

A for our lordes loue, that ye be not so weery of my most comberouse sute, but that it may like you at such oppoxtune tyme or tyme as your wisedome may finde, to help y^e his highnes may by your goodnes, be fully enforzmed of my true faithful minde, that he may the rather by the means of your wisedome, and dexterite consider that in the mater of the nonne, there was neuer on my parte any other minde than good: noz yet in any other thing elles, neuer was there noz neuer shall there be, any further faute founde in me, than that I cannot in euery thig thinke the same way that some other me of moze wisedome and deper learning do: noz can finde in mine hart otherwise to say, than as mine owne cōscience gyueth me. Which condicion hath neuer

growne in any thig that euer might touch his gracious pleasure, of any obstinate minde or misse affectionate appetite, but of a timorouse conscience, rising happely for lakke of better perceyuing, & yet not without tender respecte vnto my most bounden duty towardes his noble grace. Whose only fauour I so much esteeme, that I nothing haue of mine own in al this worlde except only my soule, but y^e I will with better wyl forgo it, than abyde of hys highnes one heaupe displeasent loke. And thus I make an ende of my long troubelous proces, belesching the blessed trinite for great goodnes ye shew me, and the great comfozte ye doe me, bothe bodely and ghostely, to prosper you and in heauen rewarde you.

Here folow certeyn letters

and other thynges, which syr Thomas More wrote while he was prisoner in the towre of London.

C Sir Thomas More, vpon warning giuen him, came befoze y^e kinges commissioners at y^e Archebithop of Canturburys place at Lambeth y^e monday the. xiii. day of Aprill in y^e yere of our lord god. 1534. and in the latter ende of the. xxv. yere of the raigne of king Henry the. viii. where he refused the othe than offred vnto him. And thereupon was he deliuered to the abbot of Westminster to be kept as a prisoner: with whom he remained till fridaye folowing, & thā was sent prisoner to the tower of London. And shortly after his coming thither he wrote a letter and set it to his eldest daughter maistres Margaret Koper: the coppe wher of here foloweth.

D When I was befoze h^e lordes at Lambeth, I was the first y^e was called in, albeit that maister doctour the vicar of Croidon was cōc befoze me, & diuers other. After the cause of my sending for, declared vnto me (whereof I somewhat meruailed in my mind, considering that they sent for no mo tēporall men but me) I desired the sight of y^e othe, which they shewed me vnder the great seale. Than desired I the sight of the act of the succession, which was deliuered me in a printed rol. After which

redded secretly by my self, and the othe considered with the acte, I shewed vnto the, y^e my purpose was not to put any faute, either in the act or any mā that made it, or in y^e othe or any mā that sware it, noz to cōdemne the conscience of any other man. But as for my selfe in good sayth my conscience so moued me in the mater, that though I would not deny to swere to the succession, yet vnto that othe that there was offred me, I could not swere, wour the subarding of my soule to perpetual dāpnaciō. And that if they doubted whither I did refuse the othe onely for the grudge of my conscience, or for any other fantasy, I was redy therein to satisfy them be mine oth. Which if they trusted not, what should they be y^e better to giue me any othe: And if they trusted that I would therein swere true, thā trusted I y^e of their goodnes they would not moue me to swere the othe that they offred me, perceiuing y^e for to swere it, was against my conscience. Vnto this my lord chanceller saide, that they all were verie soze to here me saye thus, and se me thus refuse the othe. And they sayde all, that on theyze sayth I was the very spyt that euer refused it: which would cause the kinges highnes to conceue great suspicion of me & great indignacion toward me, And therewith they

St Thomas
Audley than
lord chāceller

A they shewed me the roll, and let me see the names of þe lordes & the comons which had swozine, & subscribed their names al redy. Which notwithstanding whē they saw þe I refused to swere þe same my self, not blaming any other man that had swozine. I was in conclusion commaūded to gse downe into the gardein. And thercuppon I tarried in the olde burned chambze that loketh into the gardein, and would not gse downe because of þe heate. In þe time I saw I mayster doctour

25 Latimer come into þe gardein, & there walked he with diuers other doctours & chapleins of my lordes of Canterburpe. And very mery I saw him: for he laughed, and toke one or twaine about the necke so handsomely, that if they had be women, I would haue went he had be warden waton. After that came maister doctour Willon forth from the lordes, and was with twoo gentilmen brought by me, and gentilly sent streight vnto the towre. What time my lord of Northchester was called in befoze them, that can I not tell. But at night I hard that he had ben befoze them, but where he remained that night, and so forthe till he

C was sent hither, I neuer hard. I hard also that maister vicare of Croidon, and all the remenant of the priestes of London that were sent for, wer swozine: and that they had such fauour at the counsels hande, that they were not lingered nor made to daunce any long attendaunce to their trouaille and colt, as sutours were sometime went to be, but were spedde a pace to their gret comfort: so farre forth that maister vicar of Croidon, either for gladnes or for dyines, or els þe it might be sent, *Quod ille notus erat pontifici*, went to my lordes butery barre, and called for dyinke, and drank *valde familiariter*. When they had played their pageant and were gone out of the place, than was I called in againe. And thā was it declared vnto me, what a nomber had swozine euē sins I wet asyde gladly without any sickig.

D Wherein I laid no blame in no mā, but for mine own self answered as befoze. Now as well befoze as than, they some what laide vnto me for obstinacye, that whereas befoze, sith I refused to swere, I woulde not declare any speciall part of that othe that grudged my conscience, and open the cause wherefoze. For thereunto I had said vnto the, that I feared least the kinges highnes would as they sayde, take displeasure inough toward me for þe only refusel of the othe.

C And that if I would open and disclose þe causes why, I should therewith but further exasperate hys highnes, which I woulde in no whyle do, but rather would I abyde all the daunger and hatme that might come toward me, than gyue hys highnes any occasiō of further displeasure, than þe offering of þe othe vnto me of pure necessity: constrained me. Howbeit when they diuers times imputed this to me for stubbernes and obstinacy, that I would neither swere the othe, nor yet declare the causes why, I declined this farre toward them, that rather than I would be accōpted for obstinate, I would vpon the kinges gracious licens, or rather his such commaundement had, as might be my sufficient warrant, that my declaracion should not offend his highnes, nor put me in the daunger of anye of hys statutes, I woulde be content to declare the causes in writing, & ouer that to giue an othe in the beginning, that if I might find those causes by any man in such wise answered, as I might thinke mine own conscience satisficid, I would after þe with all mine hart swere the pꝛincipall othe so. To this I was answered, that though the kinge woulde giue me licens vnder his letters patent, yet would it not serue against the statute wherto I said, that yet if I had them, I would stand vnto the trust of his honour at my parel for the remenant. But yet thinketh me loe, that if I maye not declare the causes without perill, than to leaue the vndeclared is no obstinacye. My lord of Canterbury taking hold vpon that that I saide, that I condemned not the consciences of them that swere, said vnto me that it apered well, that I did not take it for a very sure thing and a certaine, that I might not lawfullpe swer it, but rather as a thing vncertain and doubtfull. But than (said my lordes) you knowe for a certenty and a thyng without dout, that you be bounden to obey your souerain lordes your king. And therefore are ye bounden to leaue of the dout of your vnclere consciens in refusing the othe, and take the sure waye in obeyng of your pꝛince, & swere it. Now al was it so, that in mine own mind me thought my self not concluded, yet this argumēt semed me sodenly so luttel, and namely to such authozite coming out of so noble a pꝛelates mouth, that I could agayne aunswere nothing thereto but only that I thought my self I might not well do so, because that in my consciens

this

These were they that were in the parliament.

A thys was one of the cases, in which I was bounden that I shoulde not obey my pynce, sth that whatsoeuer other folke thought in the matter (whose consciens or learning I wold not condempne nor take hypon me to iudge.) Yet in my consciens I trowth semed on y^e rother side. Wherin I had not enforzmed my cōsciens neither sodenly nor sleightlye, but by long leysour and diligent searche for the matter. And of trowth if that reason may concludre, than haue we a readye way to auoide al parplexities. For in whatsoeuer matter the doctours fnd in gret dout, the kinges commaundement giuen vpon whither side he list, soylet^h all the doutes. Than saide my Lozde of Westmister to me, I how soeuer I matter semed vnto mine owne minde, I had cause to fere that mine owne mind was errouse, when I se the gret counsaill of the realme determine of my mind the contrary, and that therefore I ought to change my consciens. So that I answered, that if there were no mo but my selfe vpon my side, and the whole parlement vpon the rother, I woulde be soze afraide to leane to mine own minde only agaynst so many. But on the other side, if it so be, that in some thinges for which I refuse I othe, I haue as I think I haue vpon my part as great a counsaill and a greater to, I am not than bounde to change my consciens, and consozme it to the counsaill of one realme, agaynst the general counsaill of Chyztendome. Upon this maister Secretary as he that tenderly fauozeth me, saide and sware a gret othe, that he had leuer that his own onely sone, (which is of trowth a goodly pong gentelman, and shall I trust come to much wo:zshyp) had lost his hedde, thā that I should thus haue refused the oth. For surely the kinges byghnes woulde now conceiue a great suspicon agaynst me, and think that I matter of the none of Canterburpe, was all contriued by my dyist. To which I saide that the contrary was true and well knowen. And whatsoeuer should misshappe me, it laye not in my power to helpe it without the perill of my soule. Than did my Lozde chauncellour repete befoze me my refusell vnto maister Secretarye, as to hym that was going vnto the kinges grace. And in the reherfing, his lordshyp repeated again, that I denied not but was content to swere vnto the succellio. Wherunto I sayde, that as for that pointe I

woulde be content, so that I might se my othe in that pointe so frampd in suche a maner as might stand with my conscience. Than saide my lozde: Mary maister Secretary marke that to, that he will not swere that neyther, but vnder some certaine maner. Verely no my Lozde quoth I, but that I wyl see it made in suche wyse fyrst, as I thal my selfe se, that I shall neyther be forsworne, nor swere agaynst my conscience. Surcly as to swere to the succellion, I see no perill. But I thought and thinke it reason, that to mine owne othe I looke well my selfe, and be of counsaill also in the fallion, and neuer entred to swere for a pecc, and set my hand to the whole othe. Howbeit as helpe me God, as to wching the whole othe I neuer withdrew any man from it, nor neuer aduised any to refuse it, nor neuer put nor wil put any scruple in anye mannes hedde, but leaue euerye man to hys owne conscience. And me thynketh in good faith that so were it good reason that eucry man shoulde leaue me to myne.

A letter wozitten with a cole by s^r Thomas More to hys daughter maistres Margaret Koper, within a whyle after he was p^risoner in the towze.

Mine own good daughter, our lozde be thanked I am in good helthe of bodye, and in good quiet of minde: and of wo:zldly thynges I no more desper then I haue. I besleche hym make you all mery in the hope of heauen. And such thynges as I somewhat longed to talke with you all, concerning the wo:zld to come, our Lozde put theim into your myndes, as I truste he dothe and better to by hys holy spirite: who plesse you and p^reserue you all. Written wth a cole by your tender louing father, who in hys p^rayer p^rayers forgetteth none of you all, nor your babes, nor your nurses, nor your good husbendes nor your good husbendes shrewde wyues, nor your fathers shrewde wyfe neither, nor our other frendes. And thus fare ye hartely well for lacke of paper.

Thomas More
knight.

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A Our Lorde kepe me continuallye true faithfull and playne, to the contrarye wherof I beseeche hym hartelye neuer to suffer me lye. For as for longe life (as I haue often tolde the Queene) I neither looke for, nor long for, but am well content to goe, if God call me hence to morowe. And I thanke our lord, I knowe no person liuing, that I woulde had one philippe for my sake: of whiche minde I am more gladd then of all the worlde besyde.

B I Recommend me to your shrewde wil, and mine other sonnes, and to John Harris my frende, and your selve knoweth to whome els, and to my shrewde wife aboue all, and God preserue you all and make and kepe you his seruantes all.

C Within a while after sir Thomas More was in prisō in y^e towre his daughter maistres Margaret Roy wrote & set vnto him a letter, whersein she leamed somewhat to labour to perswade hym to take the othe (thoughe she nothing so thought) to wiane therby credence with maister Thomas Cromwell, that she might the rather getre libertye to haue free resort vnto her father (which she onely had for the most part tyme of hys imprisonment) vnto which letter her father wrote an answer. The cōpy wherof here foloweth.

Our lord blisse you,

D If I had not ben my derely beloved daughter at a firme and fast point, I truste in goddes greates mercie this good great while before your lamentable letter had not a litle abashed me, surely farre aboue al other thynges, of which I heare diuers times not a fewe terrible towarde me. But surely they all touchd me neuer so nere, nor were so greuous vnto me, as to se you my welbeloued childe, in such vehement piteous maner, labour to perswade vnto me, & thing wherein I haue of pure necessitie for respect vnto myne owne soule, so often giuen you so pfecte answers before. Wherethin as touching the pointes of your letter, I can make none answer. For I doubt not but you well remember, that the matters which moue my conscience, (without declara-

tion wherof I can nothing touche the pointes) I haue soddy times shewed you that I will disclose them to no man.

And therfore daughter Margaret, I can in this thing no further, but like as you labour me againe to solde to your mind, to desire and praye you both againe, to leaue of such labour, & with my former answers to holde your selve content. A deably grief vnto me, and much more deably than to here of mine own death. (For the fere therof, I thanke our lord the fere of hell, the hope of heauen, & the passion of Christ daiely more and more alwaye) is, that I perceiue my god sone your husband, & you my god daughter, & my god wife, & mine other good children and innocent frendes, in gret dyspleasure and daunger of great harme thereby. The let wherof while it lyeth not in my hand, I can no further but commit all to god.

Nam in manu dei (saith the scripture) cor regis est, & sicut diuisiones aquarū quocunq; voluerit impellit illud. Whose hyghe goodnes I most hūbly beseech to enclayne the noble hart of the kinges highnes to the tender fauour of you all, and to fauour me no better than god and my self know y^e my faithfull hart toward hym & my daiely prayour for him, do deserue. For surely if his highnes might inwardlye se my true minde suche as god knoweth it is, it wold (I trust) sone asuage his high displeasure. Which while I can in this world neuer in such wise shew, but that his grace may be perswaded to beleue the contracte of me, I can no further go, but put all in the handes of him for fere of whose displeasure for the saue gard of my soule stirred by mine owne conscience, (without infection, or reproche laieng to any other mans) I suffer & endure thys trouble. Out of which I beseeche him to bring me, when his wil shalbe, into his endles blisse of heauen, & in y^e meane while, giue me grace & you both iⁿ al our agonies & troubles, deuoutly to resorte prostrate vnto the remembrance of that bitter agonye, which our sauiour suffred before his passion at the mount. And if we diligently so do, I be- rely trust we shal find therein gret comfort and consolacion. And thus my derely daughter the blessed spirite of Christe for his tender mercie gouerne and guide you all, to his pleasure and your weale and comfortes both body and soule.

Your tender louing father
Thomas More knight.

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To this last letter maistres Margaret Koper wrote an answer and lent it to sir Thomas More her father the coppe wherof here foloweth.



One owne good father, it is to me no little comfort, sith I cannot talk with you by such meanes as I wold, at the least way to delight my selfe among in this bytter time of your absens, by such meanes as I maye, by as often writting to you, as shalbe expedient, and by reading againe & againe your most fruitfull and delectable letter, the faithfull messenger of your very vertuous & ghostly minde, rid from all corrupt loue of worldly thinges, and fast knitte onely in the loue of god, and desire of heauē, as becommeth a very true worshipper and a faithfull seruant of god, which I doute not good father holdeth his holy hand ouer you, & shall (as he hath) p̄serue you both body and soule (*visit meus sana in corpore sano*) and namely, now when you haue abierced all earthly consolacions, & refined your selfe willingly gladly and fully for hys loue to his holy p̄otecciō. Father what thinke you hath bene our comfort syns your departing from vs: Surely the ex̄perts we haue had of your life past, & godly conuerfacion, & wholesome counsaile, and vertuous example, and a surety not onely of the continuance of that same, but also a grete encrease by ȳ goodnes of our loʒde to the great reste and gladnes of your hart deuoude of al earthly d̄regges, and garnished wyth the noble vesture of heauenly vertues, a pleasaſat palle for the holy spirite of God to rest in, who defende you (as I doute not good father but of his goodnes he wyll) from all trouble of ininde and of body, & gyue me your mosse louing obedient daughter and handmaide, & all vs your chylozen and frendes, to folow that that we praise in you, and to our onely com-

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fort remēbʒe & comin together of you, & we may in conclusion mete w̄ you mine owne dere father in the blyſſe of heauē to which our most mercifull loʒde hath bought vs with his p̄cious blood.

Your owne most louing obedient daughter & bedeswomā Margaret Koper, which desireth aboue al worldly thinges to be in Johns woodes steepe, to do you some seruice. But we liue in hope that we shal shortly reccue you againe, I pray god hartely we may, if it be his holy wil.

Thys John a wood was his owne seruā: that was suffred to be with him in prison to be his seruant there.

Within a while after sir Thomas More had ben in prison in the towre, his daughter maistres Margaret Koper obtained licens of the kinge, ȳ she might resort onto her father in the tower, which she did. And thereupon he wrote with a cole a letter to all his frendes, wherof the copy foloweth.

To all my louing frendes.

As much as being in prison, I cannot tel what nede I may haue, or what necessitie I maye happe to stand in, I hartely beseech you all, & if my welbeloued daughter Margaret Koper (which onely of al my frendes hath by the kinges gracious fauour licens to resort vnto me) doe any thinge desire of any of you, of such thinge as I shall hap to necede, & it may like you no lesse to regard & tender it, then if I moued it vnto you and requirred it of you parsonally p̄ſet my self. And I beseeche you all to pray for me, and I shall pray for you.

Your faithful louer & your bedeswomā Tho. More knight prisoner.

Here folow two short ballertes which sir Thomas More made for hys pastime while he was prisoner in the tower of London.

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Letwys the lost louer.

Cy flatering fortune, loke thou neuer so fayre,
Or neuer so plesantly begin to smile,
As though thou wouldest my ruine all repayre,
During my life thou shalt me not begyle.
Trust shall I god, to enire in a while.
Hys hauen or heauen sure and v̄nifoz me.
Euer after thy calme, loke I for a stozine.

Daup