

THE LIFE OF PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

By his Nephew

Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola

Translated by

Thomas More

Edited with introduction and notes by

J. M. Rigg

With an introductory essay by

Walter Pater

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PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

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Bibliographic Note

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PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

**By
Walter Pater**

No account of the Renaissance can be complete without some notice of the attempt made by certain Italian scholars of the fifteenth century to reconcile Christianity with the religion of ancient Greece. To reconcile forms of sentiment which at first sight seem incompatible, to adjust the various products of the human mind to each other in one many-sided type of intellectual culture, to give humanity, for heart and imagination to feed upon, as much as it could possibly receive, belonged to the generous instincts of that age. An earlier and simpler generation had seen in the gods of Greece so many malignant spirits, the defeated but still living centres of the religion of darkness, struggling, not always in vain, against the kingdom of light. Little by little, as the natural charm of pagan story reasserted itself over minds emerging out of barbarism, the religious significance which had once belonged to it was lost sight of, and it came to be regarded as the subject of a purely artistic or poetical treatment. But it was inevitable that from time to time minds should arise, deeply enough impressed by its beauty and power to ask themselves whether the religion of Greece was indeed a rival of the religion of Christ; for the older gods had rehabilitated themselves, and men's allegiance was divided. And the fifteenth century was an impassioned age, so ardent and serious in its pursuit of art that it consecrated everything with which art had to do as a religious object. The restored Greek literature had made it familiar, at least in Plato, with a style of expression concerning the earlier gods, which had about it much of the warmth and unction of a Christian hymn. It was too familiar with such language to regard mythology as a mere story; and it was too serious to play with a religion.

"Let me briefly remind the reader"--says Heine, in the *Gods in Exile*, an essay full of that strange blending of sentiment which is characteristic of the traditions of the middle age concerning the pagan religions--"how the gods of the older world, at the time of the definite triumph of Christianity, that is, in the third century, fell into painful embarrassments, which greatly resembled certain tragical situations of their earlier life. They now found themselves beset by the same troublesome necessities to which they had once before been exposed during the primitive ages, in that revolutionary epoch when the Titans broke out of the custody of Orcus, and, piling Pelion on Ossa, scaled Olympus. Unfortunate Gods! They had then to take flight ignominiously, and hide themselves among us here on earth, under all sorts of disguises. The larger number betook themselves to Egypt, where for greater security they assumed the forms of animals, as is generally known. Just in the same way, they had to take flight again, and seek entertainment in remote hiding-places, when those iconoclastic zealots, the black brood of monks, broke down all the temples, and pursued the gods with fire and curses. Many of these unfortunate emigrants, now entirely deprived of shelter and ambrosia, must needs take to vulgar handicrafts, as a means of earning their bread. Under these circumstances, many whose sacred groves had been confiscated, let themselves out for hire as wood-cutters in Germany, and were forced to drink beer instead of nectar. Apollo seems to have been content to take

service under graziers, and as he had once kept the cows of Admetus, so he lived now as a shepherd in Lower Austria. Here, however, having become suspected on account of his beautiful singing, he was recognised by a learned monk as one of the old pagan gods, and handed over to the spiritual tribunal. On the rack he confessed that he was the God Apollo; and before his execution he begged that he might be suffered to play once more upon the lyre, and to sing a song. And he played so touchingly, and sang with such magic, and was withal so beautiful in form and feature, that all the women wept, and many of them were so deeply impressed that they shortly afterwards fell sick. And some time afterwards the people wished to drag him from the grave again, so that a stake might be driven through his body, in the belief that he had been a vampire, and that the sick women would by this means recover. But they found the grave empty."

The Renaissance of the fifteenth century was, in many things, great rather by what it designed than by what it achieved. Much which it aspired to do, and did but imperfectly or mistakenly, was accomplished in what is called the *eclaircissement* of the eighteenth century, or in our own generation; and what really belongs to the rival of the fifteenth century is but the leading instinct, the curiosity, the initiatory idea. It is so with this very question of the reconciliation of the religion of antiquity with the religion of Christ. A modern scholar occupied by this problem might observe that all religions may be regarded as natural products; that, at least in their origin, their growth, and decay, they have common laws, and are not to be isolated from the other movements of the human mind in the periods in which they respectively prevailed; that they arise spontaneously out of the human mind, as expressions of the varying phases of its sentiment concerning the unseen world; that every intellectual product must be judged from the point of view of the age and the people in which it was produced. He might go on to observe that each has contributed something to the development of the religious sense, and ranging them as so many stages in the gradual education of the human mind, justify the existence of each. The basis of the reconciliation of the religions of the world would thus be the inexhaustible activity and creativeness of the human mind itself, in which all religions alike have their root, and in which all alike are reconciled; just as the fancies of childhood and the thoughts of old age meet and are laid to rest, in the experience of the individual. Far different was the method followed by the scholars of the fifteenth century. They lacked the very rudiments of the historic sense, which, by an imaginative act, throws itself back into a world unlike one's own, and estimates every intellectual creation in its connexion with the age from which it proceeded; they had no idea of development, of the differences of ages, of the gradual education of the human race. In their attempts to reconcile the religions of the world, they were thus thrown back upon the quicksand of allegorical interpretation. The religions of the world were to be reconciled, not as successive stages, in a gradual development of the religious sense, but as subsisting side by side, and substantially in agreement with each other. And here the first necessity was to misrepresent the language, the conceptions, the sentiments, it was proposed to compare and reconcile. Plato and Homer must be made to speak agreeably to Moses. Set side by side, the mere surfaces could never unite in any harmony of design. Therefore one must go below the surface, and bring up the supposed secondary, or still more remote meaning, that diviner signification held in reserve, *in recessu divinius aliquid*, latent in some stray touch of Homer, or figure of speech in the books of Moses.

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And yet as a curiosity of the human mind, a "madhouse-cell," if you will, into which we peep for a moment, and see it at work weaving strange fancies, the allegorical interpretation of the fifteenth century has its interest. With its strange web of imagery, its quaint conceits, its unexpected combinations and subtle moralising, it is an element in the local colour of a great age. It illustrates also the faith of that age in all oracles, its desire to hear all voices, its generous belief that nothing which had ever interested the human mind could wholly lose its vitality. It is the counterpart, though certainly the feebler counterpart, of that practical truce and reconciliation of the gods of Greece with the Christian religion, which is seen in the art of the time; and it is for his share in this work, and because his own story is a sort of analogue or visible equivalent to the expression of this purpose in his writings, that something of a general interest still belongs to the name of Pico della Mirandola, whose life, written by his nephew Francesco, seemed worthy, for some touch of sweetness in it, to be translated out of the original Latin by Sir Thomas More, that great lover of Italian culture, among whose works this life of Pico, Earl of Mirandola, and a great lord of Italy, as he calls him, may still be read, in its quaint, antiquated English.

Marsilio Ficino has told us how Pico came to Florence. It was the very day--some day probably in the year 1482--on which Ficino had finished his famous translation of Plato into Latin, the work to which he had been dedicated from childhood by Cosmo de' Medici, in furtherance of his desire to resuscitate the knowledge of Plato among his fellow-citizens. Florence indeed, as M. Renan has pointed out, had always had an affinity for the mystic and dreamy philosophy of Plato, while the colder and more practical philosophy of Aristotle had flourished in Padua, and other cities of the north; and the Florentines, though they knew perhaps very little about him, had had the name of the great idealist often on their lips. To increase this knowledge, Cosmo had founded the Platonic academy, with periodical discussions at the villa of Careggi. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the council in 1438 for the reconciliation of the Greek and Latin Churches, had brought to Florence many a needy Greek scholar. And now the work was completed, the door of the mystical temple lay open to all who could construe Latin, and the scholar rested from his labour; when there was introduced into his study, where a lamp burned continually before the bust of Plato, as other men burned lamps before their favourite saints, a young man fresh from a journey, "of feature and shape seemly and beauteous, of stature goodly and high, of flesh tender and soft, his visage lovely and fair, his colour white, intermingled with comely reds, his eyes grey, and quick of look, his teeth white and even, his hair yellow and abundant," and trimmed with more than the usual artifice of the time. It is thus that Sir Thomas More translates the words of the biographer of Pico, who, even in outward form and appearance, seems an image of that inward harmony and completeness, of which he is so perfect an example. The word mystic has been usually derived from a Greek word which signifies to shut, as if one shut one's lips, brooding on what cannot be uttered; but the Platonists themselves derive it rather from the act of shutting the eyes, that one may see the more, inwardly. Perhaps the eyes of the mystic Ficino, now long past the midway of life, had come to be thus half-closed; but when a young man, not unlike the archangel Raphael, as the Florentines of that age depicted him in his wonderful walk with Tobit, or Mercury, as he might have appeared in a painting by Sandro Botticelli or Piero di Cosimo, entered his chamber, he seems to have thought there was something not wholly earthly about him; at least, he ever afterwards believed that it was not without the co-operation of the stars that the stranger had arrived on that day. For it happened that they fell into a conversation, deeper and more intimate than men usually fall into at first sight. During

this conversation Ficino formed the design of devoting his remaining years to the translation of Plotinus, that new Plato, in whom the mystical element in the Platonic philosophy had been worked out to the utmost limit of vision and ecstasy; and it is in dedicating this translation to Lorenzo de' Medici that Ficino has recorded these incidents.

It was after many wanderings, wanderings of the intellect as well as physical journeys, that Pico came to rest at Florence. He was then about twenty years old, having been born in 1463. He was called Giovanni at baptism; Pico, like all his ancestors, from Pico, nephew of the Emperor Constantine, from whom they claimed to be descended; and Mirandola, from the place of his birth, a little town afterwards part of the duchy of Modena, of which small territory his family had long been the feudal lords. Pico was the youngest of the family, and his mother, delighting in his wonderful memory, sent him at the age of fourteen to the famous school of law at Bologna. From the first, indeed, she seems to have had some presentiment of his future fame, for, with a faith in omens characteristic of her time, she believed that a strange circumstance had happened at the time of Pico's birth--the appearance of a circular flame which suddenly vanished away, on the wall of the chamber where she lay. He remained two years at Bologna; and then, with an inexhaustible, unrivalled thirst for knowledge, the strange, confused, uncritical learning of that age, passed through the principal schools of Italy and France, penetrating, as he thought, into the secrets of all ancient philosophies, and many eastern languages. And with this flood of erudition came the generous hope, so often disabused, of reconciling the philosophers with each other, and all alike with the Church. At last he came to Rome. There, like some knight-errant of philosophy, he offered to defend nine hundred bold paradoxes, drawn from the most opposite sources, against all comers. But the pontifical court was led to suspect the orthodoxy of some of these propositions, and even the reading of the book which contained them was forbidden by the Pope. It was not until 1493 that Pico was finally absolved, by a brief of Alexander the Sixth. Ten years before that date he had arrived at Florence; an early instance of those who, after following the vain hope of an impossible reconciliation from system to system, have at last fallen back unsatisfied on the simplicities of their childhood's belief.

The oration which Pico composed for the opening of this philosophical tournament still remains; its subject is the dignity of human nature, the greatness of man. In common with nearly all medieval speculation, much of Pico's writing has this for its drift; and in common also with it, Pico's theory of that dignity is founded on a misconception of the place in nature both of the earth and of man. For Pico the earth is the centre of the universe: and around it, as a fixed and motionless point, the sun and moon and stars revolve, like diligent servants or ministers. And in the midst of all is placed man, *nodus et vinculum mundi*, the bond or copula of the world, and the "interpreter of nature": that famous expression of Bacon's really belongs to Pico. *Tritum est in scholis*, he says, *esse hominem minorem mundum, in quo mixtum ex elementis corpus et spiritus coelestis et plantarum anima vegetalis et brutorum sensus et ratio et angelica mens et Dei similitudo conspicitur.*--"It is a commonplace of the schools that man is a little world, in which we may discern a body mingled of earthy elements, and ethereal breath, and the vegetable life of plants, and the senses of the lower animals, and reason, and the intelligence of angels, and a likeness to God."--A commonplace of the schools! But perhaps it had some new significance and authority, when men heard one like Pico reiterate it; and, false as its basis was, the theory had its use. For this high dignity of man, thus bringing the dust under his feet into sensible

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communion with the thoughts and affections of the angels, was supposed to belong to him, not as renewed by a religious system, but by his own natural right. The proclamation of it was a counterpoise to the increasing tendency of medieval religion to depreciate man's nature, to sacrifice this or that element in it, to make it ashamed of itself, to keep the degrading or painful accidents of it always in view. It helped man onward to that reassertion of himself, that rehabilitation of human nature, the body, the senses, the heart, the intelligence, which the Renaissance fulfils. And yet to read a page of one of Pico's forgotten books is like a glance into one of those ancient sepulchres, upon which the wanderer in classical lands has sometimes stumbled, with the old disused ornaments and furniture of a world wholly unlike ours still fresh in them. That whole conception of nature is so different from our own. For Pico the world is a limited place, bounded by actual crystal walls, and a material firmament; it is like a painted toy, like that map or system of the world, held, as a great target or shield, in the hands of the grey-headed father of all things, in one of the earlier frescoes of the Campo Santo at Pisa. How different from this childish dream is our own conception of nature, with its unlimited space, its innumerable suns, and the earth but a mote in the beam; how different the strange new awe, or superstition, with which it fills our minds! "The silence of those infinite spaces," says Pascal, contemplating a starlight night, "the silence of those infinite spaces terrifies me"--*Le silence eternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*.

He was already almost wearied out when he came to Florence. He had loved much and been beloved by women, "wandering over the crooked hills of delicious pleasure"; but their reign over him was over, and long before Savonarola's famous "bonfire of vanities," he had destroyed those love-songs in the vulgar tongue, which would have been such a relief to us, after the scholastic prolixity of his Latin writings. It was in another spirit that he composed a Platonic commentary, the only work of his in Italian which has come down to us, on the "Song of Divine Love"--*secondo la mente ed opinione dei Platonici*--"according to the mind and opinion of the Platonists," by his friend Hieronymo Beniveni, in which, with an ambitious array of every sort of learning, and a profusion of imagery borrowed indifferently from the astrologers, the Cabala, and Homer, and Scripture, and Dionysius the Areopagite, he attempts to define the stages by which the soul passes from the earthly to the unseen beauty. A change indeed had passed over him, as if the chilling touch of the abstract and disembodied beauty Platonists profess to long for was already upon him; and perhaps it was a sense of this, coupled with that over-brightness which in the popular imagination always betokens an early death, that made Camilla Rucellai, one of those prophetic women whom the preaching of Savonarola had raised up in Florence, declare, seeing him for the first time, that he would depart in the time of lilies--prematurely, that is, like the field-flowers which are withered by the scorching sun almost as soon as they are sprung up. It was now that he wrote down those thoughts on the religious life which Sir Thomas More turned into English, and which another English translator thought worthy to be added to the books of the Imitation. "It is not hard to know God, provided one will not force oneself to define Him":--has been thought a great saying of Joubert's. "Love God," Pico writes to Angelo Politian, "we rather may, than either know Him, or by speech utter Him. And yet had men liefer by knowledge never find that which they seek, than by love possess that thing, which also without love were in vain found."

Yet he who had this fine touch for spiritual things did not--and in this is the enduring interest of his story--even after his conversion, forget the old gods. He is one

of the last who seriously and sincerely entertained the claims on men's faith of the pagan religions; he is anxious to ascertain the true significance of the obscurest legend, the lightest tradition concerning them. With many thoughts and many influences which led him in that direction, he did not become a monk; only he became gentle and patient in disputation; retaining "somewhat of the old plenty, in dainty viand and silver vessel," he gave over the greater part of his property to his friend, the mystical poet Beniveni, to be spent by him in works of charity, chiefly in the sweet charity of providing marriage-dowries for the peasant girls of Florence. His end came in 1494, when, amid the prayers and sacraments of Savonarola, he died of fever, on the very day on which Charles the Eighth entered Florence, the seventeenth of November, yet in the time of lilies--the lilies of the shield of France, as the people now said, remembering Camilla's prophecy. He was buried in the cloister at Saint Mark's, in the hood and white frock of the Dominican order.

It is because the life of Pico, thus lying down to rest in the Dominican habit, yet amid thoughts of the older gods, himself like one of those comely divinities, reconciled indeed to the new religion, but still with a tenderness for the earlier life, and desirous literally to "bind the ages each to each by natural piety"--it is because this life is so perfect a parallel to the attempt made in his writings to reconcile Christianity with the ideas of paganism, that Pico, in spite of the scholastic character of those writings, is really interesting. Thus, in the *Heptaplus*, or *Discourse on the Seven Days of the Creation*, he endeavours to reconcile the accounts which pagan philosophy had given of the origin of the world with the account given in the books of Moses--the *Timæus* of Plato with the book of Genesis. The *Heptaplus* is dedicated to Lorenzo the Magnificent, whose interest, the preface tells us, in the secret wisdom of Moses is well known. If Moses seems in his writings simple and even popular, rather than either a philosopher or a theologian, that is because it was an institution with the ancient philosophers, either not to speak of divine things at all, or to speak of them dissemblingly: hence their doctrines were called mysteries. Taught by them, Pythagoras became so great a "master of silence," and wrote almost nothing, thus hiding the words of God in his heart, and speaking wisdom only among the perfect. In explaining the harmony between Plato and Moses, Pico lays hold on every sort of figure and analogy, on the double meanings of words, the symbols of the Jewish ritual, the secondary meanings of obscure stories in the later Greek mythologists. Everywhere there is an unbroken system of correspondences. Every object in the terrestrial world is an analogue, a symbol or counterpart, of some higher reality in the starry heavens, and this again of some law of the angelic life in the world beyond the stars. There is the element of fire in the material world; the sun is the fire of heaven; and in the super-celestial world there is the fire of the seraphic intelligence. "But behold how they differ! The elementary fire burns, the heavenly fire vivifies, the super-celestial fire loves." In this way, every natural object, every combination of natural forces, every accident in the lives of men, is filled with higher meanings. Omens, prophecies, supernatural coincidences, accompany Pico himself all through life. There are oracles in every tree and mountain-top, and a significance in every accidental combination of the events of life.

This constant tendency to symbolism and imagery gives Pico's work a figured style, by which it has some real resemblance to Plato's, and he differs from other mystical writers of his time by a real desire to know his authorities at first hand. He reads Plato in Greek, Moses in Hebrew, and by this his work really belongs to the higher culture. Above all, we have a constant sense in reading him, that his thoughts,

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however little their positive value may be, are connected with springs beneath them of deep and passionate emotion; and when he explains the grades or steps by which the soul passes from the love of a physical object to the love of unseen beauty, and unfolds the analogies between this process and other movements upward of human thought, there is a glow and vehemence in his words which remind one of the manner in which his own brief existence flamed itself away.

I said that the Renaissance of the fifteenth century was in many things great, rather by what it designed or aspired to do, than by what it actually achieved. It remained for a later age to conceive the true method of effecting a scientific reconciliation of Christian sentiment with the imagery, the legends, the theories about the world, of pagan poetry and philosophy. For that age the only possible reconciliation was an imaginative one, and resulted from the efforts of artists, trained in Christian schools, to handle pagan subjects; and of this artistic reconciliation work like Pico's was but the feebler counterpart. Whatever philosophers had to say on one side or the other, whether they were successful or not in their attempts to reconcile the old to the new, and to justify the expenditure of so much care and thought on the dreams of a dead faith, the imagery of the Greek religion, the direct charm of its story, were by artists valued and cultivated for their own sake. Hence a new sort of mythology, with a tone and qualities of its own. When the ship-load of sacred earth from the soil of Jerusalem was mingled with the common clay in the Campo Santo at Pisa, a new flower grew up from it, unlike any flower men had seen before, the anemone with its concentric rings of strangely blended colour, still to be found by those who search long enough for it, in the long grass of the Maremma. Just such a strange flower was that mythology of the Italian Renaissance, which grew up from the mixture of two traditions, two sentiments, the sacred and the profane. Classical story was regarded as so much imaginative material to be received and assimilated. It did not come into men's minds to ask curiously of science concerning its origin, its primary form and import, its meaning for those who projected it. It sank into their minds, to issue forth again with all the tangle about it of medieval sentiment and ideas. In the Doni Madonna in the Tribune of the Uffizii, Michelangelo actually brings the pagan religion, and with it the unveiled human form, the sleepy-looking fauns of a Dionysiac revel, into the presence of the Madonna, as simpler painters had introduced there other products of the earth, birds or flowers; and he has given to that Madonna herself much of the uncouth energy of the older and more primitive "Mighty Mother."

It is because this picturesque union of contrasts, belonging properly to the art of the close of the fifteenth century, pervades, in Pico della Mirandola, an actual person, that the figure of Pico is so attractive. He will not let one go; he wins one on, in spite of oneself, to turn again to the pages of his forgotten books, although we know already that the actual solution proposed in them will satisfy us as little as perhaps it satisfied him. It is said that in his eagerness for mysterious learning he once paid a great sum for a collection of cabalistic manuscripts, which turned out to be forgeries; and the story might well stand as a parable of all he ever seemed to gain in the way of actual knowledge. He had sought knowledge, and passed from system to system, and hazarded much; but less for the sake of positive knowledge than because he believed there was a spirit of order and beauty in knowledge, which would come down and unite what men's ignorance had divided, and renew what time had made dim. And so, while his actual work has passed away, yet his own qualities are still active, and he himself remains, as one alive in the grave, *cæsis et vigilibus oculis*, as

his biographer describes him, and with that sanguine, clear skin, *decenti rubore interspersa*, as with the light of morning upon it; and he has a true place in that group of great Italians who fill the end of the fifteenth century with their names, he is a true HUMANIST. For the essence of humanism is that belief of which he seems never to have doubted, that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality--no language they have spoken, nor oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate, or expended time and zeal.

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Title Page of 1890 Edition

GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA:
HIS LIFE BY HIS NEPHEW GIOVANNI FRANCESCO PICO:
ALSO THREE OF HIS LETTERS; HIS INTERPRETATION OF PSALM XVI.; HIS
TWELVE RULES OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE; HIS TWELVE POINTS OF A
PERFECT LOVER; AND HIS DEPRECATORY HYMN TO GOD.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN
BY
SIR THOMAS MORE.

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
J. M. RIGG, ESQ.,
OF LINCOLN S INN, BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

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INTRODUCTION.

By
J. M. Rigg



IOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, "the Phoenix of the wits," is one of those writers whose personality will always count for a great deal more than their works. His extreme, almost feminine beauty, high rank, and chivalrous character, his immense energy and versatility, his insatiable thirst for knowledge, his passion for theorizing, his rare combination of intellectual hardihood with genuine devoutness of spirit, his extraordinary precocity, and his premature death, make up a personality so engaging that his name at any rate, and the record of his brief life, must always excite the interest and enlist the sympathy of mankind, though none but those, few in any generation, who love to loiter curiously in the bypaths of literature and philosophy, will ever care to follow his eager spirit through the labyrinths of recondite speculation which it once thrilled with such high and generous hope. For us, indeed, of the latter end of the nineteenth century, trained in the exact methods, guided by the steady light of modern philosophy and criticism, it is no easy matter to enter sympathetically into the thoughts of men who lived while as yet these were not, men who spent their strength in errant efforts, in blind gropings in the dark, on abortive half-solutions or no-solutions of problems too difficult for them, mere *ignes fatui*, it would seem, or at best mere brilliant meteor stars illuminating the intellectual firmament with a transitory trail of light, and then vanishing to leave the darkness more visible, yet without whose mistakes and failures and apparently futile waste of power philosophy and criticism would not have come into being.

Among such wandering meteoric apparitions not the least brilliant was Pico della Mirandola. Born in 1463, he grew to manhood in time to witness and participate in the effectual revival of Greek learning in Italy; yet his earliest bias was scholastic, and a schoolman in grain he remained to the day of his death. How strongly he had felt the influence of the schoolmen, how little disposed he was to follow the humanistic hue and cry of indiscriminate condemnation, may be judged from the eloquent apology for them which, in the shape of a letter to his friend Ermolao Barbaro, he published in 1485. It was the fashion to stigmatize the schoolmen as barbarians because they knew no Greek and could not write classical Latin. That was the head and front of their offending in the eyes of men who had no idea of a better method of philosophizing than theirs, nor indeed any interest in philosophy, mere rhetoricians, grammarians, and pedagogues, while at any rate the schoolmen, however rude their style, were serious thinkers, who in grappling with the deepest problems of science human and divine displayed the rarest patience, sagacity, subtlety and

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ingenuity. Such is the gist of Pico's plea on behalf of the "barbarians," in urging which he exhausts the resources of rhetoric, and the ingenuity of the advocate; nor is there reason to doubt that it represents at least the embers of a very genuine enthusiasm. That challenge, also, which he issued at Rome, and in every university in Italy in the winter of 1486-7, summoning as if by clarion call every intellectual knight-errant in the peninsula to try conclusions with him in public disputation in the eternal city after the feast of Epiphany, does it not recall the celebrated exploit of Duns Scotus at Paris, when, according to the tradition, he won the title of Doctor Subtilis by refuting two hundred objections to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in a single day? Only, as befitted "a great lord of Italy," Pico's tournament is to be on a grander scale. Duns had but one thesis to defend; Pico offers to maintain nine hundred, and lest poverty should reduce the number of his antagonists he offers to pay their travelling expenses. Moreover, to Duns, Aquinas, and other of the schoolmen, Pico is beholden for not a few of his theses; of the rest, some are drawn direct from Plato, others from Neo-Pythagorean, Neo-Platonic and syncretist writers, while a certain number appear to be original. Pico, however, was not so fortunate as Duns: the church smelt heresy in his propositions, and Pope Innocent VIII., though he had at first authorised, was induced to prohibit their discussion. (Bull dated 4th August, 1487). Thirteen were selected for examination by a special commission and were pronounced heretical. Pico, however, so far from bowing to its decision, wrote in hot haste an elaborate "Apologia" or defence of his orthodoxy, which, had it not been more ingenious than conclusive, might perhaps have been accepted; as it was, it only brought him into further trouble.

This Apology "elucubrated," as he tells, "properante stilo" in twenty nights, Pico dedicated to Lorenzo de Medici, modestly describing it as "exiguum sane munus, sed fidei meæ, sed observantiæ profecto in omne tempus erga te maxime non leve testimonium," "a trifling gift indeed, but as far as possible from being a slight token of my loyalty, nay, of my devotion to you." Hasty though its composition was, it certainly displays no lack of either ingenuity, subtlety, acuteness, learning, or style. Evidently written out of a full mind, it represents Pico's mature judgment upon the abstruse topics which it handles, and is a veritable masterpiece of scholastic argumentation. After a brief prologue detailing the circumstances which gave occasion to the work Pico proceeds to discuss *seriatim* the thirteen "damnata conclusiones," and the several objections which had been made to them. The tone throughout is severe and dry and singularly free from heat or asperity. Some of the theses are treated at considerable length, others dismissed in a page or two, or even less. Altogether, when the rapidity of its composition is borne in mind, the treatise appears little less a prodigy.

The obnoxious theses were as follows:-- (1) That Christ did not truly and in real presence, but only *quoad effectum*, descend into hell; (2) that a mortal sin of finite duration is not deserving of eternal but only of temporal punishment; (3) that neither the cross of Christ, nor any image, ought to be adored in the way of worship; (4) that God cannot assume a nature of any kind whatsoever, but only a rational nature; (5) that no science affords a better assurance of the divinity of Christ than magical and cabalistic science; (6) that assuming the truth of the ordinary doctrine that God can take upon himself the nature of any creature whatsoever, it is possible for the body of Christ to be present on the altar without the conversion of the substance of the bread or the annihilation of "paneity;" (7) that it is more rational to believe that Origen is saved than that he is damned; (8) that as no one's opinions are just such as he wills

them to be, so no one's beliefs are just such as he wills them to be; (9) that the inseparability of subject and accident may be maintained consistently with the doctrine of transubstantiation; (10) that the words "hoc est corpus" pronounced during the consecration of the bread are to be taken "materialiter" (*i.e.*, as a mere recital) and not "significative" (*i.e.*, as denoting an actual fact); (11) that the miracles of Christ are a most certain proof of his divinity, by reason not of the works themselves, but of his manner of doing them; (12) that it is more improper to say of God that he is intelligent, or intellect, than of an angel that it is a rational soul; (13) that the soul knows nothing in act and distinctly but itself.

It is undeniable that some of these propositions smack somewhat rankly of heresy, and Pico's ingenuity is taxed to the uttermost to give them even a semblance of congruity with the doctrines of the Church. The following, however, is the gist of his defence. Christ, he argues, did actually descend into hell, but only in spirit, not in bodily presence; eternal punishment is inflicted on the finally impenitent sinner not for his sins done in the flesh, which are finite, but for his impenitence, which is necessarily infinite; the cross is to be adored, but only as a symbol, not in and for itself, for which he cites Scotus, admitting that St. Thomas is against him. The thesis that God cannot take upon himself a nature of any kind whatsoever, but only a rational nature, must be understood without prejudice to the omnipotence of God, which is not in question; God cannot assume the nature of any irrational creature, because by the very act of so doing he necessarily raises it to himself, endows it with a rational nature. The thesis that no science gives us better assurance of the divinity of Christ than magical and cabalistic science referred to such sciences only as do not rest on revelation, and among them to the science of natural magic, which treats of the virtues and activities of natural agents and their relations *inter se*, and that branch only of cabalistic science which is concerned with the virtues of celestial bodies; which of all natural sciences furnish the most convincing proof of the divinity of Christ, because they show that his miracles could not have been performed by natural agencies. The sixth thesis must not be understood as if Pico maintained that the bread was not converted into the body of Christ, but only that it is possible that the bread and the body may be mysteriously linked together without the one being converted into the other, which would be quite consistent with the words of St. Paul, I Cor. x. 16: "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" if interpreted figuratively. With regard to the salvation of Origen, Pico plunges with evident zest into the old controversy as to the authenticity of the heretical passages in that writer's works, and urges that his damnation can at most be no more than a pious opinion. In justification of the position that belief is not a mere matter of will he cites the authority of Aristotle and St. Augustine, adding a brief summary of the evidences of the Christian faith, to wit, prophecy, the harmony of the Scriptures, the authority of their authors, the reasonableness of their contents, the unreasonableness of their contents, the unreasonableness of particular heresies, the stability of the Church, the miracles. As to transubstantiation, Pico professes himself to hold the doctrine of the Church, merely adding thereto the pious opinion that the Thomist distinction between real existence and essence is consistent with the theory that the bread itself remains in spite of the transmutation of its substance, and thus with the doctrine of the inseparability of subject and accident; as for the words "hoc est corpus," it appears from their context and their place in the office that they are not to be taken literally, for the priest, when in consecrating the bread he says, "Take, eat," does not suit the action to the word by offering the bread to the communicants, but takes it himself, and so when in consecrating the wine he says, "qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur," it

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is not to be supposed, as if the words were to be taken literally it must be supposed, that he means that the blood of Christ actually will be shed, or that he does not mean to claim the benefit of it for himself as well as the congregation, and the "many." That the value of Christ's miracles as evidences of his divinity lies rather in the way in which they were wrought than in the works themselves, is supported by Christ's own words in St. John xiv. 12: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father;" which are quite inconsistent with the idea that the works are themselves evidence of his divinity. In support of the proposition that intellect or intelligence cannot properly be ascribed to God, Pico invokes the authority of Dionysius the Areopagite, who holds the same doctrine, but does not on that account deny to God an altogether superior faculty of cognition, even farther removed from angelic intelligence than that is from human reason. The last proposition, viz., that the soul knows nothing in act and distinctly but itself, being extremely subtle and profound, Pico forbears to enlarge upon it, pointing out, however, that it has the authority of St. Augustine in its favour. The reference is to the *De Trinitate*, x. 14.[See Note *]. The doctrine itself is of peculiar interest, for in it lay the germ of the Cartesian philosophy.

*Note: *Utrum emin æris sit vis vivendi, reminiscendi, volendi, cogitandi, sciendi, judicandi; an ignis, an cerebri, an sanguinis, an atomorum, an præter usitata quatuor elementa quinti nescio cujus corporis, an ipsius carnis nostrae compago vel temperamentum hæc efficere valeat, dubitaverunt homines: et alius hoc, alius aliud affirmare conatus est. Vivere se tamen et meminisse, et intelligere, et velle, et cogitare, et scire, et judicare quis dubitet? Quandoquidem etiam si dubitat, vivit: si dubitat unde dubitet, meminit; si dubitat, dubitare se intelligit; si dubitat, certus esse vult; si dubitat, cogitat; si dubitat, scit se nescire; si dubitat, judicat non se temere consentire oportere. Quisquis igitur aliunde dubitat, de his omnibus dubitare non debet: quæ si non essent de ulla re dubitare non posset.*

Pico concludes the "Apologia" with an eloquent appeal to his critics to judge him fairly, which was so little heeded that some of them saw fit to impugn its good faith, and raised such a clamour about it that Pico, who in the meantime had gone to France, was peremptorily recalled to Rome by the Pope. He complied, but through the influence of Lorenzo was permitted to reside in the Benedictine monastery at Fiesole, while the new charge was under investigation. Meanwhile Garsias, Bishop of Ussel, published (1489) an elaborate examination of the "Apologia," nor did Pico hear the last of the affair until shortly before his death, when Alexander VI., by a Bull dated 18th June, 1493, acquitted him of heresy and assured him of immunity from further annoyance.

An oration on man and his place in nature -- with which Pico had designed to introduce his theses to the learned audience which he had hoped to gather about him to listen to the discussion -- was not published until after his death. The theme is the familiar one of the dignity of man as the only terrestrial creature endowed with free will, and thus capable of developing into an angel and even becoming one with God, or declining into a brute or even a vegetable. On this Pico descants at some length and with much eloquence, and a great display of erudition -- Schoolman and Neo-Platonist, Cabalist and Pythagorean, Moses and Plato, Job, Seneca, Cicero, and the Peripatetics jostling one another in his pages in the most bizarre fashion. With Pico, as with Dante, theology is the queen of the sciences, and the true end of man is so to purify the soul by the practice of virtue and the study of philosophy -- moral and natural -- as that it may be capable of the knowledge and the love of God. His own theological speculations are contained in three works, viz.: (1) a commentary on the

first twenty-six verses of the first chapter of Genesis, published in 1489, under the title of "Heptaplus," and dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici; (2) an essay towards the reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle, entitled "De Ente et Uno," published in 1491; (3) a commentary on Girolamo Benivieni's "Canzone dello Amore Celeste e Divino," the date of which has not been precisely fixed.

This curious trilogy is a signal example of the insane extravagances into which an acute and subtle intellect may be led by philosophical and theological *arrière pensée*. Pico's problem is essentially the same with that on which the most powerful and ingenious minds of the Middle Ages had spent their strength in vain, to wit -- how to reconcile theology and philosophy. The difference is that, whereas the older thinkers had but little knowledge of any other philosopher than Aristotle, and knew him but imperfectly, Pico in the full tide of the Renaissance has to grapple with the gigantic task of reconciling Catholic doctrine not merely with Aristotle, but with Plato, the Neo-Platonists, Neo-Pythagoreans, the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the Orphic and Hermetic theosophies, and indeed with whatever of recondite, obscure, and mysterious in that kind the Pagan world had given birth to. The result is what might be expected -- the wildest possible jumble of incompatible ideas, which not even the most dexterous legerdemain can twist into the remotest semblance of congruity.

In the dedicatory letter prefixed to the "Heptaplus" Pico explains to Lorenzo the scheme of the work, and the motives which induced him to undertake it. Besides the inestimable advantage which he derived from being the immediate recipient of divine revelation, Moses, it appears, was the greatest of all philosophers. Was he not versed in all the science of the Egyptians, and was not Egypt the source whence the Greeks drew their inspiration? Was not Plato rightly called by Numenius: Μωσῆς Ἀττιχίζων? [See Note *] True it is that Moses has not the least of the appearance of a philosopher, but even in the account of the creation seems only to be telling a very plain and simple story, but that must not be allowed to detract from his claims. Doubtless he veiled a profound meaning under this superficial show of simplicity, and spoke in enigmas, or allegories, even as Plato and Jesus Christ were wont to do, in order that they might not be understood except by those to whom it was given to understand mysteries.

*Note. Numenius of Apameia in Syria, a syncretistic philosopher, supposed to have lived in the age of the Antonines. For the phrase see Mullach, *Frag. Phil. Graec.* iii. 167.

In all true wisdom there should be an element of mystery; it would not be right that everyone should be able to understand it. The task of interpreting the Mosaic account of the creation has been taken in hand by a host of writers, who have struggled mightily with three cardinal difficulties, which, it would seem, they have one and all failed to surmount. These difficulties are (1) to avoid attributing to Moses commonplace or inadequate ideas; (2) to make the interpretation consecutive and consistent from beginning to end; (3) to bring him into harmony with subsequent thinkers. Where his predecessors have failed Pico hopes to succeed.

The interpretation is worthy of the poem. In the threefold division of the Tabernacle Pico finds a type of the three spheres -- angelic or intelligible, celestial, and sublunary -- which, with man, the microcosm, make up the universe; and thus has no difficulty in understanding why the veil of the Temple was rent when Christ opened a way for man into the super-celestial sphere. These four worlds are all one,

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not only because all have the same first principle and the same final cause, and are linked together by certain general harmonies and affinities, but also because whatever is found in the sublunary sphere has its counterpart in the other two, but of a nobler character (*meliore nota*). Thus to terrestrial fire corresponds in the celestial sphere the sun; in the super-celestial, seraphic intelligence. Similarly, what is water on earth is in the heavens the moon, and in the super-celestial region cherubic intelligence. "The elementary fire burns, the celestial vivifies, the super-celestial loves." What cherubic intelligence does Pico forgets to say; but fire and water being opposed, it is clear that it ought to hate.

In the intelligible world God, surrounded by nine orders of angels, unmoved Himself, draws all to Himself; to whom in the celestial world corresponds the stable empyrean with its nine revolving spheres; in the sublunary world the first matter with its three elementary forms, earth, water, and fire, the three orders of vegetable life, herbs, plants, and trees, and the three sorts of "sensual souls," zoophytic, brutish, human, making together "nine spheres of corruptible forms."

Man, the microcosm, unites all three spheres; having a body mixed of the elements, a vegetal soul, and the senses of the brute, reason or spirit, which holds of the celestial sphere, and an angelic intellect, in virtue of which he is the very image of God.

Now it is true that Moses in his account of the creation appears to ignore all this, but it is not for us on that account to impute to him ignorance of it. On the contrary, we must suppose that his cosmogony is equally true of each of the four worlds which make up the universe, and must accordingly give it a fourfold interpretation. A fifth chapter will be rendered necessary by the difference between the four worlds, and a sixth by their affinities and community.

We have thus six chapters corresponding with the six days of creation. A seventh is devoted to expounding the meaning of the Sabbath rest; and to indicate this sevenfold division of the work Pico entitles it "Heptaplus."

The plural method of interpreting Scripture, it must be observed, was by no means peculiar to Pico, indeed was in common use in his day. As a rule, however, commentators were content with three senses, which they distinguished as mystical, anagogical, and allegorical. To Pico's philosophic mind this, no doubt, seemed a pitiful empiricism. For what was the ground of the triple method? Why these three senses and no more? He scorned such grovelling economy and rule of thumb, and determined to place the interpretation of the Mosaic cosmogony once for all on a firm and philosophic basis. Digging, accordingly, deep into the nature of things for the root, as he calls it, of his exegesis, he comes upon the Ptolemaic system with its central earth surrounded by its nine concentric revolving spheres, the nearest that of the moon, the most remote that of the fixed stars, in the interspace the solar and other planetary spheres, and beyond all the stable empyrean. To this he joins the Platonic theory of an intelligible world behind the phenomenal, and the Christian idea of heaven, borrows from the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite his nine orders of angels to correspond with the nine celestial spheres, discerns in the stable empyrean the type of the immutability of God, in matter as the promise and potency of all things, the evidence of His infinite power and fullness, throws in the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the microcosm and macrocosm, and lo! the work is done, and a cosmology constructed, which to elicit from Genesis may well demand a sevenfold method of interpretation. The minor details of this curious mosaic, to wit, the correspondence between the nine

spheres of corruptible forms and the nine planets, between seraphic intelligence and the sun, between cherubic intelligence and the moon, seem, for what they are worth, to be all Pico's own.

Having thus found, as he thinks, a philosophic basis for his exegetical method, Pico proceeds to apply it to the Mosaic text with the utmost rigour and vigour. It would be tedious to follow him through all the minutiae of his elaborate and extraordinary interpretation. A few examples of his art will amply suffice; and we cannot do better than begin at the beginning. What, then, did Moses mean by "In the beginning"? The solution of this weighty problem Pico plainly regards as his greatest triumph, and accordingly reserves it for the closing chapter, when he introduces it with a mighty flourish of trumpets. These pregnant words, "In the beginning," contain, it appears, the following mystic sentence: "Pater in Filio et per Filium, principium et finem, sive quietem, creavit caput, ignem, et fundamentum magni hominis fœdere bono," which is elicited from them by various dexterous permutations and combinations of the letters which make up their Hebrew equivalent. The key to the interpretation of the sentence is found in the idea of the microcosm.

Man being the microcosm, the macrocosm, or universe, may be called "magnus homo," whose "caput," or head, is the supercelestial or intelligible world, while his "ignis," fire, or heart, is the celestial world or empyrean, and his "fundamentum," or base, the sublunary sphere, all which are bound together "fœdere bono," by ties of kinship and congruity. In plain English, then, the initial words of the first chapter of Genesis mean, according to Pico:--"The Father in the Son, and by the Son, who is the beginning and the end, or rest, created the head, the heart, and the lower parts of the great man fitly joined together;" and thus contain an implicit prophecy of the Christian dispensation.

After this splendid *tour de force*, everything else in Pico's exposition will seem tame and trivial. We may observe, however, that four being a square number, he finds in the fourth day an adumbration of the fullness of time in which Christ came to earth; in the sun, moon, and stars types of Christ, His Church, and His Apostles; in the waters under the firmament, which on the third day were gathered together unto one place, a type of the Gentiles; in the earth, a type of the Israelites; and in the fact that before the creation of the sun the waters produced nothing, and the earth little that was good, while after the sun had shone upon them they became fruitful abundantly of moving creatures, birds, and fishes, a prophecy of the spiritual revolution wrought by Christianity -- were not the Apostles fishers of men? and a plain, unmistakable proof that his exposition is no mere fancy, but solid truth. It is absurd to criticize such folly seriously, but it may be worth while to note in passing that Christ being according to Christian theology co-eternal with the Father, the creation of the sun serves but ill as a type of His advent.

Pico, however, is so little disturbed by this consideration, that he finds another type of Christ in another created object -- to wit, the firmament -- which, while separating the waters above it from those below, nevertheless unites them as every mean unites its extremes, and thus enables the former to fecundate the latter, as Christ enables the divine grace to descend upon man. At the same time, however, he is careful to affirm the orthodox position that Christ is the first begotten of every creature.

Such are some of the meanings which Pico finds in the Mosaic text when interpreting it of the creation of the intelligible or super-celestial sphere. The same

terms have, of course, quite different imports when applied to the creation of the other spheres. Thus, in relation to the sublunary sphere, "heaven" means efficient cause, "the earth" matter, and "the waters" on the face of which the Spirit of God moved, the accidents of matter.

But the reader has probably had already far too much of these absurdities, which, however, when due allowance has been made for the differences of the times, are perhaps hardly grosser than some of the ingenious attempts by which more recent writers have sought to reconcile Genesis with modern science.

It is time, however, to take a glance at the treatise "De Ente et Uno." This little tractate purports to be an essay towards the reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle -- an essentially hopeless undertaking, on which Porphyry had long before spent his strength for nought. We may therefore spare ourselves the trouble of even asking how far Pico is successful. The interest of the treatise consists in the insight which it affords into Pico's own views of the nature of God and His relation to the world. It is, in fact, a chapter, and by no means an unimportant chapter, in the long dialectic on the nature of universals and their relation to particulars, which formed the staple of mediæval thought. All cultivated people have heard of this great debate, but few have any clear idea of the issues involved in it, and why so many subtle and ingenious thinkers spent their best energies upon it. Nay, it is sometimes contemptuously dismissed by those who should know better as mere piece of frivolous logomachy. In truth, however, this apparently barren controversy was big with the most momentous of all the problems with which the human mind can concern itself -- first, "Utrum sit Deus"-- whether God exist? second, if He exist, in what way His relation to the universe is to be understood -- whether in the way of a transcendent cause or an immanent principle, or in both ways at once?

Saturated as mediæval theology was with ideas derived from Plato and Aristotle, and but imperfectly understood, it was inevitable that when men attempted to philosophize about God, they should conceive Him -- or at any rate tend to conceive Him -- rather as a universal principle, or archetypal source of ideas, than as a concrete personality. Hence nominalism, with its frank denial of the existence of universals, conceptualism with its reduction of them to figments of abstraction, seemed equally to involve atheism; even realism of the more moderate type, which, while asserting the objective existence of the universal, denied its existence *ante rem* - - *i.e.*, apart from the particular -- was viewed with suspicion as tending to merge God in the cosmos; while realism of the high Platonic order, by its assertion of the existence of a world of pure universals -- archetypes of the particulars revealed to sense -- found favour in the eyes of men in whom the philosophic interest was always strictly subordinated to the theological.

In the treatise "De Ente et Uno" the question as between the transcendence and the immanence of God comes to the surface with remarkable abruptness. Is "the One," *i.e.* God, to be regarded as "Being" or as "above Being?" Aristotle is supposed to maintain the former position, Plato undoubtedly holds the latter. To the Platonic doctrine Pico gives in his unqualified adhesion, and attempts to constrain Aristotle to do so likewise. His Platonism is of the most uncompromising type, the idealism of the Parmenides with the Parmenidean doubts and difficulties left out. Abstract terms such as "whiteness" or "humanity" signify, he asserts dogmatically, and apparently without a shadow of doubt as to the truth of the doctrine, real existences which are what they are in their own right and not by derivation from or participation in anything else,

while their corresponding concretes denote existences of an inferior order which are what they are by virtue of their participation in the abstract or archetypal ideas. Upon this theory he proceeds deliberately to base his theology. As whiteness in itself is not white, but the archetypal cause of that particular appearance in objects, and in the same way heat in itself is not hot, but the cause of the particular sensation which we call heat; so God is not "Being" though, or rather because, He is the "fullness," *i.e.* the archetypal cause, of "Being." As thus the one primal fountain of "Being" He is properly described as "the One." "God is all things and most eminently and most perfectly all things; which cannot be, unless He so comprehends the perfections of all things in Himself as to exclude whatever imperfection is in them. Now, things are imperfect either (1) in virtue of some defect in themselves, whereby they fall short of the normal standard proper to them, or (2) in virtue of the very limitations which constitute them particular objects. It follows that God being perfect has in Him neither any defect nor any particularity, but is the abstract universal unity of all things in their perfection. It is, therefore, not correct to say that He comprehends all things in Himself; for in that case neither would He be perfectly simple in nature, nor would they be infinite which are in Him, but He would be an infinite unity composed of many things infinite, indeed, in number, but finite in respect of perfection; which to speak or think of God is profanity." In other words, in order to get a true idea of God we must abstract from all plurality, all particularity whatever, and then we have as the residue the notion of a most perfect, infinite, perfectly simple being. God may, then, be called Being itself, the One itself, the Good itself, the True itself; but it is better to describe Him as that which is "above Being, above truth, above unity, above goodness, since His Being is truth itself, unity itself, goodness itself," better still to say of Him that He is "intelligibly and ineffably above all that we can most perfectly say or conceive of Him," and with Dionysius the Areopagite to define him by negatives. And so he quotes with approval part of the closing sentence of the treatise "De Mystica Theologia" in which agnosticism seems to exhaust itself in the exuberant detail of its negations. "It" (*i.e.* the First Cause) "is neither truth, nor dominion, nor wisdom, nor the One, nor unity, nor Deity, nor goodness, nor spirit, as far as we can know; nor sonship nor fatherhood, nor aught else of things known to us or any other creature; neither is it aught of things that are nor of things that are; nor is it known to any as it is itself nor knows them itself as they are; whose is neither speech, nor name, nor knowledge, nor darkness, nor light, nor error, nor truth, nor any affirmation or negation." And then, to give a colour of orthodoxy to his doctrine he quotes the authority of St. Augustine to the effect that "the wisdom of God is no more wisdom than justice, His justice no more justice than wisdom, His life no more life than cognition, His cognition no more cognition than life; for all these qualities are united in God not in the way of confusion or combination or by the interpenetration as it were of things in themselves distinct, but by way of a perfectly simple ineffable fontal unity": a summary statement of some passages in the sixth book of the treatise "De Trinitate," which is of course misleading apart from the context in which they occur.

Such is Pico's theory of the Godhead -- a theory which in fact reduces it to the mere abstraction of perfect simplicity and universality, a theory wholly irreconcilable with the Christian faith, wholly unfit to form the basis of religion. Nor was its author insensible, rather he would seem to have been only too painfully conscious of the barrenness of the results to which so much toil and trouble had brought him; for he has no sooner enunciated it than he turns, as if with a sigh, to Politian, and addresses him thus:--"But see, my Angelo, what madness possesses us. Love God while we are in the body we rather may than either define or know Him. By loving Him we more

profit ourselves, have less trouble, please Him better. Yet had we rather ever seeking Him by the way of speculation never find Him than by loving Him possess that which without loving were in vain found"-- words that since Pico's day must have found an echo in the heart of many a thinker weary with the vain effort to gain by philosophical methods a clear insight into the divine nature.

The treatise involved Pico in an amicable controversy with his friend Antonio da Faenza (Antonius Faventinus or Cittadinus), who criticised it in some detail, and to whom Pico replied with no less detail. The correspondence was protracted during his life, and was continued after his death by his nephew, but it sheds little additional light on Pico's views. How far he seriously held them, and whether he had some esoteric method of reconciling them with the orthodox faith, are questions which we have no means of answering. It is curious, however, in reference to this matter, to compare the opening chapters of his commentary on Girolamo Benivieni's *canzone* on "Celestial Love." Benivieni also was a Platonist, and having saturated himself with the Symposium and the Phaedrus, the fifth book of the third Ennead of Plotinus, and Ficino's commentaries, thought himself qualified to write a *canzone* on ideal love which should put Guinicelli and Cavalcanti to shame. The result was that he produced a *canzone* which has a certain undeniable elevation of style, but is so obscure that even with the help of Pico's detailed commentary it takes some hard study to elicit its meaning. The theme, however, is the purifying influence of love in raising the soul through various stages of refinement from the preoccupation with sensuous beauty to the contemplation of the ideal type of the beautiful, and thence to the knowledge of God, who, though, as Pico is careful to explain, He is not beautiful Himself, since beauty implies an element of variety repugnant to His nature, is nevertheless the source of the beautiful no less than of the true and the good.

The commentary consists of two parts; the first a philosophical dissertation on love in general, its nature, origin, and place in the universal scheme of things; the second a detailed analysis and exposition of the poem, stanza by stanza, almost line by line. Both parts, in spite of the good Italian in which they are written, are unspeakably tedious, being mostly made up of bald rationalizations of Greek myths. The first few chapters, however, are theological or theosophical; and here we find God described consistently with the doctrine of the "De Ente et Uno" as "ineffably elevated above all intellect and cognition," while beneath Him, and between the intelligible and the sensible worlds is placed "a creature of nature as perfect as it is possible for a creature to be," whom God creates from eternity, whom alone He immediately creates, and who "by Plato and likewise by the ancient philosophers, Mercury Trismegistus and Zoroaster is called now the Son of God, now Mind, now Wisdom, now Divine Reason." Here we have a fusion and confusion of the "self-sufficing and most perfect God" created by the Demiurge of Plato's Timaeus to be the archetype of the world, the Son of God of Philo and later theosophists, and the *Νοῦς* [Greek: Noys] of Plotinus, the first emanation of the Godhead. This Son of God, however, Pico bids us observe, is not to be confounded with the Son of God of Christian theology, who is Creator and not creature, but may be regarded as "the first and most noble angel created by God."

This is virtually Pico's last word on theology or theosophy, and it leaves the question of his orthodoxy an insoluble enigma. Did he really believe in the Son of God of Christian theology, or had he not rather dethroned Him in favour of the syncretistic abstraction which he calls the first and most noble angel created by God, though he was too timid to avow the fact. We have seen that he did not scruple to find

types of Christ in created things, such as the firmament and the sun. Little stress can be laid on this, and if it stood alone it might be dismissed as a piece of sheer inadvertence, but read in connection with the pregnant passage from the commentary on Benivieni's poem, it certainly makes in favour of the idea that in the passion for unity which evidently possessed him Pico had abandoned his trinitarianism, and that the treatise "De Ente et Uno" contains his most mature and profound theological convictions. If so, the caution against confusing the two Sons of God must be interpreted as a mere device to save appearances.

However this may be, it is undeniable that Pico was, even in the conventional Christian sense, a sincerely religious man. The letter to his nephew, Giovanni Francesco, on the spiritual life, translated by More, has in it the ring of genuine simple Christian godliness, and though Savonarola saw fit to consign him to the purgatorial fire for his refusal to devote himself entirely to the religious life, he did so probably rather in sorrow than in anger, on the principle that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, regarding Pico as one who had in him the making of a saint, but who by a *gran rifiuto* failed of attaining unto the prize of his high calling.

That Pico should have found a theology which reduces God to a *caput mortuum* of which nothing can be said but that it is above all things, and Christ to a "great angel," the first of created beings, compatible with the simple and ardent piety of a Catholic saint would indeed be a notable phenomenon, but, at the same time, one which sound criticism would accept without attempting to account for it, much less to explain it away. No exercise of ingenuity would ever succeed in harmonising his theology with the Catholic or any form of the Christian faith, and it is equally impossible to dispute the sincerity of his piety. It is all part and parcel of the peculiar, unique idiosyncrasy of the man's nature, a nature compounded of mysticism and rationalism, credulity and scepticism, in about equal proportions.

He finds strange hidden meanings in the simple words of Moses, he believes in natural magic, and holds that it testifies more clearly of Christ than any other science, yet he cannot credit the story of Christ's descent into hell, or the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the eternity of punishment, and writes an elaborate treatise in twelve books against the pretensions of astrology. A man of immense and varied learning, not merely classical but oriental, he yet permitted himself to be imposed on by a Sicilian Jew, to whom he gave an immense sum for some worthless cabalistic treatises, under the impression that they were the lost works of Ezra.

Perhaps it is unfair to take seriously what may have been merely a compliment less sincere than gracious; but it certainly does not tend to raise one's impression of his critical powers to find Pico, in a letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, setting Lorenzo's insipid verses above anything that Dante or Petrarch ever wrote.

With all this it is more easy to do injustice than justice to Pico. It is impossible to study him attentively without seeing at last that amidst all his vagaries, absurdities, perversities, there was real faculty in him, and faculty of an order which, matured by a severer discipline than his age could afford, would have won for him a place, though perhaps no very exalted one, among philosophers. The philosophic instinct, without doubt, he had, and in high measure, a veritable passion not merely for truth but for a consistent, harmonious body of truth. The high originative faculty which discovers a method was denied him. Hence he remained a mere syncretist forlornly struggling to weave the discordant utterances of rival schools into a coherent system. His importance for the student of philosophy is that he made this attempt, made it with

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wider knowledge and more passionate zeal than any of his predecessors, and failed, and that with his failure scholasticism as a movement came to an end. Individual thinkers indeed there have been, such as Leibniz and Coleridge, in whom something of Pico's spirit has survived, whose laudable anxiety to justify the ways of God to man has led them to attempt the reconciliation of the irreconcilable, of atomism, e.g., with idealism, of transcendentalism with the Christian faith, and such men are in effect schoolmen born out of due time. Nevertheless that which in the specific sense we call scholasticism made in Pico its final effort, was beaten by the sheer intractability of its problem, which the new learning made ever more apparent, and died out.

Schoolman, however, though Pico was, it must not be forgotten that he was also a humanist. His style, even where, as in the "Apologia," he is at his driest and most formal, and in the attempt to reconcile his heresies with Catholic doctrine, becomes, in the fineness of his distinctions, almost more scholastic than the subtlest doctor that ever spun intellectual cobwebs in Oxford or Paris, effectually distinguishes him from "the barbarians," and proclaims him a child of the renaissance; and long and justly celebrated were the "golden letters" in which, in all the luxuriance of Ciceronic periods, he praises Politian's translation of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus or Lorenzo's verses, discusses the rival claims of the old and new learning with Ermolao Barbaro, descants on the regal dignity of philosophy and philosophers to Andrea Corneo, exhorts his nephew to the practice of the Christian life, or expatiates to Ficino on his new-born zeal for oriental studies.

In none of these does he appear to better advantage than in one of the earliest, written in reply to a flattering letter from Politian, which in effect admitted him to the confraternity of learned men.

"I am as much beholden to you," he writes, "for the high praise you give me in your last letter as I am far from deserving it. For one is beholden to another for what he gives, not for what he pays. Wherefore, indeed, I am beholden to you for all that you write of me, since in me there is nothing of the kind, for you in no way owed it to me, but it all came of your courtesy and singular graciousness towards me. For the rest, if you examine me, you will find nothing in me that is not slight, humble, strictly limited. I am a novice, a tyro, and have advanced but a step, no more, from the darkness of ignorance. It is a compliment to place me in the rank of a student. Something more is meant by a man of learning, a title appropriate only to you and your likes, too grand for me; since of those matters which in letters are most important I have as yet obtained no thorough knowledge, scarcely more indeed than, as it were, a peep through a lattice window. I will endeavour indeed, and that I now do, to become some time or another such as you say and either really think, or at any rate would fain think, that I am. Meantime I will follow your example, Angelo, who excuse yourself to the Greeks by the fact that you are a Latin, to the Latins on the ground that you Graecize. I too will have recourse to a similar subterfuge, and claim the indulgence of the poets and rhetoricians because I am said to philosophize, of the philosophers because I play the rhetorician and cultivate the Muses; though my case is very different from yours. For in sooth while I desire to sit, as they say, on two chairs, I fall between them, and it turns out at last (to be brief) that I am neither a poet, nor a rhetorician, nor a philosopher." How strictly these gloomy forebodings were realised in the matter of philosophy we have already seen. From attempting to decide how far his cultivation of the Muses was rewarded we are precluded by Pico's own act, the destruction of his early love poems. Of these the following sonnet alone has been preserved:--

Da poi che i duo belli occhi che mi fanno
Cantar del mio Signor sì nuovamente,
Avvamparo la mia gelata mente,
Già volge in lieta sorte il second' anno.

Felice giorno, ch'a sì dolce affanno
Fu bel principio; onde nel cor si sente
Una fiamma girar sì dolcemente,
Che men beati son que' che 'n ciel stanno.

L'ombra, it pensier, la negligenza, e'l letto
M'avean ridotto, ove la maggior part
Giace ad ogn' or del vulgo errante e vile.

Scorsemi Amore a più gradito oggetto:
E se cosa di grato oggi a 'l mio stile,
Madonna affina in me l'ingegno e l'arte.

Since first the light of those twin stars, thine eyes,
That me to hymn my Lord thus newly move,
Kindled my frost-bound soul with fires of love,
Years twain their course have run in happy wise.

O blessed day, of such sweet heaviness
Such fair beginning! Since when to and fro
Within my heart a gentle flame doth go,
That not in heaven is found such happiness.

Recluse I lived, in musing lost, nor care,
Nor action knew, well-nigh become a part
Of the vile herd of errant men and base.

Love roused my soul to seek an end more fair:
And if my style to-day has aught of grace
My lady 'tis refines my mind and art.

If this somewhat insipid sonnet is a fair sample of Pico's amatory effusions, one can more readily understand why he burned them than the regret which their destruction caused Politian, and which drew from him the following epigram:--

Πολλακι τοξευθεις φλεχθεις θ' υτο Πιχος ερωτων
Ουχ ετλη προτερω, παντα δ'αφειλεθ οπλα,
Τοξα, βελη, φαρετρας, και νηησας τα γε παντα
Ηψεν ομου σορον λαμπασι ληιδιοις.
Συν δ'αυτους μαρψας αμενηνα χερυδρια,
Ταις νευραις, μεσσην δ'εμβαλε πυρκαια δνσεν
Και πυρι φλεξε το πυρ' τι δ ω αφρονες αυτον ερωτες
Τον Πικον μουσων ειςεποτασθε προμον;

Ficino took a different view from Politian. "Somewhat of love," he wrote after Pico's death, "he had written in the heat of his youth, which in his riper judgment he

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condemned and determined altogether to destroy, nor could it have been published without damage to his reputation." This, however, probably refers not so much to the literary merit of the poems as to their moral tone. His nephew, Giovanni Francesco Pico distinctly states that they were destroyed "religionis causa." It is evident also from the way in which Politian refers to them that they were such as a less severe moralist than Ficino might have censured. "I hear," he wrote, "that you have burned the little love poems which you made in the past, fearing perhaps lest they should injure your fair name or the morals of others. For I cannot think that you have destroyed them, as Plato is said to have destroyed his, because they were not worthy of publication. For as far as I remember nothing could be more terse, more sweet or more polished." Pico was wont to solace himself with Propertius, and had wantoned with other ladies than the Muses, so that in all likelihood his love poetry was decidedly more ardent than chaste. More (*infra*) is inaccurate in stating that the "five books" thus destroyed were in the vulgar tongue. They were written, as we learn from Giovanni Francesco Pico "elegiaco carmine," *i.e.* in Latin elegies, probably modelled on Propertius. The Italian poems, however, were destroyed at the same time. Of Pico's Latin elegiacs two specimens survive: (1) a hymn to God written probably after his conversion; (2) an encomiastic poem on his friend Girolamo Benivieni. For the first no high merit can be claimed. The attempt to give poetical expression to the mysteries of Christian theology is nearly always unsuccessful, and Pico's "Deprecatoria" forms no exception to the rule. The most that can be said for it is that it is tolerable Latin. Such as it is, however, it is here printed for comparison with More's translation, which will be found below.

JOANNIS PICI MIRANDULÆ DEPRECATORIA AD DEUM.

Alme Deus! summa qui majestate verendus,
Vere unum in triplici numine numen habes:
Cui super excelsi flammantia mœnia mundi
Angelici servit turba beata chori
Cujus et immensum hoc oculis spectabile nostris
Omnipotens quondam dextra creavit opus:
Æthera qui torques, qui nutu dirigis orbem,
Cujus ab imperio fulmina missa cadunt:
Parce, precor, miseris, nostras, precor, ablue sordes,
Ne nos justa tui pœna furoris agat.
Quod si nostra pari pensentur debita lance
Et sit judicii norma severa tui,
Quis queat horrendum viventis far flagellum
Vindicis, et plagas sustinuisse graves?
Non ipsa iratæ restabit Machina dextræ,
Machina supremo non peritura die.
Quæ mens non primæ damnata ab origine culpæ,
Aut quæ non proprio crimine facta nocens?
Aut certe ille ipse es proprium cui parcere semper,
Justitiamque pari qui pietate tenes:
Præmia qui ut meritis longe maiora rependis,
Supplicia admissis sic leviora malis.
Namque tua est nostris major dementia culpæ,
Et dare non dignis res mage digna Deo est.
Quamquam sat digni, si quos, dignatur amare
Qui quos non dignos invenit ipse facit.
Ergo tuos placido miserans, precor, aspice vultu,

Seu servos mavis, seu magis esse reos:
Nempe reos, nostra si spectes crimina vitæ,
Ingratæ nimium crimina mentis opus:
At tua si potius in nobis munera cernas,
Munera præcipuis nobilitata bonis,
Nos sumus ipsa olim tibi quos natura ministros
Mox fecit natos gratia sancta tuos.
Sed premit heu! miseris tantæ indulgentia sortis,
Quos fecit natos gratia, culpa reos.

Culpa reos fecit, sed vincat gratia culpam,
Ut tuus in nostro crimine crescat honor.
Nam tua sive aliter sapientia, sive potestas,
Nota suas mundo proderet possit opes,
Major in erratis bonitatis gloria nostris,
Illeque præ cunctis fulget amandus amor,
Qui potuit cælo Dominum deducere ab alto,
Inque crucem summi tollere membra Dei:
Ut male contractas patrio de semine sordes
Ablueret lateris sanguis et unda tui:
Sic amor et pietas tua, Rex mitissime, tantis
Dat mala materiem suppeditare bonis.
O amor! O pietas nostris bene provida rebus!
O bonitas servi facta ministra tui!
O amor! O pietas nostris male cognita sæclis!
O bonitas nostris nunc prope victa malis!
Da, precor, huic tanto qui semper fervet amori
Ardorem in nostris cordibus esse parem:
Da Sathanæ imperium, cui tot servisse per annos
Poenitet excusso deposuisse jugo:
Da, precor, extingui vesanæ incendia mentis,
Et tuus in nostro pectore vivat amor:
Ut cum mortalis perfunctus munere vitæ
Ductus erit Dominum spiritus ante suum,
Promissi regni felici sorte potitus
Non Dominum sed Te sentiat esse Patrem.

The poem on Benivieni is in a happier vein:-

Lætor, io, Tyrrhena, tibi, Florentia, lætor!
Clamet, io Pæn, quisquis amicus adest!
Quale decus, qua fama, tibi, qua gloria surgit!
Tolle caput, Libycas tolle superba jubas!
Ille tuos agros intra et tua moenia natus,
Atque Arni liquidas inter adultus aquas,
Cui cum divinum sit sacro in pectore numen
Quam bene de sacro nomine nomen habet!
Ille, inquam, plausu jam cœpit ubique frequenti,
Jam cœpit multo non sine honore legi.
Sicelis Ausonias illius Musa per urbes
Fert celebrem magna candida laude pedem.
Auctorem patriæ quisquis legit invidet illi,
Atque optat patriæ nomina tanta sum.
Gaude, gaude iterum tanto insignita decore,
Et vati adplaudas terra beata tuo.
Cinge coronatos vernanti flore capillos,
Conveniunt titulo Florida sarta tuo.
Undique Achæmenio spargantur compita costo,
Et per odoratas lilia multa vias.
En! stirps in nostras Benivenia protulit auras

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Etruscum docto qui gerat ore senem!
Ponite Avernales jam gens Etrusca cupressus,
Quas rapta immiti funere Laura dedit.
Pellantur queruli fletus; en! Laura revixit;
Spirat; et argutum novit, ut ante, loqui.
Quin solito nitet illa magis, majorque priore
Nescio quæ cultu gratia ab ore venit.
Reddidit hanc nobis laus nostra Hieronimus urbis,
Et dedit infernos posse iterare lacus:
At certe (procul hinc O Livor inique facessas)
Nunc graviore sonat grandius illa chely.
Di Superi! sublime ales modulatur, ut aqua
Sit jam Romano Tusca loquela sono.
Nec tamen ille Euros frondosus jactat inanes:
Plus quam promittit fronte recessus habet.
Quid referam, quam lenis erat? quam carmina piano
In numeros currunt ordine juncta suos:
Sic memini me sæpe sacros vidisse liquores
Profluere, imbriferi vis ubi nulla Noti.
Sed quis miretur meditato in carmine tantum
Cultus, cum pariter non meditata canat?
Quis non hunc juret Phoebum, modo pendeat arcus?
Cornua sint, Bromium quis neget esse Deum?
Audi hunc quoties cithara cantare recurva,
Abduxit sensus protinus ille meos.
Et quid non possent digiti mulcere loquentis?
Sisteret his rapidi flumina magna Padi:
Phoebeos medio firmaret in æthere currus:
Lunares pictos sisteret axe boves.
Terribilem sævis Martem revocaret ab armis:
Leniret Ditem, falciferumque senem:
Et quas non potuit quondam Rhodopeius Orpheus
Flectere Strymonias flecteret ille nurus.

The poem was apparently written after the death of Lorenzo, whose successor Pico hails in Benivieni. The epithet "Sicelis," applied to Benivieni's muse, refers to his bucolics; one of which (in praise of poetry) is entitled "Lauro," after Lorenzo; in another, which bears the name of "Pico," Lorenzo and Pico converse in amœbean strains. "Laura" stands apparently for Lorenzo's muse. "Etruscum qui gerat ore senem," is an uncouth and somewhat obscure phrase. "Nec tamen ille Euros frondosus jactat inanes" is plainly corrupt, but it is not easy to suggest a satisfactory emendation. "Quid referam, quam lenis erat?" is too bad Latin to have been written by Pico. Perhaps the true reading is "quam lene sonet." The verses are undeniably spirited, though somewhat too rhetorical for true poetry.

It is, indeed, only as a rhetorician that Pico can claim to have succeeded. The letter to Ermolao Barbaro in defence of the schoolmen, and that to Lorenzo in praise of his verses are admirable examples of the rhetorical exercise pure and simple -- for as such they must primarily be regarded -- a little too elaborate, perhaps, too artificial, too declamatory, but still decidedly meritorious in their kind. The air of sincerity they certainly have not -- indeed the scholastics of Padua were so far from taking Pico's eloquent panegyric of their predecessors seriously that they were inclined to suspect him of laughing at them in his sleeve. Nor is it easy to believe that Pico was really sincere in the exaggerated encomium which he passed on the verses of Lorenzo, one of the most insipid writers which even that age of learned insipidity produced. The real man, however, undoubtedly speaks in the letters on the philosophic and Christian life, the latter written, it must be remembered, when Pico was solemnized by the

recent death of Lorenzo. The minor letters exhibit Pico in the pleasant light of the scholar writing to his friends to give or solicit information on various literary questions. One closes them, however, with a sigh of regret that the scholar should predominate so much over the man.

How thankful we should have been for a few easy gossiping letters in the vulgar tongue revealing Pico to us as he was in his moments of complete *abandon*. Perhaps, however, he knew none such, and there was nothing to reveal that he has not revealed. Sense of humour he seems certainly to have lacked; I have not found in him the least suggestion that he had any faculty of hearty laughing in him at all. If he ever had it, severe study must have crushed it out of him. Probably the basis of his nature was a deep religious melancholy, not at all lightened by the fact that learning had impaired his hold on the faith.

As his short life drew towards its close Pico's preoccupation with religion became more intense and exclusive. Besides the "Rules" of a Christian Life, and the "Interpretation" of Psalm XVI, translated by More, he wrote an Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, and projected, but did not live to execute a Commentary on the New Testament, for which he prepared himself by diligent collation of such MSS. as he could come by; also a defence of the Vulgate and of the Septuagint version of the Psalms against the criticisms of the Jewish scholars, and an elaborate apology for Christianity against seven classes of opponents; to wit (1) atheists, (2) idolaters, (3) Jews, (4) Mahometans, (5) Christians who reject a portion of the faith, (6) Christians who adulterate the faith with profane superstitions, (7) orthodox Christians who live unholy lives. Some idea of the scale of this vast undertaking may be gathered from the fact that the treatise "Adversus Astrologos," which occupies 240 closely printed folio pages formed only a small fragment of it.

But while thus zealous for the defence of the faith, Pico seems never to have seriously contemplated entering the Church, though often urged to do so not only by Savonarola but by other of his friends, who thought he might reasonably aspire to the dignity of cardinal. Their solicitude for his advancement he rebuked with a haughty "Non sunt cogitationes meæ cogitationes vestræ." Probably he considered that he could render religion truer service in the character of lay advocate than if he were trammelled by clerical offices.

Short as his life was, he survived his three most intimate friends, Lorenzo de' Medici, Ermolao Barbaro, and Politian, all of whom died within the two years 1492-4. Probably the grief caused by this succession of misfortunes had much to do with inducing or aggravating the fever of which he died hardly two months after Politian, on 17th Nov. 1494. The corpse, invested by Savonarola's own hands with the habit of the order of the Frati Predicanti, in which he had ardently desired to enrol Pico during his life, was buried in the church of S. Marco. The tomb was inscribed with the epitaph:

"Joannes jacet hic Mirandola: cætera norunt
Et Tagus, et Ganges, forsan et Antipodes."

Ficino, who had been to him "in years as a father, in intimacy as a brother, in affection as a second self," wrote another epitaph, which was not, however, placed upon the tomb: "Antistites secretiora mysteria raro admodum concedunt oculis,

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statimque reconduunt. Ita Deus mortalibus divinum philosophum Joannem Pieum Mirandolam trigesimo (*sic*) anno maturum."

The generous enthusiasm which prompted Politian to confer upon his friend the high-sounding title of "Phoenix of the wits" (*Fenice degli ingegni*) has not been justified by events. Once sunk in his ashes the Phoenix never rose again.

The pious care of Giovanni Francesco Pico, who published his uncle's life and works at Venice in 1498, did much, indeed, to avert the oblivion which ultimately fell upon him. This edition, however, was imperfect, the Theses and the Commentary on Benivieni's poem, with some minor matters being omitted. These were added in the Basel edition of 1601. The "Golden Letters" have passed through many editions, the last that of Cellario in 1682. The Commentary on Celestial and Divine Love was reprinted as late as 1731.

Pico figures in a dim and ever dimmer way in the older histories of philosophy from Stanley, who gives a rude and imperfect translation of the "Commentary" to Hegel, who dismisses him and his works in a few lines. More recently, however, one of Hegel's laborious fellow-countrymen, Georg Dreydorff, discovered a system in Pico and expounded it.*

*[Note: "Das System des Johann Pico Grafen von Mirandola and Concordiat" Marburg, 1858.]

But most Englishmen probably owe such interest as he excites in them to Mr. Pater's charming sketch in his dainty volume of studies entitled "The Renaissance," [see above] or the slighter notices in Mr. J. A. Symonds' "Renaissance in Italy," or Mr. Seebohm's "Oxford Reformers."

The chronicles of Mirandola, edited for the municipality in 1872, under the title "Memorie Storiche della Città e dell' Antico Ducato della Mirandola," are an authority of capital importance for the history of the Pico family and its connexions. The notes to Riccardo Bartoli's "Elogio al Principe Pico" (1791) also contain some valuable original matter. The critical judgment of the last century on Pico's services to the cause of the revival of learning is given by Christoph Meiners in "Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Manner der Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften." Some of Pico's letters translated, into the ponderous English of the period, connected by a thread of biography, and illustrated by erudite notes, will be found in W. Parr Greswell's "Memoirs of Angelus Politianus," etc. 1805. The best modern Italian biography is that by F. Calori Cesis, entitled "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola detto La Fenice degli Ingegneri" (2nd edn. 1872).

THE LIFE OF PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

HERE IS CONTAINED THE LIFE OF GIOVANNI PICO EARL OF MIRANDOLA
A GREAT LORD OF ITALY AN EXCELLENT CUNNING MAN IN ALL
SCIENCES & VIRTUOUS OF LIVING. WITH DIVERS EPISTLES & OTHER
WORKS OF THE SAID GIOVANNI PICO FULL OF GREAT SCIENCE VIRTUE
& WISDOM WHOSE LIFE & WORKS BE WORTHY & DIGNE TO BE READ
AND OFTEN TO BE HAD IN MEMORY.



Dedication



UNTO HIS RIGHT ENTIRELY BELOVED SISTER IN CHRIST JOYCE LEIGH[1]
THOMAS MORE GREETING IN OUR LORD.



IT is and of long time hath been my well-beloved sister a custom in the beginning of the new year friends to send between presents or gifts, as the witnesses of their love and friendship & also signifying that they desire each to other that year a good continuance and prosperous end of that lucky beginning. But commonly also those presents that are used customably all in this manner between friends to be sent be such things as pertain only unto the body either to be fed or to be clad or some otherwise delighted: by which it seemeth that their friendship is but fleshly & stretcheth in manner to the body only. But forasmuch as the love & amity of Christian folk should be rather ghostly friendship than bodily: sith that all faithful people are rather spiritual then carnal: for as the apostle saith we be not now in flesh but in spirit if Christ abide in us: I therefore mine heartily beloved sister in good luck of this new year have sent you such a present as may bear witness of my tender love & zeal to the happy continuance and gracious increase of virtue in your soul: and whereas the gifts of other folk declare that they wish their friends to be worldly fortunate, mine testifieth that I desire to have you godly prosperous. These works more profitable than large were made in Latin by one Giovanni Pico Earl of Mirandola a lordship in Italy, of whose cunning & virtue we need here nothing to speak, forasmuch as hereafter we peruse the source of his whole life rather after our little power slenderly than after his merits sufficiently. The works are such that truly good sister I suppose of the quantity there cometh none in your hand more profitable: neither to th'achieving of temperance in prosperity, nor to the purchasing of patience in adversity, nor to the despising of worldly vanity, nor to the desiring of heavenly felicity: which works I would require you gladly to receive: ne were it that they be such that for the goodly matter (howsoever they be translated) may delight & please any person that hath any mean desire and love to God: and that yourself is such one as for your virtue and fervent zeal to God can not but joyously receive any thing that meanly soundeth either to the reproach of vice, commendation of virtue, or honour and laud of God, who preserve you.



THE LIFE OF GIOVANNI PICO, EARL OF MIRANDOLA.



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

OF HIS PARENTS AND TIME OF HIS BIRTH.

In the year of our Lord God M.CCCC.lxiii Pius the second being then the general vicar of Christ in his church: and Frederick the third of the name ruling the empire: this noble man was borne the last child of his mother Julia, a woman come of

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a noble stock,[3] his father hight Giovanni Francesco, a lord of great honour and authority.

OF THE WONDER THAT APPEARED BEFORE HIS BIRTH.

A marvellous sight was there seen before his birth: there appeared a fiery garland standing over the chamber of his mother while she travailed & suddenly vanished away: which appearance was peradventure a token that he which should that hour in the company of mortal men be born in the perfection of understanding should be like the perfect figure of that round circle or garland: and that his excellent name should round about the circle of this whole world be magnified, whose mind should alway as the fire aspire upward to heavenly things, and whose fiery eloquence should with an ardent heart in time to come worship and praise almighty God with all his strength: and as that flame suddenly vanished so should this fire soon from the eyes of mortal people be hid. We have oftentimes read that such unknown and strange tokens hath gone before or followeth the nativities of excellent wise and virtuous men, departing (as it were) and by God's commandment severing the cradles of such special children from the company of other of the common sort: and showing that they be born to the achieving of some great thing. But to pass over other. The great Saint Ambrose: a swarm of bees flew about his mouth in his cradle, & some entered into his mouth, and after that issuing out again and flying up on high, hiding themselves among the clouds, escaped both the sight of his father and of all them that were present: which prognostication one Paulinus[4] making much of, expounded it to signify to us the sweet honeycombs of his pleasant writing: which should show out the celestial gifts of God & should lift up the mind of men from earth into heaven.

OF HIS PERSON.

He was of feature and shape seemly and beauteous, of stature goodly and high, of flesh tender and soft: his visage lovely and fair, his colour white intermingled with comely ruddies, his eyes grey and quick of look, his teeth white and even, his hair yellow and not to piked.[5]

OF HIS SETTING FORTH TO SCHOOL AND STUDY IN HUMANITY.

Under the rule and governance of his mother he was set to masters & to learning: where with so ardent mind he laboured the studies of humanity: that within short while he was (and not without a cause) accounted among the chief Orators and Poets of that time: in learning marvellously swift and of so ready a wit, that the verses which he heard once read he would again both forward and backward to the great wonder of the hearers rehearse, and over that would hold it in sure remembrance: which in other folks wont commonly to happen contrary. For they that are swift in taking be oftentimes slow in remembering, and they that with more labour & difficulty receive it more fast & surely hold it.

OF HIS STUDY IN CANON.

OF HIS STUDY IN PHILOSOPHY & DIVINITY.

After this as a desirous ensearcher of the secrets of nature he left these common trodden paths and gave himself whole to speculation & philosophy as well human as divine. For the purchasing whereof (after the manner of Plato and Appollonius)[6] he scrupulously sought out all the famous doctors of his time, visiting studiously all the universities and schools not only through Italy but also through France. And so indefatigable labour gave he to those studies: that yet a child and beardless he was both reputed and was in deed both a perfect philosopher and a perfect divine.

OF HIS MIND AND VAINGLORIOUS DISPICIONS OF ROME.

Now had he been vii. year conversant in these studies when full of pride & desirous of glory and man's praise (for yet was he not kindled in the love of God) he went to Rome, and there (coveting to make a show of his cunning: & little considering how great envy he should raise against himself) ix. C. questions he proposed, of divers & sundry matters: as well in logic and philosophy as divinity with great study picked and sought out as well of the Latin authors as the Greeks: and partly set out of the secret mysteries of the Hebrews, Chaldees, & Arabies: and many things drawn out of the old obscure philosophy of Pythagoras, Trimegistus, and Orpheus,[7] & many other things strange: and to all folk (except right few special excellent men) before that day: not unknown only: but also unheard of. All which questions in open places (that they might be to all people the better known) he fastened and set up, offering also himself to bear the costs of all such as would come hither out of far countries to dispute, but through the envy of his malicious enemies (which envy like the fire ever draweth to the highest) he could never bring about to have a day to his dispicions appointed. For this cause he tarried at Rome an whole year, in all which time his enviers never durst openly with open dispicions attempt him, but rather with craft and sleight and as it were with privy trenches enforced to undermine him, for none other cause but for malice and for they were (as many men thought) corrupt with a pestilent envy.

This envy as men deemed was specially raised against him for this cause that where there were many which had many years: some for glory: some for covetise: given themselves to learning: they thought that it should haply deface their fame & minish th'opinion of their cunning if so young a man plenteous of substance & great doctrine durst in the chief city of the world make a proof of his wit and his learning: as well in things natural as in divinity & in many such things as men many years never attained to. Now when they perceived that they could not against his cunning any thing openly prevail, they brought forth the serpentines of false crime, and cried out that there were xiiij. of his ix. C. questions suspect of heresy. Then joined they to them some good simple folk that should of zeal to the faith and pretence of religion impugn those questions as new things & with which their ears had not be in ure. In which impugnation though some of them haply lacked not good mind: yet lacked they erudition and learning: which questions notwithstanding before that not a few famous doctors of divinity had approved as good and clean, and subscribed their names under them. But he not bearing the loss of his fame made a defence for those xiiij. questions: a work of great erudition and elegant and stuffed with the cognition of many things worthy to be learned. Which work he compiled in xx nights. In which it evidently appeareth: not only that those conclusions were good and standing with the faith: but

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also that they which had barked at them were of folly and rudeness to be reproved: which defence and all other things that he should write he committed like a good Christian man to the most holy judgement of our mother holy church: which defence received: & the xij. questions duly by deliberation examined: our holy father the Pope approved Pico and tenderly favoured him, as by a bull of our holy father Pope Alexander the vj, it plainly appeareth: but the book in which the whole. ix. C. questions with their conclusions were contained (forasmuch as there were in them many things strange and not fully declared, and were more meet for secret communication of learned men than for open hearing of common people, which for lack of cunning might take hurt thereby) Pico desired himself that it should not be read. And so was the reading thereof forbidden. Lo this end had Pico of his high mind and proud purpose, that where he thought to have gotten perpetual praise there had he much work to keep himself upright: that he ran not in perpetual infamy and slander.

OF THE CHANGE OF HIS LIFE.

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

OF THE FAME OF HIS VIRTUE AND THE RESORT UNTO HIM THEREFOR.

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

THE BURNING OF WANTON BOOKS.

Five books that in his youth of wanton verses of love with other like fantasies he had made in his vulgar tongue: all together (in detestation of his vice passed) and lest these trifles might be some evil occasion afterward, he burned them.

OF HIS STUDY AND DILIGENCE IN HOLY SCRIPTURE.

From thenceforth he gave himself day & night most fervently to the studies of scripture, in which he wrote many noble books: which well testify both his angelic wit, his ardent labour, and his profound erudition, of which books some we have & some as an inestimable treasure we have lost. Great libraries it is incredible to consider with how marvellous celerity he read them over, and wrote out what him liked: of the old fathers of the church, so great knowledge he had as it were hard for him to have that hath lived long & all his life hath done nothing else but read them. Of these newer divines so good judgement he had that it might appear there were nothing in any of them it were unknown to him, but all thing as ripe as though he had all their works ever before his eyes, but of all these new doctors he specially commendeth Saint Thomas[8] as him it enforceth himself in a sure pillar of truth. He was very quick, wise, & subtle in dispicions & had great felicity therein while he had the high stomach. But now a great while he had bade such conflicts farewell: and every day more & more hated them, and so greatly abhorred them that when Hercules Estensis Duke of Ferrara[9]: first by messengers and after by himself: desired him to dispute at Ferrara: because the general chapter of friars preachers was holden there: long it was ere he could be brought thereto: but at the instant request of the Duke which very singularly loved him he came thither, where he so behaved himself that was wonder to behold how all the audience rejoiced to hear him, for it were not possible for a man to utter neither more cunning nor more cunningly. But it was a common saying with him that such altercations were for a logician and not meetly for a philosopher, he said also that such disputations greatly profited as were exercised with a peaceable mind to th'ensearching of the truth in secret company without great audience: but he said that those dispicions did great hurt that were holden openly to th'ostentation of learning & to win the favour of the common people & the commendation of fools. He thought that utterly it could unneth be but that with the desire of worship (which these gazing disputers gape after) there is with an inseparable bond annexed the appetite of his confusion & rebuke whom they argue with, which appetite is a deadly wound to the soul, & a mortal poison to charity. There was nothing passed him of those capicious subtleties & cavillations of sophistry, nor again there was nothing that he more hated & abhorred, considering that they served of nought but to the shaming of such other folk as were in very science much better learned and in those trifles ignorant and it unto th'ensearching of the truth (to which he gave continual labour) they profited little or nought.

OF HIS LEARNING UNIVERSALLY.

But because we will hold the reader no longer in hand: we will speak of his learning but a word or twain generally. Some man hath shined in eloquence, but ignorance of natural things hath dishonested him. Some man hath flowered in the knowledge of divers strange languages, but he hath wanted all the cognition of philosophy. Some man hath read the inventions of the old philosophers, but he hath not been exercised in the new schools. Some man hath sought cunning as well

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philosophy as divinity for praise and vainglory and not for any profit or increase of Christ's church. But Pico all these things with equal study hath so received that they might seem by heaps as a plenteous theme to have flowen into him. For he was not of the condition of some folk (which to be excellent in one thing set all other aside) but he in all sciences profited so excellently: that which of them soever he had considered, in him ye would have thought that he had taken that one for his only study. And all these things were in him so much the more marvellous in that he came thereto by himself with the strength of his own wit for the love of God and profit his church without masters, so that we may say of him that Epicure the philosopher said of him that he was his own master.[10]

FIVE CAUSES THAT IN SO SHORT TIME BROUGHT HIM TO SO MARVELLOUS CUNNING.

To the bringing forth of so wonderful effects in so small time I consider five causes to have come together: first an incredible wit, secondly a marvellous fast memory, thirdly great substance by the which to the buying of his books as well Latin as Greek & other tongues he was especially holpen. VIJ.M. ducats he had laid out in the gathering together of volumes of all manner of literature. The fourth cause was his busy and infatigable study. The fifth was the contempt despising of all earthly things.

OF HIS CONDITIONS AND HIS VIRTUE.

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

OF THE SALE OF HIS LORDSHIPS AND ALMS.

Three year before his death (to th'end that all the charge & business of rule or lordship set aside he might lead his life in rest and peace, well considering to what end this earthly honour & worldly dignity cometh) all his patrimony and dominions: that is to say: the third part of th'earldom of Mirandola and of Concordia: unto Giovanni Francesco his nephew he sold, and that so good cheap that it seemed rather a gift than a sale.[11] All that ever he received of this bargain partly he gave out to poor folk, partly he bestowed in the buying of a little land, finding of him & his household. And over that: much silver vessel & plate with other precious & costly utensils of household he divided among poor people. He was content with mean fare at his table, howbeit somewhat yet retaining of the old plenty in dainty viand & silver vessel. Every day at certain hours he gave himself to prayer. To poor men always if any came he plenteously gave out his money: & not content only to give that he had himself ready: he wrote over it to one Hierom Benivenius [12] a Florentine, a well lettered man (whom for his great love toward him & the integrity of his conditions he singularly favoured) that he should with his own money ever help poor folk: & give maidens money to their marriage: and alway send him word what he had laid out that

he might pay it him again. This office he committed to him that he might the more easily by him as by a faithful messenger relieve the necessity & misery of poor needy people such as himself haply could not come by the knowledge of.

OF THE VOLUNTARY AFFLICTION & PAINING OF HIS OWN BODY.

Over all this: many times (which is not to be kept secret) he gave alms of his own body: we know many men which (as Saint Hierom[13] saith) put forth their hand to poor folk: but with the pleasure of the flesh they be overcome: but he many days (and namely[14] those days which represent unto us the passion & death that Christ suffered for our sake) beat and scourged his own flesh in the remembrance of that great benefit and for cleansing of his old offences.

OF HIS PLACABILITY OR BENIGN NATURE.

He was of cheer always merry & of so benign nature that he was never troubled with anger & he said once to his nephew that whatsoever should happen (fell there never so great misadventure) he could never as him thought be moved to wrath but if his chests perished in which his books lay that he had with great travail & watch compiled: but forasmuch as he considered that he laboured only for the love of God & profit of his church: & that he had dedicate unto him all his works, his studies & his doings: & sith he saw that sith God is almighty they could not miscarry but if it were either by his commandment or by his sufferance: he verily trusted: sith God is all good: that he would not suffer him to have that occasion of heaviness. O very happy mind which none adversity might oppress, which no prosperity might enhance: not the cunning of all philosophy was able to make him proud, not the knowledge of the Hebrew, Chaldee & Arabic language beside Greek and Latin could make him vainglorious, not his great substance, not his noble blood, could blow up his heart, not the beauty of his body, not the great occasion of sin were able to pull him back into the voluptuous broad way that leadeth to hell: what thing was there of so marvellous strength that might overturn that mind of him: which now (as Seneca saith) was gotten above fortune[15] as he which as well her favour as her malice hath set at nought, that he might be coupled with a spiritual knot unto Christ and his heavenly citizens.

HOW HE ESCHEWED DIGNITIES.

When he saw many men with great labour & money desire & busily purchase the offices & dignities of the church (which are nowadays alas the while commonly bought & sold) himself refused to receive them when two kings offered them: when another man offered him great worldly promotion if he would go to the king's court: he gave him such an answer, that he should well know that he neither desired worship ne worldly riches but rather set them at nought that he might the more quietly give himself to study & the service of God: this wise he persuaded, that to a philosopher and him that seeketh for wisdom it was no praise to gather riches but to refuse them.

OF THE DESPISING OF WORLDLY GLORY.

All praise of people and all earthly glory he reputed utterly for nothing: but in the renaying of this shadow of glory he laboured for very glory which ever more

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followeth virtue as an unseparable servant. He said that fame oftentimes did hurt to men while they live, & never good when they be dead. So much only set he by his learning in how much he knew that it was profitable to the church & to the extermination of errors. And over that: he was come to that prick of perfect humility that he little forced whether his works went out under his own name or not so that they might as much profit as if they were given out under his name. And now set he little by any other books save only the Bible, in the only study of which he had appointed himself to spend the residue of his life, saving that the common profit pricked him when he considered so many & so great works as he had conceived & long travailed upon how they were of every man by and by[16] desired and looked after.

HOW MUCH HE SET MORE BY DEVOTION THAN CUNNING.

The little affection of an old man or an old woman to Godward (were it never so small) he set more by: than by all his own knowledge as well of natural things as godly. And oftentimes in communication he would admonish his familiar friends how greatly these mortal things bow and draw to an end, how slippery & how falling it is that we live in now: how firm how stable it shall be that we shall hereafter live in, whether we be thrown down into hell or lifted up into heaven. Wherefore he exhorted them to turn up their minds to love God, which was a thing far excelling all the cunning it is possible for us in this life to obtain. The same thing also in his book which he entituled "De Ente et Uno" lightsomely he treateth where he interrupteth the course of his dispicion and turning his words to Angelo Politiano (to whom he dedicateth that book) he writeth in this wise. But now behold O my wellbeloved Angelo what madness holdeth us. Love God (while we be in this body) we rather may: than either know him or by speech utter him. In loving him also we more profit ourselves, we labour less & serve him more, & yet had we lever alway by knowledge never find that thing that we seek: than by love to possess that thing which also without love were in vain found.[17]

OF HIS LIBERALITY & CONTEMPT OF RICHES.

Liberality only in him passed measure: for so far was he from the beginning of any diligence to earthly things that he seemed somewhat besprent with the freckle of negligence. His friends oftentimes admonished him that he should not all utterly despise riches, showing him that it was his dishonesty and rebuke when it was reported (were it true or false) that his negligence & setting nought by money gave his servants occasion of deceit & robbery. Nevertheless that mind of his (which evermore on high cleaved fast in contemplation & in th'ensearching of nature's counsel) could never let down itself to the consideration and overseeing of these base abject and vile earthly trifles. His high steward came on a time to him & desired him to receive his account of such money as he had in many years received of him: and brought forth his books of reckoning. Pico answered him in this wise, my friend (saith he) I know well ye have mought oftentimes and yet may deceive me an ye list, wherefore the examination of these expenses shall not need. There is no more to do, if I be ought in your debt I shall pay you by & by,[18] & if ye be in mine pay me: either now if ye have it: or hereafter if ye be now not able.

OF HIS LOVING MIND & VIRTUOUS BEHAVIOUR TO HIS FRIENDS.

His lovers and friends with great benignity & courtesy he entreated, whom he used in all secret communing virtuously to exhort to Godward, whose goodly words so effectually wrought in the hearers that where a cunning man (but not so good as cunning) came to him on a day for the great fame of his learning to commune with him, as they fell in talking of virtue he was with the words of Pico so thoroughly pierced that forthwith all he forsook his accustomed vice and reformed his conditions. The words that he said unto him were these: if we had evermore before our eyes the painful death of Christ which he suffered for the love of us: and then if we would again think upon our death: we should well beware of sin. Marvellous benignity & courtesy he showed unto them: not whom strength of body or goods of fortune magnified but to them whom learning & conditions bound him to favour: for similitude of manners is a cause of love & friendship. A likeness of conditions is (as Appollonius saith) an affinity.[19]

WHAT HE HATED AND WHAT HE LOVED.

There was nothing more odious nor more intolerable to him than as (Horace[20] saith) the proud palaces of stately lords: wedding and worldly business he fled almost alike: notwithstanding when he was asked once in sport whether of those two burdens seemed lighter & which he would choose if he should of necessity be driven to that one and at his election: which he stuck thereat a while but at the last he shook his head and a little smiling he answered that he had lever take him to marriage, as that thing in which was less servitude & not so much jeopardy. Liberty above all thing he loved, to which both his own natural affection & the study of philosophy inclined him: & for that was he always wandering & flyting & would never take himself to any certain dwelling.[21]

OF HIS FERVENT LOVE TO GOD.

Of outward observances he gave no very great force: we speak not of those observances which the church commandeth to be observed, for in those he was diligent: but we speak of those ceremonies which folk bring up setting the very service of God aside, which is (as Christ saith) to be worshipped in spirit & in truth. But in the inward affects of the mind he cleaved to God with very fervent love and devotion: some time that marvellous alacrity languished and almost fell, and eft again with great strength rose up into God. In the love of whom he so fervently burned that on a time as he walked with Giovanni Francesco his nephew in an orchard at Ferrara, in the talking of the love of Christ he brake out into these words, nephew, said he, this will I show thee, I warn thee keep it secret: the substance that I have left after certain books of mine finished I intend to give out to poor folk, & fencing myself with the crucifix, barefoot walking about the world, in every town and castle I purpose to preach of Christ. Afterward I understand by the special commandment of God he changed that purpose and appointed to profess him self in the order of friars preachers.

OF HIS DEATH.

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In the year of our redemption, M.CCCC.XCIII. when he had fulfilled the xxxii. year of his age & abode at Florence, he was suddenly taken with a fervent access[22] which so farforth crept into the interior parts of his body, that it despised all medicines & overcame all remedy, and compelled him within three days to satisfy nature and repay her the life which he received of her.

OF HIS BEHAVIOUR IN THE EXTREMES OF HIS LIFE.

After that he had received the holy body of our Saviour when they offered unto him the crucifix (that in the image of Christ's ineffable passion suffered for our sake he might ere he gave up the ghost receive his full draught of love and compassion in the beholding of that pitiful figure as a strong defence against all adversity and a sure portcullis against wicked spirits) the priest demanded him whether he firmly believed that crucifix to be the Image of him that was very God & very man: which in his Godhead was before all time begotten of his father: to whom he is also equal in all thing: and which of the Holy Ghost God also: of him & of the Father coeternally going forth (which .iij. persons be one God) was in the chaste womb of our lady a perpetual virgin conceived in time: which suffered hunger, thirst, heat, cold, labour, travail, & watch and which at the last for washing of our spotty sin contracted and drawn unto us in the sin of Adam, for the sovereign love that he had to mankind, in the altar of the cross willingly & gladly shed out his most precious blood. When the priest enquired of him these things & such other as they be wont to enquire of folk in such case, Pico answered him that he not only believed it but also certainly knew it. When it one Alberto [23] his sister's son: a young man both of wit, cunning, & conditions excellent: began to comfort him against death: & by natural reason to show him why it was not to be feared but strongly to be taken: as that only thing which maketh an end of all the labour, pain, trouble, & sorrow of this short miserable deadly life: he answered that this was not the chief thing it should make him content to die: because that death determineth the manifold incommodities and painful wretchedness of this life: but rather this cause should make him not content only but also glad to die: for that death maketh an end of sin: in as much as he trusted the shortness of his life should leave him no space to sin and offend. He asked also all his servants' forgiveness, if he had ever before that day offended any of them. For whom he had provided by his testament viij. years before, for some of them meat and drink, for some money, each of them after their deserving. He showed also to the above named Alberto & many other credible persons that the queen of heaven came to him that night with a marvellous fragrant odour refreshing all his members that were bruised & frused [24] with that fever, & promised him that he should not utterly die. He lay always with a pleasant and a merry countenance, and in the very twitches and pangs of death he spake as though he beheld the heavens open. And all that came to him & saluted him offering their service with very loving words he received, thanked, & kissed. The executor of his moveable goods he made one Antonio his brother.[25] The heir of his lands he made the poor people of the hospital of Florence. And in this wise into the hands of our Saviour he gave up his spirit.

HOW HIS DEATH WAS TAKEN.

What sorrow and heaviness his departing out of this world was: both to rich and poor, high & low: well testifieth the princes of Italy, well witnesseth the cities &

people, well recordeth the great benignity and singular courtesy of Charles king of France,[26] which as he came to Florence, intending from thence to Rome and so forth in his voyage against the Realm of Naples, hearing of the sickness of Pico, in all convenient haste he sent him two of his own physicians as ambassadors both to visit him and to do him all the help they might: and over that sent unto him letters subscribed with his own hand full of such humanity and courteous offers as the benevolent mind of such a noble prince and the worthy virtues of Pico required.

OF THE STATE OF HIS SOUL.

After his death (and not long after) Hieronimus [27] a friar preacher of Ferrara, a man as well in cunning as holiness of living most famous, in a sermon which he rehearsed in the chief church of all Florence said unto the people in this wise. O thou City of Florence I have a secret thing to show thee which is as true as the gospel of Saint John. I would have kept it secret but I am compelled to show it. For he that hath authority to command me, hath bid me publish it. I suppose verily that there be none of you but ye knew Giovanni Pico Earl of Mirandola, a man in whom God had heaped many great gifts and singular graces, the church had of him an inestimable loss, for I suppose if he might have had the space of his life prolonged: he should have excelled (by such works as he should have left behind him) all them that died this .viii.C. year before him. He was wont to be conversant with me and to break to me the secrets of his heart: in which I perceived that he was by privy inspiration called of God unto religion. Wherefore he purposed oftentimes to obey this inspiration and follow his calling. Howbeit not being kind enough for so great benefices of God: or called back by the tenderness of his flesh (as he was a man of delicate complexion) he shrank from the labour, or thinking haply that the religion had no need of him deferred it for a time, howbeit this I speak only by conjecture.[28] But for this delay I threatened him two year together: that he would be punished if he forsoothed that purpose which our Lord had put in his mind, & certainly I prayed to God myself (I will not lie therefore) that he might be somewhat beaten: to compel him to take that way which God had from above showed him. But I desired not this scourge upon him that he was beaten with: I looked not for that: but our Lord had so decreed that he should forsake this present life and leave a part of that noble crown that he should have had in heaven. Notwithstanding the most benign judge hath dealt mercifully with him: and for his plenteous alms given out with a free and liberal hand unto poor people & for the devout prayers which he most instantly offered unto God this favour he hath: though his soul be not yet in the bosom of our Lord in the heavenly joy: yet is it not on that other side deputed unto perpetual pain, but he is adjudged for a while to the fire of purgatory, there to suffer pain for a season, which I am the gladder to show you in this behalf: to the intent it they which knew him: such especially as for his manifold benefices are singularly beholden unto him: should now with their prayers, alms, & other suffrages help him. These things this holy man Hierom, this servant of God openly asserted, and also said that he knew well if he lied in that place: he were worthy eternal damnation. And over that he said that he had known all those things within a certain time, but the words which Pico had said in his sickness of the appearing of our Lady caused him to doubt & to fear lest Pico had been deceived by some illusion of the devil: in as much as the promise of our Lady seemed to have been frustrate by his death: but afterward he understood that Pico was deceived in the equivocation of the word while she spake of the second death & everlasting & he understood her of the first death & temporal. And after this the same Hierom showed

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

to his acquaintance that Pico had after his death appeared unto him all compassed in fire & showed unto him that he was such wise in purgatory punished for his negligence & his unkindness. Now sith it is so that he is adjudged to that fire from which he shall undoubtedly depart unto glory & no man is sure how long it shall be first: & may be the shorter time for our intercessions: let every Christian body show their charity upon him to help to speed him thither where after the long habitation with the inhabitants of this dark world (to whom his goodly conversation gave great light) & after the dark fire of purgatory (in which venial offences be cleansed) he may shortly (if he be not already) enter the inaccessible & infinite light of heaven; where he may in the presence of the sovereign Godhead so pray for us that we may the rather by his intercession be partners of that unspeakable joy which we have prayed to bring him speedily to. Amen.

Here endeth the life of Giovanni Pico Earl of Mirandola.

Three Letters written by Pico Della Mirandola

Here followeth three epistles of the said Pico: of which three two be written unto Giovanni Francesco his nephew, the third unto one Andrew Corneus a noble man of Italy.

THE ARGUMENT & MATTER OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PICO UNTO HIS NEPHEW GIOVANNI FRANCESCO.

It appeareth by this epistle that Giovanni Francesco the nephew of Pico had broken his mind unto Pico and had made him of council in some secret godly purpose which he intended to take upon him: but what this purpose should be upon this letter can we not fully perceive. Now after that he thus intended, there fell unto him many impediments & divers occasions which withstood his intent and in manner letted him & pulled him back, wherefore Pico comforteth him in this epistle and exhorteth him to perseverance, by such means as are in the epistle evident and plain enough. Notwithstanding in the beginning of this letter where he saith that the flesh shall (but if we take good heed) make us drunken in the cups of Circe and misshape us into the likeness & figure of brute beasts: those words if thee perceive them not be in this wise understanden. There was sometime a woman called Circe which by enchantment as Virgil maketh mention used with a drink to turn as many men as received it into divers likeness & figures of sundry beasts, some into lions, some into bears, some into swine, some into wolves, which afterward walked ever tame about her house and waited upon her in such use or service as she list to put unto them. In like wise the flesh if it make us drunk in the wine of voluptuous pleasure or make the soul leave the noble use of his reason & incline unto sensuality and affections of the body: then the flesh changeth us from the figure of reasonable men in the likeness of unreasonable beasts, and that diversely: after the convenience & similitude between our sensual affections and the brutish properties of sundry beasts: as the proud hearted man into a lion, the irous into a bear, the lecherous into a goat, the drunken glutton into a swine, the ravenous extortioner into a wolf, the false deceiver into a fox, mocking jester into an ape. From which beastly shape may we never be restored to our own likeness again: unto the time we have cast up again the drink of the bodily affections by which we were into these figures enchanted. When there cometh sometime a monstrous beast to the town we run and are glad to pay some money to have sight thereof, but I fear if men would look upon themselves advisedly: they should see a more monstrous beast nearer home: for they should perceive themselves by the wretched inclination to divers beastly passions changed in their soul not into the shape of one but of many beasts, that is to say of all them whose brutish appetites they follow. Let us then beware as Pico counselleth us it we be not drunken in the cups of Circe, that is to say in the sensual affections of the flesh, lest we deform the image of God in our souls, after whose image we be made, & make our self worse than idolaters, for if he be odious to God which turneth the image of a beast into God: how much is he more odious which turneth the image of God into a beast.

**GIOVANNI PICO EARL OF MIRANDOLA TO GIOVANNI FRANCESCO
HIS NEPHEW BY HIS BROTHER HEALTH IN HIM THAT IS VERY
HEALTH.**

That thou hast had many evil occasions after thy departing which trouble thee & stand against the virtuous purpose that thou hast taken there is no cause my son why thou shouldst either marvel thereof, be sorry therefor, or dread it, but rather how great a wonder were this if only to thee among mortal men the way lay open to heaven without sweat, as though that now at erst the deceitful world & the cursed devil failed, & as though thou were not yet in the flesh: which coveteth against the spirit: and which false flesh (but if we watch & look well to our self) shall make us drunk in the cups of Circe & so deform us into monstrous shapes of brutish & unreasonable beasts. Remember also that of these evil occasions the holy apostle saint James saith thou hast cause to be glad, writing in this wise. *Gaudete fratres quum in temptationes varias incideritis*. Be glad saith he my brethren when thee fall in divers temptations, and not causeless: for what hope is there of glory if there be none hope of victory: or what place is there for victory where there is no battle: he is called to the crown & triumph which is provoked to the conflict & namely to that conflict: in which no man may be overcome against his will, & in which we need none other strength to vanquish but it we list ourselves to vanquish. Very happy is a Christian man sith that the victory is both put in his own free will: & the reward of the victory shall be far greater than we can either hope or wish. Tell me I pray thee my most dear son if there be aught in this life of all those things: the delight whereof so vexeth and tosseth these earthly minds. Is there I say one of those trifles: in the getting of which a man must not suffer many labours many displeasures & many miseries ere he get it. The merchant thinketh himself well served if after X years sailing, after a m. incommodities, after a m. jeopardies of his life he may at last have a little the more gathered together. Of the court & service of this world there is nothing that I need to write unto thee, the wretchedness whereof the experience itself hath taught thee & daily teacheth. In obtaining the favour of the princes, in purchasing the friendship of the company in ambitious labour for offices & honours what an heap of heaviness there is: how great anguish: how much business & trouble I may rather learn of thee than teach thee, which holding myself content with my books & rest, of a child have learned to live within my degree & as much as I may dwelling with myself nothing out of myself labour for, or long for. Now then these earthly things slippery, uncertain, vile & common also to us and brute beast sweating & panting we shall uneth obtain: and look we then to heavenly things & goodly (which neither eye hath seen nor ear hath heard nor heart hath thought) to be drawn slumbry & sleeping maugre our teeth: as though neither God might reign nor those heavenly citizens live without us. Certainly if this worldly felicity were gotten to us with idleness and ease: then might some man that shrinketh from labour rather choose to serve the world than God. But now if we be so laboured in the way of sin as much as in the way of God and much more (whereof the damned wretches cry out: *Lassati sumus in via iniquitatis*. We be wearied in the way of wickedness, then must it needs be a point of extreme madness if we had not lever labour there where we go from labour to reward than where we go from labour to pain. I pass over how great peace & felicity it is to the mind when a man hath nothing that grudgeth his conscience nor is not appalled with the secret twitch of any privy crime. This pleasure undoubtedly far excelleth all the pleasures that in this life may be obtained or desired: what thing is there to be desired among the delights of this world: which in the seeking weary us, in the having blindeth us, in the losing paineth us. Doubtest thou my son whether the minds of

wicked men be vexed or not with continual thought and torment: it is the word of God which neither may deceive nor be deceived. *Cor impii quasi mare fervens quod quiescere non potest.* The wicked man's heart is like a stormy sea it may not rest, there is to him nothing sure, nothing peaceable, but all thing fearful, all thing sorrowful, all thing deadly. Shall we then envy these men: shall we follow them: & forgetting our own country heaven, & our own heavenly Father where we were free born: shall we wilfully make ourselves their bondsmen: & with them wretchedly living more wretchedly die: and at the last most wretchedly in everlasting fire be punished. O the dark minds of men. O the blind hearts. Who saith not more clear than light that all these things be (as they say) truer than truth itself, & yet do we not that it we know is to be done. In vain we would pluck our foot out of the clay but we stick still. There shall come to thee my son doubt it not (in these places namely where thou art conversant) innumerable impediments every hour: which might fear thee from the purpose of good and virtuous living & (but if thou beware) shall throw thee down headlong. But among all things the very deadly pestilence is this: to be conversant day and night among them whose life is not only on every side an allective to sin: but over that all set in the expugnation of virtue, under their captain the devil, under the banner of death, under the stipend of hell, fighting against heaven, against our Lord God and against his Christ. But cry thou therefore with the prophet. *Dirumpamus vincula eorum & projiciamus a nobis iugum ipsorum.* Let us break the bands of them and let us cast off the yoke of them. These be they whom (as the glorious apostle Saint Paul saith) our Lord hath delivered into the passions of rebuke and to a reprovableness to do those things that are not convenient, full of all iniquity, full of envy, manslaughter, contention, guile, & malice: backbiters, odious to God, contumelious, proud, stately, finders of evil things, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without covenant, without mercy. Which when they daily see the justice of God, yet understand they not that such as these things commit are worthy death: not only they that do such things: but also they which consent to the doing: wherefore my child go thou never about to please them whom virtue displeaseth: but evermore let these words of the apostle be before thine eyes. *Oportet magis Deo placere quam hominibus.* We must rather please God than men. And remember these words of Saint Paul also. *Si hominibus placerem, servus Christi non essem.* If I should please men I were not Christ's servant. Let enter into thine heart an holy pride & have disdain to take them for masters of thy living which have more need to take thee for a master of theirs. It were far more seeming that they should with thee by good living begin to be men than thou shouldst with them by the leaving of thy good purpose shamefully begin to be a beast. There holdeth me sometime by almighty God as it were even a swoon and an insensibility for wonder when I begin in my self: I wot never whether I shall say: to remember or to sorrow, to marvel or to bewail the appetites of men, or if I shall more plainly speak: the very madness not to believe the gospel whose truth the blood of martyrs crieth, the voice of apostles soundeth, miracles proveth, reason confirmeth, the world testifieth, the elements speaketh, devils confesseth. But a far greater madness is it if thou doubt not but that the gospel is true: to live then as though thou doubttest not but that it were false. For if these words of the words of the gospel be true, that it is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven why do we daily then gape after the heaping up of riches. And if this be true that we should seek for the glory and praise not that cometh of men, but that cometh of God, why do we then ever hang upon the judgement & opinion of men and no man reckoneth whether God like him or not. And if we surely believe it once the time shall come in which our Lord shall say, go thee cursed people into everlasting fire, & again, come thee my

blessed children possess the kingdom that hath been prepared for you from the forming of the world, why is there nothing than it we less fear than hell, or it we less hope for than the kingdom of God. What shall we say else but that there be many Christian men in name but few in deed. But thou my son enforce thyself to enter by the straight gate that leadeth to heaven & take no heed what thing many men do: but what thing the very law of nature, what thing very reason, what thing our Lord himself showeth thee to be done. For neither thy glory shall be less if thou be happy with few nor thy pain more easy if thou be wretched with many. Thou shalt have .ii. specially effectual remedies against the world & the devil with which two as with .ii. wings thou shalt out of this vale of misery be lifted up in heaven, that is to say, alms deed & prayer. What may we do without the help of God, or how shall he help us if he be not called upon.

But over that: certainly he shall not hear thee when thou callest on him if thou hear not first the poor man when he calleth upon thee, and verily it is according that God should despise thee being a man when thou being a man despisest a man. For it is written: in what measure that ye mete, it shall be mete you again. And in another place of the gospel it is said: blessed be merciful men for they shall get mercy. When I stir thee to prayer I stir thee not to the prayer which standeth in many words, but to that prayer which in the secret chamber of the mind, in the privy closet of the soul with very affect speaketh to God, and in the most lightsome darkness of contemplation not only presenteth the mind to the Father: but also unieth it with him by inspeakable ways which only they know that have essayed. Nor I care not how long or how short thy prayer be, but how effectual, how ardent, and rather interrupted & broken between with sighs than drawn on length with a continual row & number of words. If thou love thine health, if thou desire to be sure from the grennes[29] of the devil, from the storms of this world, from th' await of thine enemies, if thou long to be acceptable to God, if thou covet to be happy at the last: let no day pass thee but thou once at the least wise present thyself to God by prayer, and falling down before him flat to the ground with an humble affect of devout mind, not from the extremity of thy lips but out of the inwardness of thine heart, cry these words of the prophet. *Delictia juventutis mee ignorantias meas ne memineras, sed secundum misericordiam tuam memento mei propter bonitatem tuam Domine.* The offences of my youth and mine ignorances remember not good Lord, but after thy mercy Lord for thy goodness remember me. When thou shalt in thy prayer ask of God: both the Holy Spirit which prayeth for us & eke thine own necessity shall every hour put in thy mind, & also what thou shalt pray for: thou shalt find matter enough in the reading of holy scripture which that thou wouldst now (setting poet's fables & trifles aside) take ever in thine hand I heartily pray thee.[30] Thou mayst do nothing more pleasant to God, nothing more profitable to thyself: than if thine hand cease not day nor night to turn and read the volumes of holy scripture. There lieth privily in them a certain heavenly strength quick and effectual, which with a marvellous power transformeth & changeth the reader's mind into the love of God, if they be clean and lowly entreated. But I have passed now the bounds of a letter, the matter drawing me forth & the great love that I have had to thee, both ever before: & specially sith that hour in which I have had first knowledge of thy most holy purpose. Now to make an end with this one thing I warn thee (of which when we were last together I often talked with thee) that thou never forget these .ii. things, that both the Son of God died for thee & that thou shalt also thyself die shortly, live thou never so long. With these twain as with two spurs, the one of fear the other of love, spur forth thine horse through the short way of this momentary life to the reward of eternal felicity, sith we neither ought nor may prefer

ourselves any other end than the endless fruition of the infinite goodness both to soul & body in everlasting peace.

Fare well and fear God.[31]

THE MATTER OR ARGUMENT OF THE EPISTLE OF PICO TO ANDREW CORNEUS.

This Andrew a worshipful man and a special friend of Pico had by his letters given him counsel to leave the study of philosophy, as a thing in which he thought Pico to have spent time enough & which: but if it were applied to the use of some actual business: he judged a thing vain & unprofitable: wherefore he counselled Pico to surcease of study and put himself with some of the great princes of Italy, with whom (as this Andrew said) he should be much more fruitfully occupied than always in the study & learning of philosophy, to whom Pico answered as in this present epistle appeareth. Where he saith these words (By this it should follow that it were either servile or at the least wise not princely to make the study of philosophy other than mercenary) thus he meaneth. Mercenary we call all those things which we do for hire or reward. Then he maketh philosophy mercenary & useth it not as cunning but as merchandise which studieth it not for pleasure of itself: or for the instruction of his mind in mortal virtue: but to apply it to such things where he may get some lucre or worldly advantage.

GIOVANNI PICO EARL OF MIRANDOLA TO ANDREW CORNEUS GREETING.

Ye exhort me by your letters to the civil and active life, saying that in vain: and in manner to my rebuke & shame: have I so long studied in philosophy: but if I would at the last exercise the learning in the entreating of some profitable acts & outward business. Certainly my wellbeloved Andrew I had cast away both cost & labour of my study: if I were so minded that I could find in my heart in this matter to assent unto you & follow your counsel. This is a very deadly and monstrous persuasion which hath entered the minds of men: believing that the studies of philosophy are of estates & princes: either utterly not to be touched: or at least wise with extreme lips to be sipped: and rather to the pomp & ostentation of their wit than to the culture & profit of their minds to be little & easily tasted. The words of Neoptolemus they hold utterly for a sure decree: that philosophy is to be studied either never or not long:[32] but the sayings of wise men they repute for japes & very fables: that sure & steadfast felicity standeth only in the goodness of the mind, & that these outward things of the body or of fortune little or nought pertain unto us. But here thee will say to me thus. I am content thee study, but I would have you outwardly occupied also. And I desire you not so to embrace Martha that thee should utterly forsake Mary. Love them & use them both, as well study as worldly occupation. Truly my wellbeloved friend in this point I gainsay you not, they that so do I find no fault in nor I blame them not, but certainly it is not all one to say we do well if we do so: and to say we do evil but if we do so. This is far out of the way: to think that from contemplation to the active living, that is to say from the better to the worse, is none error to decline: and to think that it were shame to abide still in the better and not decline. Shall a man then be rebuked because that he desireth and ensueth virtue only for itself: because he studieth the mysteries of God: because he ensearcheth the

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counsel of nature: because he useth continually this pleasant ease & rest: seeking none outward thing, despising all other thing: sith those things are able sufficiently to satisfy the desire of their followers. By this reckoning it is a thing either servile or at the least wise not princely to make the study of wisdom other than mercenary: who may well hear this, who may suffer it. Certainly he never studied for wisdom which so studied therefore that in time to come either he might not or would not study therefore, this man rather exercised the study of merchandise than of wisdom. Ye write unto me that it is time for me now to put myself in household with some of the great princes of Italy but I see well that as yet ye have not known the opinion that philosophers have of themselves, which (as Horace saith) repute themselves kings of kings:[33] they love liberty: they can not bear the proud manners of estates: they can not serve. They dwell with themselves and be content with the tranquillity of their own mind, they suffice themselves & more, they seek nothing out of themselves: the things that are had in honour among the common people: among them be not holden honourable. All that ever the voluptuous desire of men thirsteth for: or ambition sigheth for: they set at nought & despise. Which while it belongeth to all men: yet undoubtedly it pertaineth most properly to them whom fortune hath so liberally favoured that they may live not only well and plenteously but also nobly. These great fortunes lift up a man high and set him out to the show: but oftentimes as a fierce and a skittish horse they cast off their master. Certainly alway they grieve and vex him and rather tear him than bear him. The golden mediocrity, the mean estate is to be desired which shall bear us as it were in hands[34] more easily: which shall obey us & not master us. I therefore abiding firmly in this opinion set more by my little house, my study, the pleasure of my books, the rest and peace of my mind: than by all your kings' palaces, all your common business, all your glory, all the advantage that ye hawk after and all the favour of the court. Nor I look not for this fruit of my study that I may thereby hereafter be tossed in the flood and rumbling of your worldly business: but that I may once bring forth the children that I travail on: it I may give out some books of mine own to the common profit which may somewhat savour if not of cunning yet at the least wise of wit and diligence. And because ye shall not think that my travail & diligence in study is any thing remitted or slacked: I give you knowledge that after great fervent labour with much watch and infatigable travail I have learned both the Hebrew language and the Chaldee, and now have I set hand to overcome the great difficulty of the Araby tongue. These my dear friend be things which to appertain to a noble prince I have ever thought and yet think. Fare thee well. Written at Paris the .xv. day of October the year of grace. M.CCCC.lxxxxii.[35]

THE ARGUMENT OF THE EPISTLE FOLLOWING.

After that Giovanni Francesco the nephew of Pico had (as it appeareth in the first epistle of Pico to him) began a change in his living: it seemeth by this letter that the company of the court where he was conversant diversely (as it is their unmannerly manner) descanted thereof to his rebuke as them thought: but as truth was unto their own. Some of them judged it folly, some called it hypocrisy, some scorned him, some slandered him, of all which demeanour (as we may of this epistle conjecture) he wrote unto this earl Pico his uncle, which in this letter comforted & encourageth him, as it is in the course thereof evident.

**GIOVANNI PICO EARL OF MIRANDOLA TO FRANCESCO HIS NEPHEW
GREETING IN OUR LORD.**

Happy art thou my son when that our Lord not only giveth thee grace well to live but also that while thou livest well he giveth thee grace to bear evil words of evil people for thy living well. Certainly as great a praise as it is to be commended of them that are commendable, as great a commendation it is to be reproved of them that are reprovably. Notwithstanding my son I call thee not therefore happy because this false reproof is worshipful & glorious unto thee, but for because that our Lord Jesu Christ (which is not only true but also truth itself) affirmeth that our reward shall be plenteous in heaven when men speak evil to us & speak evil against us living for his name.[36] This is an Apostles dignity: to be reputed digne afore God to be defamed of wicked folk for his name. For we read in the gospel of Luke that the apostles went joyful and glad from the council house of the Jews because God had accepted them as worthy to suffer wrong and repress for his sake. Let us therefore joy and be glad if we be worthy so great worship before God that his worship be showed in our rebuke. And if we suffer of the world any thing that is grievous or bitter: let this sweet voice of our Lord be our consolation. *Si mundus vos odio habet, scitote quia priorem me vobis odio habuit.* If the world (saith our Lord) hate you, know ye that it hated me before you. If the world then hated him by whom the world was made: we most vile & simple men and worthy (if we consider our wretched living well) all shame & reproof: if folk backbite us & say evil of us: shall we so grievously take it that lest they should say evil we should begin to do evil. Let us rather gladly receive these evil words, and if we be not so happy to suffer for virtue & truth as the old saints suffered beatings, bindings, prison, swords, & death: let us think at the least wise we be well served if we have the grace to suffer chiding, detraction, & hatred of wicked men, lest that if all occasion of deserving be taken away there be left us none hope of reward. If men for thy good living praise thee: thy virtue certainly in that it is virtue maketh thee like unto Christ: but in that it is praised it maketh thee unlike him: which for the reward of his virtue received the opprobrious death of the cross for which as the apostle saith God hath exalted him and given him a name that is above all names. More desireful is then to be condemned of the world and exalted of God than to be exalted of the world and condemned of God: the world condemneth to life, God exalteth to glory: the world exalteth to a fall, God condemneth to the fire of hell. Finally if the world fawn upon thee: uneth it may be but that thy virtue (which all lift upward should have God alone to please) shall somewhat unto the blandishing of the world & favour of the people incline. And so though it lose nothing of the integrity of our perfection: yet it loseth of the reward, which reward while it beginneth to be paid in the world where all thing is little, it shall be less in heaven where all thing is great. O happy rebukes which make us sure: that neither the flower of our virtue shall wither with the pestilent blast of vainglory: nor our eternal reward be minished for the vain promotion of a little popular fame. Let us my son love these rebukes, & only of the ignominy and reproof of our Lord's cross let us like faithful servants with an holy ambition be proud. We (saith Saint Paul) preach Christ crucified, which is unto the Jews despite, unto the Gentiles folly, unto us the virtue and wisdom of God. The wisdom of this world is foolishness afore God, & the folly of Christ is that by which he hath overcome the wisdom of the world by which it hath pleased God to make his believing people safe.

If that thou doubt not but that they be mad which backbite thy virtue: which the Christian living that is very wisdom reputeth for madness: consider then how much were thy madness, if thou shouldst for the judgement of mad men swerve from

the good institution of thy life, namely sith all error is with amendment to be taken away & not with imitation & following to be increased. Let them therefore neigh, let them bawl, let them bark, go thou boldly forth thy journey as thou hast begun, and of the wickedness & misery consider how much thyself art beholden to God: which hath illumined thee sitting in the shadow of death, and translating thee out of the company of them (which like drunken men without a guide wander hither and thither in obscure darkness) hath associated thee to the children of light. Let that same sweet voice of our Lord alway sound in thine ears. *Sine mortuos sepelire mortuos suos, tu me sequere.* Let dead men alone with dead men, follow thou me. Dead be they that live not to God, and in the space of this temporal death laboriously purchase themselves eternal death. Of whom if you ask whereto they draw: whereto they refer their studies, their works & their business, & finally what end they have appointed themselves in the adoption whereof they should be happy: either they shall have utterly nothing to answer, or they shall bring forth words repugnant in themselves & contrary each to other like the raving of bedlam people. Nor they wot never themselves what they do, but like them that swim in swift floods they be borne forth with the violence of evil custom as it were with the boisterous course of the stream. And their wickedness blinding them on this side: & the devil pricking them forward on that side: they run forth headlong into all mischief, as blind guides of blind men, till that death set on them unaware, & till that it be said unto them that Christ saith in the gospel, my friend this night the devils shall take thy soul from thee: these goods then that thou hast gathered whose shall they be. Then shall they envy them whom they despised. Then shall they commend them that they mocked. Then shall they covet to ensue them in living when they may not: whom when they might have ensued they pursued. Stop therefore thine ears my most dear son, & whatsoever men say of ye, whatsoever men think on ye, account it for nothing, but regard only the judgement of God, which shall yield every man after his own works when he shall show himself from heaven with the angels of his virtue: in flame of fire doing vengeance upon them that have not known God nor obeyed his gospel, which (as the apostle saith) shall suffer in death eternal pain, from the face of our Lord, & from the glory of his virtue, when he shall come to be gloried of his saints & to be made marvellous in all them that have believed. It is written. *Nolite timere qui corpus possunt occidere, sed qui animam potest mittere in gehennam.* Fear not them (saith our Lord) that may kill the body: but fear him that may cast the soul into hell. How much less then be they to be feared: that may neither hurt soul nor body: which if they now back-bite thee living virtuously, they shall do the same nevertheless: if (virtue forsaken) thou were overwhelmed with vice: not for that vice displeaseth them but for that the vice of backbiting alway pleaseth them. Flee if thou love thine health, flee as far as thou mayst their company, and returning to thyself oftentimes secretly pray unto the most benign father of heaven, crying with the prophet. *Ad Te Domine levavi animam meam: Deus meus in Te confido, non erubescam, etiam si irrideant me inimici mei. Et enim universi qui sperant in Te non confundentur. Confundantur iniqua agentes supervacue. Vias tuas Domine demonstra mihi, et semitas tuas edoce me. Dirige me in veritate tua, et doce me: quia Tu es Deus Salvator meus, et in Te sperabo tota die.*[37] That is to say. To Ye Lord I lift up my soul: in Thee I trust, I shall not be ashamed, & though mine enemies mock me. Certainly all they that trust in Thee shall not be ashamed. Let them be ashamed that work wickedness in vain. Thy ways good Lord show me, and thy paths teach me. Direct me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art God my Saviour, in Thee shall I trust all the day. Remember also my son that thy death lieth at hand. Remember that all the time of our life is but a moment & yet less than a moment.

Remember how cursed our old enemy is: which offereth us the kingdoms of this world that he might bereave us the kingdom of heaven: how false the fleshly pleasures: which therefore embrace us that they might strangle us: how deceitful these worldly honours: which therefore lift us up: that they might throw us down: how deadly these riches: which the more they feed us, the more they poison us: how short, how uncertain, how shadow-like false imaginary it is that all these things together may bring us: & though they flow to us as we would wish them. Remember again how great things be promised and prepared for them: which despising these present things desire and long for that country whose king is the Godhead, whose law is charity, whose measure is eternity. Occupy thy mind with these meditations and such other that may waken thee when thou sleepest, kindle thee when thou waxest cold, confirm thee when thou waverest, & exhibit the wings of the love of God while thou labourest to heavenward, that when thou comest home to us (which with great desire we look for) we may see not only him that we covet but also such a manner one as we covet. Fare well and love God whom of old thou hast begun to fear. At Ferrara the .ii. day of July the year of our redemption. M.CCCC.lxxxii.

**THE INTERPRETATION OF GIOVANNI PICO UPON
THIS PSALM *CONSERVA ME DOMINE*.**

[38] *Conserua me Domine quoniam speravi in Te. Dixi Domino: Deus meus es Tu, quoniam bonorum meorum non eges. Sanctis qui sunt in terra mirificavit voluntates suas. Multiplicate sunt infirmitates eorum postea acceleraverunt. Non congregabo conventicula eorum de sanguinibus: nec memor ero nominum eorum per labia mea. Dominus pars hereditatis mee & calicis mei: Tu es qui restitues hereditatem meam mihi. Funes occiderunt mihi in preclaris: etenim hereditas mea preclara est mihi. Benedicam Dominum qui tribuit mihi intellectum: et usque ad noctem increpauerunt me renes mei. Providebam Deum in conspectu meo semper, quoniam a dextris est mihi ne commovear. Propter hoc letatum est cor meum et exultavit lingua mea insuper et caro mea requiescet in spe. Quia non derelinques animam meam in inferno: nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem. Notas mihi fecisti vias vite: adimplebis me letitia cum vultu tuo. Delectationes in dextera tua usque in finem.*

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

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

Dixi Domino: Deus meus es Tu. I have said to our Lord: my God art Thou. After that he hath warded & fenced himself against pride he describeth in these words

his estate. All the estate of a righteous man standeth in these words. *Dixi Domino: Deus meus es Tu*. I have said to our Lord: my God art Thou. Which words though they seem common to all folk, yet are there very few that may say them truly. That thing a man taketh for his God that he taketh for his chief good. And that thing taketh he for his chief good which only had, though all other things lack, he thinketh himself happy, & which only lacking, though he have all other things, he thinketh himself unhappy. The niggard then saith to his money: *deus meus es tu*, my God art thou. For though honour fail & health and strength and friends, so he have money he thinketh himself well. And if he have all those things that we have spoken of, if money fail he thinketh himself unhappy. The glutton saith unto his fleshly lust, the ambitious man saith to his vainglory: my God art thou. See then how few may truly say these words, I have said to our Lord: my God art Thou. For only he may truly say it which is content with God alone: so that if there were offered him all the kingdoms of the world and all the good that is in earth and all the good that is in heaven, he would not once offend God to have them all. In these words then, I have said to our Lord: my God art Thou, standeth all the state of a right wise man.

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

Sanctis qui sunt in terra ejus mirificavit voluntates suas. To his saints that are in the land of him he hath made marvellous his wills. After God should we specially love them which are nearest joined unto God, as be the holy angels & blessed saints that are in their country of heaven: therefore after that he had said to our Lord: my God art thou: he addeth therunto that our Lord hath made marvellous his wills, that is to say he hath made marvellous his loves and his desires toward his saints that are in the land of him, that is to wit, in the country of heaven which is called the land of God and the land of living people. And verily if we inwardly consider how great is the felicity of that country & how much is the misery of this world, how great is the goodness and charity of those blessed citizens: we shall continually desire to be hence that we were there. These things & such other when we remember, we should ever more take heed that our meditations be not unfruitful, but that of every meditation we should always purchase one virtue or other, as for ensample by this meditation of the goodness of that heavenly country we should win this virtue that we should not only strongly suffer death and patiently when our time cometh or if it were put unto us for the faith of Christ: but also we should willingly and gladly long therefore, desiring to

be departed out of this vale of wretchedness that we may reign in that heavenly country with God & his holy saints.

Multiplicate sunt infirmitates eorum postea acceleraverunt. Their infirmities be multiplied and after they hasted. These words the prophet speakth of wicked men. By infirmities he understandeth idols and so it is in the Hebrew text. For as good folk have but one God whom they worship, so evil folk have many gods and idols, for they have many voluptuous pleasures many vain desires many divers passions which they serve, & wherefore seek they many sundry pleasures? certainly for because they can find none that can set their heart at rest & for it (as the prophet saith) wicked men walk about in a circuit or compass whereof there is none end. Now after these words: their idols be multiplied: it followeth. After they hasted: it is to say: after their idols, after their passions and beastly desires they run forth headlong unadvisedly without any consideration. And in this be we taught that we should as speedily run to virtue as they run to vice, & that we should, with no less diligence serve our Lord God than they serve their lord the devil. The just man considering the estate of evil folk determineth firmly with himself (as we should also) that utterly he will in no wise follow them, & therefore he saith. *Non congregabo conventicula eorum de sanguinibus: nec memor ero nominum.* I shall not gather the congregation of them from the blood: nor I shall not remember their names, he saith, from the blood: both because idolaters were wont to gather the blood of their sacrifice together and thereabout to do their ceremonies: and also for that all the lives of evil men forsake reason which standeth all in the soul, and follow sensuality that standeth all in the blood, the prophet saith not only that he will not gather their congregation together from the blood, that is to say it he would do no sacrifice to those idols but also that he would not remember their names, that is to say that he would not talk nor speak of the voluptuous delight which are evil peoples gods, which we might yet lawfully do: showing us by it: that a perfect man should abstain not only from unlawful pleasures but also from lawful, to th'end that he may all together whole have his mind into heavenward and the more purely intend unto the contemplation of heavenly things. And forasmuch as some man would peradventure think that it were folly for a man utterly to deprive himself from all pleasures, therefore the prophet addeth. *Dominus pars hereditatis mee.* Our Lord is the part of mine inheritance. As though he would say. Marvel thee not though I forsake all thing to th'intent that I may have the possession of God in whom all other things also be possessed. This should be the voice of every good Christian man. *Dominus pars hereditatis mee.* God is the part of mine inheritance. For certainly we Christian people to whom God is promised for an inheritance ought to be ashamed to desire any thing beside him. But for it some man might haply repute it for a great presumption that a man should promise himself God for his inheritance, therefore the prophet putteth thereto. *Tu es qui restitues hereditatem meam mihi.* Thou good Lord art he that shall restore mine inheritance unto me. As though he would say. O good Lord my God I know well that I am nothing in respect of Thee, I wot well I am unable to ascend by mine own strength so high to have Thee in possession, but Thou art He that shalt draw me to Thee by thy grace, Thou art He that shalt give Thyself in possession unto me. Let a righteous man then consider how great a felicity it is to have God fall unto him as his inheritance: it followeth in the psalm. *Funes ceciderunt mihi in preclaris.* The cords have fallen to me nobly. The parts and lots of inheritances were of old time met out and divided by cords or ropes. These words then, the ropes or cords have fallen to me nobly, be as much to say as the part or lot of mine inheritance is noble. But forasmuch as there be many men which though they be called to this great felicity (as indeed all Christian

people are) yet they set little thereby and often times change it for a small simple delight, therefore the prophet saith suingly. *Hereditas mea preclara est mihi*. Mine inheritance is noble to me. As though he would say that as it is noble in itself so it is noble to me, that is to say I reputed it noble, and all other things in respect of it I repute (as Saint Paul saith) for dung. But forasmuch as to have this light of understanding whereby a man may know this gift that is given him of God to be the gift of God, therefore the prophet suingly saith. *Benedicam Dominum, qui tribuit intellectum*. That is to say. I shall bless our Lord which hath given me understanding. But in so much as a man oftentimes intendeth after reason to serve God, and that notwithstanding yet sensuality and the flesh repugneth: then is a man perfect when that not his soul only but also his flesh draw forth to Godward after those words of the prophet in another psalm. *Cor meum & caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum*. That is to say. My mind & my flesh both have joyed into living God. And for this the prophet saith here suingly. *Et usque ad noctem increpauerunt me renes mei*. My reins or kidney hath chidden me unto the night. That is to say. My reins, in which is wont to be the greatest inclination to concupiscence, not only now incline me not to sin but also chideth me, that is to say, withdraw me from sin unto the night, that is to say, they so far forth withdraw me from sin that willingly they afflict and pain my body. Affliction is in scripture oftentimes signified by the night because it is the most discomfortable season. Then suingly the prophet showeth what is the root of this privation or taking away of fleshly concupiscence in a man, saying. *Providebam Deum in conspectu meo semper*. I provided God always before my sight. For if a man had God always before his eyes as a ruler of all his works, & in all his works he should neither seek his own lucre his glory nor his own pleasure but only to the pleasure of God, he should shortly be perfect. And forasmuch as he that so doeth prospereth in all thing, therefore it followeth. *Ipse a dextris est mihi ne commovear*. He is on my right hand that I be not moved or troubled. Then the prophet declareth how great is the felicity of a just man, which shall be everlastingly blessed both in body and in soul, and therefore he saith. *Lætatum est cor meum*. My soul is glad knowing it after death heaven is made ready for him. *Et caro mea requiescet in spe*. And my flesh shall rest in hope. That is to say that though it joy not by and by as in receiving his glorious estate immediately after the death,[39] yet it resteth in the sepulchre with this hope that it shall arise in the day of judgement immortal and shining with his soul. And also the prophet more expressly declareth in the verse following. For where he said thus, my soul is glad, he addeth the cause, saying. *Quia non derelinques animam meam in inferno*. For thou shalt not leave my soul in hell. Also where the prophet said that his flesh should rest in hope he showeth the cause, saying. *Nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem*. Nor thou shalt not suffer thy saint to see corruption, that is to say, thou shalt not suffer the flesh of a good man to be corrupted. For that that was corruptible shall arise incorruptible. And forasmuch as Christ was the first which entered paradise and opened the life unto us, and was the first that rose again and the cause of our resurrection: therefore these words that we have spoken of the resurrection been principally understanden of Christ, as Saint Peter the apostle hath declared, & secondarily they may be understanden of us in that we be the members of Christ, which only never saw corruption, for his holy body was in his sepulchre nothing putrefied. Forasmuch then as the way of good living bringeth us to a perpetual life of soul & body, therefore the prophet saith. *Notas mihi fecisti vias vite*. Thou hast made the wages of life known unto me. And because that all the felicity of that standeth in the clear beholding and fruition of God, therefore it followeth. *Adimplebis me letitia cum vultu tuo*. Thou shalt fill me full of gladness with thy cheer. And for that our

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felicity shall be everlasting, therefore he saith. *Delectationes in dextra tua usque in finem.* Delectation & joy shall be on thy right hand for ever: he saith on thy right hand because that our felicity is fulfilled in the vision and fruition of the humanity of Christ which sitteth in heaven on the right hand of his father's majesty, after the words of Saint John. *Hæc est tota merces, ut videamus Deum, & quem misisti Jesum Christum.* That is all our reward that we may behold God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent: to which reward he bring us that sitteth there and prayeth for us. Amen.

Pico's Twelve Rules

HERE BEGIN XII RULES OF GIOVANNI PICO EARL OF MIRANDOLA PARTLY EXCITING PARTLY DIRECTING A MAN IN SPIRITUAL BATTLE.[40]

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

THE SECOND RULE.

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

THE THIRD RULE.

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

THE FOURTH RULE.

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

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

As often as thou dost war and strive,
By the resistance of any sinful motion,
Against any of thy sensual wits five,
Cast in thy mind as oft with good devotion
How thou resemblest Christ: as with sour potion
If thou pain thy taste: remember therewithal
How Christ for thee tasted eysell[41] and gall.

If thou withdraw thine hands and forbear
The raven of any thing: remember then
How his innocent hands nailed were.
If thou be tempt with pride: think how that when
He was in form of God: yet of a bond man
He took the shap and humbled himself for thee
To the most odious and vile death of a tree.

Consider when thou art moved to be wrath
He who that was God, and of all men the best,
Seeing himself scorned, scourged both,
And as a thief between .ii. thieves thrust
With all rebuke and shame: yet from his breast
Came never sign of wrath or of disdain,
But patiently endured all the pain.

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

THE FIFTH RULE.

Remember well that we in no wise must
Neither in the foresaid spiritual armour
Nor any other remedy put our trust,
But only in the virtue strength of our Saviour:
For he it is by whose mighty power
The world was vanquished & his prince cast out:
Which reigned before in all the earth about.

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

THE SIXTH RULE.

One sin vanquished look thou not tarry,
But lie in await for another every hour,
For as a wood[42] lion thee send our adversary
Runneth about seeking whom he may devour:
Wherefore continually upon thy tower,
Lest he thee unpurveyed and unready catch,
Thou must with the prophet stand & keep watch.

THE .VII. RULE.

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

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

THE .VIII. RULE.

The time of battle so put thyself in preace[43]
As though thou shouldest after that victory
Enjoy for ever a perpetual peace:
For God of his goodness and liberal mercy
May grant the gift, & eke thy proud enemy,

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Confounded and rebuked by thy battle,
Shall thee no more haply for very shame assail.

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

THE .IX. RULE.

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

THE .X. RULE.

In all temptation withstand the beginning:
The cursed infants of wretched Babylon[44]
To suffer them wax is a jeopardous thing:
Beat out their brains therefore at the Stone:
Perilous is the canker that catcheth the bone:
Too late cometh the medicine if thou let the sore
By long continuance increase more & more.

THE .XI. RULE.

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

In this point many men err for negligence,
For they compare not the joy of the victory

To the sensual pleasure of their concupiscence,
But like rude beasts unadvisedly
Lacking discretion they compare & apply
Of their foul sin the voluptuous delight
To the laborious travail of the conflict & fight.

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

THE .XII. RULE.

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

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

Against this pomp & wretched world's glose
Consider how Christ the Lord, sovereign power,
Humbled himself for us unto the cross:
And peradventure death within one hour
Shall us bereave wealth riches and honour:
And bring us down full low both small & great
To vile carrion and wretched worms' meat.

Pico's twelve weapons of spiritual battle

Here follow the .XII. weapons of spiritual battle which every man should have at hand when the pleasure of a sinful temptation cometh to his mind.

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

THE .XII. WEAPONS HAVE WE[45] MORE AT LENGTH DECLARED AS IT FOLLOWETH.

THE PLEASURE LITTLE AND SHORT.

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

THE FOLLOWERS GRIEF & HEAVINESS.

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

THE LOSS OF A BETTER THING.

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

THIS LIFE A DREAM AND A SHADOW.

This wretched life (the trust & confidence
Of whose continuance maketh us bold to sin)
Thou perceivest well by experience,
Sith that hour in which it did begin,
It holdeth on the course and will not lynne,[46]
But fast it runneth on and passen shall
As doth a dream or a shadow on the wall.

DEATH AT OUR HAND AND UNWARE.

Consider well that ever night and day,
While that we busily provide and care
For our disport revel mirth and play,
For pleasant melody and dainty fare:
Death stealeth on full slyly, and unaware
He lieth at hand and shall us enterprise
We not[47] how soon nor in what manner wise.

FEAR OF IMPENITENT DEPARTING.

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

ETERNAL REWARD ETERNAL PAIN.

Thou seest this world is but a thoroughfare,
See thou behave thee wisely with thy host:

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Hence must thou needs depart naked & bare,
And after thy desert look to what cost
Thou art conveyed at such time as thy ghost
From this wretched carcass shall dissever:
Be it joy or pain, endure it thou shall for ever.

THE NATURE AND DIGNITY OF MAN.

Remember how God hath made the reasonable
Like unto his image and figure,
And for the suffered pains intolerable
That he for angel never would endure.
Regard O man thine excellent nature:
Thou that with angel art made to been equal,
For very shame be not the devil's thrall.

THE PEACE OF A GOOD MIND.

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

THE GREAT BENEFICES OF GOD.

Beside that God thee bought & formed both
Many a benefit hast thou received of his:
Though thou have moved him often to be wroth
Yet he thee kept hath and brought us up to this,
And daily calleth upon thee to his bliss:
How mayst thou then to him unloving be
That ever hath been so loving unto thee.

THE PAINFUL CROSS OF CHRIST.

When thou in flame of the temptation fryest
Think on the very lamentable pain,
Think on the piteous cross of woeful Christ,
Think on his blood beat out at every vein,
Think on his precious heart carved in twain:

Think how for thy redemption all was wrought:
Let him not lose that he so dear hath bought.

THE WITNESS OF MARTYRS & EXAMPLE OF SAINTS.

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

Pico's Twelve Properties or Conditions of a Lover

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

THE .XII . PROPERTIES WE HAVE AT LENGTH MORE OPENLY EXPRESSED IN BALLAD AS IT FOLLOWETH.[48]

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

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

THE SECOND PROPERTY.

Of his love lo the sight and company
To the lover so glad and pleasant is,
That whoso hath the grace to come thereby
He judgeth him in perfect joy and bliss:
And whoso of that company doth miss,

Live he in never so prosperous estate,
He thinketh him wretched and infortunate.

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

THE THIRD PROPERTY.

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

So thou that wilt with God get into favour
Garnish thyself up in as goodly wise,
As comely be, as honest in behaviour
As it is possible for thee to devise:
I mean not hereby that thou shouldst arise,
And in the glass upon thy body prowl,[49]
But with fair virtue to adorn thy soul.

THE FOURTH PROPERTY.

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

Thus should of God the lover be content
Any distress or sorrow to endure,
Rather than to be from God absent,
And glad to die, so that he may be sure
By his departing hence for to procure

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After this valley dark the heavenly light,
And of his love the glorious fight.

THE FIFTH PROPERTY.

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

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

THE .VI. PROPERTY.

The perfect lover longeth for to be
In presence of his love both night & day:
And if it haply so befall that he
May not as he would: he will yet as he may
Ever be with his love, that is to say,
Where his heavy body nill be brought[50]
He will be conversant in mind and thought.

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

THE .VII. PROPERTY.

There is no page or servant most or least
That doth upon his love attend & wait,

There is no little worm, no simple beast,
Ne none so small a trifle or conceit,
Lace, girdle, point, or proper glove strait:
But that if to his love it have been near,
The lover hath it precious, lief, & dear.

So every relic, image or picture,
That doth pertain to God's magnificence,
The lover of God should with all busy cure
Have it in love, honour and reverence:
And specially give them pre-eminence
Which daily done his blessed body nyrche,[51]
The quick relics, the ministers of his church.

THE .VIII. PROPERTY.

A very lover above all earthly thing
Coveteth and longeth evermore to hear
T'honour, laud, commendation and praising,
And every thing that may the fame clear
Of his love: he may in no manner
Endure to hear that therefro mighten vary,
Or any thing found into the contrary.

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

THE .IX. PROPERTY.

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

Of God likewise so wonderful and high
All thing esteem & judge his lover ought,
So reverence, worship, honour & magnify,

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That all the creatures in this world i-wrought
In comparison should he set at nought:
And glad be if he might the mean devise
That all the world would thinke in like wise.

THE .X. PROPERTY.

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

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

THE .XI. PROPERTY.

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

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

THE .XII. PROPERTY.

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

So thou likewise that hast thine heart i-set
Upward to God: so well thyself endeavour,
So studiously that nothing may thee let
Nor fro his service any wise dissever:
Freely look eke thou serve that thereto never
Trust of reward or profit do thee bind,
But only faithful heart & loving mind.

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

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

A Prayer Of Pico Mirandola Unto God.

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

In stray balance of rigorous judgement
If Thou shouldst our sin ponder and weigh:
Who able were to hear thy punishment.
The whole engine of all this world I say,
The engine that endure shall for aye,
With such examination might not stand
Space of a moment in thine angry hand.

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

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

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

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

But this thy goodness wringeth us alas:
For we whom grace had made thy children dear
Are made thy guilty folk by our trespass:
Sin hath us guilty made this many a year.
But let thy grace, thy grace that hath no peer,
Of our offence surmounten all the peace,[52]
That in our sin thine honour may increase.

For though thy wisdom, though thy sovereign power
May otherwise appear sufficiently:
As things which thy creatures every hour
All with one voice declare and testify:
Thy goodness yet, thy singular mercy,
Thy piteous heart, thy gracious indulgence
Nothing so clearly showeth as our offence.

What but our sin hath showed that mighty love:
Which able was thy dreadful majesty
To draw down into earth fro heaven above
And crucify God: that we poor wretches we
Should from our filthy sin i-cleansed be
With blood and water of thine own side,
That streamed from thy blessed wounds wide.

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

Grant I Thee pray such heat into mine heart
That to this love of thine may be egal.
Grant me fro Sathanas service to astert,
With whom me rueth so long to be thrall.
Grant me good Lord and Creator of all

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The flame to quench of all sinful desire,
And in thy love set all mine heart afire.

That when the journey of this deadly life
My silly ghost hath finished, and thence
Departen must without his fleshly wise,
Alone into his Lord's high presence:
He may Thee find: O Well of Indulgence:
In thy lordship not as a lord: but rather
As a very tender loving father.

Amen.

NOTES.



collation of More's text with the original showed that in a few instances he had inaccurately or inadequately rendered it. In such cases, or where for any other reason it seemed desirable, the words of the original are given in the notes, the letters G.F.P. or P. subjoined in brackets indicating that the reference is to the Latin life by Giovanni Francesco Pico or to Pico's works. A few misprints have been silently corrected.

1. This lady may be either Jocosa or Joyce, daughter of Richard Culpeper of Hollingborne, Kent, and wife of Ralph Leigh, undersheriff of London, or her daughter, Jocosa or Joyce Leigh, sister of Sir John Leigh who succeeded to the manor of Stockwell, Surrey, on the death of his uncle, Sir John Leigh, 27 Aug., 1523. Tanswell, "History and Antiquities of Lambeth," pp. 41-2. Manning and Bray, "History of Surrey," iii. 497-8.

2. Pico was the third son and youngest child of Giovanni Francesco Pico, Count of Mirandola and Concordia in the Modenese. He had two brothers, Galeotto, and Antonio Maria, and three sisters, Catterina, Lucrezia and Giulia. Galeotto had to wife Bianca, daughter of Niccolò d'Este, lord of Ferrara; Antonio Maria married twice, viz., (1) Costanza, daughter of Sante Bentivoglio, lord of Bologna, (2) a Neapolitan lady. Pico's eldest sister, Catterina, married (1) Leonello Pio, lord of Carpi, by whom she had Alberto, mentioned in connection with Pico's death; (2) Rodolfo, lord of Gonzaga. Carpi and Gonzaga are little towns in the Modenese. Lucrezia also married twice, viz. (1) Pino Ordellaffo, lord of Forli; (2) Gherardo Appiani di Piombino, Count of Montagnana. The third sister, Giulia, took the veil.

Pico's pedigree has been carried back as far as Manfredo of Reggio, a contemporary of Charlemagne; but the descent from the nephew of Constantine is mythical.

"Memorie Storiche della Mirandola," Litta, "Celebr. Fam. Ital." Pico, *Opera* (ed. 1601), *Life* by G. F. Pico; and "Adversus Astrologos," ii. cap. ix.

3. The Boiardi. Giulia was the daughter of Feltrino Boiardo, first Count of Scandiano, and aunt of the poet, Matteo Maria Boiardo, author of the "Orlando Innamorato." Litta, "Celebr. Fam. Ital." Venturi, "Storia di Scandiano," p. 83.

4. Paulinus was secretary to S. Ambrose, and wrote his life; from which the story in the text is taken.

5. "Flavo et inaffectedato capillitio"(G.F.P.). Apparently Pico was somewhat careless about the arrangement of his hair.

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6. Apollonius of Tyana, fl. 70 A.D., travelled throughout the ancient world expounding Neo-Pythagoreanism, and working wonders, esteemed miraculous.

7. For an account of these spurious compositions, written at various dates between the first century before and the third century after Christ, but which were universally regarded as genuine in Pico's day, see Zeller, "Philosophie der Griechen."

8. Aquinas.

9. With whom Pico was connected by affinity. See note 2.

10. For this vaunt of Epicurus see Diogenes Lærtius, "Vitæ Philosph.": τουτου Απολλοδωρος εν χρονικοις Λυσιφανους ακουσαι φησι και Πραξιφανους αυτος δε ου φησιν αλλ εαυτου, εν τη προς Ευρυδικον επιστολη.

11. Pico's conduct in this matter was not altogether so generous as it appears in the text. Soon after his father's death his brothers had fallen out about the partition of the family estates, and matters went so far that in 1473 Galeotto surprised Antonio Maria and incarcerated him in the citadel of Mirandola, while he made himself master of the entire inheritance, apparently ignoring Pico's title altogether. Antonio Maria remained a close prisoner in Mirandola for about two years, at the close of which he was released in deference to the intercessions, or perhaps menaces, of his friends, fled to Rome, and appealed to the Pope. He returned in 1483 with a small army furnished by the Duke of Calabria, possessed himself of Concordia, and negotiated a treaty of partition with his brother. The treaty was, however, by no means strictly observed. Pico had taken no part in the quarrel, and was probably the more ready to cede his rights to his nephew that any attempt to vindicate them for himself would certainly have excited the determined hostility of his brothers. The conveyance was executed on 22 April 1491. "Memorie Storiche della Mirandola," i. 108; ii. 43. Calori Cesis, "Giovanni Pico."

12. Girolamo Benivieni, author of the "Canzone dell'Amore Celeste e Divino" on which Pico wrote the commentary referred to in the Introduction. For an account of him see Mazzucchelli, "Scrittori Italiani."

13. St. Jerome, author of the Vulgate version of the Bible. The passage referred to is as follows:--"Scimus plerosque dedisse eleemosynam, sed de proprio corpore nihil dedisse; porrexisse egentibus manum, sed carnis voluptate superatos dealbasse ea quæ foris erant, et intus plenos suis ossibus mortuorum." "Epistola ad Eustochium Virginem," *Opera* (fol.) i. 65. g.

14. "Potissimum" (G.F.P.), especially. So in "Romaunt of the Rose," l. 1,358-9, the pomegranate is described as "a fruit full well to like, Namely, to folk when they be sick."

15: A reminiscence of the "De Sapientis Constantia."

16. "Passim" (G.F.P.), on all hands. In fourteenth and fifteenth century literature "by and by" frequently means severally, or one by one, as in "Romaunt of the Rose," l. 4,582, "These were his words by and by." The "Promptorium Parvulorum" (Camden Soc.) translates it "sigillatim." Thence the transition to the sense of the text is not difficult.

17. See Introduction.

18. "Quam primum" (G.F.P.), as soon as possible.

19. See note 6.

20. A reminiscence of Epode II.

21. After leaving Bologna, Pico spent two years at Padua, the stronghold of scholasticism in Italy. He also studied for a time at Ferrara, under Battista Guarino, the humanist, whom in one of his letters he addresses as *preceptor meus*. In 1482 he returned to Mirandola, in the vicinity of which he built himself a little villa, which he describes as "pleasant enough, considering the nature of the place and district," and on which he wrote a poem now lost. Here he entertained Aldo Manuzio, who about the same time, doubtless by Pico's recommendation, was appointed tutor to his nephew, Alberto Pio, and a Greek scholar, Emanuel Adramyttenus, a refugee from Crete, where the Moslem was triumphant. He now began to correspond with Politian, and on a visit to Reggio made the acquaintance of Savonarola, who had come thither to attend a chapter of Dominicans. In 1483 he went to Pavia, taking with him Emanuel Adramyttenus, who acted as his Greek master. There Emanuel died, and Pico then joined Aldo Manuzio at Carpi. About this time he began the study of the oriental languages, his master being one Jocana, otherwise unknown. In 1484, if not earlier, he went to Florence, and made himself known to Marsilio Ficino, who had then just completed his translation of Plato. Pico urged him to crown his labours by performing the same office for Plotinus. Ficino, who was so little above the common superstitions of his time that he believed firmly in astrology, saw in Pico's unexpected appearance at this critical juncture an event not to be explained by natural causes, and taking his suggestion as a divine monition, forthwith set about the work: nor, when it was completed, did he omit to recount, in dedicating it to Lorenzo, the incident which led to its initiation. Pico appears to have remained at Florence until the latter part of 1485, when we lose sight of him for a time. We obtain, however, a transient glimpse of him in a somewhat novel light from a letter from his sister-in-law, Costanza, to Fra Girolamo, of Piacenza, dated 16 May, 1486, and printed in "Memorie Storiche della Mirandola," ii. 167. From this it appears that he had then recently left Arezzo with a Florentine married lady, who, Costanza is careful to state, "accompanied him voluntarily," but had been attacked by some boors, who cut to pieces his attendants, wounded him in two places, and carried him back to Arezzo. Whether the outrage is imputable to the jealousy of the lady's husband, Costanza cannot say. How the affair ended does not appear, but in the following October we find Pico at Perugia, and in November at Fratta in the Ferrarese. Then followed the visit to Rome, the affair of the Theses, and the journey to France, where he was presented to Charles VIII. After his recall to Italy he resided either at Fiesole or Florence until the summer of 1491, when he accompanied Politian to Venice. They returned to Florence in time to be present at the deathbed of Lorenzo (8 Ap. 1492). The rest of his life Pico spent partly at Ferrara and partly at Florence.

The foregoing brief record of Pico's wanderings reposes mainly upon the evidence afforded by his letters and those of Aldo Manuzio, Politian, and Ficino. Many of these, however, are undated, and all are singularly poor in personal detail. See also Calori Cesis, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola," 2nd ed., 1872; Parr Greswell, "Memoirs of Angelus Politianus," &c.; and Villari's "Savonarola," Eng. tr. 1889, ii. 74.

22. "Insidiosissima correptus est febre" (G.F.P.).

23. See Note 2.

24. "Cœli reginam ad se nocte adventasse miro fragrantem odore, membraque omnia febre illa *contusa contractaque* refovisse" (G.F.P.). "Frushed "appears to be derived from the French *froisser*, which may mean either to bruise or to rumple; whence also probably "froyse" used locally for a pancake. See "Promptorium Parvulorum" (Camden Soc.) *Froyse*.

25. See note 2.

26. Charles VIII., to whom Pico had recently been presented. See note 21.

27. Girolamo Savonarola. For what little is known of his relations with Pico see note 21, and his life by Villari, Eng. tr. (1889).

28. "Verum divinis beneficiis male gratus, vel ab sensibus vocatus, detractabat labores (delicatæ quippe temperaturæ fuerat); vel arbitratus eius opera religionem indigere, differebat ad tempus: hoc tamen non ut verum sed ut a me conjectatum et præsumptum dixerim" (G.F.P.). But unmindful of God's favours to him, or led away by the senses, he shrank from the labours (he was of a delicate constitution); or thinking that religion had need of his services he yet deferred them for a time: not, however, that I state this as truth, but only as what I conjecture or presume to be so.

29. "A diaboli laqueis" (P.), from the snares of the devil. So in Holinshed, "History of Scotland," Ethodius, 194 H. B., we read of "nets and grens" for snaring hares.

30. "Suggeret tibi cum Spiritus qui interpellat pro nobis, tum ipsa necessitas singulis horis quod petas a Deo tuo: suggeret et sacra lectio, quam ut omissis jam sabulis nugisque poetarum semper habeas in manibus etiam atque etiam rogo" (P.). It shall be taught thee both by the Spirit which intercedes for us and by thine own needs every hour what thou shouldest ask of thy God; and also by the reading of the holy scriptures, which, laying now aside the frivolous fables of the poets, I earnestly entreat thee to have ever in thy hands.

31. The letter is dated from Ferrara, 15 May, 1492, *i.e.* shortly after the death of Lorenzo.

32. A fragment of the lost Neoptolemus of Ennius:--

"Philosophari est mihi necesse, at paucis, nam omnino haut placet;
Degustandum ex ea, non in eam ingurgitandum censeo."

Ribbeck, "Frag. Lat. Reliq." i. 53; cf. Cic. "Tusc. Dispt." ii. 1.

33. Epist. I. i. *ad fin*:--

"Ad summam: sapiens uno minor est Jove, dives,
Liber, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum;
Præcipue sanus, nisi cum pituita molesta est."

34. "Uti mannus" (P.), like a draught-horse. Doubtless in More's edition the word was spelt manus; hence the curious mistranslation.

35. "*Perusia* xv. Octo Mcccclxxxvi. anno gratiæ" (P.). It is not easy to account for the double error into which More has here fallen.

36. "Mentientes *propter* eum" (P.), lying (*i.e.* to our disadvantage) because of him.

37. Ps. xxv. 1-5 in the authorized and revised versions. The Vulgate, where it appears as Ps. xxiv., has a slightly different rendering: Ad Te Domine levavi animam meam: Deus meus in Te confido, non erubescam: Neque irrideant me inimici mei: etenim universi, qui sustineant Te, non confundentur. Dirige me in veritate tua, et doce me, quia Tu es Deus Salvator meus, et Te sustinui tota die."

38. Ps. xvi. in the authorized and revised versions, xv. in the Vulgate, which is as follows:--"Conserva me Domine, quoniam speravi in Te. Dixi Domino: Deus meus es Tu, quoniam bonorum meorum non eges. Sanctis qui sunt in terra eius mirificavit omnes voluntates meas in eis. Multiplicatae sunt infirmitates eorum: postea acceleraverunt. Non congregabo conventicula eorum de sanguinibus: nec memor ero nominum eorum per labia mea. Dominus pars hereditatis meae, et calicis mei. Tu es qui restitues hereditatem meam mihi. Funes ceciderunt mihi in praeclearis: etenim hereditas mea praecleara est mihi. Benedicam Dominum, qui tribuit mihi intellectum: insuper et usque ad noctem increpuerunt me renes mei. Providebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper: quoniam a dextris est mihi ne commovear. Propter hoc laetatum est cor meum, et exultavit lingua mea: insuper et caro mea requiescet in spe. Quoniam non derelinques animam meam in inferno: nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem. Notas mihi fecisti vias vitae, adimplebis me laetitia cum vultu tuo: delectationes in dextera tua usque in finem."

39. "By-and-by" is here evidently forthwith.

40. These rules, of which More's verses are rather a paraphrase than a translation, were written by Pico in prose, and were translated into prose by Sir Thomas Elyot, author of the "Book of the Governour," as follows:

"THE RULES OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE MADE BY GIOVANNI PICO THE ELDER EARL OF MIRANDOLA.

"First if to man or woman the way of virtue doth seem hard or painful, because we must needs fight against the flesh, the devil, and the world, let him or her call to remembrance, that whatsoever life they will chose according to the world, many adversities, incommodities, much heaviness and labour are to be suffered.

"Moreover let them have in remembrance, that in wealth and worldly possessions is much and long contention, laborious also, and therewith unfruitful, wherein travail is the conclusion or end of labour, and finally pain everlasting, if those things be not well ordered and charitably disposed.

"Remember also, that it is very foolishness to think to come unto heaven by any other mean than by the said battle, considering that our head and master Christ did not ascend unto heaven but by his passion: And the servant ought not to be in better estate or condition than his master or sovereign.

"Furthermore consider, that this battle ought not to be grudged at, but to be desired and wished for, although thereof no price or reward mought ensue or happen, but only that thereby we mought be conformed or joined to Christ our God and master. Wherefore as often as in resisting any temptation thou dost withstand any of the senses or wits, think unto what part of Christ's passion thou mayst apply thyself or make thyself like: As resisting gluttony, whilst thou dost punish thy taste or appetite: remember that Christ received in his drink eyssell[41] mixed with the gall of a beast, a drink most unsavoury and loathsome. When thou withdrawest thy hand from unlawful

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taking or keeping of any thing, which liketh thine appetite: remember Christ's handes as they were fast nailed unto the tree of the cross. And resisting of pride, think on him, who being very God almighty, for thy sake received the form of a subject, and humbled himself unto the most vile and reproachful death of the cross.

"And when thou art tempted with wrath: remember that He which was God, and of all men the most just or righteous, when He beheld himself mocked, spit on, scourged, and punished with all despites and rebukes, and set on the cross among errant thieves, as if He Himself were a false harlot, He notwithstanding showed never token of indignation or that He were grieved, but suffering al things with wonderful patience, answered al men most gently. In this wise if thou peruse all things one after another, thou mayst find, that there is no passion or trouble, that shall not make thee in some part conformable or like unto Christ.

"Also put not thy trust in man's help, but in the only virtue of Christ Jesu, which said: Trust well, for I have vanquished the world. And in another place He said: The prince of this world is cast out thereof. Wherefore let us trust by his only virtue, to vanquish the world, and to subdue the devil. And therefore ought we to ask his help by the prayers of us and of his saints.

"Remember also, that as soone as thou hast vanquished one temptation, always another is to be looked for: The devil goeth alway about and seeketh for him whom he would devour. Wherefore we ought to serve diligently and be ever in fear, and to say with the prophet: I will stand alway at my defence.

"Take heed moreover, that not only thou be not vanquished of the devil, that tempteth thee, but also that thou vanquish and overcome him. And that is not only when thou dost no sin, but also when of that thing wherein he tempted thee, thou takest occasion for to do good. As if he offereth to thee some good act to be done to the intent that thereby thou mayst fall into vainglory: forthwith thou thinking it not to be thy deed or work, but the benefit or reward of God, humble thou thyself, and judge thee to be unkind unto God in respect of his manifold benefits.

"As often as thou dost fight, fight as in hope to vanquish, & to have at the last perpetual peace. For that peradventure God of his abundant grace shall give unto thee, and the devil being confused of thy victory, shall return no more again. But yet when thou hast vanquished, bear thyself so as if thou shouldst fight again shortly. Thus alway in battle thou must think on victory: and after victory thou must prepare thee to battle immediately.

"Although thou feelest thyself well armed and ready, yet flee notwithstanding all occasions to sin. For as the wise man saith: who loveth peril shall therein perish.

"In all temptations resiste the beginning, and beat the children of Babylon again the Stone, which Stone is Christ, and the children be evil thoughts and imaginations. For in long continuing of sin, seldom worketh medicine or remedy.

"Remember, that although in the said conflict of temptation the battle seemeth to be very dangerous: yet consider how much sweeter it is to vanquish temptation, than to follow sin, whereto she inclineth thee, whereof the end is repentance. And herein many be foul deceived, which compare not the sweetness of victory to the sweetness of sin, but only compareth battle to pleasure. Not withstanding a man or woman, which hath a thousand times known what it is to give place to temptation, should once essay, what it is to vanquish temptation.

"If thou be tempted, think thou not therefore that God hath forsaken thee, or that he setteth but little by thee, or that thou art not in the sight of God good or perfect but remember, that after Saint Paul had seen God, as He was in his divinity, and such secret mysteries as be not lawful for any man to speak or rehearse, he for all that suffered temptation of the flesh, wherewith God suffered him to be tempted, lest he should be assaulted with pride. Wherein a man ought to consider that Saint Paul, which was the pure vessel of election, and rapt into the third heaven, was notwithstanding in peril to be proude of his virtues, as he saith of himself. Wherefore above all temptations man or woman ought to arm them most strongly against the temptation of pride, since pride is the root of all mischief, against the which the only remedy is to think alway that God humbled himself for us unto the cross. And moreover that death hath so humbled us whether we will or no, that our bodies shall be the meat of wormes loathsome and venomous."

41. "Recordare illum felle potatum et aceto" (P.). For "eysell" (i.e. vinegar) cf. Shakespeare, Hamlet, v. i. l. 264, "Woo't drink up eisel?" and Sonnet, cxi. l. 10, "Potions of eisel 'gainst my strong infection."

42. "Wood" in the sense of *mad* is not uncommon in our older writers. So Demetrius in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," ii. I, 1. 192,

"And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot find my Hermia."

43. "Preace" would seem to be a corruption of *prest*, ready, used substantivally, "put thyself in preace" meaning *make thyself ready*. See Skeat, "Etymological Dictionary of the English Language," art. *Press*.

44. Cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 8, 9: "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

45. Here More speaks in *propria persona*, with perhaps a *double entendre* in the "We More." There is nothing in Pico corresponding to the verses which follow.

46. For "lynne," cease, cf. Spenser, "Faery Queen," i. canto v. 35.

"And Sisiphus an huge round stone did reel
Against an hill, ne might from labour lin."

47. "Not" is for *ne wot*, i.e. know not. So Chaucer concludes the description of the Merchant in the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales," l. 286:

"But soth to sayn I n'ot how men him call."

48. The stanzas on the "Properties" are original except the last two, which are a paraphrase of the following sentence:-

"Solemus autem ad hoc induci præcipue ex tribus causis. Prima est quando servitium ipsum per se est appetibile: secunda quando ille cui servimus est in se valde bonus et amabilis: sicut solemus dicere, servimus illi propter suas virtutes. Tertia est quando ille prius quam inciperes multa tibi beneficia contulit. Et hæc tria sunt in Deo: quia pro servitio eius nihil naviter accipitur quod non sit nobis bonum: et quoad

animam et quoad corpus: quia servire ei non est aliud quam tendere ad eum: hoc est ad summum bonum. Similiter ipse est optimus et pulcherrimus et sapientissimus: et habet omnes conditiones quæ solent nos movere ad amandum aliquem et serviendum ei gratis: et in nos contulit summa beneficia cum nos et ex nihilo creaverit et per sanguinem Filii ab inferno redemerit." (P.) There are, moreover, three principal considerations by which we are accustomed to be impelled to this service. The first is that the service itself is desirable for its own sake. The second arises when he whom we serve is in himself very good and amiable, and we serve him, as we are in the habit of saying, on account of his virtues. The third, when before the commencement of your service he whom you serve has conferred on you many favours. And these three considerations coexist in the case of God, for nothing whatever is accepted by way of His service which is not for our good both of soul and of body: for to serve Him is nothing else but to seek after Him: *i.e.* after the chief good. Likewise He Himself is of all beings the best, and most lovely and wisest: and has in Himself all the properties which are wont to move us to love and serve any one without reward: and has conferred on us the greatest favours, since He has both created us from nothing, and redeemed us from hell by the blood of His Son."

48. Cf. "Promptorium Parvulorum" (Camd. Soc.). "Prolling, or seeking. Perscrutatio, investigatio, scrutinum:" and Chaucer, "Canterbury Tales," l. 16880. "Though ye prolle aye, ye shall it never find."

50. Cf. note 47.

51. "Nyrche" has been substituted by way of conjectural emendation for "wyrche," which is unintelligible, "Nyrche" as = nourish gives the sort of sense required by the context; and the eccentric spelling may be merely due to the roughness with which the r was pronounced in More's time.

52. "Peace," cup: from the low Latin, *pecia*. See "Promptorium Parvulorum" (Camden Soc.) *Pece*; and Du Cange, *Pecia*.

