

A Dauy the Dycer.

Long was I lady Lucke your seruing man,
and now haue lost agayne all that I gat,
wherfoze whan I thinke on you nowe and than,
and in my mynde remember this and that,
ye may not blame me though I bestrew your cat,
but in fayth I blesse you agayne a thousand times,
foz lending me now some layfure to make rymes.

B In August in the yere of our lord, 1534. & in the. xxvi. yere of the raygne of kyng Henrye the eyght, the ladye Alyce Alington, (wyfe to syr Gyles Alington knyghte, and daughter to syr Thomas Doyes seconde and last wyfe) wrote a letter to maistres Margaret Koper, the cōpy whereof here foloweth.

S After Koper with all my heart I recomēd me vnto you, thankyng you for all kyndnesse. The cause of my wrytyngge at thys tyme is, to shew you that at my coming home, within. ii. howres after, my lord chauncellour did come to take a course at a bucke in our parke, the which was to my husband a greate comfort, that it wold please him so to doe. Then whē he had taken hys pleasure and kilde his dere, he wente to syr Thomas Barnesfrans to bed: where I was the next day with him at his desyre, & which I could not say naye to, for me thought he dyd byd me heartelye: and most especially, because I wold speake to him for my father. And when I sawe my tyme, I did desyre hym as humbly as I coude, that he wold (as I haue heard say that he hath bēn) be still good lord vnto my father. fyrst he answered me, that he woulde be as gladdē to doe for hym as for his father, and that (he sayd) did appeare very well, when the matter of the nonne was layde to hys charge. And as for thys other matter, he meruayled & my father is so obstinate in his owne conceite, in that that every bodye went furth withall, saue onelye the blynde bysshoppe and he. And in good faythe (sayde my lord) I am very gladdē that I haue no learning, but in a fewe of Irfopes fables, of the which I shal tel you one. Ther was a countrey in the which there wer almoste none but soles, sayyng a fewe whiche were wise and they by theyr wisdom knew, th at ther wold

fall a great rayne, the whiche shoulde make all theym foolles, that shoulde be sowled or wet therewith. They seeyng that, made them caues vnder & ground, & rill all the rayne was passe. Than they came furth, thinking to make the soles doe what they lyst, and to rule theym as they woulde. But the soles woulde none of that, but woulde haue the rule themselves for all theyr craft. And whē the wise men saw that they coude not obreynt theyr purpose, they willed that they had been in the rayne, and had befoyled theyr clothes with them. When this tale was tolde, my lord dyd laugh very merely. Than I sayd to hym, that for al hys mery fable, I did put no doubt, but that he woulde be good lord vnto my father when he sawe hys tyme. He sayde, I woulde not haue your father so scrupulous of hys conscience. And then he tolde me another fable, of a Lyon, an Assē, and a wolfe, & of theyr confession. fyrst the Lyon confessed & he had deuowred al & bestes & he could come by. His confessor astopled hym, because he was a king, and also it was his nature so to doe. Than came the pooze Assē, and sayde that he toke but one strawe out of hys maisters shoe for hūger, by & meanes wherof he thought that his maister did take colde. Hys confessor could not assoile this great trespass, but by and by sent hym to the bysshop. Than came the wolfe and made his confession, and he was straitly commaunded that he shoulde not passe. vi. pence at a meale. But when the sayde wolfe had vsed thys dyet a little while, he waxed very hungry, in so much that on a day when he saw a cowe with her calfe come by him, he sayd to himselfe, I am very hungry, and sayne wold I eate, but that I am bound by my godly father. Notwithstanding that, my conscience shall iudge me. And than if that be so, than shall my conscience be thus, that the cowe doth seme to me now but

A woꝛth a grote. And than if the colwe be but woꝛth a grote, than is the calfe but woꝛth.ii. pencc. So did the wolfe eate both the colwe & the calfe. Now my good sister, hath not my lord tolde me.ij. pzetables. In god sayth they pleased me nothing, noꝛ I wilst not what to say, for I was abashed of this answer. And I see no better suite thā to almightie god. For he is the comforter of all sorowes, and will not fayle to send his comfort to his seruantes when they haue most neede. Thus fare ye well mine own good sister. Written the monday after saint Laurence in haste.

Your sister Alice Alington.

When maistres Koper had receiued this letter, she at her next repayre to her father in h towne, shewed him this letter. And what communicacion was therupon betwene her father and her, ye shall perceiue by an answer here following (as wꝛiten to the ladye Alington.) But whether thys answer wer wꝛiten by syꝛ Thomas Doze in his daughter Kopers name, oꝛ by her selfe, it is not certaynelye knowne.

When I came next vnto my father after, me thoughte it both conuenient and necessary, to shew him your letter. Conuenient, that he might thereby see your louing labour taken for hym. Necessary, that sith he might perceiue thereby, that if he stande still in this scruple of hys conscience, (as it is at the least wyse called by many that are his frendes and wyse) al his frendes that seme most able to doe him good, either shall finally forsake him, oꝛ peraduenture not be habile in dede to do him anye good at all. And for these causes, at my next being wꝛth him after your letter receiued, when I had a while talked with him, syꝛst of his diseases bothe in his bestt ofiolde, & his reynes nowe, by reason of grauell and stone, & of the crampe also that dyuers nightes gripeth hym in his legges, and that I found by his woꝛdes that they wer not much encreased, but continued after theyꝛ manner that they did befoze, sometime very soze & sometime little grief, and that at that time I found him out of payn, and as one in his case mighte, metelye well minded, after oure. vii. Psalmes & the letany said, to sit & talke & be merue, beginning syꝛst with other thinges, of the

god comfort of my mother, & the good order of my brother & all my sisters, disposing them selfe euery day moze & moze to set litle by the woꝛld, & drawe moze & moze to God, & that his household, hys neighbors, & other good frendes abode, diligently remembꝛed him in their prayeꝛs, I added vnto this: I pray god good father that theyꝛ prayeꝛs & ours & your owne therwith, may purchase of god h grace, that you may in this great matter (for which you stand in this trouble, and for your trouble all we also h loue you) take such a waye by time, as standing with the pleasure of god, may content & please the king, whom ye haue alwaye founden so singularly gracious vnto you, that if ye shoulde stidly refuse to doe the thing that wer his pleasure, which god not displeased you might do (as many great wise & well learned men say that in this thing you may) it wold both be a great blot in your woꝛship in euery wise mannes opinion, and as my selfe haue heard some say (such as your selfe haue alway taken for well learned and god) a perill vnto your soule also. But as for that point (father) wil I not be holde to dispute vpon, sith I truste in God and your good mynde that ye will loke surely therto. And your learning I know for suche, that I wot well you can. But one thing is ther which I & other your frendes syꝛnd and perceiue abode, whiche but if it be shewed you, you may peraduenture to your greete perill, mistake, and hope for lesse harm (for as for god I wot wel in this woꝛld of this matter ye loke for none) than I soze feare me, shall be likelype to fall to you. For I allure you father, I haue receiued a letter of late from my sister Alington, by whiche I see well that if ye change not your mind, you are likelype to lose al those frendes that are habile to do you anye good. For if ye leese not their god wils, you shal at h least wise lese h effect therof, for anye good h they shal be habile to doe you. With this my father smyled vpon me & saide: what maistres Cue (as I called you when you came first) hath my daughter Alington plaid the serpent with you, & with a letter set you a woꝛke to come teꝛpte your father again, & for the fauour h you beare him labour to make him sweare against his conscience, & so send him to h deuil? And after that, he looked sadly agayne, & earnestly said vnto me. Daughter Margaret, we two haue talked of this thinge after

After thā twyse oꝝ thꝛise. And þ̄ same tale
 in effect, that you tell me now therein, &
 the same feare to, haue you twise told me
 befoze, & I haue twise answered you to,
 that in this matter if it were possible foꝝ
 me to doe the thing that might content þ̄
 kinges grace, & god therewith not offen-
 ded, ther hath no man taken this othe al-
 ready moze gladly than I would doe: as
 he that reckoneth himsele moze depelpe
 bounden vnto the kynges byghness, foꝝ
 his most singular bountie, many wayes
 thewed and declared, than any of the all
 besyde. **B**ut sith standing my conscience
 I can in no wyse doe it, & that foꝝ the in-
 struction of my conselice in the matter,
 I haue not sleightly looked, but by many
 yeres studied & aduisedly considꝛed, & ne-
 uer could yet see noꝝ heare þ̄ thing, noꝝ I
 thinke I neuer shal, & could enduce mine
 own mind to think other wise than I do,
 I haue no maner remedy, but god hath
 geuen me to þ̄ streight, that either I must
 dedly displease him, oꝝ abide anye woꝝld-
 ly harme that he shal foꝝ mine other sin-
 nes, vnder name of this thyng, suffer to
 fall vpon me. **C**whereof (as I befoze thys
 haue told you to) I haue ere I came here,
 not lest vnberthougth noꝝ vnconsidered,
 þ̄ very woꝝt & the vttermost that can by
 possibilitie fall. And albeit that I know
 mine own frailtie ful well, & the natural
 faintnes of mine own heart, yet if I had
 not trusted þ̄ god thold geue me strenght
 rather to endure al thinges, than offend
 him by swearing vngodly against mine
 own conscience, you may be very sure I
 woulde not haue come here. And sith I
 loke in this matter but only vnto god, it
 maketh me little matter, though men cal
 it as it please the, & say it is no conscience
 but a foolish scruple. At this woꝝd I toke
 a god occasion, & said vnto him thus: **A**
 god faith father foꝝ my parte, I neither
 do, noꝝ it canot become me, either to mis-
 trust your god minde oꝝ your learnyng.
 But because you speake of þ̄ that some
 calle it but a scruple, I assure you you
 shall see by my sisters letter, that one of þ̄
 greatestte estates in this realme, & a man
 learned to, & (as I dare say your self shal
 thinke whē you know him, & as you haue
 already right effectuallye proued him)
 your tender friend and very speciall god
 loꝝd, accounteth your conselice in this mat-
 ter, foꝝ a right simple scruple. And you
 may be sure he faith it of god mind, and
 lyeth no litle cause. foꝝ he faith, þ̄ where
 you say your conscience moueth you to
 this, all þ̄ nobles of this realme, & almost

all other men to, go boldly furth with þ̄
 contrary, & sticke not thereat, saue only
 your self & one other mā: whō though he
 be right god & very well learned too, yet
 would I wene fewe þ̄ loue you, geue you
 the counsaile against al other menne, to
 leane to his minde alone. And with this
 woꝝd I toke him your letter, þ̄ he might
 see my woꝝdes wer not sayned, but spokē
 of his mouth, whō he much loueth & este-
 meth highly. **T**herupō he read ouer your
 letter. And when he came to þ̄ end, he be-
 gan it afresh & read it ouer again. And in
 the reading he made no maner haste, but
 aduised it laisozly, & pointed euery woꝝd.
 And after þ̄ he pauised, & thā thus he said. **F**
 foꝝ with daughter **M**argaret, I find my
 daughter **A**lington such as I haue euer
 souē her, & I trust euer shal, as natural-
 ly minding me as you þ̄ are mine owne.
Howbeit, her take I verely foꝝ mine own
 to, sith I haue maried her mother & bꝛo-
 ught by her of a child as I haue bꝛought
 by you, in other thinges and in learning
 both, wherein I thanke God the fyndeth
 now some fruite, & bꝛingeth her own by
 very vertuously and well. **W**herof god I
 thanke him hath sent her god soꝝe, oure
 loꝝd pꝛeserue the & sende her much ioy of
 the, & my god sonne her gentle husbāde
 to, & haue mercye on the soule of mine o-
 ther god sonne her spꝛit: I am daily bede-
 man (& so wyte her) foꝝ them all. In this
 matter she hath vsed her self like her self,
 wisely & like a very daughter toward me
 & in the ende of her letter, getteth as god
 couisel as any man þ̄ wit hath wold wish,
 god geue me grace to folowe it, & god re-
 ward her foꝝ it. **N**ow daughter **M**arga-
 ret as foꝝ my loꝝd, I not only thinke, but
 haue also found it, that he is vndoubtedly
 my singular god loꝝd. And in mine other
 busines concerning the sely nūne, as my
 cause was god & clere, so was he my god
 loꝝd therein, & **S**ecretary my god ma-
 ster to. foꝝ which I shall neuer cease to
 be faithful bedeman foꝝ the both, & daily
 doe I by my trouth, praye foꝝ them as I
 pray foꝝ my selfe. And whēsoener it shold
 happen (which I trust in god shall neuer
 happen) þ̄ I be souē other than a true mā
 to my pꝛince, let the neuer fauor me nei-
 ther of the both, noꝝ of trouth no moze it
 could become the to do. **B**ut in this mat-
 ter **M**egge to tell the trouth betwene the
 & me, my loꝝds **C**lops fables do not gret-
 ly moue me. **B**ut as his wisdom foꝝ hys
 pastime told them merely to mine othe
 daughter, so shal I foꝝ my pastime, aun-
 swer the to the **M**egge þ̄ arte mine other-
M. ii.

A The fyrst fable of the rayne that washte away all their wittes þ̄ stode abzoðe whē it fell, I haue heard oft ere this: It was a tale so often told among þ̄ kinges counsel by my lozde Cardinall when hys grace was chaunceliour, þ̄ I cannot lightlye foꝝgeare it. Foꝝ of trowth in tymes past whē bartance began to fall betwene the Emperour and tye frenche king, in such wise that they were lykely & dyd in dede, fall together at warre, & that ther wer in the counsaile here sometime sundꝝ opinions, in which some were of the mynde that they thoughte it wisdome, that we should sit still & let them alone: but euermoze against that way, my lozde v̄sld this fable of those wylse mē, that because they would not be washed with the rayn that should make all the people foolcs, went thē self in caues, & hid them vnder the ground. But when the rayne had once made all the remenant foolcs, and that they came out of theyꝝ caues & wold vtter their wisdome, the foolcs agreed together agaynst them, & there all to bet them. And so sayd his grace, that if we woulde be so wylse þ̄ we woulde sitte in peace whyle the foolcs foughte, they woulde not sayle after, to make peace and agree and fall at length all vpon vs. I will not dispute vpon hys graces counsaile, and I truste we neuer made warre but as reason woulde. But yet this fable foꝝ hys parte, dydde in hys dayes help the king & the realme to spend manye a fayre peny. But that geare is passed, and hys grace is gone our lozde asloyle his soule. And therefore shall I nowe come to thys Closes fable, as my Lozde fall mercely layde it furth foꝝ me. If those wylse menne Pegge, when the rayn was gone at theyꝝ coming abzoðe, where they found all menne foolcs, withēd theselues foolcs to, because they could not rule them, than semeth it that the fooly rayne was so soze a showze, that enē thoꝝwe the grounde it sanke into theyꝝ caues, and powzed downe vpon theyꝝ heades, and wette them to the skynne, & made them moze noddes than them that stode abzoðe. Foꝝ if they had had anye witte, they myght well see, that though they had been foolcs too, that thing wold not haue suffyled, to make them the rulers ouer the other foolcs, no moze than þ̄ tother foolcs ouer them: and of so manye foolcs all myght not be rulers. Now whē they longed so soze to bere a rule among foolcs, that so they so mighte, they woulde be gladde to leese their witte and be foolcs to, the foolishe rayne hadde wash-

ed them metely well. Howe be it, to save the trowth, befoze the rayne came, if they thoughte that all the remenaunte should turne into foolcs, and than either were so foolishe that they woulde, or so madde to thinke that they should, so fewe rule so many foolcs, and hadde not so much wit, as to consider that there are none so vnruly as they that lacke witte and are foolcs, than were these wylse menne skarke foolcs befoze the rayne came. Howe be it daughter Roper, whome my Lozde here taketh foꝝ the wylse menne, and whome he meanceth to be foolcs, I cannot berpe well geasse, I cannot reade well suche ryddles. Foꝝ as Dauus saythe in The-
rence: *Non sum Oedipus*. I may say you wot well: *Non sum Oedipus sed Morus*, which name of myne what it signiēpeth in Greke, I nede not tell you. But I truste my lozde reckoneth me amonge the foolcs, and so reckō I my self, as my name is in greke. And I finde I thanks God, causes not a fewe, wherfoze I so should in very dede. But surely among those that long to be rewlers, God and myne owne consciēce clerely knoweth, that no man may truly nouber and reckon me. And I wene eche other mans conscience can tell himself the same, since it is so well known that of the kinges great goodnes, I was one of the greatest rewlers in thys noble realme, and that at myne owne great labour by his gret goodnes dyscharged. But whomsoeuer my lozde meane foꝝ the wylse men, and whosoēuer his lozde shyp take foꝝ the foolcs, and whomsoeuer lag foꝝ the rule, & who so euer long foꝝ none, I beseeche our lozde make vs all so wise as that we may euerye man here so wisely rule our self, in this tyme of teares, thys vale of miserye, thys symple wretched world (in which as Boece sayth, one mā to be pꝝoude that he beareth rule ouer othcr mē, is much like as one mouce wold be pꝝoude to beare a rule ouer other mice in a barne) god I say geue vs the grace so wisely to rule our self here, that when we shall hence in hast to mete þ̄ great spouse we be not takē sleepers, & foꝝ lacke of light in our lampes, thyt out of beaue among the. v. foolishe byꝝgins. The second fable I target semeth not to be Closes. Foꝝ by þ̄ the matter goeth all vpon confession, it semeth to be fained since chꝝstendome began. Foꝝ in Grece befoze Chꝝst's daies they v̄sld not confessio, no moze the men than, than the beastes nowe. And Closes was a Greke, & died long ere Chꝝst was boꝝne. But what: who made it, maketh little

A litle matter. For I enuy not that Clope hath þ name. But surely it is somewhat so subtil for me. For whan his lordship vnderstandeth by the lyon & the wolfe, which both twayn confessed the selfe, of rauin & deuouring of al y came to their handes, & the tone enlarged his conscience at his pleasure in the constraccion of his penance, nor whō by the god discrete confessor y enioyned the tone a litle penance, & the tother none at all, and sente the poze Alle to the byshop, of all these thynges can I nothing tel. But by the folk the scrupulous Alle, that had so soze a conscience, for y taking of a straw for hungar out of hys maisters shoo, my lordes othe wordes of my scruple declare, that his lordship merely meant y by me: signifying (as it seemeth by that similitude) that of ouersight & folye, my scrupulous conscience taketh for a gret perilous thynge towarde my soule, if I should sweare this othe, which thing as his lordship thinketh, wer in dede but a tryple. And I suppose well Margaret as you tolde me right now, y so think manny mo besyde, as well spirituall as temporal, and that euen of those, y for theyr learning and their vertue, my self not a litle extreme. And yet albeit that I suppose this to be true, yet beleue I not eue very surely, y euerye man so thynketh y so saith. But though they did daughter, y would not make much to me, nor though I should see my lord of Rocheester say the same, & sweare the oth himself before me too. For whereas you tolde me right now, y such as loue me, wold not aduyle me, that agaynst all other men, I should leane vnto hys mind alone, verely daughter no more I dwe. For albeit y of very trouthe, I haue hym in that reuerent estimacion, y I reckon in this realm no one mā, in wisdom, learning, & long approued bertne together, mete to be matched & compared with him, yet y in this matter I was not lead by him, very wel & plain appeareth, both in that I refused y oth before it was offred him & in that also y his lordship was content to haue swozne of that oth (as I perceyued since by you when you moued me to the same) either somewhat more, or in some other maner than euer I mynded to doe. Merely daughter I neuer intend (God being my god lord) to pynne my soule at another mannes backe, not eue the best man y I know this day liuing: for I knowe not whither he may happe so carpe it. Ther is no mā liuing, of whō

whyle he liueth, I maye make my selfe sure. Some may dwe for fauour, & some may dwe for feare, & so might they carpe my soule a wrog way. And some might hap to frame himselfe a conscience, and thinke that while he dō it for feare, god wold forgene it. And some may peradventure thinke that they will repenie & be thriuen therof, & that so shall god remit it them. And some may be peradventure of y mind, that if they say one thing & thinke the whyle y contrary, god more regardeth their heart than their tonge, & that therfore their oth goeth vpon that they thinke, and not vpon that they say: as a womā reloned once. I trow daughter you wer by. But in god sayth Margaret, I can vse no such wayes in so great a matter: but lyke as if mine owne conscience serued me, I wold not let to do it though other men refused, so though other refuse it not, I dare not do it, mine owne conscience standyng agaynst it. If I had (as I tolde you) looked but lightly for y matter, I wold haue cause to feare. But now haue I so looked for it & so long, that I purpose at the least wyse to haue no lesse regard vnto my soule, than had once a poore honest man of the countrey, that was called Campayne. And with this, he told me a tale, I wene I can scait tell it you agayne, because it hangeth vpon some tearmes and ceremonies of y law. But as farre as I can call to mind my fathers tale was this, that ther is a court belongyng of course vnto euerye sayre, to dooe iustice in such thynge as happen within the same. Thys courte hath a pzetely sond name, but I caot hapen on it: but it begynneth with a ppe, & the remenant goeth much like the name of a knyght that I haue knowen I wis, and I trowe you to, for he hath been at my fathers ofte ere this, at such tyme as you wer there, a metely tall black man, hys name was sy William Ponder. But tut let the name of the court go for thys once, or call it if ye will a courte of ppe sy William Ponder. But thys was the matter loe, that vpon a tyme, at suche a courte holden at Barrynewe sayre, there was an eschetour of Londō that had arested a man y was ioutelawed, & had sealed hys goodes that he hadde brought into the sayre, collyng hym out of the sayre by a trayne. The man that was arested & hys goodes sealed was a northern manne, whiche by his frendes made theschetour within the sayre to be arested, vpo an accis, I wot nere whar,

And so was he brought befoze the iudge of h court of py lye William Ponder. And at the lasse h matter came to a certayne ceremonye to be tryed by a quest of .xii. men, a iury as I remember they call it, or elles a perjury. Nowe had the clothman by frendshipp of the officers, founden h meanes to haue all the quest almost, made of the nozthern men, such as had they bothes there standing in h sayze. Now was it come to the last daye in the after none, & the .xii. men had herd both the parties & they counsel tel their tales at the barre, & were fro the barre had into a place, to talke & common, & agreed vpo their sentence. Nay let me speke better in my termes yet, I trow h iudge geueth the sentence, & the questes tale is called a verdit. They wer skant come in together, but the nozthern men were agreed, & in effect all the tother to, to call our London eschetour. They thoughte ther neded no moze to proue that he dyd wrong, than euen the name of hys bare office alone. But than was ther among the as the deuill wold, this honest mā of another quarter, h was called Cumpany. And because the felowe semed but a fowle, & late still & sayde nothing, they made no reckoning of hym, but sayd we be agreed now, come let vs go geue our verdit. Than whan h poze felowe sawe that they made such hast, & his mind nothing gaue him that way that theirs did (if their mindes gaue the that way that they said) he prayde the to tarp & talke vpon the matter, and tell him such reason therein, that he might thinke as they did: and whē he so thold do, he wold be glad to say with the, or els he sayde they must pardone him. For sich he had a soule of his own to kepe as they had, he must say as he thoughte for hys, as they must for theirs. Whan they herd thys, they wer half angry with him. What god felow (quod one of the nozthern men) whare wonnes thou? We not we steuen here, & thou ne but ene la alene, & all we agreed: whereto shouldest thou sticke: what is thy name gude felow? Passers (quod he) my name is called Cumpany. Cumpany q they, now by thy trowth gude felowe playe than the gude companion, come theron furth with vs, & passe euen for gude company. Wold god god maisters of the man agayn, that ther lay no moze weight theron. But now whē we shall hence & come befoze god, and that he shall send you to heauen for doing according to your conscience, and me to

the deuill for dooing againste myne, in passing at your request here for god company now, by god maister Wykenson h was one of the nozthern mens names) if I shall than say to all you agayn, maisters, I went once for god company with you, which is the cause that I goe now to hell, play you the god felowes now agayn with me, as I went than for god company with you, so some of you goe now for god company with me. Wold ye goe maister Wykenson: nay naye by our lady, noz neuer one of you all. And therfoze must ye pardō me from passing as you passe, but if I thought in h matter as you doe, I dare not in such a matter passe for god company. For the passage of my poze soule passeth al god company. And when my father had told me thys tale, than sayde he ferther thus: I praye the now god Margaret tell me this, wouldest thou wishe thy poze father being at the last wisse somewhat lered, lesse to regard the peril of his soule than did there h honest vnlearned mā: I meble not (you wor wel) wthe conscience of any mā, that hath swozne: noz I take not vpo me to be they iudge. But now if they doe well, & that they conscience grudge the not, if I with my conscience to the contrary, thoulde for god company passe on with them & swaere as they doe, when all our soules hereafter shall passe out of this wo:ld, & stand in iudgement at the barre befoze the high iudge, if he iudge them to heauē and me to the deuill, because I did as they did, not thinking as they thought, if I thold than say (as the god man Cumpany sayd) Wpno olde god lordes & frendes, naming such a lord and such, yea and some bishoppes peradventure of suche as I loue best, I swaere because you swaere, & wente that way that you went, doe likewise for me now, let me not go alone, if there be any god felowshippe with you, some of you come with me: by my trowth Marger I may say to the in secret counsaile, here betwene vs swayn (but let it goe no ferther I beseeche the heartely) I fynde the frendshipp of thys wretched wo:ld so sicke, that for any thing that I could reere or pray, that woulde for god felowshipp goe to the deuill with me, amonge them all I wene thould I not fynde one. And than by God Marger if I thinke so to, best it is I suppose, h for any respecte of them, all were they twyse as many moe as they be, I haue my selfe a respecte to myne owne soule. Surely father quod I, with

A I, without any scruple at all, you may be bolde I dare saye for to sweare that. But father, they that thynke you shold not refuse to sweare the thyng, that you see so manie so good menne and so well learned sweare befoze you, meane not that you shoulde sweare to beare them felowshyp, noz to passe with them for godd compaigne: but that the credence that you may with reason geue to theyz persones for theyz afozesayde qualites, shoulde well moue you to thinke the oth such of it selfe, as enery man maye well sweare withoute perill of theyz soule, if theyz owne priuate consciēce to the contrarye be not the lette; and that ye well oughte and haue godd cause to chaunge your owne conscience, in conseruacion of your owne conscience to the conscience of so many other, namely being such as you knowe they be. And syth it is also by a lawe made by the parliament commaunded, they thynke that you be upon the peryll of your soule, bounden to change and reforme your conscience, and conseruacion of your owne as I sayd vnto other mennes. **M**ary **M**arget (quod my father agayne) for the part that you playe, y^e u playe it not muche a myste. **B**ut **M**arget sayd, as for the lawe of the lande, though euer ye man beyng bozne and inhabityng therein, is bounden to the keepyng in euery case vpon some tempoꝝall payne, and in many cases vpon payne of Goddes displeasure to, yet is there no manne bounden to sweare, that euery lawe is well made, noz bounden vpon the payne of Goddes displeasure, to persourme anye suche poynte of the lawe, as were in dede vnlawefull. **O**f which maner kynd, that there maye suche happe to be made in anye parte of chrystendome, I suppose no manne doubteth, the generall counsaile of the whole bodye of chrystendome euer moze in that poynte excepte: which though it may make some thynges better than other, and some thynges maye growe to that poynte, that by another lawe they maye neede to be reformed, yet to institute any thing in suche wyse to Goddes displeasure, as at the making might not lawfully be persourmed, the spirit of god that gouerneth his church, neuer hath yet suffered, noz neuer hereafter shall, hys whole catholike church lawfully gathered together in a generall counsaile, as Chryste hathe made playne promyses in scripture. Now if it

so happe, that in anye particuler parte of chrystendome, there be a lawe made, that be suche, as for some parte thereof some menne thinke that the lawe of god cannot beare it, and some other thinke yes, the thing being in suche maner in question, that thozow diuers quarters of chrystendome, some that are godd men and cunning, bothe of our owne dayes and befoze our dayes thynke some one way, and some other of lyke learninge and godnesse thynke the contrarye, in thys case he that thynketh agaynst the lawe, neither maye sweare that lawe lawefully was made, standynge hys owne conscience to the contrarye, noz is bounden vpon payne of Goddes displeasure to chaunge hys owne conscience therein, for anye particuler lawe made any where, other than by the generall counsaile, or by a general sayth growen by the woꝝkinge of Godd vniuersally thozow all chrystien nacions: noz other authozitie than one of these twayne (except speciall reuelacion and expresse commaundement of Godd) sith the contrarye opinions of godd menne and well learned, as I putte you the case, made the vnderstandynge of the scriptures doubtfull, I can see none that lawefully maye commaunde and compell anye man to chaunge his owne opinion, and to translate his owne conscience from the one syde to the tother. **F**or an ensauple of some such maner thynges, I haue I trow befoze this time tolde you, that whither our blessed lady wer conceued in originall sinne or not, was somtime in great question among the great learned men of chrystendome. **A**nd whether it be yet decyded & determined by any generall counsaile, I remember not. **B**ut this I remeber well, that notwithstanding that the feast of her conception, was than celebrate in the church (at the least wyse in dyuers prouinces) yet was holy **S**. **B**arnarde, whiche as his manifold bokes made in the lawde & prayse of our ladye dooe declare, was of as deuoute affection toward al thynges sownyng toward her commendacion, that he thought might well be verifed or suffered, as any mā was liuyng, yet I saye was that holy deuoute manne, agaynst that part of her prayse, as appereth well by a pistle of hys, wherein he ryghte soze and with gret reason argueth theragaynst, and approueth not the institution of

At that feaste neither. For he was not of
 thys mynde alone, but many other wel
 learned menne with hym, and ryghte
 holpe menne to. Howe was there on
 the tother syde, the blessed holpe byshop
 Saynte Anselme, and he not alone nei-
 ther, but many well learned and verpe
 verteous also with him. And they bee
 both twayne holpe sayntes in heauen,
 and many moe that wer on eyther side.
 For neither parte was there bounden
 to chaunge theyr opinion for thother,
 nor for anye prouinciall counsaile ey-
 ther. But lyke as after the determina-
Btion of a well assembled general coun-
 saile, euerye manne had been bounden
 to geue credence that waye, & confirme
 theyr owne conscience to the determi-
 nation of the counsaile generale, and
 than all they that helde the contrarpe
 befoze, were for that holdynge oute of
 blame, so if befoze suche declion a man
 had agaynst his owne conscience, swozn
 to mayntayn and defend the other side,
 he hadde not sayled to offende God he-
 ry for. But marve if on the tother side
 a man wolde in a matter take a way by
 hymselfe vpon his owne mynde alone,
 or with some few, or with neuer so ma-
Cny, agaynst an euident trowth appea-
 ryng by the common sayth of christen-
 dome, thys conscience is verpe damna-
 ble. Yea, or if it be not even fullve so
 playn and euident, yet if he see but him-
 selfe with farre the fewer parte, thinke
 the tone way, agaynst farre the moze
 parte of as well learned and as good,
 as those are that affyrme the thing that
 he thinketh, thinking and affyrmyng
 the contrarpe, and that of such folke as
 he hath no reasonable cause wherefoze
 he shoulde not in that matter suppose,
 that those which say they think agaynst
Dhys mynde, affyrme the thing that they
 saye, for none other cause but for that
 they so thynke in dede, thys is of verpe
 trowth a verpe good occasion to moue
 him, and yet not to compell him, to con-
 forme his mynde and conscience vnto
 theyrs. But Margaret, for what cau-
 ses I refuse the othe, y thing (as I have
 often tolde you) I wil neuer shew you,
 neither you nor no bodye elles, excepte
 the kinges bygynnes should like to com-
 maund me. Whiche if hys grace did, I
 haue ere this tolde you therein howe o-
 bedientlye I haue sayde. But surelye
 daughter I haue refused it and doe, for
 mo causes than one. And for what cau-

ses soener I refuse it, thys am I sure,
 that it is well knowen, that of theym
 that haue swozne it, some of the best ler-
 ned befoze the othe geuen theym, sayde
 and playne affyrmed the contrarpe, of
 some suche thinges as they haue nowe
 swozne in the othe, and that vpon theyr
 trowth and theyr learninge than, and
 that not in haste nor sodaynely, but of-
 ten and after greate diligence doone to
 seeke and fynde out the trowth. That
 might be father (quod I) and yet since
 they myghte see moze, I will not (quod
 he) dispute daughter Margaret agaynst
 that, nor misciudge any other mannes
 conscience, whiche lyeth in theyr owne
 hearte farre out of my sighte. But thys
 will I saye, that I neuer hearde in my self
 the cause of theyr chaunge, by any new
 further thinge founden of aucthoritie,
 than as farre as I perceiue they hadde
 looked on, and as I suppose, verpe well
 wayed befoze. Howe of the selfe same
 thinges that they saw befoze, seme some
 other wyse vnto theym nowe than they
 did befoze, I am for theyr sakes y glad-
 der a greate deale. But anye thing that
 euer I sawe befoze, yet at thys daye to
 me they seme but as they did. And ther-
 fore, though they make doe other wyse
 than they mighte, yet daughter I maye
 not. As for suche thynges as some men
 woulde happelye saye, that I myghte
 with reason flesse regard their chaunge,
 for anye saumple of theym to be taken
 to the chaunge of my conscience, because
 that the keepynge of the princes pleasure,
 and the auoyding of hys indignacion,
 the feare of the losing of theyr worldlye
 substance, with regarde vnto the dys-
 comforte of theyr kintredde and theyr
 frendes, myghte happe make some men
 either swere otherwise than they think,
 or frame theyr conscience a freshe to
 thinke other wyse than they thoughte,
 anye suche opinion as thys is, will I
 not conceyue of theym. I haue better
 hope of theyr goodnesse, than to thinke
 of theym so. For if suche thinges shoulde
 haue touned theym, the same thynges
 hadde been liklye to make me doe the
 same: for in good saythe I knewe fewe
 so faynte hearted as my selfe. Therfore
 will I Margaret by my will, thinke no
 worse of other folke in the thing that I
 knowe not, than I find in my self. But
 as I know well myne onely conscience
 causeth me to refuse the othe, so will I
 truste in God, that accordinge to theyr
 consci-

A conscience they haue receyued it and
 swozne. But whereas you thynk Mar-
 get, that they bee so manye, moo than
 there are on the tother syde that thynke
 in this thyng as I thynke, surelye for
 your owne coumfort that you shall not
 take thoughte, thynking that your fa-
 ther casteth hym selfe awaye so lyke a
 fowle, that he woulde teobarde the losse
 of hys substaunce, and peradventure
 his bodye, withoute anye cause why he
 so shoulde for peryll of hys soule, but
 rather hys soule in peryll thereby to, to
 thys shall I saye to the Marget, that in
 some of my causes I nothing doubt at
 all, but that though not in this realme,
 yet in Chyrtendome aboute, of those
 well learned menne and vertuous that
 are yet aliue, they be not the fewer part
 that are of my mynde. Besydes that,
 that it were ye wotte well possible, that
 some menne in thys realme too, thinke
 not so cleare the contrarpe, as by the
 othe receiued they haue swozne to say.
Nowe thus farre forth I saye for them
 that are yet aliue. But god me nowe to
 them that are deadde befoze, and that
 are I trust in heauen, I am sure that it
 is not the fewer parte of them, that all
 the tyme whyle they liued, thoughte in
 some of the thynges, y way that I thinke
 now. I am also Marget of this ching
 sure ynough, that of those holy doctozs
 and sayntes, whiche to be with God in
 heauen long ago no god chytten man
 doareth, whose bookes yet at this day re-
 mayn here in mens handes, there thou-
 ght in some suche thynges as I thynke
 nowe. I say not that they thought al so,
 but surelye such & so manye as will well
 appeare by their wytyng, that I praye
 god geue me the grace y my soule maye
 folow theyrs. And yet I thewe you not
 all Marget that I haue for my selfe in y
 sure discharge of my conscience. But for
 the conclusio daughter Marget of all
 this matter, as I haue often tolde you,
 I take not bypon me neither to dyffine
 nor dyspute in these matters, nor I re-
 buke nor noz impugne any other mans
 dede, nor I neuer wrote, nor so muche
 as spake in any company, anye woorde
 of reproche in anye thing that the par-
 lement hadde passed, nor I medled not
 with the conscience of any other man,
 that either thinketh oz saith he thinketh
 contrarpe vnto myne. But as concer-
 ning mine owne selfe, for thy coumfort
 thal I say daughter to the, y mine own

consciēce in this mater (I damne none
 other mans) is such, as may well stand
 with mine owne saluacion, thereof am
 I Dogge as sure, as y is, god is in hea-
 uē. And therfoze as for al the vemenāt,
 godes, lādes, and life both, (if y chance
 sholde so fortune) sith this conscience is
 sure for me, I verelye trust in God, he
 shall rather strengthe me to beare the
 losse, than agaynste thys conscience to
 sweare and putte my soule in perill, sith
 al the causes that I perceue moue other
 men to the contrary, seme not suche vnto
 me as (in my conscience make anye
 change. When he saw me sit with this
 verye ladde, as I promise you sith my
 hearte was full heauye for the perill of
 his persone, for in sayth I feare not his
 soule, he smiled by me & said: how now
 daughter Marget? what howe mother
 Cue? where is your mind nowe? sit not
 musing w some serpent in your brest,
 vpon some new persuassion, to offer fa-
 ther Adam the apple yet once agayne?
 In god sayth father of I, I can no fer-
 ther goe, but am (as I trowe Cresede
 saith in Chaucer) comen to Dulcarno
 euen at my wittes ende. For sith then
 saumple of to manye wyse men, cannot
 in this matter moue you, I se not what
 to say moze, but if I should loke to per-
 swade you w the reaso y master Harry
 Paterson made. For he met one day one
 of our men, & when he had asked where
 you wer, & heard y you wer in the towre
 Hill, he wared eue angry w you & sayd:
 Why? what epleth him that he wil not
 sweare? wherefoze shoulde he sticke to
 swere? I haue swozn y oth my selfe. And
 so I can in god faith go now no ferther
 neither, after so many wyse mē who ye
 take for no saumple, but if I should say
 like M. Harry: why wold you refuse to
 swere father? for I haue swozn my selfe.
 At this he laughed & sayde. What word
 was like Cue to, for he offered Adā no
 worse fruit than he had eaten her selfe.
 But yet father of I by my trowth, I fere
 me very soze, y this matter will bynge
 you in meruelous heavy trouble. You
 know wel y as I thewed you, M. Secre-
 tary sent you word as your very friend,
 to remēber, y the parlement lasteth yet.
 Marget of my father, I thanke hym
 right hertely. But as I thewed you thā
 agayn, I lest not this geare vntoughte
 on. And albett I knowe well that if
 they would make a lawe to doo me any
 harme, that lawe coulde neuer be lawe
 full

She toke the
 worse fruit
 than she had
 eaten her selfe.
 thy exception
 as farre as
 would stande
 with the lawe
 of god.

A full, but that God shall I trust kepe me in that grace that concernyng my dute to my pynce, no man shall owe me hurte but if he do me wronge (and than as I tolde you, thys is lyke a rydole, a case in whiche a man may lese his head and haue no harme) and not withstandyng also I haue godd hope, that God shall neuer suffer so good & wyse a pynce, in such wyse to requyte the long seruice of his true saythfull seruaunte, yet lych there is nothyng vnpossible to falle, I forgat not in thys matter, the counsell of Chryst in the gospel, that ere I hold begynne to buyde thys castell for the sauegarde of myne owne soule, I hold sytte and reken what the charge would be. I coumpted Marger full surely many a restless night, whyle my wyse slept, and wente I had slepte to, what peryll were possible for to falle to me, so farre furth that I am sure ther can come none aboute. And in deuylsng daughter ther vpon, I had a full heauy heart. But yet I thanke our Lorde for all that, I neuer thought to change, though the very vtermoste shoulde happe me that my feare ranne vpon. No father (quod I) it is not lyke to thinke vpon a thyng that may be, and to see a thyng that shall be, as ye shoulde (our Lorde saue you) if the chaunce shoulde so fortune. And than shoulde you peradventure thynke, that you thinke not now, and yet than peradventure it would be to late. To late daughter (quod my father) Margeret? I beseeche our Lorde, that if euer I make suche a chaunge, it maye bee to late in dede. For wel I wotte the chaunge can not be good for my soule, that chaunge I saye that shoulde growe but by feare. And therfore I pray God that in thys world I neuer haue godd of such chage.

For so muche as I take harme here, I shall haue at the leastwise the lesse therfore when I am hence. And if it so were that I wisse well now, that I shoulde saynte and falle, and for feare sweare hereafter, yet woulde I wythe to take harme by the refusyng fyrst: for so hold I haue the better hope for grace to ryse againe. And albeit (Marger) that I wot well my lewdenes hath ben suche: that I knowe my selfe well woorthye that god shoulde let me slippe, yet can I not but trust in hys mercifull godnes, that as his grace hath strenghted me hether to, and made me contente in my hearte, to lese, godd, lande, and lyfe too, rather

than to sweare agaynst my conscience, and hary also putte in the kyng toward me that godd and gracious mynde, that as yet he hath taken fro me nothing but my libertie (wherwith as helpe me godd) his grace hath done me so great goodd by the spiritual profite that I trust I take thereby, that among all his great benefites heaped vpon me so thicke, I reckon vpon my sayth my pzyonment, eue the very chief I cannot I saye therfore mistruste the grace of Godd, but that eyther he shall conserue and kepe the king in that gracious mynde still, to doe me none hurt, or els if hys pleasure be, that for myne other synnes I shall suffer in suche a cause in sighte as I shall not deserue, his grace shall geue me strength to take it patientlye, and peradventure somewhat gladdely to, wherby his high goodnes shall (by the merites of his bitter passion toynd thereunto, and farre surmounting in merite for me, all that I can suffer my selfe) make it serue for releas of my payne in purgatozpe, and quec that for encrease of some rewarde in heauen. Mystruste him Pegge will I not, though I fele me saynt. Pea and though I shoulde feele my feare euen at poynt to ouerthrowe me to, yet shall I remember howe Saynte Peter with a blasfe of a wynde, beganne to synke for his saynt sayth, and shall doe as he did, call vpon Chryst and pray him to helpe. And than I truste he shall sette his holy hande vnto me, and in the stormy seas, hold me vppe from drowning. Pea and if he suffer me to playe Saynt Peter farther, and to fall full to the grounde, and sweare and forswear to, (whiche our Lorde for his tender passion kepe me fro, and let me lese if it so fall, and neuer wyne therby:) yet after shall I trust that his goodnesse will caste vpon me his tender pitteous eye, as he dyd vpon Saynt Peter, and make me stande vppe agayne, and confesse the trowth of my conscience a freshe, and abyde the thame and the harme here of myne own faulte. And finally Marger, thys wotte I berpe well, that withoute my faulte he will not lette me be losse. I shall therfore with goodd hope, committe my selfe to hys mercie. And if he suffer me for my faultes to perishe, yet shall I thā serue for a prayse of his iustice. But in godd sayth Peg, I trust I his tender pitte shall kepe my poze soule safe & make me commed his mercy. And therfore mine own
good

A god daughter, neuer trouble thy mind, for anye thyng that euer shall happe me in this worlde. Nothyng can come, but that that God wille. And I make me verpe sure, that what soeuer that bee, seme it neuer so badde in sight, it shall in dede be the best. And with thys my god chylde I pray you heartely, be you and all your sisters and my sonnes to, comfortable and seruisable to your god mother my wyfe. And of youre good houbandes mindes I haue no maner dout. Commende me to theym all, and to my

B god daughter Alington, and to all my other frendes, sisters, neces, nephewes, and alies, and vnto all our seruauntes, man, woman, and chylde, & all my god neyghbours and oure acquapntance abroad. And I right heartely, praye both you and them, to serue God, and be merry and reioyce in hym. And if any thing happe me that you would be lothe, pray to god for me, but trouble not your self: as I shall full heartely praye for vs all, that wec maye meete together once in heauen, where we shall make merpe for euer, and neuer haue trouble after.

A letter wrytten and sente by syr T. More to maister doctoꝝ Nicholas Wylson (than both prysoners in the tower of London) in the yere of our lord. 1534. and in the. xxvi. yere of the raygne of kyng Henry the eyght.

Wre Lorde be poure comfort. And wheras I perceue by sundry meanes, that you haue promised to sweare the othe, I beseeche our Lorde geue you theathe of god lucke, I neuer gaue anye man counsell to the contraye in my dayes, noꝝ neuer vsed anye wayes to putte anye scruple in other folkes conscience concernyng the matter. And where as I perceyue that you woulde gladdely knowe what I entende to doe, you wotte well that I tolde you when wee were bothe abroad, that I woulde therein neyther knowe youre mynde noꝝ no mannes elles: noꝝ you noꝝ no manelles should therein knowe myne. For I woulde be no parte taker with no manne, noꝝ of trowth neuer I wyl: but leaupyng suretye other man to theyꝝ own conscience, my self will with Goddes grace folowe myne owne. For agaynst myne owne to sweare, were peryll of my dampnaci-

on. And what mine owne shall be to morowe, my selfe cannot be sure. And whether I shall haue finallye the grace to doe accordyng to myne owne conscience or not, hangeth in goddes godnes and not in myne, to whome I beseeche you heartely remember me in your deuoute prayers, and I shall and davely doe, remember you in myne, such as they be. And as longe as my pooꝝe thortlyfe shall last, anye thyng that I haue poure part shall be therein.

Another letter wrytten and sent by syr Thomas More to maister doctoꝝ Wylson (than bothe prysoners in h towre) in the yere of our lord. 1534. and in the. xxvi. yere of the raygne of kyng Henry the eyght.

God maister Wylson in my right heriy wyse I recomend me to you. And very soꝝpe am I to see you, besyde the trouble that you be in by this imprisonment, with losse of libertie, goddes reuenues of youre lpyelode and counterte of your frendes companye, fallen also into such agonye and beracion of mynde, thozowe doutes falling in your mynde, that dyuerslye to and fro tolle and trouble youre conscience, to poure great heauines of heart, as I (to no little grieffe of myne own mynde for your sake) perceiue. And so muche am I for you god maister doctoꝝ the more soꝝpe, for that it lyeth not in me, to geue you such kynde of comforte, as me semeth you somewhat desyre and loke for at my hande. For where as you woulde somewhat heare of my mind in your doutes, I am a manne at this daye verpe lpytle mete therfore. For this you knowe well god maister doctoꝝ, that at such time as the matter came in such maner in question, as myne opinion was asked therein amonge other, and yet you made prytue therunto before me, you remember wel that at that time, you and I manye times talked together thereof. And by all the tyme after, in which I dyd at the kynges gracious commaundement both seeke out and reade, and common with ail such as I knewe made prytue to the matter, to perceue what I might therein, by both sides, & by indifferent waying of euerye thyng as nere as my pooꝝe wit & lerning wold serue me) to see to which side my conscience could incline, & as myne