

contempe
of a mans
selfe.

but also much more to despise all maner of dignitie, honour, and estimation of the worlde, and to loue all kinde of contempt and dishonour for Gods sake. And this affection apperaineth properly vnto humilitie, which is a verie inwarde, and hartie contempte of our selues: Which contempte commeth of the true knowledge of our selues, & of the consideration of our owne finnes. I speake this, to the intente that such as be louers of true humilitie maye vnderstand, that out of this verie same fountaine, from whence that water is drawn that maie cause in vs an hatred and abhorringe of our selues, is that other water drawn also, that susteineth, and watereth the tree of true humilitie, out of which tree all vertues doe springe.

All ver-
tues doe
springe
out of hu-
militie.



TEWSDAIE NIGHTE.

OF THE MISERIES OF
THIS LYFE.

THIS DAIE (WHEN
THOU HAST MADE THE SIGNE
of the Crosse, & prepared thy selfe,) thou hast to
meditate vpon the condition, and miseries of
this lyfe: that thou mayest by them vnder-
stande, how rayne the glory of this worlde is,
seinge it is built vpon so weake a foundation:
and how little accompt a man ought to make
of him selfe, being (as he is subiect) vnto so many
miseries.

NOW for this purpose thou
hast to consider first of the
vylenes of the original, and
birthe of man, to witt: the
matter whereof he is com-
pounded: the maner of his conception: the
greifes, and paynes of his birthe: the frailtie,
& miseries of his bodie: accordinge as here-
after shalbe entreated.

Then thou hast to consider the great

I.
Of the
shortnes
of this
life.
Psal. 89.

miseris of the lyfe that he liueth, & cheiflie these seuen.

First, consider how shorte this life is, seinge the longest rearme thereof passeth not threescore and tenne, or fower score yeares. For all the rest (if anie mans lyfe be drawn a litle longer) is but labour, and sorowe. And if thou take out of this the time of our infancie, which is rather a lyfe of beastes, than of men, and withall the time that is spent in sleepe, at which time we haue not the vse of our senses, and reason, thou shalt finde that our lyfe is a great deale shorter, than it seemeth vnto vs. Besides all this, if thou compare this lyfe with the eternitie of the lyfe to come, that endureth for evermore, it shall scarcely seeme so muche as a minute: Whereby thou mayest perceiue, how farre out of the waie those persones are, who to enioye the litle blast of so short a lyfe, do hazarde to lose the quiet rest of the blessed lyfe to come, which shall endure euerlastingly.

II.
Of the
uncer-
tainie of
our life.

Secondly, consider how vncertaine this lyfe is, (which is an other miserie besides the former.) For it is not only of it selfe very short, but euen that very smale continuance of lyfe that it hath, is not assured, but doubtful. For how manie (I praie thee) doe come to the age of those threescore and tenne, or foure score yeares, which we spake of? In how manie persons is the webbe cut of, eue at the first, when it is scarcely begonne to be

wouen

wouen? How manie doe passe awaie out of this worlde, euen in the flower (as they rearme it) of their age, and in the verye blof-
somyng of yowthe. Ye knowe not (saith our Sauour) when our Lorde will come, whether in the morninge, or at nonedaie, or at mid-
night, or at the time of the cocke croweing: That is to saie: Ye knowe not whether he will come in the time of infancie, or of child-
hoode, or of yowthe, or of age. For the better perceauinge of this pointe, it shalbe a good helpe vnto thee to call to minde, how manie of thy fryendes and acquaintance are deade, and departed out of this worlde. And especially remember thy kynsfolke, thy companions, and familiars, and some of the worshipfull & famous personages of great estimation in this world, whom death hath assaulted, & snatched awaie in diuers ages, and vterlie beguyled, and defeyted them of all their fonde designementes, and hopes. I knowe a certaine man, that hath made a memoriall of all such notable personages, as he hath knowen in this worlde in all kinde of estates, which are now dead: and sometimes he readeth their names, or calleth them to minde: and in rehere (all of euerie one of them, he doth breifly represente before his eies the whole tragedie of their lyues, the mockeries, and deceites of this worlde, and withall the conclusion and ende of all worldly thinges. Whereby he vnderstandeth what good cause the Apostle

Marc. 13.

1. Cor. 7.
31.

had to saie: *That the figure of this worlde passeth awaie.* In which wordes he geueth vs to vnderstande, how litle grownde, and staie, the affaires of this lyfe haue, seinge he woulde not calle them verie thinges in deede, but onely figures, or shewes of thinges, which haue no beinge, but onely an apparance, whereby also they are the more deceitfull.

III.
*Of the
frayltie
and bric-
klenes of
this lyfe.*

Thirdly, consider how fraile, and briclike this lyfe is, and thou shalt finde, that there is no vessell of glasse so fraile as it is. Inso- muche as a lytle distemperature of the aier, or of the sonne, the drinkinge of a cuppe of colde water, yea the verie breathe of a sicke man is able to spoyle vs of oure lyfe, as we see by dailie experience of manie persones, whom the least occasiō of al these that we haue here rehearsed, hath bene able to ende their liues, & that even in the most flourishing tyme of all their age.

IIII.
*Of the
mutabili-
tie of this
lyfe.*

Fourthly, consider how mutable and variable this lyfe is, and how it neuer continueth in one selfe same staie. For which purpose thou must consider the great & often alterations, and chaunges of our bodies, which neuer continewe in one same state, and disposition. Consider likewise, how farre greater the chaunges, and mutations of our mindes are, which doe euer ebbe and flowe like the Sea, and be continuallie altered and tossed with diuers wyndes, and surges of passions, that do disquiet, and trouble vs euerie

howre

howre. Fynally, consider how great the mutation in the whole man is, who is subiecte to all the alterations of fortune, which neuer continueth in one same beinge, but alwaies turneth her wheele, and rolet vp and downe from one place to another. And aboue all this, consider how continuall the mouinge of our life is, seinge it neuer resteth daie, nor night, but goeth alwaies shorteninge from time to time, and consumeth it selfe like as a garment doth with vse, and approacheth euerie howre nearer and nearer vnto death. Now by this reckenyng what els is our life, but as it were a candle that is alwaies wastinge, and consuminge, and the more it burneth, & geueth light, the more it consumeth and wasteth awaie? What els is our life, but as it were a flowre, that bud- deth in the morninge, and fadeth awaie at noone daie, and at eueninge is cleane dried vp? This verie comparifon maketh the Prophet in the Psalme, where he saith. *The morninge of our infancie passeth awaie like an hearbe, it blossmeth in the morninge, and sodenlie fadeth awaie, and at eueninge it decaieth, and waxeth harde, and withereth awaie.*

*Our lyfe
wastes the
awaye
lyke a
burninge
candle.*

Psal. 89.

Fiftly, consider how deceitfull our life is (which peraduenture is the worst propertie it hath.) For by this meane it deceaueth vs, in that beinge in verie deede filthy, it seemeth vnto vs beawtiful: and beinge but shorte, euerie man thinketh his owne lyfe wilbe longe: and beinge so miserable (as it

V.
*Of the
ceytestie
of this
lyfe.*

Ee

is in deede) yet it seemeth so amiable, that to mainteine the same, men will not sticke to runne through all daungers, trauels, and losses, (be they neuer so great,) yea they will not spare to doe suche thinges for it, as whereby they are assured to be damned for euer and euer in hell fier, and to lose lyfe euerlastinge.

VI.
How that
litle tyme
we haue
to lyue is
also sub-
iecte to
many mi-
series both
of bodie,
& mynde.

Sixtly, consider how besides this that our lyfe is so short (as hath bene saied,) yet that litle time we haue to liue is also subiecte vnto diuers and sundrye miseries, as well of the minde, as of the bodie: in somuche as all the same beinge dewlie considered, and layed together is nothinge els, but a vale of teares, and a maine Sea of infinite miseries. S. Ierome declareth of Zerxes that most mightie kinge, (who threwe downe mountaines, and dried vp the Seas) that on a tyme he went vp to the toppe of a highe hill, to take a vewe of his huge armie, which he had gathered together of infinite numbers of people. And after that he had well vewed and considered them, it is saied that he wepte: & beinge demaunded the cause of his weepinge, he answered, and saied: I weepe because I consider that within these hundred yeares, there shall not one of all this huge Armie, which I see here present before me, be lefte aliue. Wherevpon S. Ierome saith these woordes: O that we might (saith he) ascende vp to the toppe of some towre, that were so highe, that we might see from

thence al

thence all the whole earthe vnderneath our feete. From thence shouldest thou see the ruins and miseries of all the worlde: Thou shouldest see nations destroyed by nations: and kingdoms by kingdoms. Thou shouldest see some hanged, and others murdered: some drowned in the Sea, others taken prisoners. In one place thou shouldest see mariages, and myrthe: in an other dolefull mourninge, and lamentation. In one place thou shouldest see some borne into this world, & caried to the Church to be Christened: in an other place thou shouldest see some others die, and caried to the Church to be buried. Some thou shouldest see exceedinge wealthie, & flowinge in greate abundance of landes, and riches: and others againe in great pouertie, and begginge from dore to dore. To be short, thou shouldest see, not onelie the huge armie of Zerxes, but also all the men, women, and children of the worlde, that be now aliue, within these fewe yeares to ende their liues, and not to be seene anye more in this worlde.

Consider also all the diseases and calamities that maie happen to mens bodies, and withall all the afflictions, and cares of the minde. Consider likewise the daungers, and perilles, that be incident aswell to al estates, as also to al the ages of men: and thou shalt see verie euidentlye the manifolde miseries of this lyfe. By the seinge whereof thou

E 2

VII.
Of the
diseases
calamities
that
open to
bodie
of the
flittie

and cares
of the
mynde.

VIII.
Of death.

shalt perceave how smalle a thinge all that is, that the worlde is able to geue thee, and this consideration maye cause thee more easily to despise and contemne the same, and all that thou mayste hope to receave from it.

After all these manifolde miseries, and calamities, there succeedeth the last miserie, that is death, which is as well to the bodie, as to the soule, of all terrible thinges the verie last, and most terrible. For the bodie shall in a momente be spoyled of al that it hathe. And of the soule there shall then be made a resolute determination what shall become of it for euer, and euer.

THE SECOND TREATISE, CONTEYNINGE A CONSIDERATION OF THE MISERIES OF MANS LYFE: wherein the former meditation is declared more at large.

HOW great the miseries are, that the nature of mankinde is subiect vnto by reason of synne, there is no tongue able to expresse. And therefore S. Gregorie said verie well, that onely our two first parentes, Adam, and Eue,

(who

(who knewe by experience the noble condition, and state, wherein almightie God created man,) vnderstode perfectly the miseries of man. Because they by callinge to minde the felicitie and prosperous estate of that lyfe, which they had once enioyed, sawe more clearly the miseries of the bannishment, wherein they remained through sinne. But the children of these our two miserable parentes, as they neuer knewe what thinge prosperitie, and good happe was, but were alwaies fostered, and brought vp in miserie: so they knowe not, what thinge miserie is, because they neuer knewe what prosperitie was. Yea manie of them are as it were persons in a mere frensie, so farre voide of sense, as they woulde (if it were possible) continue perpetuallye in this lyfe, & make this place of bannishment their countrey, and this prison their dwellinge howse, because they vnderstand not the miseries thereof. Wherefore like as they that are accustomed to dwell in places of vnsauory and stinkinge aier, do feele no payne nor trouble of it, by reason of the custome, and vse, they haue thereof: euen so these miserable persons vnderstande not the miseries of this lyfe, because they are so enured, and accustomed to liue in them.

Now that thou mayst not likewise falle into this soule deceit, nor into other greater inconueniences that are wont to followe hereof, consider (I praie thee with good

E 3

Our two
first parentes
onely
(Adam
and Eue)
vnder-
stode per-
fectlye the
miseries
wherein
mankinde
remayneth
through
synne.

attention) the multitude of these miseries: and before all other, consider & weighe the miseries, that are in the first beginninge, and birth of a man, and afterwarde the conditions of the lyfe he liueth.

*Of the
originall
and byrthe
of man.*

Genes. 2.

To beginne this matter therefore at the verie original: Consider first of what matter mans bodie is compounded. For by the worthines, or basenes of the matter, often times the condition of the worcke is knowen. The holic scripture saith, that almightie God created man of the slyme, or dytte of the earth. Now of al the elementes, earthe is the most base, and inferior: and emonge all the partes of the earthe, slyme is the most base, and vile. Whereby it maie appeare, that almightie God created man of the most vile, and basest thinge of the worlde. Inso-much as euen the Kinges, the Emperors, & the Popes, be they neuer so highe, famous, and royal, are euen slyme, and dytte of the earthe. And this thinge vnderstoode the Egyptians right well, of whom it is written, that when they celebrated yearly the feast of their natiuitie, they caried in their handes certaine hearbes, that growe in myrie and slymie diches: to signifie thereby, the likenes, & affinitie, that men haue with weedes, & slymye dytte: which is the common father both to weedes, and to men. Wherefore if the matter of which we are made be so base, & vyle, whereof art thou so proude, thou dust, and ashes? Whereof art

thou

thou so leste, thou stinkinge weede, and dyttie slyme?

Now as concerninge the maner, & workmanshippe, wherewith the worke of this matter is wrought, it is not to be committed to writinge, neither yet to be considered vpon, but to be passed ouer with sylence, and closinge vp our eies, that we beholde not so filthie a thinge at it is. If men knewe how to be ashamed of a thinge which they ought of reason to be ashamed of, suerlie they woulde be ashamed of nothinge more, than to consider the maner how they were conceaued. Concerninge which point I will touch one thinge onely, and that is, that whereas our mercifull Lorde, and Sauour, came into this worlde to take vpon him all our miseries, for to discharge vs of them, onely this was the thinge, that he woulde in no wise take vpon him. And whereas he disdained not to be buffered, and spitted vpon, and to be reputed for the basest of all men, onely this he thought was vnseemly, and not meete for his maiestie, to witt, if he shoulde haue bene conceiued in such maner, and order, as men are. Now as touchinge the substance and foode wherewith mens bodies are nourished, before they be borne into this worlde, it is not so cleane a thinge, as that it ought once to be named. No more ought a number of other vncleane thinges, that are daylie scene at the tyme of our birthe.

*father,
bothe to
weedes, &
to men.*

*Of the
byrthe of
a man. &
of his first
entrie into
this
worlde.*

Let vs now come to the birthe of a man, and first entrie into the worlde. Tell me I praie thee, what thinge is more miserable, than to see a woman in her trauell, when she bringeth forth her child? O what sharpe agonies and bitter panges dothe she then fee! What painfull tossinges and throwes doth she make! What daungerous gypes & quames is she in! What pittiefull skrykes & gronings dothe she vtter. I omitt here to speake of manie monstrous, straunge, and ouerthwart birthes. For if I should make reheresall of them, I shoulde neuer make an ende. And yet all this notwithstanding when the feelie creature commeth into the world, it commeth (God wotte) weeping, and cryenge, poore, naked, weake, and miserable: it is vtterlie destitute and in necessitie of all thinges, and vnable to doe anie thinge. Other liuinge things are borne with shooes vpon their feete, and apparell vpon their backe: some with wolles: others with scales: others with feathers: others with leather: others with shells: in so muche as the verie trees come forth couered with a rynde, or barke, yea & sometimes for feilings they be dowble barked: onelie man is borne starke naked, without anie other kinde of garment in the worlde, but onely a skynne, which is all riuelled, fowle, and lothsome to beholde, wherein he commeth lapped at the time of his birthe. With these ornamentes creepeth he into the worlde, who after his

comminge,

comminge, groweth vnto such fonde ambition, and pryde, that a whole worlde is scarcelie able to satisfie him.

Moreouer, other liuinge things at the verie houre of their comminge into this worlde, are able immediatlie to seeke for such thinges as they stand in neede of, and haue abilitie to do the same: Some can goe: others can swimme: others can flie: to be short, each one of them is able without anie instructor to seeke for such thinges, as it hath need of: onely man knoweth nothing, neither is he able to doe anie thinge, but must of necessitie be caried in other folkes armes. How longe time is it before he can learne to goe? And yet he must beginne to crawelle vpon all fowre, before he can goe vpon two. How longe tyme is it before he can speake so muche as one worde? And not onely before he can speake, but also before he can tell how to put meate into his owne mowth, vnles some others doe helpe him? One thinge onely I must confesse he can doe of him selfe, that is, he can crie, and weepe. This is the first thing he doethe, and this is the thinge onely he can doe without anie teacher. And although he can also laughe of him selfe, yet can he not do it, before he be fowrtie daies olde, notwithstanding that he is euer more weeping from the first hower of his comminge into this worlde. Whereby thou mayest vnderstande, how farre more prompt, and readie

*A man
weepeth
so soone as
he is born
into this
world but
he
ghe
vnt
four
daye
ter
byrt*

EE

our nature is to pewlinge, and weeping, than to ioye, and mirth. O mere follye, and madnes of men, (saith a Wise man) who of so poore, naked, and base beginninge, do perswade themselves, that they are borne to be prowde!

Of the bodie of mā.

Now as concerninge the verie bodie of man, (whereof men esteime them selues so muche, and take suche a vaine conceite) I woulde thou shouldest consider with indifferent eies, what our bodies are in verie deede, how gaye and beawifull soeuer they appeare to our outwarde sighte. Tell me (I praie thee) what other thinge is the body of a man, but onely a corrupt and teynted vessell, which incontinentlie sowreth, and corrupteth whatsoeuer lycour is powred into it: What other thinge is a mans bodie, but onely a filthie donghill, couered ouer with snowe, which outwardlie appeareth white, and within is full of filth, and vncleannes? What muckhil is so filthie? What sincke auoideth out of it such filthie geare through all his channells, as a mans bodie doth by seuerall meanes, and waies? The trees, the hearbes, yea and certaine liuinge beastes also do yeelde out of them verie sweete & pleasaunte sauours: but man yeeldeth, & auoydeth from him, such lothsome, and fowle stynckinge stufte, as he seemeth to rewele none other thing, but onely a fountaine of all stutishnes, and filthines.

It is written of a great wise philosopher

called

Plotinus.

called Plotinus, that he was ashamed of the condition, & basenes of his bodie, inso much as he was verie vnwilling to heare anie talke of his lignage, and pedegree: neither coule he euer be induced with anie perswasions to giue his consent that anie man shoulde puttraite him out in picture: sayeing, that it was sufficient, that he him selfe caried with him all the daies of his lyfe a thinge so filthie and so vnworthie of the noblenes of his soule, although he were not bownde to leaue behinde him a perpetuall remembrance of his owne dishonour.

It is written also of the holie Abbot Isidorus, that vpon a time whilest he was at meate he was not able to refraine from weeping, and beinge demaunded why he wepte, he answered: I weepe, because I am ashamed to be here feedinge vpon the corruptible meate of beastes: whereas I was created to be in the companie of Angels, & to feed vpon heauenly foode with them.

Isidorus.

OF THE MISERIES AND
conditions of this lyfe: and first of the
shortnes of the same.

§. II.

AFTER this, consider the great and manifolde miseries of mans lyfe, and especially these seuen: to witt: Howe shorte this lyfe is: How vncertain: How fraile: How incōstāt:

How deceitfull: and finally, how miserable it is. This done thinke vpon the ende thereof, which is deathe.

*Of the
shortenes
of our life.
Iob. 3. 14.*

Consider then first of the shortnes of our lyfe, which thinge the holie man Iob considered, when he saied: O Lorde *the daies of man are verie shorte, and thou knowest the number of the monethes, that he hath to liue.* We see at this daie, what a great matter it is for one to liue three score and tenne, or foure score yeares, and this is commonly the ordinarie rate of mans lyfe: Inſomuch as when they liue ſo longe, they accompt them ſelues not to be euill delt withall. As the Prophet ſignifieth, when he ſaith: *The daies of man are at the vitermoſt but threescore and tenne yeares: and if the ſtrongest do reach to fourescore, all that ſolloweth is but labour, and greiſſe.*

Pſal. 89.

*The tyme
of infan-
cie.*

Now if thou wilt deuyde this accompte into partes, and not reckon it thus in a groſſe ſomme, it ſeemeth vnto me, that thou canſt not well reckon the tyme of our infancie for anie part of our lyfe: & much leſſe the time, that is conſumed in ſleepe. Becauſe the lyfe of infancie when we are not as yet come to the vſe of reaſon (which onely ſheweth vs to be men) can not well be called the lyfe of men, but rather the lyfe of beaſtes, euen as it were the lyfe of a yonge goate, that goeth here and there ſkippinge, and leaping: eſpecially becauſe we ſee that in all that age, there is nothinge either learned, or done, that maie well beſeeme the dignitie of a

man.

man. Now as touching the time that is ſpent in ſleepe, I ſee not how it maye be called the time of lyfe, ſeing the principall parte of our life is to haue the vſe of our ſenſes, and reaſon, which as then both the one and the other are ſuſpended in vs, and as it were deade.

*The tyme
conſumed
in ſleepe.*

And therefore a certayne Philoſopher ſaied, that in the halfe of a mans lyfe there is no difference betwene the happie man, and unhappie: forſomuch as duringe the tyme of ſleepe all men are equall, becauſe they be then as it were dead. It is cleare, that if a kinge ſhoulde be detained as a priſoner for the ſpace of one or two yeares, we can not ſaie (and ſaie trulie) that he raigned duringe that time, ſeing he enioyed not the kingdome, nor gouerned the ſame lyke a kinge. How then can it be ſaied, that a man liueth whiles he ſleepeth, ſeing duringe that time the Seignorie and vſe of his reaſon, yea and of his ſenſes alſo, by which he liueth, ſtande as it were in ſuſpenſe? For this cauſe a certain Poet termed ſleepe the coſin germaine of death, and another called it the brother of deathe, for the likenes and reſemblance, which he perceaued to be betwene the one, and the other. Now then if ſo great a parte of our lyfe be ſpent in ſleepe, what a great part is that wherein it cannot be ſayed that we doe liue at all. And if it be the common cuſtome of men to ſleepe the thirde parte of the daie, and night,

*The thirde
parte of
our lyfe is
consumed
in sleepe.*

which is eight whole howres, (although there be a great sorte, that doe not content them selues therewith) it followeth by this accompte, that the thirde parte of our lyfe is consumed in sleepe, and so consequently, that duringe that time we doe not liue. So that hereby thou mayst perceaue, what a great parte of our short lyfe is spent in sleepe euerie daie. This accompte therefore beinge thus made, (which vndoubtedly is a very true accompt) how much is that, that remaineth of a mans verie lyfe in deece, euen of suche I meane, as liue longest?

Certainlie that philosopher had verie great reason to doe as he did, who beinge demaunded what he thought of the lyfe of a man, tourned him selfe about before them that made the demaunde, and sodainly departed out of their sight. Geuinge them thereby to vnderstand, that our lyfe is no more, but onely a tourne about, and of short continuance. Our lyfe is no more, but as it were the shotinge of a sterre, that passeth at a tryce, and flasheth quickly awaie, and within a litle while after, euen that verie signe that was left behinde, vanisheth out of sight also. For within verie fewe daies after a man is departed out of this lyfe, the verie remembrance of him dieth with his lyfe, be the personage neuer so great, or honorable. To conclude, this lyfe seemed so shorte to manie of the auncient wisemen, that one of them termed it a dreame: and

an other

an other not contented therewith, called it the dreame of a shadowe, seeming to him that it was ouermuch to calle it the dreame of a true thing in deed, being as he thought it none other than a dreame of a vaine and friuolous thinge.

Againe, if we compare this smalle remanent of the lyfe that we here liue, with the life to come, howe muche lesse will it yet appeare? Ecclesiasticus saith verie well: *If the number of a mans dayes be an hundred yeares, it is muche.* Now what is all this (being compared with the lyfe euerlastinge) but as it were a droppe of water compared with all the whole Sea? And the reason hereof is euident. For if a sterre (which is farre greater than all the whole earthe) beinge compared with the rest of heauen, seemeth so smalle a thinge, how smalle shall this present lyfe (which is so shorte) seeme to be, being compared with the lyfe to come, that shall neuer haue ende? And if (as the astronomers affirme) all the whole earthe in comparison of heauen be but as it were a litle pinnes point, because the inestimable greatnes of the heauens causeth it to seeme so smalle a thinge, what shall this litle puffe of our short lyfe seeme to be, if it be compared with lyfe euerlastinge, which is infinite? Vndoubtedly it will seeme nothinge at all. For if a thousande yeares in the sighte of almightie God, be no more but as it were yesterdaie, which is now past, and gone,

*To compare this
smalle remanente
of our lyfe
with the
lyfe euerlastinge
that is to
come.
Ecclesi. 18.*

what shall the lyfe of one hundred yeares seeme to be in his sight, but onely a verie nothinge?

Sap. 5.

And thus it seemeth vnto the damned persones, when they make comparison betwene this life, which they haue left behinde them, with the eternitie of the tormentes, which they shall suffer for euermore. As they themselues doe confesse in the booke of wisdom in theyse woordes: *What hath our pride auayled vs, and the pompe of our riches? All these things are past awaie, as it were a shadowe that flieth, and as one that rideth swyftlie in post, or as the shippe that passeth by the waters, and leaueth no signe where it hath gone, or as an arrowe shotte at a certaine marke, which so sone as the aier hath once opened, and made him his waie, forthwith it closeth vp againe, and it is not known which waie it went.* Euen so it fareth with vs. For at that verie instant when we are borne, we beginne to decaie, and we leaue no memorie or signe of vertue behinde vs. Consider then how shorte all the time of this transitorie lyfe shal seeme there to all those miserable damned wretches, seinge they doe playnelie confesse, that they liued not at all, but that so sone as they were borne, forthwith they beganne to fade and vanishe awaie. Now if this be so, what greater follie, or madnes, can be imagined, than that a man for the enioyinge of this shorte dreame of so vaine pleasures, and delightes, shoulde goe to suffer euerlasting

damnation

damnation and tormentes in hell fier for euer, and euer. Furthermore, if the time and space of this lyfe be so shorte, and the lyfe to come so longe, to witt, euerlastinge, what a mere follie is it, to take so great labour and paines to prouide so manie things for this lyfe beinge so shorte, and not to make anie prouision at all for the lyfe to come, which is so longe, that it shall neuer haue ende? What a fonde parte were it for a man that mynded to liue in Spayne, to spende, and consume all he hath in byenge rootes, and buildinge howses in the Indees, and to make no prouision for the countrie, whereunto he goethe to dwell, and make his abode? Now how much more foolishhe and madde are they, that spende all their goodes, and substance, in makinge prouision for this present lyfe, where they shall liue so shorte a time, and make no prouision at all for the euerlastinge lyfe to come, where they must dwell, and make their abode for euermore? Especially considering that they haue so good meanes for their prouision there, by transportinge all their goodes thither by the handes of the poore. As the Wiseman witnesseth, sayeing: *Throwe thy bread vpon the runninge waters, for a longe time after shalt thou finde it againe.*

It is a mere follie to make so great prouision for this short lyfe, and not to prouide for the euerlastinge lyfe to come.

Ecc. 5.

OF THE VNCERTAINETIE OF OUR LYFE.

§. III.

BV though our lyfe endure but a shorte space, yet if this shorte space were so certaine, that we might be assured thereof, (as king Ezechias was, vnto whom almightie God graunted fyftiene yeares of lyfe) our miserie were the more tollerable. But trulie it is not so. For as our lyfe is verie short, euen so that verie tyme we haue to liue (how short or longe so euer it be) is also vncertain, and doubtful. For as the Wise man saith: Man knoweth not the daie of his ende, but lyke as fishes when they thinke them selues in most safetie are taken with the hooke, and as birdes are cawghte in a snare, when they thinke nothinge lesse: euen so death assaulteth men in an euill season, when they thinke least of it. Trulie that is a verie wise and approued sentence, which is commonlie saied. *That there is nothinge more certaine than death, nor nothinge more vncertain than the houre of death.* And therefore a certaine philosopher compared the liues of men to the belles, or bubbles, that are made in water pittes, when it raineth: of the which, some doe vanishe awaie sodenlie euen at their verie risinge, others doe endure a litle

longer

Esay. 38.

Eccles. 9.

A notable sentence.

longer, and out of hande are decaied, others also doe continewe somewhat more, and others lesse. So that although they doe all endure but onely some litle time, yet in that littell there is great varietie.

Wherefore if the ende of our lyfe be so vncertaine: If it be so vncertain also when the dreadfull houre of our accompt shall come: why doe we liue with such loosenes, and negligence? Why doe we not consider those wordes of our Sauour, where he sayeth vnto vs: *Watche, because ye knowe not when the sonne of man will come?* O that men woulde waighe the force of this reason! Because ye know not the howre (sayeth our Sauour) watche ye, and be alwaies in a readines. As if he had sayed in expresse wordes: because ye knowe not the howre, watche euerie howre: because ye knowe not the moneth, watche euerie moneth: and because yee knowe not the yeare, be still in a readines euerie yeare. For although ye know not certainly what yeare he wil calle you, yet most certaine it is, that a yeare shall come in which vndowtedlie he will calle you.

But that the force of this reason maie the better be perceaued, let vs put an example. Tell me, if there were set before thee vpon a table thirtie or fourtie seuerall dishes of meat, and thou haddest a certaine warninge geuen thee by some of thy friendes, that in one of them there were poison, durst thou geue the aduenture to eate of anie

Math. 24.
Marc. 13.
Luc. 12.

one of them, although thou were verie much a hungered? Vndowtedlie thou wouldest not doe it. For the verie feare thou wouldest haue, least thou mightest peradventure light vpon that dish that were poysoned, woulde make thee to abstaine from all the rest. Now let vs examin how manie yeares at the vttermost thou mayst hope yet to liue. Thou wilt saie peradventure (after thou hast well considered the matter) that thou mayest liue thirtie or fourtie yeares. Well then if it be certaine, that in one of these yeares thou art assured to die, & thou knowest not in which of them, why art thou not then affraid in euerie one of them, seinge thou art well assured, that in one of them thy lyfe shalbe taken frō thee? Thou wouldest not be so hardie, as to put thy hande into anie one of the foresaied fourtie dishes, although thou were in a verie sore hunger, because thou knowest that in one of them there is death present. And wilt thou not also be affraide of euerie one of these fourtie yeares, seinge thou art so wel assured, that thou shalt die in one of these yeares? What answere canst thou make to this reason?

Harken yet to an other reason, which is of no lesse efficacie than the other. Tell me, why doe men keepe a continuall watche in a Castel that standeth in the frontiers vpon the enemies? Is it for anie other cause, but onely for that they knowe not when

the

the enemies will come to assaulte it? Assuredlie for none other. So that because they knowe not certainly at what time the enemies wil come, therefore do they continuallie watche it at all tymes. For if they knewe certainlie the time of their comminge, they might be careles in the meane while, and reserve the diligence of their watche vntill that verie time. Now I require thee hartely for the loue of God, to be an indifferent Iudge towching that, which I shall saye vnto thee. Let vs consider well this poynte. If thou watche thy Castle euerie nighte, because thou art vncertain when thy enemy will come, whether to daie, or to morrowe, this yeare, or the next: why dost thou not then keepe a continuall watche ouer thy soule, seinge thou knowest not what howre death shall come to geue the assault vpon thee? The verie same vncertainie that is in the Castle, is in thy soule also: yea this vncertainie is farre more, and the matter is without all comparifon of greater importance. Now what iudgement haue they that are alwaies so vigilāt in watching their castle, and so careles alwayes abowt their soules: so careles I saie, as to sleepe alwaies, without euer thinkinge vpon them? What thinge can be more against reason? Consider that thy soule is of greater valewe, than all the castels and kingdoms in the worlde. Yea if thou consider the price wherewith it was bought, thou mayest well iudge that it is of

Matth. 25.

more valewe than all the angels in heauen. Consider also that thou hast greater enemies, that doe endeavour continnallie both daie and night to assault it. Consider that thou canst by no meanes vnderstand the daie, or the houre of thy assault. Consider that the whole substance of the saluation or damnation of thy soule consisteth in this point, whether thou be taken provided or vnprovided at that dreedefull howre. For so much as accordinge to the parable of the Gospell, the virgins which were founde readie, and prepared, entered into the marriage with the bridegrome, & such as were founde vnprovided taried without. To conclude therefore, what cause is there why thou shouldest not alwaies watche as well ouer thy soule, as ouer thy castell, seinge the vncertainie is greater, the danger greater, the cause greater, and al the rest without anie comparison farre greater, and of more importance?

OF THE FRAILTIE OF
OVR LYFE.

§. IIII.

HOWBEIT our lyfe is not only vncertaine, but also verie fraile, & bricke. For I praie thee, what glasse is so bricke, & so subiecte to knockes, & breakinge, as the lyfe of man?

Some

Some times the verie aier, and heat of the sonne (if it be vehement) is able to spoyle vs of our lyfe. But what speake I of the sonne? seinge the verie eies, yea the onely lookinge of some persone is able some times to bereue a creature of his lyfe. It shal not neede to drawe anie sworde, or to vse anie kinde of armour or munition for the matter, seinge the only looke of some one man is able to bereue an other of his lyfe. Consider now what a sure castell this is, wherein the treasure of our lyfe is kept, seing the onelie beholdinge of it a farre of, is able to batter it cleane downe to the ground.

But this were not so much to be wodered at in the age of infancie, when the buildinge is as yet but newe, and griene: but the greater wonder is, that after that the worke is settled, and hath continued manie yeares together, there happeneth some accident of no greater importance than these beforenamed that is able vtterlie to ouerthrowe it. If thou enquire and aske whereof dyed this man, or whereof died that man, they will answer thee, that he died by drinkinge a cuppe of colde drinke in a sweat: or by surfetinge at a supper: or of some other great pleasure, or greife: and sometimes they can geue no cause at all, but that he went to his bed safte, and sounde, and the next daie in the morninge was founde starke dead at his wiues syde. Is there any glasse or earthe vessel in the world more bricke, or subiecte to

breakynge than this? And certainlie it is not to be wondered at, that man is so bricke, consideringe that he is also made of earth: but it is rather to be wondered at, that beinge of such stuffe, and makinge as he is, he is able to endure so longe a time as he doth. Why is a clocke so oftentimes disordered, and out of frame. The reason is, because it hath so manie wheelles, and pointes, and is so full of artificiall worke, that although it be made of yron, yet euerie litle thinge is able to distemper it. Now how much more tender is the artificiall composition of our bodies, & how much more fraile is the matter of our fleashe, than is the yron whereof a clocke is made? Wherefore if the artificiall composition of our bodies be more tender, and the matter more fraile, why shoulde we wonder, if some one pointe amonge so manie wheelles haue some impediment, by reason of which defect it stoppeth, and endeth the course of our lyfe? Trewlye, we haue rather good cause to meruaile, not why men doe so quickly ende their liues, but how they endure so longe, the woorkmanshipe of their bodies beinge so tender, and the matter and stuffe whereof they be compounded so fraile, & weake.

This is that miserable frailtie, which the Prophet Esaie signifieth in these wordes. Almighty God saied vnto his prophet: Crie: the Prophet answered: what shall I saie? God saied

vnto

vnto him: All fleashe is haie, & all the glorie thereof is like vnto the flower of the feild. The haie wythe-
reth, the flowre fadeth away, but the worde of God continueth for euer. Vpon whiche wordes S Ambrose saith thus. Trulie it is euen so: for the glorie of man flourisheth in the fleshe like vnto haie, which although it seeme to be great, it is in verie dede but litle like an hearbe: it buddeth like a floure, and fadeth like haie. So that it hath no more but a certain flourishinge in apparance, and no firmenes nor stabilitie in the fruite. For what firmenes can there be in the matter of fleashe, or what good thinges of anie longe continuance are to be founde in so weake a subiect? To daye thou mayest see a yonge striplinge in the most flourishinge time of his age, with great strength, lustie, and iettinge vp and downe in the streetes in great brauerie, with a iolye loslie countenance: & if it so fall out that this verie next night he be taken with some disease, thou shalt see him the next daie with a face so farre altered, and chaunged, that whereas before he seemed verie amiable, and beautifull, he wil now seeme euill fauored, miserable, and verie lothsome to beholde. Now what shall I saie of the other accidentes, and alterations of our bodies? Some are sore broken with troubles, and aduersities: others are weakened with pouertie: others are tormented for want of good digestion: others are distempered with drinking of wines: others waxe

S. Ambr.

G 3

feeble with age: others become tender, and ouer delicate, by much cherishinge them selues: and others marre their complexion with vsinge ryotous behaitour. Now then accordinge to this reckeninge, is it not true (trow ye) that our fleashe withereth like haie, and that the floure thereof fadeth, and vanisheth awaie?

what
greate al-
teration
& incon-
stancie is
in this
worlde.

Thou shalt see some other, who beinge descended of a verie honorable parentage, of noble blood, & of a verie aunciet howse, and familie, wel friended, & hauinge good store of kinred both by father, and mother, and keepinge a great howse, and attended vpon with a great trayne of his tennantes and seruantes, and rulyng the whole counrey where he liueth, and who there but he? yet neuerthelesse if a contrarie winde of fortune blowe but a litle against him, then is he forthwith vterlie forsaken of his friendes, euill entreated of his equales, and litle regarded of all the worlde: inso-much as then verie fewe or none will put of a cappe vnto him, but rather contemne him. Thou shalt see an other that hath now abundance of landes, and riches, and is generallie reported in all mens mowthes to be a very courteous, liberall, & bountifull man, and of great renowme, and estimation, exalted to honorable dignities, and promotions, and preferred so highe in the common wealth that he is a greate ruler, and mightie gouernour, and hath the commendation of

all

all persones to be a verie wise, happie, and fortunat man: thou shalt see (I saie) the times so to alter, and chaunge, that euen this man who is now so highelie exalted to great dignities, and offices, and magnified in the mowthes of all men, shalbe vterlie disgraced, and thrust into that verie prison, where he himselve had heretofore imprisoned manie others, and shall there ende his lyfe in verie great infamie, miserie, and wretchednes. Vnto how manie also doth it happen to be wayted vpon, and brought home to their howses this daie with a number of golden chaynes, foote clothes, and seruinge men, and with all the gaye pompe in the worlde, and the verie nexte night followynge, either by means of treason of some one of his owne howsholde, or familiar acquaintance, or by other misfortune, to haue all this glorious pompe obscured: yea it maie so falle out, that euē a litle stitche comminge in his syde, maye marre the fashon of all this gaie ruffelinge shewe, wherein he tooke so great delighte. O how deceitfull are the hopes of men (saie the Tully,) how fraile is fortune, how vaine are all our contentions, and strifes, which manie times doe breake, and falle in the middle waie, & are ouerwhelmed, and drowned in saylinge, before they can come to the sight of the hauē! Now what a fonde madnes is this in the children of Adā, vpon so weake foundations to buylde such highe castles, and towers? They consider not,

G 2

that they buyld vpon sande, and that euen whē the weather is most fayre a wynde wil come, and blowe downe all that standeth not vpon a sownde & stronge foundation. O what sonde accomptes doe men make often times, because they will not tourne their eies, and looke into their owne consciences, and take first an accompt of them selues!

And if this be thought so great a blindness, how much greater is the blindness of those wicked persones, that are so bolde, as to continew manie yeares in synne, knowing that there is no greater distance betwene them and hell gates, but onely this bricke and short lyfe! Let vs imagin now, that there were a man hanginge by a smale twyned threede, and that there were directlie vnder him a verie great deepe well, and he hanginge in such wise ouer it, that when the threede happened to breake he shoulde forthwith falle into it. In what euill case (trowe yee) woulde this man thinke himselfe to be? O how fearfull, and how fore troubled woulde he be! How willinglie woulde he offer all the substance he hath, to be deliuered of that daunger! Now thou miserable wretche that darest continewe so manie dayes and yeares in synne, contrarie to the lawes of almightie God, why doest thou not consider, that thou hangest in the like daunger? Doest thou not plainlie see before thy face, that whēsoeuer the threed

There is
no more
distauce
betweene
vnrpen-
sinners &
hell fier,
but onely
this
bricke &
short
lyfe.

of this

of this fraile, and short lyfe breaketh in sonder, thou art assured (continueinge still in this thy wicked & sinful lyfe) to fall into the deepe bottomles pitt of hell fier? How canst thou then slepe? How cast thou playe? How cast thou lawghe, or be in anie quiet? How is it, that thou art so stone blynde, as not to see such a terrible perill and daunger as hell, and euerlastinge damnation, to be readie euerie houre to falle vpon thee?

OF THE MVTABIL- TIE OF THIS LYFE.

§. V.



VRE lyfe hath yet an other defect, which is to be mutable, & neuer to continewe in one staie: accordinge as the holie man Iob assumeth in a pittiefull discourse which he maketh of the miseries of mā's lyfe in these wordes. *A man borne of a woman, liuinge but a smalle time, is replenished with manie miseries, he commeth forth like a floure, and withereth awaie out of hande: his daies passe awaie like a shadowe, and he neuer continueth in one state.* But now to passe ouer all other miseries, what thinge is there in the worlde more fickle and mutable than man? They saie that the Cameleon chaungeth him selfe in one

Iob. 14.

G 3

houre into manie and diuers colours: And the Sea called Euripus is by reason of his often chaunges accompted very infamous: The Moone hath likewise for euerie daie a peculiar forme, and shape: But what is all this in comparison of the alterations of man? What protheus was euer chaunged into so many formes, as man changereth euerie houre? Some times he is sicke, some times whole: Some times contented, some times discontented: Some times sorowfull, some times merie: Some times in good hope, some times in despaire: Some times suspicious, some times secure: Some times pleased, some times angrie: Some times he will, and some times he wil not: yea manie times he knoweth not himselfe what he woulde have. To be short, he altereth, and chaungereth himselfe so often, as there be accidentes happeninge vnto him euerie houre. For all such accidentes doe tolle and turmoyle him, each one in his feuerall kinde. That which is past is ircksome vnto him: that which is present troubleth, and molesteth him: and that which is to come vexeth, and disquieteth him. If he haue neither landes, nor goodes, he liueth in trauell. If he haue them, he liueth in pride: And if he lose them, he liueth in great griefe, and sorrowe. Now what Moone, or Sea, is subiect to so manie chaunges, and alterations, as the lyfe of man? The Sea chaungereth not but when the windes tourne contrarie vnto it. But in

mans

mans lyfe whether it be wyndie, or calme weather, there be euermore diuers alterations and stormes.

Now what shall I saye of the continuall mouinge and wastinge of our life? What minute of an houre passeth, but that we goe one steppe forward towards our deathe? What other thinge trowest thou is the mouinge of the heauens, but as it were a verie swifte wheele, which is continually spyninge, and windinge vp our lyfe? For like as a role of wolles is sponne vpon a wheele, of the which at euerie tourninge about some parte is wounde vp, at the first tourne a litle, at the seconde tourne a litle more, and so forth at euerie tourne, vntil al be ended: so doeth the wheele of the heauens continuallie spyne, and wynde vp our lyfe, in that at euerie tourninge that it maketh, a peice of our lyfe is sponne, and wounde vp. And therefore holic Iob saied: *That his daies were more swift, than one that rydeth in post.* For he that rideth in post, though his message require neuer so much haste, yet some times necessitie causeth him to staie. But our lyfe neuer staieth, neither wil it geue vs so much libertie, as the space of one houre of rest.

Whereunto S. Ierome agrieth verie well, sayeing: Whatsoeuer I goe about, whatsoeuer I write, whatsoeuer I reade ouer againe, & correct, each thinge taketh awaie from me some parte of my lyfe. And loke how manie pointes & minumes the notarie

Of the continuall mouinge & wastinge of our lyfe.

Iob, 9.

S. I. Ierome

writeth, so manie are the losses & decreasings of my lyfe. Insomuche that like as they that faile in a shippe, whether they stande, or sit, are alwaies goeing, and sailing, and do euer approche nearer and nearer to the ende of their nauigation: euen so in this lyfe al the time that we liue, we walke, and faile still forwardes, approching nearer, & nearer, to the common hauen, and ende of our nauigation, which is deathe.

Our lyfe is a continuall walkinge towards deathe, & the howe of our deathe is the dreadfull howe of our iudgement.

Now then if our lyfe be nothinge els but a continuall walkinge towards deathe: If the houre of death be also the dreadfull houre of our iudgement: What other thing is oure whole lyfe, but onely a continuall walkyng towards the tribunall seate of almightie God, and an approching euerie hower nearer & nearer vnto his iudgement. Now what greater madnes maye there be, than for vs goeyng actually to be iudged, to offende him (as we be goeyng in the waye thitherwardes) that must geue sentence vpon vs: and so by our offences prouoke his anger more and more against vs? Open thine eies therefore (ô thou miserable man,) and consider the waie that thou takest: thinke well with thy selfe whether thou arte goeyng: and be ashamed, or at least take compassion of thy selfe, and consider how euill this that thou doest, agreeth with that which thou goest to doe.

OF THE DECEIT- fulness of our lyfe.

§. VI.

Cowld we well beare with all these miseries of our lyfe, if it had not yet an other miserie (in my iudgement) farre greater and worse than all theise: which is, that it is deceitfull, & seemeth in apparence otherwise, than it is in verie deede. For as it is true, that is commonly sayed: that *Fayned holines is a double iniquitie*: euen so is it also most certainly true: that *Deceitful felicitie is a double miserie*. For if this lyfe would shewe it selfe plainlie as it is in deede, and make no lye at all vnto vs, vndoutedlye we would neither lose our selues for it, nor yet trust vnto it, but would alwaies liue readie prepared against it. But verely it is so full of hypocrisie, and deceit, that whereas it is indeede filthie, it is neuerthelesse solde vnto vs for beautiful, & beinge shorte, it seemeth vnto vs verie longe, and whereas it chaungeth it selfe euerie houre, it beareth a countenance as though it continued alwaies firme and stable in one same state. Dost thou perceauce (saith S. Ierome) when thou wast made an infant? Canst thou tell when thou wast made a striplinge? or when thou camest to mā's state? or when thou beganest

S.

to waxe an olde man? Good Lorde, what a wonder is this, that euerie daie we die, and euerie daie we alter, & chaunge, and yet for all this we perswade our selues verie fondlie that we shall liue here for euermore.

Vpon this affiance were those prowde, & sumptuous buildinges of the Magarences built, of who a certaine Philosopher saith, that they builded as though they shoulde liue for euer, and they liued as though they shoulde dye the next daye. Whereof (I praie you) commeth so great forgetfulnes of almightie God: so great couetousnes: so great vanitie: so great carefulnes in purchasinge, and heaping together of landes, & riches: and so great negligence in preparinge our selues to die: but that we beleue and perswade our selues that our life shalbe verie longe, and endure a great time? This false imagination maketh vs to beleue, that we haue time enough for all thinges: for the worlde, for pleasures, for vanities, for vices, and for many other vaine, and curious exercises: and that yet after all this, we shal haue time enough also before we dye, to prouyde our accompte readie, and to make our attonement with almightie God. Insomuch that like as we make our accompt of a piece of clothe when it lieth vpon a table before vs, appointinge one piece for one purpose, and an other piece for an other: euen so do we make an accōpt of our liues, as though we our selues had the seignorie and gouer-

nement

The cause why manie be so carefull to provide for this worlde, & so careless and negligent to prepare themselves to dye.

nement of times, and might dispose both of them, and of our lyfe, at our owne wil, and pleasure. This fonde deceit groweth of a secret perswasion, and affiance, that euerie man hath within himselfe, grownded not vpon anie reason, or true foundation, but onely vpon selfe loue. The which as it hateth and abhorreth death exceedinglie, so will it in no case haue any remembrance of it, nor be perswaded that it will come so soone to his howse as to other mens. And all this is for auoydinge of the great paine, and grieve, which he woulde conceaue if he beleued it in verie deede. And hereof it cometh, that he is easilie induced to beleue, that other folke shall die within a short space. For as he is not greatly in loue with them, so is not the knowledge of that trueth so sower, and vnlikinge vnto him, but that he can easilie beleue it. But as towchinge himselfe, he maketh an other maner of accompt. For as he loueth himselfe exceedingly, so is he verie lothe to beleue a thinge, that maie be occasion of so greate paine, and grieve vnto him, as the same woulde be. But we see daylie that such persons are often times fowly deceyued, & that their dreames tourne cleane contrarie to their fonde imaginations. For as towchinge others, of whose liues they had smalle hope that they shoulde haue anie longe continuance, they liue a longer time, than they euer imagined they coulde haue done: And

we can easilie be perswaded, that others will dye within a short time but we will not beleue but that we our selues shall liue verie longe.

Hh 2

they themselues that thought to liue, and remaine here a longe while, doe leade the daunce, & depart ow't of this worlde before them. So that it fareth with them, as with younge sea men, that beginne to saile in the Sea, who whē they come forth of the haueu mowth, it seemeth vnto the, that the lande and howses doe depart awaie from them, (which is nothinge so,) but contrariwise, it is they themselues that moue, and depart awaie, and the lande remaineth still in his olde place.

OF THE MISERIES of mans lyfe.

§ VII.

ALTHOUGH our lyfe be subiect to all these miseries before rehearsed, yet if that little time of lyfe were wholie lyfe indeede, it were somewhat: but the greatest miserie of all is, that the lyfe which a man hath to liue, whether it be shorte, or longe, is altogether subiect to such a nōber of miseries and calamities, both of bodie, and minde, as it maie more trulie be reamed dearthe, than lyfe.

Wherefore accordinge as a Poet saied verie well: *Not to liue, but to passe the lyfe well, is lyfe.* So that although this lyfe be verie

sparynge

sparynge and shorte in all other thinges: yet in troubles & miseries it is verie plentiful, & longe. Vndoubtedlye our life is but shorte, respectinge the lyfe it selfe: and if we respect the time of enioyenge it, it is yet much shorter: but if we consider, how insufficient it is towards the obteyninge of wisdome, it is litle, or nothinge at all. Howbeit although it be indeede verie shorte for all good thinges: yet in one thinge onely I fynde it longe, that is, in bearynge of paine, & miserie. O daungerous straite, in which the lesse time thou hast to passe the more perill & daunger thou hast in the passage! Certainlie if we had eies to consider our selues, and to see our owne case, we shoulde alwaies goe weeping, and lamentinge our owne state, as men condemned by the iust iudgement of almightie God to suffer such great miseries. But that our miserie might be yet more increased on euerie side, this miserie is added to all the rest, that beinge in miserable case, we liue like men in a frensie, & doe neither feelee nor vnderstande our owne miserie, and wretchednes. Those two Philosophers Heraclitus, and Democritus, although they were infidels perceyued the same better than we doe, of whom it is reported, that the one passed his lyfe alwayes weeping, and the other alwaies laughinge: forsomuch as they sawe clearly, that all our lyfe was nothinge els, but mere vanitie, and miserie.

*Heraclitus
Democri-
tus.*

Hh ;

If thou dowte of this, tel me (I praie thee) what meane all these carkes, and cares, wherein men doe liue? What a number of infinite sorowes, griefes, anguishes, feares, passions, suspitions, malices, with other the like tribulations, and afflictions, is the soule of man subiect vnto? Vnto all which passions man is so prone, that manie times he is in a passion without anie cause: and feareth, where there is no cause at all to feare: and when there is no other man to vexe and tormente him outwardlie, he then vexeth, and tormenteth himselfe inwardly: as holie Iob confessed in these wordes, when he saide: *Why hast thou (o Lorde) sett me against thee? I am become irksome, and burdensome euen to myne owne selfe.*

Iob. 7.

Of the externall
miseries
of the bodie,

Psal. 89.

Now as towching the externall miseries of the bodie, who is able to number them? How great labour and paine must we take to gaine a piece of bread, whereby to sustein our liues? The verie birdes & brute beastes are fed without anie occupation, labour, or paine: but man is constrained to sweate daye, and night, and to turnioyle both by Sea, and lande, to get his liuinge. This is that miserie, whiche the Prophet lamented, when he saide: *The daies of our lyfe consume awaie like the spyders webbe.* For like as the spyder laboureth daye, and night, in spyninge of her webbe, wastinge euen her owne bowels, and consuminge her selfe to bringe it to an ende, and all this longe and costly

trauell

trauell is ordeyned to none other purpose, but onely to make a fine and tender nett, to catche flies withall: euen so the feely miserable man doth nothinge els, but labour, and toile, night, and daie, both with bodie, and minde: and all this his trauell serueth to none other ende, but onely to catche flies: I mean, to procure vayne and trifelinge thinges, and of very smalle valewe. And some times it falleth so out, that after much traualinge vp, and downe, & great labour and paines taken therein, when the webbe is fully finished, and browght to an ende, there commeth sodainly a blusteringe blast of winde, that carieth awaie the webbe, and the owner withall: and so both the worke and the workman perish wholie together at one instant.

And yet were it so, that with al these paynfull trauels, and labours, our lyfe were safe, and secure, then our miserie shoulde not be so great as it is, but though our lyfe be secure from famine, and hunger: yet is it not from the plague, and pestilence, and from infinite other daungers, and diseases, that doe dailie and howrelie assault vs. Who is able to numbre how manie kindes and diuersities of diseases nature hath ordained for mans bodie? The bokes of the phisitions are full fraught with the declaration of diuers diseases, & remedies for the same. And yet we see, that their science increaseth

Our short
life is not
safe, and
secure, but
subiecte
vnto infinite
daungers,
and diseases.

Hh 4

euerie daie with the comminge of newe & straunge diseases, insomuche as the nūber of the diseases, whereof we haue presently experience, were vtterlye vnknown vnto the aunciēt phisitions, that were in times past. And yet emonge all these remedies scarcely shal ye find one that is pleasant, or delectable: yea, & there be manie of them that are more irkesome & painfull, than the verie sicknes, or diseases them selues. Insomuch as one great tormente can not be remedied, without an other greater than it.

And if there be anie complexions so happie, as that they haue not bene assaulted with these kindes of miseries, yet are they not secure and exempte from other calamities, and mischaunces, wherewithall we see those men to be dayly molested, that haue not bene much vexed with sicknes and diseases. How manie thousandes of men (trow yee) are drowned euerie daie in the Sea? How manie are deuoured in warres? How manie are endaungered by earthequakes? How manie with ouerflowinges of riuers, & great waters? How manie with fallinge downe of howses? How manie with the stinginge and strikinge of venomous beastes? How manie wofull women in trauaile of their children doe purchase full dearlie their childrens liues, with their owne painfull deathes?

Now althoughe it be so, that the brute beastes doe fight against vs, and althoughe

in

in a maner all thinges that were made to serue vs, be no lesse noysome than seruiceable vnto vs, (yea rather it seemeth that they all haue as it were conspired against vs:) yet for al this (I saye) there might be some remedie founde, if men woulde acorde and agree together emonge them selues, & were as conformable in peace, as they are in nature. But alas it is farre otherwise. For euen they them selues are in armes against them selues: and emonge all creatures in the worlde, there is none against whō man is more cruelly bent, than against the companion of his owne nature. How many kindes of engins, artillarie, munition, and weppōs haue men inuented to defende them selues, and to offende others? How manie are dailie spoiled of their liues by the cruell swordes of their enemies? How manie threatninges, robberies, iniuries, woundes, deathes, reproches, sclauanders, and emprisonmentes, doe men daily susteine by the malice, & crueltie of other men? We see that neither the lande, nor the sea, nor the highe waies, nor the cōmon streetes, are free from theiues, robbers, murderers, pirates, & enemies. The cruell anger and rage of the furyous man is at all times readie to be reuenged of his enemy: yea and he taketh greate pleasure in it. What meane so many kindes of weapons? Such diuersitie of artillarie? Such store of munition? Such abundance of gunpowder? So manie deuisors &

*Emonge
all creatu-
res man is
most cruell
against the
cōpanion
of his own
nature.*

*Iulius Ce-
sar.*

Tullye.

inuentors of newe kindes of stratagemes, and cruell practices of warre, but onely to multiplie, and increase on euerie side the miseries, and calamities of mankind? In somuch as when we are not molested with the aier, nor with the elementes, we are persecuted by the companions of our owne verie nature. It is written of one onely man called Iulius Cesar, (who emonge all the Emperors was most commended for clemencie,) that euen he alone with his armies slewe in diuers battells aboute a million, and a hundered thousand men. Consider nowe, howe manie more would he haue slaine, if he had bene cruell, seinge he slewe so manie beinge commended, and praised for a verie gentle, and mercifull prince?

Tullye also maketh mention of a notable Philosopher, who wrote a booke concerninge the deathes of men, wherein he rehearseth many occasions of mens deathes, that haue happened in the worlde: as by fluddes, plagues, pestilences, destructions of Cities, concourse of wylde beastes, which comming sodainly vpon some natiōs, haue vterlie slaine and deuowred them. And yet after al this he concludeth, that a farre greater number of men haue bene destroyed by men, than be all the other kindes of calamities, though they were all ioyned together. Now what thinge can be more ruthfull, and of greater greife and admiration than this? This is that politique and sociable

creature

creature, that is borne without nayles, without weapons, and without poyson, to liue in peace and concorde with other liuinge creatures: and yet he is full of hatred, crueltie, and desire of reuengement.

But now if we would make a discourse, and ronne throughout the miseries that are incident to all the ages, and states of this lyfe, we shoulde finde our selues to be yet in farre worse case. How full of ignorance is the time of our infancie? Howe light, and wanton are we, when we growe to be stripplines? Howe rashe, and headlonge be we in the time of our youth? Howe heauie, and vnweldie, when we waxe olde men? What els is an infant, but a brute beast in the forme of a man? What is a yonge boie, but as it were a wylde vntamed colte, and unbrydled? What is a heauie, & vnweldie olde man, but euen a sacke stuffed with greifes, and diseases? The greatest desire that men haue, is to liue vntill they be olde: at which age a man is in farre worse case, than in all his lyfe time before, and then he standeth in most neede, and hath least helpe, and succoure. For the olde man is forsaken of the world: He is forsaken of his owne kinsfolk, friends, and acquaintance: He is forsaken of his owne members, and senses: yea he forsaketh himselfe, in that the verie vse of reason forsaketh him. And he is onely accompanied with his paynfull aches, greifes, and diseases. For his companie and

*Of the mis-
eries inci-
dent vnto
all the
ages and
states of
this life.*

conuerſation is then verie irckſome and troubleſome vnto the whole howſe where he dwelleth. This is the marke forſooth wherevpon the eie of man is ſo earneſtly fixed: This is the happie ſtate, which al men doe ſo griedelie deſire: & hereunto tendeth the worldlie felicitie, and the ambition of longe lyfe.

There is litle contentation in the ſtates of men, and eche one deſireth to chaunge his ſtate with the ſtates of others.

As concerninge the ſtates of men we ſhoulde neuer make an ende, if we ſhoulde rehearſe the litle contentation that is to be founde in each of them, & the great deſire that euerie one hath to chaunge his owne ſtate, and conditiō, with the ſtate of others: thinkinge that he ſhoulde haue greater hartes eaſe in an other mans ſtate, than he hath in his owne. And thus doe men continually vexe, and turmoyle themſelues like vnto a ſicke man, that doth nothing els but tumble and toſſe in his bed from one ſide to an other, perſwadinge himſelfe that by meanes of theſe often chaunges & remo- uinges he ſhal finde more eaſe & reſt than he had before, and yet he findeth in verie deede that he is fowlie deceyued: For ſo much as the cauſe of his diſquietnes reſteth within him ſelfe, which is his owne greiſe, and diſeaſe.

To conclude, ſuch is the miſerable ſtate & condition of this lyfe, that the Wiſe man had good cauſe to ſaie: Great and heauie is the yoke, that the children of Adam carie on their neckes, euen from the daie

they

they come forth of their mothers wombe, vntil the daie of their burial, which is the common mother of all. And S. Barnarde was not affrayed to ſaie, that he thought this lyfe litle better than the lyfe of hell it ſelfe, were it not for the hope we maye here haue to atteyne vnto the kingdome of heauen.

And albeit all theſe miſeries doe come vnto vs as a punniſhement for ſynne: yet was it a verie mercifull and medicinable punniſhement. For the prouidence of almightie God did ſo ordaine it, meaninge thereby to withdrawe and ſeparate our hartes from the inordinate loue of this lyfe. The verie cauſe why he put ſo much bitter muſtarde vpon the breaſtes of this lyfe, was to weane vs from it. The cauſe why he ſuffered our lyfe to become ſo ſilthie, was that we ſhoulde not ſet oure loue vpon it. The cauſe why he woulde haue vs to be moleſted and vexed ſo often times in this lyfe, was that we might the more willinglie forſake it, and ſighe continuallie for the true lyfe, which is in the worlde to come. For if we be ſo vnwillinge to forſake this lyfe, beinge wholy ſo miſerable as it is: if we be now euer whympering, and whyninge for the fruites, & pleaſures of Egypt, what woulde we doe, if al our lyfe were ſweete, and pleaſant? And what woulde we doe, if it were wholie likinge and delitefull to our taſte, & appetite? Who woulde then (trowe yee)

S. Barnard

The miſeries of this lyfe are ordeyned as a punniſhment for ſynne, & to withdrawe our hartes from the inordinate loue of this lyfe.

Exod. 16.

Phillip. 1.

contemne it for Gods sake? Who would then exchange it for heauen? Who would then saie with S. Paule, I haue a desire to be loosed from this fleashe, and to be with Christ?

OF THE LAST MISERIE
OF MAN: WHICH IS DEATHE.

§. VIII.

AFTER al these miseries, succedeth the last, and of all others most terrible, which is death. This is that miserie, whereof a certaine Poët lamented, sayeing: The best daies of mortall men are those that passe first awaie, and then succedeth a number of sicknesses, and diseases, and with them heauie and dolefull age, and continuall trouble, and aboue al, the sharpenes of cruell deathe. This is the lodge and ende of mans lyfe, whereof holic Iob saied: *I knowe well o Lorde, that thou wilt deliuer me ouer to deathe, where there is a house prepared for all men liuinge.*

Iob. 30.

How manie the miseries are that be included in this miserie alone, I wil not take vpon me to declare at this present. Onely I will rehearse what a certaine holic father saith by waie of exclamation against death in this wise. O death, how bitter is the

remembrance

remembrance of thee? How quicklie and suddenly stealest thou vpon vs? How secrete are thy pathes, and waies? How doutfull is thy houre? And how vniuersall is thy seignorie, and dominion? The mightie can not escape thy handes: the wise can not hide them selues from thee: and the stronge lose their strengthe in thy presence. Thou accountest no man riche: forsomuch as no man is able to raũsome his lyfe of thee for money. Thou goest euerye where: thou searchest euerye where: & thou art euerye where. Thou witherest the hearbes: thou drinkest vp the windes: thou corruptest the aier: thou chaungest the ages: thou alterest the worlde: thou stickest not to sup vp the sea: all thinges doe increase, and diminish, but thou continuest alwaies at one staie. Thou art the hammer that alwaies striketh: thou art the sword that neuer blun-
teth: thou art the snare whereinto euerye one falleth: thou art the prison wherein euerye one entereth: thou art the sea wherein all doe perishe: thou art the paine that euerye one suffereth: and the tribute that euerye one payeth.

Iob. 13.

O cruel death, why hast thou not compassion of vs, but comcest stealinge sodelie vpon vs, to snarke vs awaie in our best times, and to interrupt our affaires when they are well begonne, & brought to a good forwardnes? Thou robbest frō vs in one houre, as much as we haue gained in manie yeares.

Thou cuttest of the succession of kinredes,
& families: Thou leauest kingdomes with-
out anie heires. Thou fillest the worlde with
wydowes, & orphanes: Thou breakest of the
studies of great clerckes: Thou ouerthrow-
est good wittes in their rypest age: Thou
ioynest the ende with the beginninge, with-
out geuinge place to the myddle: To con-
clude, thou art such a one, as almightie God
was sheth his handes of thee, and cleareth
himselfe in plaine wordes, sayenge: *That he
neuer made thee, but that thou haddest thine entrie
into the worlde by the verie enmie and craft of the
diuell.*

Sap. 1.
Eccl. 2.

**WHAT FRVITE, AND
COMMODITIE, MAYE BE
taken of the foresaid
considerations.**

§. 9.

HEISE are the miseries of
our lyfe, with infinite others:
the consideration whereof a
man ought to direct vnto
two principal endes emonge
others: the one, to the know-
ledge and contempt of the glorie of this
worlde: and the other, to the knowledge and
contempte

contempte of our selues For this considera-
tion serueth verie well both for the one, and
the other. But wilt thou vnderstande in one
worde what the glorie of this worlde is?
Marke and consider with attention the state
and condition of mans lyfe, and thereby
shalte thou perceyue, what the glorie of this
lyfe is. Tell me (I praie thee) can the glorie
of man be more longe or more stable than
the lyfe of man? It is most certaine that it
can not. For this glorie is an accident, which
is grownded vpon this lyfe, as vpon his
subiecte, or foundation, and therefore when
the foundation and subiecte faileth, the ac-
cidentes must needs faile withall. And for
this verie cause no riches, no pleasures, no
delightes can continewe any longer tyme
with a man vntill his graue. For so much as
then faileth the foundation, wherevpon all
these thinges are built, and haue their staie:
which foundation is our lyfe. Now tell me
then, if this lyfe be such as thou hast now
hearde described vnto thee: to witt: short, vn-
certaine, fraile, inconstante, deceitfull, and
miserable, how longe can the buildinge en-
dure, that shalbe framed vpon this founda-
tion? How longe can the accidentes conti-
newe, that shalbe grounded vpon so weake a
substance? When thou hast considered this
point well with thy selfe, thou must needs
saye, that they shall endure no longer than
the foundation and substance it selfe endu-
reth: and thou must needs confesse, that

*The riches
pleasures
& deligh-
tes of this
lyfe can-
not conti-
newe any
longer than
the lyfe it
selfe.*

manietimes they endure not so longe: as we see by dailie experience in the goodes of fortune, which with manie men haue an ende before their lyfe endeth.

Now if that sayeing of the Poët Pindarus be true: to witt, That this lyfe is no more but a dreame of a shadowe: What thinkest thou then is the glorie of this world, which is of shorter continuâce the our lyfe? What accompt wouldest thou make of a goodly building, in case it stood vpon a false foundation? What accöpte wouldest thou make of an image of waxe, very richlie & curiously wrought, in case it were set against the sone, where it is certayne that so soone as the waxe shoulde be moltē, forthwith the forme of the image woulde vtterlie be defaced, & leese his beautie? Whie do we make so litle accompt of the beautie of a flowre, but because it groweth vpon so weake a subiect? For so soone as it is nypt of from the stalke, incontinentlie it loseth his faire glosse, and beautie? It is not possible to haue beautie of anie firme continuance in a matter so fraile, and corruptible. It followeth therefore that the glorie of man is such as the lyfe of man is. For although glory doe continewe after the ende of our lyfe, yet what shall that glorie auayle him that hath no sence, nor feelinge thereof? What dothe it auayle Homere now whilest thou so highelie praisest and commendest his Iliades? Vndoubtedly no more, but as S.

Ierome

S. Ierome

Ierome saith speaking of Aristotle, Wo be vnto thee Aristotle, that art praised where thou art not, to witt, here in the worlde: and art tormented where thou art indeede: to wit, in hell.

Other inestimable commodities mayest thou gather owt of this consideration. For if thou cōsider all these miseries with good attention, thine eies shalbe opened forthwith, and thou shalt wonder at the great blindnes of men, yea the verie straungenes of it shall cause thee to saie to thy selfe: Good Lorde, what cause is there, why this miserable lignage of Adam shoulde waxe prowde! From whence commeth such puffing and arrogancie of minde, such hawtie and lostie courages, so great contempt of others, such estimation of our selues, and so great forgetfulnes of almightie God? What cause hast thou to be prowde thou dust, & ashes? Why doest thou magnifie, and aduance thy selfe, thou seely wretche of the earth? Why doest thou not hold downe thy peacockes taile, beholdinge thy fowle feete, to wit, the vylenes of thy state, and conditiō? What cause hast thou to seeke so carefullie for the glorie of this worlde, seinge it is myngled with so manie miseries? What thinge is there so sweete, but that it maie be made bitter wih the mixture of so manie sower, and bitter sawces?

Moreouer, if this lyfe be a vale of teares, a prison of guiltie persons, & a bannishment

Ii 2

MEDITATION FOR

of them that be condemned, how canst thou settle so greate vanitie, so great pompe, and pride of the worlde, such gaye ornamentes, and statelie furniture of houses, and families, in the place of teares? How canst thou imagine to make this a place of pastymes, and pleasures, of feastes, and bankettes, How canst thou be so diligente to heape so greidelie together for the prouision of this worlde, and be so forgetfull of the worlde to come, as if thou were borne onely to liue here in earth with brute beastes, and haddest no parte in heauen with the Angels. Suerlie I must neides saie, that thou art very much wedded to miserie, and that thou camest out of a meruaylous miserable stocke, if so manie argumentes of the miseries of this worlde be not able to open thine eies, and make thee to discern to grosse and so palpable a blindenes.

WENSDAIE
NIGHTE.OF THE HOWER OF
DEATHE.THIS DAIE (WHEN
THOU HAST MADE THE SIGNE

of the Crosse, and prepared thy selfe herunto,) thou hast to meditate vpon the houre of deathe: which is one of the most profitable considerations, that a Christian man may haue, as well for the obteyninge of true wisdom, and escheuinge of sinne: as also to moue him to beginne to prepare him selfe in time for the howre of death.

BVt to the intent that this consideration maie be profitable vnto thee, it shall behoue thee to make thy petition vnto almightie God, beseeching him to graunte thee some feeling of such thinges as are wont to passe in this