the furthest parts of Italy, the disappointment of company, or of a safe convoy, or the uncertainty of returns of money into those remote parts, denied him that happiness, which he did often occasionally mention with a deploration.

Not long after his return into England, that exemplary pattern of gravity and wisdom, the Lord Ellesmere, then Keeper of the Great Seal, the Lord Chancellor of England, taking notice of his learning, languages, and other abilities, and much affecting his person and behaviour, took him to be his chief secretary; supposing and intending it to be an introduction to some more weighty employment in the State; for which, his Lordship did often protest, he thought him very fit.

Nor did his Lordship, in this time of Master Donne's attendance upon him, account him to be so much his servant as to forget he was his friend; and, to testify it, did always use him with

much courtesy, appointing him a place at his own table, to which he esteemed his company and discourse to be a great ornament.

He continued that employment for the space of five years, being daily useful, and not mercenary to his friend. During which time he—I dare not say unhappily—fell into such a liking, as,—with her approbation,—increased into a love, with a young gentlewoman that lived in that family, who was niece to the Lady Ellesmere, and daughter to Sir George More, then Chancellor of the Garter and Lieutenant of the Tower.

Sir George had some intimation of it, and, knowing prevention to be a great part of wisdom, did therefore remove her with much haste from that to his own house at Lothesley, in the County of Surrey; but too late, by reason of some faithful promises which were so interchangeably passed, as never to be violated by either party.

These promises were only known to themselves; and the friends of both parties used much diligence, and many arguments, to kill or cool their affections to each other; but in vain, for love is a flattering mischief that hath denied aged and wise men a foresight of those evils that too often prove to be the children of that blind father; a passion that carries us to commit errors with as much ease as whirlwinds move feathers, and begets in us an unwearied industry to the attainment of what we desire. And such an industry did, notwithstanding much watchfulness against it, bring them secretly together,—I forbear to tell the manner how,—and at last to a marriage too, without

the allowance of those friends whose approbation always was, and ever will be necessary, to make even a virtuous love become lawful.

And that the knowledge of their marriage might not fall, like an unexpected tempest, on those that were unwilling to have it so; and that pre-apprehensions might make it the less enormous when it was known, it was purposely whispered into the ears of many that it was so, yet by none that could affirm it. But, to put a period to the jealousies of Sir George—doubt often begetting more restless thoughts than the certain knowledge of what we fear—the news was, in favour to Mr. Donne, and with his allowance, made known to Sir George, by his honourable friend and neighbour Henry, Earl of Northumberland; but it was to Sir George so immeasurably unwelcome, and so transported him that, as though his passion of anger and inconsideration might exceed theirs of love and error, he presently engaged his sister, the Lady Ellesmere, to join with him to procure her lord to discharge Mr. Donne of the place he held under his Lordship. This request was followed with violence; and though Sir George were remembered that errors might be over punished, and desired therefore to forbear till second considerations might clear some scruples, yet he became restless until his suit was granted and the punishment executed. And though the Lord Chancellor did not, at Mr. Donne's dismissal, give him such a commendation as the great Emperor Charles the Fifth did of his Secretary Eraso, when he parted with him to his son and

successor, Philip the Second, saying, "That in his Eraso, he gave to him a greater gift than all his estate, and all the kingdoms which he then resigned to him;" yet the Lord Chancellor said, "He parted with a friend, and such a Secretary as was fitter to serve a king than a subject."

Immediately after his dismissal from his service, he sent a sad letter to his wife to acquaint her with it; and after the subscription of his name, writ,

"John Donne, Anne Donne, Un-done;"

and God knows it proved too true; for this bitter physic of Mr. Donne's dismissal, was not enough to purge out all Sir George's choler, for he was not satisfied till Mr. Donne and his sometime compupil in Cambridge, that married him, namely, Samuel Brooke, who was after Doctor in Divinity and Master of Trinity College—and his brother Mr. Christopher Brooke, sometime Mr. Donne's chamber-fellow in Lincoln's Inn, who gave Mr. Donne his wife, and witnessed the marriage, were all committed to three several prisons.

Mr. Donne was first enlarged, who neither gave rest to his body or brain, nor to any friend in whom he might hope to have an interest, until he had procured an enlargement for his two imprisoned friends.

He was now at liberty, but his days were still cloudy; and, being past these troubles, others did still multiply upon him; for

his wife was—to her extreme sorrow—detained from him; and though, with Jacob, he endured not a hard service for her, yet he lost a good one, and was forced to make good his title, and to get possession of her by a long and restless suit in law, which proved troublesome and sadly chargeable to him, whose youth, and travel, and needless bounty, had brought his estate into a narrow compass.

It is observed, and most truly, that silence and submission are charming qualities, and work most upon passionate men; and it proved so with Sir George; for these, and a general report of Mr. Donne's merits, together with his winning behaviour,—which, when it would entice, had a strange kind of elegant irresistible art;—these, and time, had so dispassionated Sir George, that, as the world had approved his daughter's choice, so he also could not but see a more than ordinary merit in his new son; and this at last melted him into so much remorse—for love and anger are so like agues as to have hot and cold fits; and love in parents, though it may be quenched, yet is easily rekindled, and expires not till death denies mankind a natural heat—that he laboured his son's restoration to his place; using to that end both his own and his sister's power to her lord; but with no success; for his answer was, "That though he was unfeignedly sorry for what he had done, yet it was inconsistent with his place and credit, to discharge and readmit servants at the request of passionate petitioners."

Sir George's endeavour for Mr. Donne's readmission was by all means to be kept secret:—for men do more naturally reluct

for errors than submit to put on those blemishes that attend their visible acknowledgment. But, however, it was not long before Sir George appeared to be so far reconciled as to wish their happiness, and not to deny them his paternal blessing, but yet refused to contribute any means that might conduce to their livelihood.

Mr. Donne's estate was the greatest part spent in many and chargeable travels, books, and dear-bought experience: he out of all employment that might yield a support for himself and wife, who had been curiously and plentifully educated; both their natures generous, and accustomed to confer, and not to receive, courtesies, these and other considerations, but chiefly that his wife was to bear a part in his sufferings, surrounded him with many sad thoughts, and some apparent apprehensions of want.

But his sorrows were lessened and his wants prevented by the seasonable courtesy of their noble kinsman, Sir Francis Wolly, of Pirford in Surrey, who intreated them to a cohabitation with him; where they remained with much freedom to themselves, and equal content to Him, for some years; and as their charge increased—she had yearly a child—so did his love and bounty.

Mr. Donne and his wife continued with Sir Francis Wolly till his death: a little before which time Sir Francis was so happy as to make a perfect reconciliation between Sir George and his forsaken son and daughter; Sir George conditioning, by bond, to pay to Mr. Donne 800*l.* at a certain day, as a portion with his wife, or 20*l.* quarterly for their maintenance, as the interest for

it, till the said portion was paid.

Most of those years that he lived with Sir Francis he studied the Civil and Canon Laws; in which he acquired such a perfection, as was judged to hold proportion with many, who had made that study the employment of their whole life.

Sir Francis being dead, and that happy family dissolved, Mr. Donne took for himself a house in Mitcham—near to Croydon in Surrey—a place noted for good air and choice company: there his wife and children remained; and for himself he took lodgings in London, near to Whitehall, whither his friends and occasions drew him very often, and where he was as often visited by many of the nobility and others of this nation, who used him in their counsels of greatest consideration, and with some rewards for his better subsistence.

Nor did our own nobility only value and favour him, but his acquaintance and friendship was sought for by most Ambassadors of foreign nations, and by many other strangers whose learning or business occasioned their stay in this nation.

Thus it continued with him for about two years, all which time his family remained constantly at Mitcham; and to which place he often retired himself, and destined some days to a constant study of some points of controversy betwixt the English and Roman Church, and especially those of Supremacy and Allegiance: and to that place and such studies he could willingly have wedded himself during his life; but the earnest persuasion of friends became at last to be so powerful, as to cause the removal

of himself and family to London, where Sir Robert Drewry, a gentleman of a very noble estate, and a more liberal mind, assigned him and his wife an useful apartment in his own large house in Drury Lane, and not only rent free, but was also a cherisher of his studies, and such a friend as sympathized with him and his, in all their joy and sorrows.

At this time of Mr. Donne's and his wife's living in Sir Robert's house, the Lord Hay was, by King James, sent upon a glorious embassy to the then French King, Henry the Fourth; and Sir Robert put on a sudden resolution to accompany him to the French Court, and to be present at his audience there. And Sir Robert put on a sudden resolution to solicit Mr. Donne to be his companion in that journey. And this desire was suddenly made known to his wife, who was then with child, and otherwise under so dangerous a habit of body as to her health, that she professed an unwillingness to allow him any absence from her; saying, "Her divining soul boded her some ill in his absence;" and therefore desired him not to leave her. This made Mr. Donne lay aside all thoughts of the journey, and really to resolve against it. But Sir Robert became restless in his persuasions for it, and Mr. Donne was so generous as to think he had sold his liberty when he received so many charitable kindnesses from him, and told his wife so; who did therefore, with an unwilling willingness, give a faint consent to the journey, which was proposed to be but for two months; for about that time they determined their return. Within a few days after this resolve, the Ambassador, Sir

Robert, and Mr. Donne, left London; and were the twelfth day got all safe to Paris. Two days after their arrival there, Mr. Donne was left alone in that room in which Sir Robert, and he, and some other friends had dined together. To this place Sir Robert returned within half an hour; and as he left, so he found, Mr. Donne alone; but in such an ecstasy, and so altered as to his looks, as amazed Sir Robert to behold him; insomuch that he earnestly desired Mr. Donne to declare what had befallen him in the short time of his absence. To which Mr. Donne was not able to make a present answer; but, after a long and perplexed pause, did at last say, "I have seen a dreadful vision since I saw you: I have seen my dear wife pass twice by me through this room, with her hair hanging about her shoulders, and a dead child in her arms: this I have seen since I saw you." To which Sir Robert replied, "Sure, sir, you have slept since I saw you; and this is the result of some melancholy dream, which I desire you to forget, for you are now awake." To which Mr. Donne's reply was: "I cannot be surer that I now live than that I have not slept since I saw you: and am as sure that at her second appearing she stopped and looked me in the face, and vanished." Rest and sleep had not altered Mr. Donne's opinion the next day: for he then affirmed this vision with a more deliberate, and so confirmed a confidence, that he inclined Sir Robert to a faint belief that the vision was true. It is truly said that desire and doubt have no rest; and it proved so with Sir Robert; for he immediately sent a servant to Drewry House, with a charge to hasten back and bring him word whether

Mrs. Donne were alive; and, if alive, in what condition she was as to her health. The twelfth day the messenger returned with this account:—That he found and left Mrs. Donne very sad and sick in her bed; and that, after a long and dangerous labour, she had been delivered of a dead child. And, upon examination, the abortion proved to be the same day, and about the very hour, that Mr. Donne affirmed he saw her pass by him in his chamber.

This is a relation that will beget some wonder, and it well may; for most of our world are at present possessed with an opinion that visions and miracles are ceased. And, though it is most certain that two lutes, being both strung and tuned to an equal pitch, and then one played upon, the other that is not touched, being laid upon a table at a fit distance, will—like an echo to a trumpet—warble a faint audible harmony in answer to the same tune; yet many will not believe there is any such thing as a sympathy of souls; and I am well pleased that every reader do enjoy his own opinion. But if the unbelieving will not allow the believing reader of this story, a liberty to believe that it may be true, then I wish him to consider many wise men have believed that the ghost of Julius Cæsar did appear to Brutus, and that both St. Austin, and Monica his mother, had visions in order to his conversion. And though these and many others—too many to name—have but the authority of human story, yet the incredible reader may find in the sacred story (1 Sam. xxviii. 14) that Samuel did appear to Saul even after his death—whether really or not, I undertake not to determine. And Bildad, in the

Book of Job, says these words (iv. 13-16): "A spirit passed before my face; the hair of my head stood up; fear and trembling came upon me, and made all my bones to shake." Upon which words I will make no comment, but leave them to be considered by the incredulous reader; to whom I will also commend this following consideration: That there be many pious and learned men that believe our merciful God hath assigned to every man a particular guardian angel to be his constant monitor, and to attend him in all his dangers, both of body and soul. And the opinion that every man hath his particular angel may gain some authority by the relation of St. Peter's miraculous deliverance out of prison (Acts xii. 7-10; 13-15), not by many, but by one angel. And this belief may yet gain more credit by the reader's considering, that when Peter after his enlargement knocked at the door of Mary the mother of John, and Rhode, the maidservant, being surprised with joy that Peter was there, did not let him in, but ran in haste and told the disciples, who were then and there met together, that Peter was at the door; and they, not believing it, said she was mad: yet, when she again affirmed it, though they then believed it not, yet they concluded, and said, "It is his angel."

More observations of this nature, and inferences from them, might be made to gain the relation a firmer belief; but I forbear, lest I, that intended to be but a relator, may be thought to be an engaged person for the proving what was related to me; and yet I think myself bound to declare that, though it was not told me by Mr. Donne himself, it was told me—now long since—

by a person of honour, and of such intimacy with him, that he knew more of the secrets of his soul than any person then living: and I think he told me the truth; for it was told with such circumstances, and such asseveration, that—to say nothing of my own thoughts—I verily believe he that told it me did himself believe it to be true.

I return from my account of the vision, to tell the reader, that both before Mr. Donne's going into France, at his being there, and after his return, many of the nobility and others that were powerful at court, were watchful and solicitous to the King for some secular employment for him. The King had formerly both known and put a value upon his company, and had also given him some hopes of a state-employment; being always much pleased when Mr. Donne attended him, especially at his meals, where there were usually many deep discourses of general learning, and very often friendly disputes, or debates of religion, betwixt his Majesty and those divines, whose places required their attendance on him at those times: particularly the Dean of the Chapel, who then was Bishop Montague—the publisher of the learned and eloquent Works of his Majesty—and the most Reverend Doctor Andrews the late learned Bishop of Winchester, who was then the King's Almoner.

About this time there grew many disputes, that concerned the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance, in which the King had appeared, and engaged himself by his public writings now extant: and his Majesty discoursing with Mr. Donne, concerning many

of the reasons which are usually urged against the taking of those Oaths, apprehended such a validity and clearness in his stating the questions, and his answers to them, that his Majesty commanded him to bestow some time in drawing the arguments into a method, and then to write his answers to them; and, having done that, not to send, but be his own messenger, and bring them to him. To this he presently and diligently applied himself, and within six weeks brought them to him under his own handwriting, as they be now printed; the book bearing the name of "Pseudo-Martyr," printed anno 1610.

When the King had read and considered that book, he persuaded Mr. Donne to enter into the Ministry; to which, at that time, he was, and appeared, very unwilling, apprehending it—such was his mistaken modesty—to be too weighty for his abilities.

Such strifes St. Austin had, when St. Ambrose endeavoured his conversion to Christianity; with which he confesseth he acquainted his friend Alipius. Our learned author—a man fit to write after no mean copy—did the like. And declaring his intentions to his dear friend Dr. King, then Bishop of London, a man famous in his generation, and no stranger to Mr. Donne's abilities—for he had been Chaplain to the Lord Chancellor, at the time of Mr. Donne's being his Lordship's Secretary—that reverend man did receive the news with much gladness; and, after some expressions of joy, and a persuasion to be constant in his pious purpose, he proceeded with all convenient speed to ordain

him first Deacon, and then Priest not long after.

Presently after he entered into his holy profession, the King sent for him, and made him his Chaplain in Ordinary, and promised to take a particular care for his preferment.

And, though his long familiarity with scholars and persons of greatest quality was such, as might have given some men boldness enough to have preached to any eminent auditory; yet his modesty in this employment was such, that he could not be persuaded to it, but went usually accompanied with some one friend to preach privately in some village, not far from London; his first sermon being preached at Paddington. This he did, till his Majesty sent and appointed him a day to preach to him at Whitehall; and, though much were expected from him, both by his Majesty and others, yet he was so happy—which few are—as to satisfy and exceed their expectations: preaching the Word so, as shewed his own heart was possessed with those very thoughts and joys that he laboured to distil into others: a preacher in earnest; weeping sometimes for his auditory, sometimes with them; always preaching to himself like an angel from a cloud, but in none; carrying some, as St. Paul was, to Heaven in holy raptures, and enticing others by a sacred art and courtship to amend their lives: here picturing a vice so as to make it ugly to those that practised it; and a virtue so as to make it beloved, even by those that loved it not; and all this with a most particular grace and an unexpressible addition of comeliness.

That summer, in the very same month in which he entered

into sacred Orders, and was made the King's Chaplain, his Majesty then going his progress, was entreated to receive an entertainment in the University of Cambridge: and Mr. Donne attending his Majesty at that time, his Majesty was pleased to recommend him to the University, to be made Doctor in Divinity; Doctor Harsnett, after Archbishop of York, was then Vice-Chancellor, who, knowing him to be the author of that learned book the "Pseudo-Martyr," required no other proof of his abilities, but proposed it to the University, who presently assented, and expressed a gladness that they had such an occasion to entitle him to be theirs.

His abilities and industry in his profession were so eminent, and he so known and so beloved by persons of quality, that within the first year of his entering into sacred Orders, he had fourteen advowsons of several benefices presented to him: but they were in the country, and he could not leave his beloved London, to which place he had a natural inclination, having received both his birth and education in it, and there contracted a friendship with many, whose conversation multiplied the joys of his life; but an employment that might affix him to that place would be welcome, for he needed it.

Immediately after his return from Cambridge his wife died, leaving him a man of a narrow, unsettled estate, and—having buried five—the careful father of seven children then living, to whom he gave a voluntary assurance never to bring them under the subjection of a step-mother; which promise he kept most

faithfully, burying with his tears all his earthly joys in his most dear and deserving wife's grave, and betook himself to a most retired and solitary life.

In this retiredness, which was often from the sight of his dearest friends, he became crucified to the world, and all those vanities, those imaginary pleasures, that are daily acted on that restless stage, and they were as perfectly crucified to him.

His first motion from his house was to preach where his beloved wife lay buried—in St. Clement's Church, near Temple Bar, London; and his text was a part of the Prophet Jeremy's Lamentation: "Lo, I am the man that have seen affliction."

In this time of sadness he was importuned by the grave Benchers of Lincoln's Inn—who were once the companions and friends of his youth—to accept of their Lecture, which, by reason of Dr. Gataker's removal from thence, was then void; of which he accepted, being most glad to renew his intermitted friendship with those whom he so much loved, and where he had been a Saul,—though not to persecute Christianity, or to deride it, yet in his irregular youth to neglect the visible practice of it,—there to become a Paul, and preach salvation to his beloved brethren.

About which time the Emperor of Germany died, and the Palsgrave, who had lately married the Lady Elizabeth, the King's only daughter, was elected and crowned King of Bohemia, the unhappy beginning of many miseries in that nation.

King James, whose motto—*Beati pacifici*—did truly speak the very thoughts of his heart, endeavoured first to prevent, and

after to compose, the discords of that discomposed State; and, amongst other his endeavours, did then send the Lord Hay, Earl of Doncaster, his Ambassador to those unsettled Princes; and, by a special command from his Majesty, Dr. Donne was appointed to assist and attend that employment to the Princes of the Union, for which the Earl was most glad, who had always put a great value on him, and taken a great pleasure in his conversation and discourse: and his friends at Lincoln's Inn were as glad; for they feared that his immoderate study, and sadness for his wife's death, would, as Jacob said, "make his days few," and, respecting his bodily health, "evil" too: and of this there were many visible signs.

About fourteen months after his departure out of England, he returned to his friends of Lincoln's Inn, with his sorrows moderated, and his health improved; and there betook himself to his constant course of preaching.

About a year after his return out of Germany, Dr. Carey was made Bishop of Exeter, and by his removal, the Deanery of St. Paul's being vacant, the King sent to Dr. Donne, and appointed him to attend him at dinner the next day. When his Majesty was sat down, before he had eat any meat, he said after his pleasant manner, "Dr. Donne, I have invited you to dinner; and, though you sit not down with me, yet I will carve to you of a dish that I know you love well; for, knowing you love London, I do therefore make you Dean of St. Paul's; and, when I have dined, then do you take your beloved dish home to your study, say grace there

to yourself, and much good may it do you."

Immediately after he came to his Deanery, he employed workmen to repair and beautify the Chapel; suffering as holy David once vowed, "his eyes and temples to take no rest till he had first beautified the house of God."

The next quarter following when his father-in-law, Sir George More,—whom time had made a lover and admirer of him—came to pay to him the conditioned sum of twenty pounds, he refused to receive it; and said—as good Jacob did, when he heard his beloved son Joseph was alive—"It is enough; you have been kind to me and mine: I know your present condition is such as not to abound, and I hope mine is, or will be such as not to need it: I will therefore receive no more from you upon that contract," and in testimony of it freely gave him up his bond.

Immediately after his admission into his Deanery the Vicarage of St. Dunstan in the West, London, fell to him by the death of Dr. White, the advowson of it having been given to him long before by his honourable friend Richard Earl of Dorset, then the patron, and confirmed by his brother the late deceased Edward, both of them men of much honour.

By these, and another ecclesiastical endowment which fell to him about the same time, given to him formerly by the Earl of Kent, he was enabled to become charitable to the poor, and kind to his friends, and to make such provision for his children, that they were not left scandalous as relating to their or his profession and quality.

The next Parliament, which was within that present year, he was chosen Prolocutor to the Convocation, and about that time was appointed by his Majesty, his most gracious master, to preach very many occasional sermons, as at St. Paul's Cross, and other places. All which employments he performed to the admiration of the representative body of the whole Clergy of this nation.

He was once, and but once, clouded with the King's displeasure, and it was about this time; which was occasioned by some malicious whisperer, who had told his Majesty that Dr. Donne had put on the general humour of the pulpits, and was become busy in insinuating a fear of the King's inclining to popery, and a dislike of his government; and particularly for the King's then turning the evening lectures into catechising, and expounding the Prayer of our Lord, and of the Belief, and Commandments. His Majesty was the more inclinable to believe this, for that a person of nobility and great note, betwixt whom and Dr. Donne there had been a great friendship, was at this very time discarded the court—I shall forbear his name, unless I had a fairer occasion—and justly committed to prison; which begot many rumours in the common people, who in this nation think they are not wise unless they be busy about what they understand not, and especially about religion.

The King received this news with so much discontent and restlessness that he would not suffer the sun to set and leave him under this doubt; but sent for Dr. Donne, and required his

answer to the accusation; which was so clear and satisfactory that the King said, "he was right glad he rested no longer under the suspicion." When the King had said this, Dr. Donne kneeled down, and thanked his Majesty, and protested his answer was faithful, and free from all collusion, and therefore "desired that he might not rise till, as in like cases, he always had from God, so he might have from his Majesty, some assurance that he stood clear and fair in his opinion." At which the King raised him from his knees with his own hands, and "protested he believed him; and that he knew he was an honest man, and doubted not but that he loved him truly." And, having thus dismissed him, he called some Lords of his Council into his chamber, and said with much earnestness, "My Doctor is an honest man; and, my Lords, I was never better satisfied with an answer than he hath now made me; and I always rejoice when I think that by my means he became a Divine."

He was made Dean in the fiftieth year of his age, and in his fifty-fourth year a dangerous sickness seized him, which inclined him to a consumption; but God, as Job thankfully acknowledged, preserved his spirit, and kept his intellectuals as clear and perfect as when that sickness first seized his body; but it continued long, and threatened him with death, which he dreaded not.

Within a few days his distempers abated; and as his strength increased so did his thankfulness to Almighty God, testified in his most excellent "Book of Devotions," which he published at his recovery; in which the reader may see the most secret

thoughts that then possessed his soul, paraphrased and made public: a book that may not unfitly be called a Sacred Picture of Spiritual Ecstasies, occasioned and applicable to the emergencies of that sickness; which book, being a composition of meditations, disquisitions, and prayers, he writ on his sick-bed; herein imitating the holy Patriarchs, who were wont to build their altars in that place where they had received their blessings.

This sickness brought him so near to the gates of death, and he saw the grave so ready to devour him, that he would often say his recovery was supernatural: but that God that then restored his health continued it to him till the fifty-ninth year of his life: and then, in August 1630, being with his eldest daughter, Mrs. Harvey, at Abury Hatch, in Essex, he there fell into a fever, which, with the help of his constant infirmity—vapours from the spleen—hastened him into so visible a consumption that his beholders might say, as St. Paul of himself, "He dies daily;" and he might say with Job, "My welfare passeth away as a cloud, the days of my affliction have taken hold of me, and weary nights are appointed for me."

Reader, this sickness continued long, not only weakening, but wearying him so much, that my desire is he may now take some rest; and that before I speak of his death thou wilt not think it an impertinent digression to look back with me upon some observations of his life, which, whilst a gentle slumber gives rest to his spirits, may, I hope, not unfitly, exercise thy consideration.

His marriage was the remarkable error of his life; an error

which, though he had a wit able and very apt to maintain paradoxes, yet he was very far from justifying it: and though his wife's competent years, and other reasons, might be justly urged to moderate severe censures, yet he would occasionally condemn himself for it: and doubtless it had been attended with an heavy repentance, if God had not blessed them with so mutual and cordial affections, as in the midst of their sufferings made their bread of sorrow taste more pleasantly than the banquets of dull and low-spirited people.[Pg xxviii]

The recreations of his youth were poetry, in which he was so happy as if nature and all her varieties had been made only to exercise his sharp wit and high fancy; and in those pieces which were facetiously composed and carelessly scattered,—most of them being written before the twentieth year of his age—it may appear by his choice metaphors that both nature and all the arts joined to assist him with their utmost skill.

It is a truth, that in his penitential years, viewing some of those pieces that had been loosely—God knows, too loosely—scattered in his youth, he wished they had been abortive, or so short-lived that his own eyes had witnessed their funerals; but, though he was no friend to them, he was not so fallen out with heavenly poetry, as to forsake that; no, not in his declining age; witnessed then by many divine sonnets, and other high, holy, and harmonious composures. Yea, even on his former sick-bed he wrote this heavenly hymn, expressing the great joy that then possessed his soul, in the assurance of God's favour to him when

he composed it:—

"AN HYMN

"TO GOD THE FATHER

"Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

"Wilt Thou forgive that sin, which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two:—but wallow'd in a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

"I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son
Shall shine as He shines now, and heretofore;
And having done that, Thou hast done,
I fear no more."

I have the rather mentioned this hymn, for that he caused it to be set to a most grave and solemn tune, and to be often sung to the organ by the choiristers of St. Paul's Church, in his own hearing; especially at the Evening Service; and at his return from his customary devotions in that place, did occasionally say to a friend, "the words of this hymn have restored to me the same thoughts of joy that possessed my soul in my sickness, when I composed it. And, O the power of church-music! that harmony added to this hymn has raised the affections of my heart, and quickened my graces of zeal and gratitude; and I observe that I always return from paying this public duty of prayer and praise to God, with an unexpressible tranquillity of mind, and a willingness to leave the world."

After this manner did the disciples of our Saviour, and the best of Christians in those ages of the Church nearest to His time, offer their praises to Almighty God. And the reader of St. Augustine's life may there find, that towards his dissolution he wept abundantly, that the enemies of Christianity had broke in upon them, and profaned and ruined their sanctuaries, and because their public hymns and lauds were lost out of their Churches. And after this manner have many devout souls lifted up their hands and offered acceptable sacrifices unto Almighty God, where Dr. Donne offered his, and now lies buried.

But now [1656], Oh Lord! how is that place become desolate!
Before I proceed further, I think fit to inform the reader, that

not long before his death he caused to be drawn a figure of the Body of Christ extended upon an anchor, like those which painters draw, when they would present us with the picture of Christ crucified on the cross: his varying no otherwise than to affix Him not to a cross, but to an anchor—the emblem of Hope,—this he caused to be drawn in little, and then many of those figures thus drawn to be engraven very small in Heliotropium stones, and set in gold; and of these he sent to many of his dearest friends, to be used as seals, or rings, and kept as memorials of him, and of his affection to them.

His dear friends and benefactors, Sir Henry Goodier and Sir Robert Drewry, could not be of that number; nor could the Lady Magdalen Herbert, the mother of George Herbert, for they had put off mortality, and taken possession of the grave before him; but Sir Henry Wotton, and Dr. Hall, the then—late deceased—Bishop of Norwich, were; and so were Dr. Duppa, Bishop of Salisbury, and Dr. Henry King, Bishop of Chichester—lately deceased—men, in whom there was such a commixture of general learning, of natural eloquence, and Christian humility, that they deserve a commemoration by a pen equal to their own, which none have exceeded.

And in this enumeration of his friends, though many must be omitted, yet that man of primitive piety, Mr. George Herbert, may not; I mean that George Herbert, who was the author of "The Temple, or Sacred Poems and Ejaculations." A book, in which by declaring his own spiritual conflicts, he hath comforted and

raised many a dejected and discomposed soul, and charmed them into sweet and quiet thoughts; a book, by the frequent reading whereof, and the assistance of that Spirit that seemed to inspire the author, the reader may attain habits of peace and piety, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost and Heaven: and may, by still reading, still keep those sacred fires burning upon the altar of so pure a heart, as shall free it from the anxieties of this world, and keep it fixed upon things that are above. Betwixt this George Herbert and Dr. Donne, there was a long and dear friendship, made up by such a sympathy of inclinations that they coveted and joyed to be in each other's company; and this happy friendship was still maintained by many sacred endearments; of which that which followeth may be some testimony.

"TO MR. GEORGE HERBERT;

**"SENT HIM WITH ONE OF MY SEALS
OF THE ANCHOR AND CHRIST**

**"A Sheaf of Snakes used heretofore to be my
Seal, which is the Crest of our poor family."**



"Qui prius assuetus serpentum falce tabellas
Signare, hæc nostræ symbola parva domus,
Adscitus domui Domini—

"Adopted in God's family, and so
My old coat lost, into new Arms I go.
The Cross, my Seal in Baptism, spread below,
Does by that form into an Anchor grow.
Crosses grow Anchors, bear as thou shouldst do
Thy Cross, and that Cross grows an Anchor too.
But He that makes our Crosses Anchors thus,
Is Christ, who there is crucified for us.
Yet with this I may my first Serpents hold;—
God gives new blessings, and yet leaves the old—
The Serpent, may, as wise, my pattern be;
My poison, as he feeds on dust, that's me.
And, as he rounds the earth to murder, sure
He is my death; but on the Cross, my cure,
Crucify nature then; and then implore
All grace from Him, crucified there before.
When all is Cross, and that Cross Anchor grown
This Seal's a Catechism, not a Seal alone.
Under that little Seal great gifts I send,
Both works and pray'rs, pawns and fruits of a friend.
O! may that Saint that rides on our Great Seal,
To you that bear his name, large bounty deal.

"John Donne."

"IN SACRAM ANCHORAM PISCATORIS

"GEORGE HERBERT

"Quod Crux nequibat fixa clavique additi,—
Tenere Christum scilicet ne ascenderet,
Tuive Christum—

"Although the Cross could not here Christ detain,
When nail'd unto't, but He ascends again;
Nor yet thy eloquence here keep Him still,
But only whilst thou speak'st—this Anchor will:
Nor canst thou be content, unless thou to
This certain Anchor add a Seal; and so
The water and the earth both unto thee
Do owe the symbol of their certainty.
Let the world reel, we and all ours stand sure,
This holy cable's from all storms secure.

"George Herbert."

I return to tell the reader, that, besides these verses to his dear Mr. Herbert, and that Hymn that I mentioned to be sung in the choir of St. Paul's Church, he did also shorten and beguile many sad hours by composing other sacred ditties; and he writ

an Hymn on his death-bed, which bears this title:[Pg xxxiii]—

"AN HYMN TO GOD, MY GOD, IN MY SICKNESS

"March 23, 1630

"Since I am coming to that holy room,
Where, with Thy Choir of Saints, for evermore
I shall be made Thy music, as I come
I tune my instrument here at the door,
And, what I must do then, think here before.

"Since my Physicians by their loves are grown
Cosmographers; and I their map, who lie
Flat on this bed—

"So, in His purple wrapt, receive my Lord!
By these His thorns, give me His other Crown
And, as to other souls I preach'd Thy word,
Be this my text, my sermon to mine own,

"That He may raise; therefore the Lord throws down."

If these fall under the censure of a soul, whose too much mixture with earth makes it unfit to judge of these high raptures and illuminations, let him know, that many holy and devout men have thought the soul of Prudentius to be most refined, when,

not many days before his death, "he charged it to present his God each morning and evening with a new and spiritual song;" justified by the example of King David and the good King Hezekiah, who, upon the renovation of his years paid his thankful vows to Almighty God in a royal hymn, which he concludes in these words: "The Lord was ready to save; therefore I will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of my life in the Temple of my God."

The latter part of his life may be said to be a continued study; for as he usually preached once a week, if not oftener, so after his sermon he never gave his eyes rest, till he had chosen out a new text, and that night cast his sermon into a form, and his text into divisions; and the next day betook himself to consult the Fathers, and so commit his meditations to his memory, which was excellent. But upon Saturday he usually gave himself and his mind a rest from the weary burthen of his week's meditations, and usually spent that day in visitation of friends, or some other diversions of his thoughts; and would say, "that he gave both his body and mind that refreshment, that he might be enabled to do the work of the day following, not faintly, but with courage and cheerfulness."

Nor was his age only so industrious, but in the most unsettled days of his youth, his bed was not able to detain him beyond the hour of four in a morning; and it was no common business that drew him out of his chamber till past ten; all which time was employed in study; though he took great liberty after it. And if

this seem strange, it may gain a belief by the visible fruits of his labours; some of which remain as testimonies of what is here written: for he left the resultance of 1400 authors, most of them abridged and analysed with his own hand: he left also six score of his sermons, all written with his own hand, also an exact and laborious Treatise concerning self-murder, called Biathanatos; wherein all the laws violated by that act are diligently surveyed, and judiciously censured: a Treatise written in his younger days, which alone might declare him then not only perfect in the Civil and Canon Law, but in many other such studies and arguments, as enter not into the consideration of many that labour to be thought great clerks, and pretend to know all things.

Nor were these only found in his study, but all businesses that passed of any public consequence, either in this or any of our neighbour-nations, he abbreviated either in Latin, or in the language of that nation, and kept them by him for useful memorials. So he did the copies of divers Letters and Cases of Conscience that had concerned his friends, with his observations and solutions of them; and divers other businesses of importance, all particularly and methodically digested by himself.

He did prepare to leave the world before life left him; making his Will when no faculty of his soul was damped or made defective by pain or sickness, or he surprised by a sudden apprehension of death: but it was made with mature deliberation, expressing himself an impartial father, by making his children's portions equal; and a lover of his friends, whom he remembered

with legacies fitly and discreetly chosen and bequeathed. I cannot forbear a nomination of some of them; for methinks they be persons that seem to challenge a recordation in this place; as namely, to his brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Grimes, he gave that striking clock, which he had long worn in his pocket; to his dear friend and executor, Dr. King—late Bishop of Chichester—that Model of Gold of the Synod of Dort, with which the States presented him at his last being at the Hague; and the two pictures of Padre Paolo and Fulgentio, men of his acquaintance when he travelled Italy, and of great note in that nation for their remarkable learning.—To his ancient friend Dr. Brook—that married him—Master of Trinity College in Cambridge, he gave the picture of the Blessed Virgin and Joseph.—To Dr. Winniff who succeeded him in the Deanery—he gave a picture called the Skeleton.—To the succeeding Dean, who was not then known, he gave many necessaries of worth, and useful for his house; and also several pictures and ornaments for the Chapel, with a desire that they might be registered, and remain as a legacy to his successors.—To the Earls of Dorset and Carlisle he gave several pictures; and so he did to many other friends; legacies, given rather to express his affection, than to make any addition to their estates: but unto the poor he was full of charity, and unto many others, who, by his constant and long continued bounty, might entitle themselves to be his alms-people: for all these he made provision, and so largely, as, having then six children living, might to some appear more than proportionable to his estate. I

forbear to mention any more, lest the reader may think I trespass upon his patience: but I will beg his favour, to present him with the beginning and end of his Will.

"In the name of the blessed and glorious Trinity. Amen. I John Donne, by the mercy of Christ Jesus, and by the calling of the Church of England, Priest, being at this time in good health and perfect understanding—praised be God therefore—do hereby make my last Will and Testament in manner and form following:—

"First, I give my gracious God an entire sacrifice of body and soul, with my most humble thanks for that assurance which His Blessed Spirit imprints in me now of the Salvation of the one, and the Resurrection of the other; and for that constant and cheerful resolution, which the same Spirit hath established in me, to live and die in the religion now professed in the Church of England. In expectation of that Resurrection, I desire my body may be buried—in the most private manner that may be—in that place of St. Paul's Church, London, that the now Residentiaries have at my request designed for that purpose, &c.—And this my last Will and Testament, made in the fear of God,—whose mercy I humbly beg, and constantly rely upon in Jesus Christ—and in perfect love and charity with all the world—whose pardon I ask, from the lowest of my[Pg xxxvii] servants, to the highest of my superiors—written all with my own hand, and my name subscribed to every page, of which there are five in number.

"Sealed December 13, 1630."

Nor was this blessed sacrifice of charity expressed only at his death, but in his life also, by a cheerful and frequent visitation of any friend whose mind was dejected, or his fortune necessitous; he was inquisitive after the wants of prisoners, and redeemed many from prison, that lay for their fees or small debts: he was a continual giver to poor scholars, both of this and foreign nations. Besides what he gave with his own hand, he usually sent a servant, or a discreet and trusty friend, to distribute his charity to all the prisons in London, at all the festival times of the year, especially at the Birth and Resurrection of our Saviour. He gave an hundred pounds at one time to an old friend, whom he had known live plentifully, and by a too liberal heart and carelessness became decayed in his estate; and when the receiving of it was denied, by the gentleman's saying, "He wanted not;"—for the reader may note, that as there be some spirits so generous as to labour to conceal and endure a sad poverty, rather than expose themselves to those blushes that attend the confession of it; so there be others, to whom nature and grace have afforded such sweet and compassionate souls, as to pity and prevent the distresses of mankind;—which I have mentioned because of Dr. Donne's reply, whose answer was, "I know you want not what will sustain nature; for a little will do that; but my desire is, that you, who in the days of your plenty have cheered and raised the hearts of so many of your dejected friends, would now receive this from me, and use it as a cordial for the cheering of your own:" and upon these terms it was received. He was an happy

reconciler of many[Pg xxxviii] differences in the families of his friends and kindred,—which he never undertook faintly; for such undertakings have usually faint effects—and they had such a faith in his judgment and impartiality, that he never advised them to any thing in vain. He was, even to her death, a most dutiful son to his mother, careful to provide for her supportation, of which she had been destitute, but that God raised him up to prevent her necessities; who having sucked in the religion of the Roman Church with the mother's milk, spent her estate in foreign countries, to enjoy a liberty in it, and died in his house but three months before him.

And to the end it may appear how just a steward he was of his Lord and Master's revenue, I have thought fit to let the reader know, that after his entrance into his Deanery, as he numbered his years, he, at the foot of a private account, to which God and His Angels were only witnesses with him,—computed first his revenue, then what was given to the poor, and other pious uses; and lastly, what rested for him and his; and having done that, he then blessed each year's poor remainder with a thankful prayer; which, for that they discover a more than common devotion, the reader shall partake some of them in his own words:—

So all is that remains this year [1624-5]—

"Deo Opt. Max. benigno largitori, á me, at ab iis quibus hæc à me reservantur, gloria et gratia in æternum. Amen."

Translated thus.

To God all Good, all Great, the benevolent Bestower, by me

and by them, for whom, by me, these sums are laid up, be glory and grace ascribed for ever. Amen.

So that this year, [1626,] God hath blessed me and mine with

"Multiplicatæ sunt super nos misericordiæ tuæ, Domine."

Translated thus.

Thy mercies, Oh Lord! are multiplied upon us.

"Da, Domine, ut quæ ex immensâ bonitate tuâ nobis elargiri dignatus sis, in quorumcunque manus devenerint, in tuam semper cedant gloriam. Amen."

Translated thus.

Grant, Oh Lord! that what out of Thine infinite bounty Thou hast vouchsafed to lavish upon us, into whosoever hands it may devolve, may always be improved to thy glory. Amen.

"In fine horum sex annorum manet [1627-8-9]—

"Quid habeo quod non accepi a Domino? Largitur etiam ut quæ largitus est sua iterum fiant, bono eorum usu; ut quemadmodum nec officiis hujus mundi, nec loci in quo me posuit dignitati, nec servis, nec egenis, in toto hujus anni curriculo mihi conscius sum me defuisse; ita et liberi, quibus quæ supersunt, supersunt, grato animo ea accipiant, et beneficium authorem recognoscant. Amen."

Translated thus.

At the end of these six years remains—

What have I, which I have not received from the Lord? He bestows, also, to the intent that what He hath bestowed

may revert to Him by the proper use of it: that, as I have not consciously been wanting to myself during the whole course of the past year, either in discharging my secular duties, in retaining the dignity of my station, or in my conduct towards my servants and the poor—so my children for whom remains whatever is remaining, may receive it with gratitude, and acknowledge the beneficent Giver. Amen.

But I return from my long digression.

We left the Author sick in Essex, where he was forced to spend much of that winter, by reason of his disability to remove from that place; and having never, for almost twenty years, omitted his personal attendance on his Majesty in that month, in which he was to attend and preach to him; nor having ever been left out of the roll and number of Lent Preachers, and there being then—in January, 1630—a report brought to London, or raised there, that Dr. Donne was dead; that report gave him occasion to write the following letter to a dear friend:—

"Sir,

"This advantage you and my other friends have by my frequent fevers, that I am so much the oftener at the gates of Heaven; and this advantage by the solitude and close imprisonment that they reduce me to after, that I am so much the oftener at my prayers, in which I shall never leave out your happiness; and I doubt not, among His other blessings, God will add some one to you for my prayers. A man would almost be content to die—if there were no other benefit in death—to hear of so much sorrow, and so

much good testimony from good men, as I—God be blessed for it—did upon the report of my death; yet I perceive it went not through all; for one writ to me, that some—and he said of my friends—conceived I was not so ill as I pretended, but withdrew myself to live at ease, discharged of preaching. It is an unfriendly, and, God knows, an ill-grounded interpretation; for I have always been sorrier when I could not preach, than any could be they could not hear me. It hath been my desire, and God may be pleased to grant it, that I might die in the pulpit; if not that, yet that I might take my death in the pulpit; that is, die the sooner by occasion of those labours. Sir, I hope to see you presently after Candlemas; about which time will fall my Lent Sermon at Court, except my Lord Chamberlain believe me to be dead, and so leave me out of the roll: but as long as I live, and am not speechless, I would not willingly, decline that service. I have better leisure to write, than you to read; yet I would not willingly oppress you with too much letter. God so bless you and your son, as I wish to

"Your poor friend and Servant

"In Christ Jesus,

"J. Donne."

Before that month ended, he was appointed to preach upon his old constant day, the first Friday in Lent: he had notice of it, and had in his sickness so prepared for that employment, that as he had long thirsted for it, so he resolved his weakness should not hinder his journey; he came therefore to London some few days before his appointed day of preaching. At his coming

thither, many of his friends—who with sorrow saw his sickness had left him but so much flesh as did only cover his bones—doubted his strength to perform that task, and did therefore dissuade him from undertaking it, assuring him, however, it was like to shorten his life: but he passionately denied their requests, saying "he would not doubt that that God, who in so many weaknesses had assisted him with an unexpected strength, would now withdraw it in his last employment; professing an holy ambition to perform that sacred work." And when, to the amazement of some beholders, he appeared in the pulpit, many of them thought he presented himself not to preach mortification by a living voice, but mortality by a decayed body, and a dying face. And doubtless many did secretly ask that question in Ezekiel (chap. xxxvii. 3), "Do these bones live? or, can that soul organise that tongue, to speak so long time as the sand in that glass will move towards its centre, and measure out an hour of this dying man's unspent life? Doubtless it cannot." And yet, after some faint pauses in his zealous prayer, his strong desires enabled his weak body to discharge his memory of his preconceived meditations, which were of dying; the text being, "To God the Lord belong the issues from death." Many that then saw his tears, and heard his faint and hollow voice, professing they thought the text prophetically chosen, and that Dr. Donne had preached his own Funeral Sermon.

Being full of joy that God had enabled him to perform this desired duty, he hastened to his house; out of which he never

moved, till, like St. Stephen, "he was carried by devout men to his grave."

The next day after his sermon, his strength being much wasted, and his spirits so spent as indisposed him to business or to talk, a friend that had often been a witness of his free and facetious discourse asked him, "Why are you sad?" To whom he replied with a countenance so full of cheerful gravity, as gave testimony of an inward tranquillity of mind, and of a soul willing to take a farewell of this world, and said:—

"I am not sad; but most of the night past I have entertained myself with many thoughts of several friends that have left me here, and are gone to that place from which they shall not return; and that within a few days I also shall go hence, and be no more seen. And my preparation for this change is become my nightly meditation upon my bed, which my infirmities have now made restless to me. But at this present time, I was in a serious contemplation of the providence and goodness of God to me; to me, who am less than the least of His mercies: and looking back upon my life past, I now plainly see it was His hand that prevented me from all temporal employment; and that it was His will I should never settle nor thrive till I entered into the Ministry; in which I have now lived almost twenty years—I hope to His glory,—and by which, I most humbly thank Him, I have been enabled to requite most of those friends which shewed me kindness when my fortune was very low, as God knows it was: and—as it hath occasioned the expression of my gratitude—I thank God most of them have stood in need

of my requital. I have lived to be useful and comfortable to my good Father-in-law, Sir George More, whose patience God hath been pleased to exercise with many temporal crosses; I have maintained my own mother, whom it hath pleased God, after a plentiful fortune in her younger days, to bring to great decay in her very old age. I have quieted the consciences of many, that have groaned under the burden of a wounded spirit, whose prayers I hope are available for me. I cannot plead innocency of life, especially of my youth; but I am to be judged by a merciful God, who is not willing to see what I have done amiss. And though of myself I have nothing to present to Him but sins and misery, yet I know He looks not upon me now as I am of myself, but as I am in my Saviour, and hath given me, even at this present time, some testimonies by His Holy Spirit, that I am of the number of His Elect: I am therefore full of inexpressible joy, and shall die in peace."

I must here look so far back, as to tell the reader that at his first return out of Essex, to preach his last sermon, his old friend and physician, Dr. Fox—a man of great worth—came to him to consult his health; and that after a sight of him, and some queries concerning his distempers he told him, "That by cordials, and drinking milk twenty days together, there was a probability of his restoration to health"; but he passionately denied to drink it. Nevertheless, Dr. Fox, who loved him most entirely, wearied him with solicitations, till he yielded to take it for ten days; at the end of which time he told Dr. Fox, "He had drunk it more to satisfy

him, than to recover his health; and that he would not drink it ten days longer, upon the best moral assurance of having twenty years added to his life; for he loved it not; and was so far from fearing Death, which to others is the King of Terrors, that he longed for the day of his dissolution."

It is observed, that a desire of glory or commendation is rooted in the very nature of man; and that those of the severest and most mortified lives, though they may become so humble as to banish self-flattery, and such weeds as naturally grow there; yet they have not been able to kill this desire of glory, but that like our radical heat, it will both live and die with us; and many think it should do so; and we want not sacred examples to justify the desire of having our memory to outlive our lives; which I mention, because Dr. Donne, by the persuasion of Dr. Fox, easily yielded at this very time to have a monument made for him; but Dr. Fox undertook not to persuade him how, or what monument it should be; that was left to Dr. Donne himself.

A monument being resolved upon, Dr. Donne sent for a carver to make for him in wood the figure of an urn, giving him directions for the compass and height of it; and to bring with it a board, of the just height of his body. "These being got, then without delay a choice painter was got to be in readiness to draw his picture, which was taken as followeth.—Several charcoal fires being first made in his large study, he brought with him into that place his winding-sheet in his hand, and having put off all his clothes, had this sheet put on him, and so tied with knots at his

head and feet, and his hands so placed as dead bodies are usually fitted, to be shrouded and put into their coffin, or grave. Upon this urn he thus stood, with his eyes shut, and with so much of the sheet turned aside as might shew his lean, pale, and death-like face, which was purposely turned towards the East, from whence he expected the second coming of his and our Saviour Jesus." In this posture he was drawn at his just height; and when the picture was fully finished, he caused it to be set by his bedside, where it continued and became his hourly object till his death, and was then given to his dearest friend and executor Dr. Henry King, then chief Residentiary of St. Paul's, who caused him to be thus carved in one entire piece of white marble, as it now stands in that Church; and by Dr. Donne's own appointment, these words were to be affixed to it as an epitaph:—

JOHANNES DONNE

SAC. THEOL. PROFESS

POST VARIA STUDIA, QUIBUS AB ANNIS

TENERRIMIS FIDELITER, NEC INFELICITER

INCUBUIT;

INSTINCTU ET IMPULSU SP. SANCTI, MONITU

ET HORTATU

REGIS JACOBI, ORDINES SACROS AMPLEXUS,

and perplexities of a various life, even to the gates of death and the grave; my desire is, he may rest, till I have told my reader that I have seen many pictures of him, in several habits, and at several ages, and in several postures: and I now mention this because I have seen one picture of him, drawn by a curious hand, at his age of eighteen, with his sword, and what other adornments might then suit with the present fashions of youth and the giddy gaieties of that age; and his motto then was—

"How much shall I be changed
Before I am changed!"

And if that young, and his now dying picture were at this time set together, every beholder might say, "Lord! how much is Dr. Donne already changed, before he is changed!" And the view of them might give my reader occasion to ask himself with some amazement, "Lord! how much may I also, that am now in health, be changed before I am changed; before this vile, this changeable body shall put off mortality!" and therefore to prepare for it.— But this is not writ so much for my reader's memento, as to tell him, that Dr. Donne would often in his private discourses, and often publicly in his sermons, mention the many changes both of his body and mind, especially of his mind from a vertiginous giddiness; and would as often say, "His great and most blessed change was from a temporal to a spiritual employment"; in which he was so happy, that he accounted the former part of his life to

be lost; and the beginning of it to be, from his first entering into Sacred Orders, and serving his most merciful God at His altar.

Upon Monday, after the drawing this picture, he took his last leave of his beloved study; and, being sensible of his hourly decay, retired himself to his bedchamber; and that week sent at several times for many of his most considerable friends, with whom he took a solemn and deliberate farewell, commending to their considerations some sentences useful for the regulation of their lives; and then dismissed them, as good Jacob did his sons, with a spiritual benediction. The Sunday following, he appointed his servants, that if there were any business yet undone, that concerned him or themselves, it should be prepared against Saturday next; for after that day he would not mix his thoughts with any thing that concerned this world; nor ever did; but, as Job, so he "waited for the appointed day of his dissolution."

And now he was so happy as to have nothing to do but to die, to do which he stood in need of no longer time; for he had studied it long, and to so happy a perfection, that in a former sickness he called God to witness (in his "Book of Devotions," written then), "He was that minute ready to deliver his soul into his Hands, if that[Pg xlviiii] minute God would determine his dissolution." In that sickness he begged of God the constancy to be preserved in that estate for ever; and his patient expectation to have his immortal soul disrobed from her garment of mortality, makes me confident that he now had a modest assurance that his prayers were then heard, and his petition granted. He lay fifteen days

earnestly expecting his hourly change; and in the last hour of his last day, as his body melted away, and vapoured into spirit, his soul having, I verily believe, some revelation of the beatifical vision, he said, "I were miserable if I might not die"; and after those words, closed many periods of his faint breath by saying often, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." His speech, which had long been his ready and faithful servant, left him not till the last minute of his life, and then forsook him, not to serve another master—for who speaks like him,—but died before him; for that it was then become useless to him, that now conversed with God on earth as Angels are said to do in heaven, only by thoughts and looks. Being speechless, and seeing heaven by that illumination by which he saw it, he did, as St. Stephen, "look stedfastly into it, till he saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God His Father"; and being satisfied with this blessed sight, as his soul ascended, and his last breath departed from him, he closed his own eyes, and then disposed his hands and body into such a posture, as required not the least alteration by those that came to shroud him.

Thus variable, thus virtuous was the life; thus excellent, thus exemplary was the death of this memorable man.

He was buried in that place of St. Paul's Church, which he had appointed for that use some years before his death; and by which he passed daily to pay his public devotions to Almighty God—who was then served twice a day by a public form of prayer and praises in that place; but he was not buried privately, though he

desired it; for, beside an unnumbered number of others, many persons of nobility, and of eminence for learning, who did love and honour him in his life, did show it at his death, by a voluntary and sad attendance of his body to the grave, where nothing was so remarkable as a public sorrow.

To which place of his burial some mournful friends repaired, and, as Alexander the Great did to the grave of the famous Achilles, so they strewed his with an abundance of curious and costly flowers; which course they—who were never yet known—continued morning and evening for many days, not ceasing till the stones that were taken up in that Church to give his body admission into the cold earth—now his bed of rest—were again by the mason's art so levelled and firmed as they had been formerly, and his place of burial undistinguishable to common view.

The next day after his burial some unknown friend, some one of the many lovers and admirers of his virtue and learning, writ this epitaph with a coal on the wall over his grave:—

"Reader! I am to let thee know,
Donne's body only lies below;
For, could the grave his soul comprise,
Earth would be richer than the skies!"

Nor was this all the honour done to his reverend ashes; for, as there be some persons that will not receive a reward for that for which God accounts Himself a debtor; persons that dare trust

God with their charity, and without a witness; so there was by some grateful unknown friend, that thought Dr. Donne's memory ought to be perpetuated, an hundred marks sent to his faithful friends and executors (Dr. King and Dr. Montford), towards the making of his monument. It was not for many years known by whom; but, after the death of Dr. Fox, it was known that it was he that sent it; and he lived to see as lively a representation of his dead friend as marble can express: a statue indeed so like Dr. Donne, that—as his friend Sir Henry Wotton hath expressed himself—"It seems to breathe faintly, and posterity shall look upon it as a kind of artificial miracle."

He was of stature moderately tall; of a straight and equally-proportioned body, to which all his words and actions gave an unexpressible addition of comeliness.

The melancholy and pleasant humour were in him so contempered, that each gave advantage to the other, and made his company one of the delights of mankind.

His fancy was unimitably high, equalled only by his great wit; both being made useful by a commanding judgment.

His aspect was cheerful, and such as gave a silent testimony of a clear knowing soul, and of a conscience at peace with itself.

His melting eye showed that he had a soft heart, full of noble compassion; of too brave a soul to offer injuries, and too much a Christian not to pardon them in others.

He did much contemplate—especially after he entered into his sacred calling—the mercies of Almighty God, the

immortality of the soul, and the joys of heaven: and would often say in a kind of sacred ecstasy—"Blessed be God that He is God, only and divinely like Himself."

He was by nature highly passionate, but more apt to reluct at the excesses of it. A great lover of the offices of humanity, and of so merciful a spirit that he never beheld the miseries of mankind without pity and relief.

He was earnest and unwearied in the search of knowledge, with which his vigorous soul is now satisfied, and employed in a continual praise of that God that first breathed it into his active body: that body which once was a temple of the Holy Ghost, and is now become a small quantity of Christian dust:—

But I shall see it re-animated.

I. W.

TO THE MOST EXCELLENT PRINCE, PRINCE CHARLES

MOST EXCELLENT PRINCE,

I have had three births; one, natural, when I came into the world; one, supernatural, when I entered into the ministry; and now, a preternatural birth, in returning to life, from this sickness. In my second birth, your Highness' royal father vouchsafed me his hand, not only to sustain me in it, but to lead me to it. In this last birth, I myself am born a father: this child of mine, this book, comes into the world, from me, and with me. And therefore, I presume (as I did the father, to the Father) to present the son to the Son; this image of my humiliation, to the lively image of his Majesty, your Highness. It might be enough, that God hath seen my devotions: but examples of good kings are commandments; and Hezekiah writ the meditations of his sickness, after his sickness. Besides, as I have lived to see (not as a witness only, but as a partaker), the happiness of a part of your royal father's time, so shall I live (in my way) to see the happiness of the times of your Highness too, if this child of mine, inanimated by your gracious acceptance, may so long preserve alive the memory of

Your Highness humblest and devotedest,

JOHN DONNE.

DEVOTIONS

I

Insultus morbi primus.

*The first Alteration, the first
Grudging, of the Sickness*

I. MEDITATION

Variable, and therefore miserable condition of man! this minute I was well, and am ill, this minute. I am surprised with a sudden change, and alteration to worse, and can impute it to no cause, nor call it by any name. We study health, and we deliberate upon our meats, and drink, and air, and exercises, and we hew and we polish every stone that goes to that building; and so our health is a long and a regular work: but in a minute a cannon batters all, overthrows all, demolishes all; a sickness unprevented for all our diligence, unsuspected for all our curiosity; nay, undeserved, if we consider only disorder, summons us, seizes us, possesses us, destroys us in an instant. O miserable condition of man! which was not imprinted by God, who, as he is immortal

himself, had put a coal, a beam of immortality into us, which we might have blown into a flame, but blew it out by our first sin; we beggared ourselves by hearkening after false riches, and infatuated ourselves by hearkening after false knowledge. So that now, we do not only die, but die upon the rack, die by the torment of sickness; nor that only, but are pre-afflicted, super-afflicted with these jealousies and suspicions and apprehensions of sickness, before we can call it a sickness: we are not sure we are ill; one hand asks the other by the pulse, and our eye asks our own urine how we do. O multiplied misery! we die, and cannot enjoy death, because we die in this torment of sickness; we are tormented with sickness, and cannot stay till the torment come, but pre-apprehensions and presages prophesy those torments which induce that death before either come; and our dissolution is conceived in these first changes, quickened in the sickness itself, and born in death, which bears date from these first changes. Is this the honour which man hath by being a little world, that he hath these earthquakes in himself, sudden shakings; these lightnings, sudden flashes; these thunders, sudden noises; these eclipses, sudden offuscations and darkening of his senses; these blazing stars, sudden fiery exhalations; these rivers of blood, sudden red waters? Is he a world to himself only therefore, that he hath enough in himself, not only to destroy and execute himself, but to presage that execution upon himself; to assist the sickness, to antedate the sickness, to make the sickness the more irremediable by sad apprehensions, and, as if he would

make a fire the more vehement by sprinkling water upon the coals, so to wrap a hot fever in cold melancholy, lest the fever alone should not destroy fast enough without this contribution, nor perfect the work (which is destruction) except we joined an artificial sickness of our own melancholy, to our natural, our unnatural fever. O perplexed discomposition, O riddling distemper, O miserable condition of man!

I. EXPOSTULATION

If I were but mere dust and ashes I might speak unto the Lord, for the Lord's hand made me of this dust, and the Lord's hand shall re-collect these ashes; the Lord's hand was the wheel upon which this vessel of clay was framed, and the Lord's hand is the urn in which these ashes shall be preserved. I am the dust and the ashes of the temple of the Holy Ghost, and what marble is so precious? But I am more than dust and ashes: I am my best part, I am my soul. And being so, the breath of God, I may breathe back these pious expostulations to my God: My God, my God, why is not my soul as sensible as my body? Why hath not my soul these apprehensions, these presages, these changes, these antidates, these jealousies, these suspicions of a sin, as well as my body of a sickness? Why is there not always a pulse in my soul to beat at the approach of a temptation to sin? Why are there not always waters in mine eyes, to testify my spiritual sickness? I stand in the way of temptations, naturally, necessarily; all men

do so; for there is a snake in every path, temptations in every vocation; but I go, I run, I fly into the ways of temptation which I might shun; nay, I break into houses where the plague is; I press into places of temptation, and tempt the devil himself, and solicit and importune them who had rather be left unsolicited by me. I fall sick of sin, and am bedded and bedrid, buried and putrified in the practice of sin, and all this while have no presage, no pulse, no sense of my sickness. O height, O depth of misery, where the first symptom of the sickness is hell, and where I never see the fever of lust, of envy, of ambition, by any other light than the darkness and horror of hell itself, and where the first messenger that speaks to me doth not say, "Thou mayest die," no, nor "Thou must die," but "Thou art dead;" and where the first notice that my soul hath of her sickness is irrecoverableness, irremediableness: but, O my God, Job did not charge thee foolishly in his temporal afflictions, nor may I in my spiritual. Thou hast imprinted a pulse in our soul, but we do not examine it; a voice in our conscience, but we do not hearken unto it. We talk it out, we jest it out, we drink it out, we sleep it out; and when we wake, we do not say with Jacob, *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not*: but though we might know it, we do not, we will not. But will God pretend to make a watch, and leave out the spring? to make so many various wheels in the faculties of the soul, and in the organs of the body, and leave out grace, that should move them? or will God make a spring, and not wind it up? Infuse his first grace, and not second it with more, without which we can no more use

his first grace when we have it, than we could dispose ourselves by nature to have it? But alas, that is not our case; we are all prodigal sons, and not disinherited; we have received our portion, and mispent it, not been denied it. We are God's tenants here, and yet here, he, our landlord, pays us rents; not yearly, nor quarterly, but hourly, and quarterly; every minute he renews his mercy, but *we will not understand, lest that we should be converted, and he should heal us.*¹

I. PRAYER

O eternal and most gracious God, who, considered in thyself, art a circle, first and last, and altogether; but, considered in thy working upon us, art a direct line, and leadest us from our beginning, through all our ways, to our end, enable me by thy grace to look forward to mine end, and to look backward too, to the considerations of thy mercies afforded me from the beginning; that so by that practice of considering thy mercy, in my beginning in this world, when thou plantedst me in the Christian church, and thy mercy in the beginning in the other world, when thou writest me in the book of life, in my election, I may come to a holy consideration of thy mercy in the beginning of all my actions here: that in all the beginnings, in all the accesses and approaches, of spiritual sicknesses of sin, I may

¹ Matt. xiii. 15.

hear and hearken to that voice, *O thou man of God, there is death in the pot,*² and so refrain from that which I was so hungerly, so greedily flying to. *A faithful ambassador is health,*³ says thy wise servant Solomon. Thy voice received in the beginning of a sickness, of a sin, is true health. If I can see that light betimes, and hear that voice early, *Then shall my light break forth as the morning, and my health shall spring forth speedily.*⁴ Deliver me therefore, O my God, from these vain imaginations; that it is an over-curious thing, a dangerous thing, to come to that tenderness, that rawness, that scrupulousness, to fear every concupiscence, every offer of sin, that this suspicious and jealous diligence will turn to an inordinate dejection of spirit, and a diffidence in thy care and providence; but keep me still established, both in a constant assurance, that thou wilt speak to me at the beginning of every such sickness, at the approach of every such sin; and that, if I take knowledge of that voice then, and fly to thee, thou wilt preserve me from falling, or raise me again, when by natural infirmity I am fallen. Do this, O Lord, for his sake, who knows our natural infirmities, for he had them, and knows the weight of our sins, for he paid a dear price for them, thy Son, our Saviour, Christ Jesus. Amen.

² 2 Kings, iv. 40.

³ Prov. xiii. 17.

⁴ Isaiah, lviii. 8.

II. Post actio læsa.

The Strength and the function of the senses, and other faculties, change and fail

II. MEDITATION

The heavens are not the less constant, because they move continually, because they move continually one and the same way. The earth is not the more constant, because it lies still continually, because continually it changes and melts in all the parts thereof. Man, who is the noblest part of the earth, melts so away, as if he were a statue, not of earth, but of snow. We see his own envy melts him, he grows lean with that; he will say, another's beauty melts him; but he feels that a fever doth not melt him like snow, but pour him out like lead, like iron, like brass melted in a furnace; it doth not only melt him, but calcine him, reduce him to atoms, and to ashes; not to water, but to lime. And how quickly? Sooner than thou canst receive an answer, sooner than thou canst conceive the question; earth is the centre of my body, heaven is the centre of my soul; these two are the natural places of these two; but those go not to these two in an equal pace: my body falls down without pushing; my soul does not go up without pulling; ascension is my soul's pace and measure, but

precipitation my body's. And even angels, whose home is heaven, and who are winged too, yet had a ladder to go to heaven by steps. The sun which goes so many miles in a minute, the stars of the firmament which go so very many more, go not so fast as my body to the earth. In the same instant that I feel the first attempt of the disease, I feel the victory; in the twinkling of an eye I can scarce see; instantly the taste is insipid and fatuous; instantly the appetite is dull and desireless; instantly the knees are sinking and strengthless; and in an instant, sleep, which is the picture, the copy of death, is taken away, that the original, death itself, may succeed, and that so I might have death to the life. It was part of Adam's punishment, *In the sweat of thy brows thou shalt eat thy bread*: it is multiplied to me, I have earned bread in the sweat of my brows, in the labour of my calling, and I have it; and I sweat again and again, from the brow to the sole of the foot, but I eat no bread, I taste no sustenance: miserable distribution of mankind, where one half lacks meat, and the other stomach!

II. EXPOSTULATION

David professes himself a dead dog to his king Saul,⁵ and so doth Mephibosheth to his king David,⁶ and yet David speaks to Saul, and Mephibosheth to David. No man is so little, in respect of the greatest man, as the greatest in respect of God; for here,

⁵ 1 Sam. xxiv. 15.

⁶ 2 Sam. ix. 8.

in that, we have not so much as a measure to try it by; proportion is no measure for infinity. He that hath no more of this world but a grave; he that hath his grave but lent him till a better man or another man must be buried in the same grave; he that hath no grave but a dunghill, he that hath no more earth but that which he carries, but that which he is, he that hath not that earth which he is, but even in that is another's slave, hath as much proportion to God, as if all David's worthies, and all the world's monarchs, and all imagination's giants, were kneaded and incorporated into one, and as though that one were the survivor of all the sons of men, to whom God had given the world. And therefore how little soever I be, as *God calls things that are not, as though they were*, I, who am as though I were not, may call upon God, and say, My God, my God, why comes thine anger so fast upon me? Why dost thou melt me, scatter me, pour me like water upon the ground so instantly? Thou stayedst for the first world, in Noah's time, one hundred and twenty years; thou stayedst for a rebellious generation in the wilderness forty years, wilt thou stay no minute for me? Wilt thou make thy process and thy decree, thy citation and thy judgment, but one act? Thy summons, thy battle, thy victory, thy triumph, all but one act; and lead me captive, nay, deliver me captive to death, as soon as thou declarest me to be enemy, and so cut me off even with the drawing of thy sword out of the scabbard, and for that question, How long was he sick? leave no other answer, but that the hand of death pressed upon him from the first minute? My God, my God, thou wast

not wont to come in whirlwinds, but in soft and gentle air. Thy first breath breathed a soul into me, and shall thy breath blow it out? Thy breath in the congregation, thy word in the church, breathes communion and consolation here, and consummation hereafter; shall thy breath in this chamber breathe dissolution and destruction, divorce and separation? Surely it is not thou, it is not thy hand. The devouring sword, the consuming fire, the winds from the wilderness, the diseases of the body, all that afflicted Job, were from the hands of Satan; it is not thou. It is thou, thou my God, who hast led me so continually with thy hand, from the hand of my nurse, as that I know thou wilt not correct me, but with thine own hand. My parents would not give me over to a servant's correction, nor my God to Satan's. I am *fallen into the hands of God* with David, and with David I see that his mercies are great.⁷ For by that mercy, I consider in my present state, not the haste and the despatch of the disease, in dissolving this body, so much as the much more haste and despatch, which my God shall use, in re-collecting and re-uniting this dust again at the resurrection. Then I shall hear his angels proclaim the *Surgite mortui*, Rise, ye dead. Though I be dead, I shall hear the voice; the sounding of the voice and the working of the voice shall be all one; and all shall rise there in a less minute than any one dies here.

⁷ 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.

II. PRAYER

O most gracious God, who pursuest and perfectest thine own purposes, and dost not only remember me, by the first accesses of this sickness, that I must die, but inform me, by this further proceeding therein, that I may die now; who hast not only waked me with the first, but called me up, by casting me further down, and clothed me with thyself, by stripping me of my self, and by dulling my bodily senses to the meats and eases of this world, hast whet and sharpened my spiritual senses to the apprehension of thee; by what steps and degrees soever it shall please thee to go, in the dissolution of this body, hasten, O Lord, that pace, and multiply, O my God, those degrees, in the exaltation of my soul toward thee now, and to thee then. My taste is not gone away, but gone up to sit at David's table, *to taste, and see, that the Lord is good.*⁸ My stomach is not gone, but gone up, so far upwards toward the *supper of the Lamb*, with thy saints in heaven, as to the table, to the communion of thy saints here in earth. My knees are weak, but weak therefore that I should easily fall to and fix myself long upon my devotions to thee. *A sound heart is the life of the flesh;*⁹ and a heart visited by thee, and directed to thee, by that visitation is a sound heart. *There is no soundness in my*

⁸ Psalm xxxiv. 8.

⁹ Prov. xiv. 30.

*flesh, because of thine anger.*¹⁰ Interpret thine own work, and call this sickness correction, and not anger, and there is soundness in my flesh. *There is no rest in my bones, because of my sin;*¹¹ transfer my sins, with which thou art so displeased, upon him with whom thou art so well pleased, Christ Jesus, and there will be rest in my bones. And, O my God, who madest thyself a light in a bush, in the midst of these brambles and thorns of a sharp sickness, appear unto me so that I may see thee, and know thee to be my God, applying thyself to me, even in these sharp and thorny passages. Do this, O Lord, for his sake, who was not the less the King of heaven for thy suffering him to be crowned with thorns in this world.

¹⁰ Psalm xxxviii. 3.

¹¹ Psalm xxxviii. 3.

III. Decubitus sequitur tandem. *The patient takes his bed*

III. MEDITATION

We attribute but one privilege and advantage to man's body above other moving creatures, that he is not, as others, grovelling, but of an erect, of an upright, form naturally built and disposed to the contemplation of heaven. Indeed it is a thankful form, and recompenses that soul, which gives it, with carrying that soul so many feet higher towards heaven. Other creatures look to the earth; and even that is no unfit object, no unfit contemplation for man, for thither he must come; but because man is not to stay there, as other creatures are, man in his natural form is carried to the contemplation of that place which is his home, heaven. This is man's prerogative; but what state hath he in this dignity? A fever can fillip him down, a fever can depose him; a fever can bring that head, which yesterday carried a crown of gold five feet towards a crown of glory, as low as his own foot to-day. When God came to breathe into man the breath of life, he found him flat upon the ground; when he comes to withdraw that breath from him again, he prepares him to it by laying him flat upon his bed. Scarce any prison so close that affords not the prisoner two or three

steps. The anchorites that barked themselves up in hollow trees and immured themselves in hollow walls, that perverse man that barrelled himself in a tub, all could stand or sit, and enjoy some change of posture. A sick bed is a grave, and all that the patient says there is but a varying of his own epitaph. Every night's bed is a type of the grave; at night we tell our servants at what hour we will rise, here we cannot tell ourselves at what day, what week, what month. Here the head lies as low as the foot; the head of the people as low as they whom those feet trod upon; and that hand that signed pardons is too weak to beg his own, if he might have it for lifting up that hand. Strange fetters to the feet, strange manacles to the hands, when the feet and hands are bound so much the faster, by how much the cords are slacker; so much the less able to do their offices, by how much more the sinews and ligaments are the looser. In the grave I may speak through the stones, in the voice of my friends, and in the accents of those words which their love may afford my memory; here I am mine own ghost, and rather affright my beholders than instruct them; they conceive the worst of me now, and yet fear worse; they give me for dead now, and yet wonder how I do when they wake at midnight, and ask how I do to-morrow. Miserable, and (though common to all) inhuman posture, where I must practise my lying in the grave by lying still, and not practise my resurrection by rising any more.

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