

THE ENGLISH WORKS OF SIR THOMAS MORE

VOLUME THE FIRST

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edition of 1557, and edited, with a
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and

An Essay on "The Authorship of Richard III"

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FIGURE OF THOMAS MORE IN THE LITTLE GUILD, FLEET
MUSEUM

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EARLY POEMS

Notes on allusions and unusual words in the
Early Poems will be found on pp. 194-7.

THESE FOWRE THINGES

here folowyng Mayster Thomas More wrote
in his youth for his pastime.

(I) *A mery jest how a sergeant would learne to playe the frere.*
Written by maister Thomas More in bys youth.

Wyse men alway,
Affyrme and say,
That best is for a man :
Diligently,
For to apply,
The busines that he can,¹
And in no wyse,
To enterpryse,
An other faculte,
For he that wyll,
And can no skylle,
Is never lyke to the.²
He that hath lafte,
The hosiers crafte,
And falleth to making shone,
The smythe that shall,
To payntyng fall,
His thrift is well nigh done.
A blacke draper,
With whyte paper,
To goe to writyng scole,
An olde butler,
Becum a cutler,
I wene shall prove a fole.
And an olde trot,
That can god wot,
Nothyng but kysse the cup,
With her phisick,
Wil kepe one sicke,
Til she have soused hym up.
A man of lawe,
That never sawe,

¹ knows.

The wayes to bye and sell,
Wenyng to ryse,
By marchaundise,
I pray god spede hym well.
A marchaunt eke,
That wyll goo secke,
By all the meanes he may,
To fall in sute,
Tyll he dispute,
His money cleane away.
Pletyng³ the lawe,
For every strawe,
Shall prove a thrifty man,
With bate and strife,
But by my life,
I cannot tell you whan,
Whan an hatter
Wyll go smatter,
In philosophy,
Or a pedlar,
Waxe a medlar,
In theology,
All that ensue,
Suche craftes new,
They drive so farre a cast,
That evermore,
They do therfore,
Beshrewe themselfe at last.

¶ This thing was tryed
And verelyed,

² thrive.

³ pleading.

Here by a sergeaunt late,
That thriftly was,
Or he coude pas,
Rapped about the pate,
Whyle that he would
See how he could,
In goddes name play the frere :
Now yf you wyll,
Knowe how it fyll,
Take hede and ye shall here.

¶ It happed so,
Not long a go,
A thrifty man there dyed,
An hundred pounde,
Of nobles rounde,
That had he layd a side :
His sonne he wolde,
Should have this golde,
For to beginne with all :
But to suffise
His chyldc, well thrise,
That money was to smal.
Yet or this day
I have hard say,
That many a man certesse,
Hath with good cast,
Be ryche at last,
That hath begonne with lesse.
But this yonge manne,
So well beganne,
His money to imploy,
That certainly,
His policy,
To see it was a joy.
For lest sum blast,
Myght over cast,
His ship, or by mischaunce,
Men with sum wile,
Myght hym begyle,
And minish his substaunce,
For to put out,

¹ dyght = put.² useless.³ dress.⁴ cared.⁵ married.

All maner dout,
He made a good purvay,
For every whyt,
By his owne wyt,
And toke an other way :
First fayre and wele,
Therof much dele,
He dygged¹ it in a pot,
But then him thought,
That way was nought,²
And there he left it not.
So was he faine,
From thence agayne,
To put it in a cup,
And by and by,
Covetously,
He supped it fayre up.
In his owne brest,
He thought it best,
His money to enclose,
Then wist he well,
Whatever fell,
He coude it never lose.
He borowed then,
Of other men,
Money and marchaundise :
Never payd it,
Up he laid it,
In like maner wyse.
Yet on the gere,³
That he would were,
He rought⁴ not what he spent,
So it were nyce,
As for the price,
Could him not miscontent.
With lusty sporte,
And with resort,
Of joly company,
In mirth and play,
Full many a day,
He lived merely.⁵

¶ And men had sworne,
Some man is borne,
To have a lucky howre,
And so was he,
For such degre,
He gat and suche honour,
That without dout,
Whan he went out,
A sergeaunt well and fayre,
Was redy strayte,
On him to wayte,
As sone as on the mayre.
But he doubtlesse,
Of his mekenesse,
Hated such pompe and pride,
And would not go,
Companied so,
But drewe himself a side,
To saint Katherine,
Streight as a line,
He gate him at a tyde,
For devocion,
Or promociion,
There would he nedes abyde.
There spent he fast,
Till all was past,
And to him came there meny,
To aske theyr det,
But none could get,
The valour of a peny.
With visage stout,
He bare it out,
Even unto the harde hedge,¹
A month or twaine,
Tyll he was faine,
To laye his gowne to pledge.
Than was he there,
In greater feare,
Than ere that he came thither,
And would as fayne,
Depart againe,
Depart againe,
But that he wist not whither.
Than after this,

¹ very limit.² owed.

To a frende of his,
He went and there abode,
Where as he lay,
So sick alway,
He myght not come abrode.

¶ It happed than,
A marchant man,
That he ought² money to,
Of an officere,
Than gan enquire,
What him was best to do.
And he answerde,
Be not aferde,
Take an accion therfore,
I you becheste,
I shall hym reste,
And than care for no more.

¶ I feare quod he,
It wyll not be,
For he wyll not come out.
The sergeaunt said,
Be not afraid,
It shall be brought about.
In many a game,
Lyke to the same,
Have I bene well in ure,³
And for your sake,
Let me be bake,
But yf I do this cure.

¶ Thus part they both,
And foorth then goth,
A pace this officere,
And for a day,
All his array,
He chaunged with a frere.
So was he dight,⁴
That no man might,

³ well used to.⁴ dressed.

Hym for a frere deny,
 He dopped and dooked,¹
 He spake and looked,
 So religiously.
 Yet in a glasse,
 Or he would passe,
 He toted² and he peered,
 His harte for pryde,
 Lepte in his syde,
 To see how well he freered.

¶ Than forth a pace,
 Unto the place,
 He goeth in goddes name,
 To do this dede,
 But now take hede,
 For here begynneth the game.

¶ He drew hym ny,
 And softly,
 Streyght at the dore he knocked :
 And a damsell,
 That hard hym well,
 There came and it unlocked.
 The frere sayd,
 God spede fayre mayd,
 Here lodgeth such a man,
 It is told me :
 Well syr quod she,
 And yf he do what than.
 Quod he maystresse,
 No harme doutelesse :
 It longeth for our order,
 To hurt no man,
 But as we can,
 Every wight to forder.
 With hym truly,
 Fayne speake would I.
 Sir quod she by my fay,
 He is so sike,
 Ye be not lyke,

¹ ducked and curtsied.

To speake with hym to day.
 Quod he fayre may,³
 Yet I you pray,
 This much at my desyre,
 Vouchesafe to do,
 As go hym to,
 And say an austen fyre.
 Would with hym speke,
 And matters breake,
 For his avayle certayn.
 Quod she I wyll,
 Stonde ye here styll,
 Tyll I come downe agayn.
 Up is she go,
 And told hym so,
 As she was bode to say.
 He mistrustyng,
 No maner thyng,
 Sayd mayden go thy way,
 And fetche him hyder,
 That we togyder,
 May talk. Adowne she gothe,
 Up she hym brought,
 No harme she thought,
 But it made some folke wrothe.

¶ This officere,
 This fayned frere,
 Whan he was come aloft,
 He dopped than,
 And grete this man,
 Religiously and oft.
 And he agayn,
 Ryght glad and fayn,
 Toke hym there by the hande,
 The frere than sayd,
 Ye be dismayd,
 With trouble I understande.
 In dede quod he,
 It hath with me,
 Bene better than it is.
 Syr quod the frere,

² looked.

³ maiden.

Be of good chere,
 Yet shall it after this.
 For Christes sake,
 Loke that you take,
 No thought within your brest :
 God may tourne all,
 And so he shall,
 I trust unto the best.
 But I would now,
 Comen¹ with you,
 In counsaile yf you please,
 Or ellys nat
 Of matters that,
 Shall set your heart at ease.

¶ Downe went the mayd,
 The marchaunt sayd,
 Now say on gentle frere,
 Of thys tydyng,
 That ye me bryng,
 I long full sore to here.

¶ Whan there was none,
 But they alone,
 The frere with evyll grace,
 Sayd, I rest the,
 Come on with me,
 And out he toke his mace :
 Thou shalt obay,
 Come on thy way,
 I have the in my clouche,
 Thou goest not hence,
 For all the pense,
 The mayre hath in his pouche.

¶ This marchaunt there,
 For wrath and fere,
 He waxyng welnygh wood,²
 Sayd horson thefe,
 With a mischefe,

¹ talk.

² mad.

³ ear.

Who hath taught the thy good.
 And with his fist,
 Upon the lyst,³
 He gave hym such a blow,
 That backward downe,
 Almost in sowne,⁴
 The frere is overthrow.
 Yet was this man,
 Well fearder than,
 Lest he the frere had slayne,
 Tyll with good rappes,
 And hevye clappes,
 He dawde⁵ hym up agayne.
 The frere toke harte,
 And up he starte,
 And well he layde about,
 And so there goth,
 Betwene them both,
 Many a lusty cloute.
 They rent and tere,
 Eche others here,
 And clave togyder fast,
 Tyll with luggyng,
 And with tuggyng,
 They fell downe bothe at last.
 Than on the grounde,
 Togyder rounde,
 With many a sadde stroke,
 They roll and rumble,
 They turne and tumble,
 As pygges do in a poke.

So long above,
 They heve and shove,
 Togider that at last,
 The mayd and wyfe,
 To breake the strife,
 Hyed them upward fast.
 And whan they spye,
 The captaynes lye,
 Both waltring⁶ on the place,
 The freres hood,

⁴ swoon.

⁵ roused.

⁶ rolling.

They pulled a good,
 Adowne about his face.
 Whyle he was blynde,
 The wenche behynde,
 Lent him leyd on the flore,
 Many a joule,
 About the noule,
 With a great batyldore.
 The wyfe came yet,
 And with her fete,
 She holpe to kepe him downe,
 And with her rocke,¹
 Many a knocke,
 She gave hym on the crowne.
 They layd his mace,
 About his face,
 That he was wood for payne :
 The fyre frappe,
 Gate many a swappe,
 Tyll he was full nygh slayne.
 Up they hym lift,
 And with yll thrift,
 Hedlyng a long the stayre,
 Downe they hym threwe,
 And sayd adewe,
 Commaunde us to the mayre.

¶ The frere arose,
 But I suppose,
 Amased was his hed,
 He shoke his eares,
 And from grete scares,
 He thought hym well a fled.
 Quod he now lost,
 Is all this cost,
 We be never the nere.
 Ill mote he the,²
 That caused me,
 To make my selfe a frere.

¶ Now masters all,
 Here now I shall,
 Ende there as I began,
 In any wyse,
 I would avyse,
 And counsaile every man,
 His owne craft use,
 All newe refuse,
 And lyghtly let them gone :
 Play not the frere,
 Now make good chere,
 And welcome every chone.

Finis.

(II) *Mayster Thomas More in his youth devysed in bys fathers house in London, a goodly hangyng of fyne paynted clothe, with nyne pageauntes, and verses over of every of those pageauntes : which verses expressed and declared, what the ymages in those pageauntes represented : and also in those pageauntes were paynted, the thynges that the verses over them dyd (in effecte) declare, whiche verses here folowe.*

In the first pageant was painted a boy playing at the top and squyrge.³ And over this pageant was written as foloweth.

Chyldhod.

I am called Chyldhod, in play is all my mynde,
 To cast a coyte, a cokstele, and a ball.
 A toppe can I set, and dryve it in his kynde.
 But would to god these hatefull bookes all.

¹ duff.

² thrive.

³ whige.

Were in a fyre brent¹ to powder small.
 Than myght I lede my lyfe alwayes in play :
 Whiche lyfe god sende me to myne endyng day.

In the second pageant was paynted a goodly freshe yonge man, rydyng upon a goodly horse, havynge an hawk on his fyste, and a brase of grayhoundes folowynge hym. And under the horse fete, was paynted the same boy, that in the fyrst pageante was playnge at the top and squyrge. And over this second pageant the wrytyng was thus.

Manhod.

Manhod I am therefore I ine delyght,
 To hunt and hawk, to nourishe up and fede,
 The grayhounde to the course, the hawk to the flyght,
 And to bestryde a good and lusty stede.
 These thynges become a very man in dede,
 Yet thynketh this boy his pevishe game swetter,
 But what no force, his reason is no better.

In the thyrd pagiaunt, was paynted the goodly younge man, in the seconde pagiaunt lyeng on the grounde. And uppon hym stode ladye Venus goddes of love, and by her uppon this man stode the lytle god Cupyde. And over this thyrd pageant, this was the wrytyng that foloweth.

Venus and Cupyde.

Who so ne knoweth the strength power and myght,
 Of Venus and me her lytle sonne Cupyde,
 Thou Manhod shalt a myrrour bene a ryght,
 By us subdued for all thy great pryde,
 My fyry dart perceth thy tender syde,
 Now thou whiche erst despysedst children small,
 Shall waxe a chylde agayne and be my thrall.

In the fourth pageant was paynted an olde sage father sitting in a chayre. And lyeng under his fete was painted the ymage of Venus and Cupyde, that were in the third pageant. And over this fourth pageant the scripture was thus.

Age.

Olde Age am I, with lokkes, thynne and hore,
 Of our short lyfe, the last and best part.
 Wyse and discrete : the publike wele therefore,
 I help to rule to my labour and smart,
 Therefore Cupyde withdrawe thy fyry dart,
 Chargeable² matters shall of love oppresse,
 The childish game and ydle bysinesse.

¹ burn.

² weighty.

In the fyfth pageaunt was paynted an ymage of Death: and under hys fete lay the olde man in the fourth pageaunte. And above this fyfth pageaunt, this was the saying.

Deth.

Though I be foule ugly lene and mysshape,
Yet there is none in all this worlde wyde,
That may my power withstande or escape,
Therefore sage father greatly magnified,
Discende from your chayre, set a part your pryde,
Witsafe¹ to lende (though it be to your payne)
To me a fole,² some of your wise brayne.

In the sixt pageant was painted lady Fame. And under her fete was the picture of Death that was in the fyfth pageant. And over this sixt pageant the writyng was as feloweth.

Fame.

Fame I am called, marvayle you nothing,
Though I with tonges am compassed all rounde
For in voyce of people is my chiefe livyng.
O cruel death, thy power I confounde.
When thou a noble man hast brought to grounde
Maugry thy teeth to lyve cause hym shall I,
Of people in perpetuall memory.

In the seventh pageant was painted the ymage of Tyme, and under hys fete was lyng the picture of Fame that was in the sixt pageant. And this was the scripture over this seventh pageaunt.

Tyme.

I whom thou seest with horyloge in hande,
Am named tyme, the lord of every howre,
I shall in space destroy both see and lande.
O simple fame, how darest thou man honowre.
Promising of his name, an endlesse flowre,
Who may in the world have a name eternall,
When I shall in proces destroy the world and all.

In the eyght pageant was pictured the ymage of lady Eternitee, sitting in a chayre under a sumptuous cloth of estate, crowned with an imperial crown. And under her fete lay the picture of Tyme, that was in the seventh pageant. And above this eyght pageant was it written as feloweth.

¹ witsafe.

² fole.

Eternitee.

Me nedeth not to bost, I am Eternitee,
The very name signifyeth well,
That myne empyre infinite shal be.
Thou mortall Tyme every man can tell,
Art nothyng els but the mobilite,
Of sonne and mone chaungyng in every degre,
When they shall leve theyr course thou shalt be brought,
For all thy pride and bostyng into nought.

In the nynth pageant was painted a Poet sitting in a chayre. And over this pageant were there writen these verses in latin felowyng.

The Poet.

Has fictas quemcunque iuvat spectare figuras,
Sed mira veros quas putat arte homines,
Ille potest veris, animum sic pascere rebus,
Ut pictis oculos pascit imaginibus.
Namque videbit uti fragilis bona lubrica mundi,
Tam cito non veniunt, quam cito pretereunt,
Gaudia laus & honor, celeri pede omnia cedunt,
Qui manet excepto semper amore dei?
Ergo homines, levibus iamiam diffidite rebus,
Nulla recessuro spes adhibenda bono.
Qui dabit eternam nobis pro munere vitam,
In permansuro ponite vota deo.

(III.) *A ruful lamentaciō (written by master Thomas More in his youth) of the deth of queene Elisabeth mother to king Henry the eight, wife to king Henry the seventh, & eldest daughter to king Edward the fourth, which queene Elisabeth dyed in childbed in February in the yere of our lord 1503 & in the 18. yere of the raigne of king Henry the seventh.*

O ye that put your trust and confidence,
In worldly ioy and frayle prosperite,
That so live here as ye should never hence,
Remember death and loke here uppon me.
Ensaumple I thinke there may no better be.
Your selfe worre well that in this realme was I,
Your queene but late, and lo now here I lye.

Was I not borne of olde worthy linage?
 Was not my mother queene my father kyng?
 Was I not a kinges fere¹ in marriage?
 Had I not plenty of every pleasaunt thyng?
 Mercifull god this is a straunge reckenynge:
 Rychesse, honour, welth, and auncestry
 Hath me forsaken and lo now here I ly.

If worship myght have kept me, I had not gone.
 If wyt myght have me saved, I neded not fere.
 If money myght have holpe, I lacked none.
 But O good God what vayleth² all this gere.³
 When deth is come thy mighty messangere,
 Obey we must there is no remedy,
 Me hath he sommoned, and lo now here I ly.

Yet was I late promised otherwyse,
 This yere to live in welth and delice.
 Lo where to comineth thy blandishyng promyse,
 O false astrolagy and devynatrice,
 Of goddes secretes makynge thy selfe so wyse?
 How true is for this yere thy prophecy?
 The yere yet lasteth, and lo now here I ly.

O bryttill welth, ay full of bitternesse,
 Thy single pleasure doubled is with payne.
 Account my sorow first and my distresse,
 In sondry wyse, and reckon there agayne,
 The joy that I have had, and I dare sayne,
 For all my honour, endured yet have I,
 More wo then welth, and lo now here I ly.

Where are our Castels, now where are our Towers?
 Goodly Rychmonde sone art thou gone from me,
 At westminster that costly worke of yours,
 Myne owne dere lorde now shall I never see.
 Almighty god vouchesafe to graunt that ye,
 For you and your children well may edefy.
 My palyce bylded is, and lo now here I ly.

Adew myne owne dere spouse my worthy lorde,
 The faithfull love, that dyd us both combyne,
 In matiage and peasable concorde,
 Into your handes here I cleane resyne.

¹ wife.² availab.³ the more one.

To be bestowed uppon your children and myne,
 Erst wer you father, & now must ye supply,
 The mothers part also, for lo now here I ly.

Farewell my doughter lady Margarete.
 God wotte full oft it greved hath my mynde,
 That ye should go where we should seldome mete.
 Now am I gone, and have left you behynde,
 O mortall folke that we be very blinde,
 That we least feare, full oft it is most nye,
 From you depart I fyrst, and lo now here I lye.

Farewell Madame my lordes worthy mother,
 Comfort your sonne, and be ye of good chere,
 Take all a worth, for it will be no nother.
 Farewell my doughter Katherine late the fere,¹
 To prince Arthur myne owne chyld so dere,
 It booteth not for me to wepe or cry,
 Pray for my soule, for lo now here I ly.

Adew iord Henry my lovyng sonne adew.
 Our lorde encrease your honour and estate,
 Adew my doughter Mary bright of hew.
 God make you vertuous wyse and fortunate.
 Adew swete hart my litle doughter Kate,
 Thou shalt swete babe suche is thy desteny,
 Thy mother never know, for lo now here I ly.

Lady Cicyly Anne and Katheryne.
 Farewell my welbeloved sisters three,
 O lady Briget other sister myne,
 Lo here the ende of worldly vanitee.
 Now well are ye that earthly foly flee,
 And hevenly thynges love and magnify,
 Farewell and pray for me, for lo now here I ly.

Adew my lordes, adew my ladies all,
 Adew my faithfull servauntes every chonc,²
 Adew my commons whom I never shall,
 See in this world wherfore to the alone,
 Immortall god verely three and one,
 I me commende thy infinite mercy,
 Shew to thy servant, for lo now here I ly.

¹ wife.² every one.

(IV.) *Certain meters in english written by master Thomas More in his youth for the booke of Fortune, and caused them to be printed in the begynnynge of that booke.*

The wordes of Fortunc to the people.

Mine high estate power and auctoritie,
If ye ne know, enserche and ye shall spye,
That richesse, worship, welth, and dignitie,
Joy, rest, and peace, and all thyng fynally,
That any pleasure or profit may come by,
To mannes comfort, ayde, and sustinaunce,
Is all at my devyse and ordinaunce.

Without my favour there is nothyng wonne.
Many a matter have I brought at last,
To good connclosure, that fondly was begonne.
And many a purpose, bounden sure and fast
With wise provision, I have overcast.
Without good happe there may no wit suffise,
Better is to be fortunate than wyse.

And therefore hath there some men bene or this,
My deadly foes and written many a boke,
To my dispryse. And other cause there nys,¹
But for me list not frendly on them loke,
Thus lyke the fox they fare that once forsok,
The pleasaunt grapes, and gan for to defy them,
Because he lept and yet could not come by them.

But let them write theyr labour is in vayne,
For well ye wote, myrth, honour, and richesse,
Much better is than penyury and payne.
The nedy wretch that lingereth in distresse,
Without myne helpe is ever comfortlesse,
A wery burden odious and loth,
To all the world, and eke to him selfe both.

But he that by my favour may ascende,
To mighty power and excellent degree,
A common wele to governe and defende,
O in how blist condicion standeth he :
Him self in honour and felicitye,
And over that, may forther and encrease,
A region hole in joyfull rest and peace.

¹ is not.

Now in this poynt there is no more to say,
Eche man hath of him self the governaunce.
Let every wight than folowe his owne way.
And he that out of povertie and mischaunce,
List for to live, and wyll hym selfe enhaunce,
In wealth & richesse, come forth and wayte on me.
And he that wyll be a beggar, let hym be.

Thomas More to them that trust in fortune.

Thou that art prowde of honour shape or kynne.
That hepest up this wretched worldes treasure,
Thy fingers shrined with gold, thy tawny skynne,
With fresh apparayle garnished out of measure,
And wenest to have fortune at thy pleasure,
Cast up thyne eye, and loke how slipper¹ chaunce,
Illudeth² her men with chaunge and varyaunce.

Sometyme she loketh as lovely fayre and bright,
As goodly Venus mother of Cupyde.
She beckett³ and she smileth on every wight.
But this chere fayned, may not long abide.
There commeth a cloude, and farewell all our pryde.
Like any serpent she beginneth to swell,
And looketh as fierce as any fury of hell.

Yet for all that we brotle⁴ men are fayne,
(So wretched is our nature and so blynde)
As soone as Fortune list to laugh agayne,
With fayre countenaunce and disceitfull mynde,
To crouche and knele and gape after the wynde,
Not one or twayne but thousandes in a rout,
Lyke swarmyng bees come flickeryng her aboute.

Then as a bayte she bryngeth forth her ware,
Silver, gold, riche perle, and precious stone :
On whiche the mased people gase and stare,
And gape therefore, as dogges doe for the bone.
Fortune at them laugheth, and in her trone
Amyd her treasure and waveryng rychesse,
Prowdly she hoveth⁵ as lady and empresse.

¹ elusive, slippery.

² deceives.

³ courtships.

⁴ brittle.

⁵ presides.

Fast by her syde doth wery Labour stand,
 Pale Fere also, and Sorow all bewept,
 Disdayn and Hatred on that other hand,
 Eke restles watche fro slepe with travayle kept,
 His eyes drowsy and loking as he slept.
 Before her standeth Daunger and Envy,
 Flattery, Dysceyt, Mischiefe and Tiranny.

About her commeth all the world to begge.
 He asketh lande, and he to pas would bryng,
 This toye and that, and all not worth an egge :
 He would in love prosper above all thyng :
 He kneleth downe and would be made a kyng :
 He forceth¹ not so he may money have,
 Though all the worlde accompt hym for a knave.

Lo thus ye see divers heddes, divers wittes.
 Fortune alone as divers as they all,
 Unstable here and there among them flittes :
 And at aventure downe her giftes fall,
 Catch who so may she throweth great and small
 Not to all men, as commeth sonne or dewe,
 But for the most part, all among a fewe.

And yet her brotall giftes long may not last.
 He that she gave them, loketh prowde and hye.
 She whirlth about and pluckth away as fast,
 And geveth them to an other by and by.
 And thus from man to man continually,
 She useth to geve and take, and slyly tosse,
 One man to wynnyng of an others losse.

And when she robbeth one, down goth his pryde.
 He wepeth and wayleth and curseth her full sore.
 But he that receveth it, on that other syde,
 Is glad, and blesther often tymes therefore.
 But in a whyle when she loveth hym no more,
 She glydeth from hym, and her giftes to.
 And he her curseth as other fooles do.

Alas the folysh people can not cease,
 Ne voyd her traync,² tyll they the harme do fele.
 About her alway, besely they preace.³
 But lord how he doth thynk hym self full wele.
 That may set once his hande uppon her whele.

¹ careth.² will.³ press.

He holdeth fast : but upwarde as he flieth,
 She whippeth her whele about, and there he lyeth.

Thus fell Julius from his mighty power.
 Thus fell Darius the worthy kyng of Perse.
 Thus fell Alexander the great conquerour.
 Thus many mo then I may well reherse.
 Thus double fortune, when she lyst reverse
 Her slipper favour fro them that in her trust,
 She fleeth her wey and leyeth them in the dust.

She sodeinly enhaunceth them a loft.
 And sodeynly mischeveth all the flocke.
 The head that late lay easily and full soft,
 In stede of pylows lyeth after on the blocke.
 And yet alas the most cruell proude mocke :
 The deynty mowth that ladyes kissed have,
 She bryngeth in the case to kysse a knave.

Thus whan she changith her uncertayn coorse,¹
 Up startth a knave, and downe there falth a knyght,
 The beggar ryche, and the ryche man pore is.
 Hatred is turned to love, love to despyght.
 This is her sport, thus proveth she her myght.
 Great boste she maketh yf one be by her power,
 Welthy and wretched both within an howre.

Povertee that of her giftes wyl nothing take,
 Wyth mery chere, looketh uppon the prece,²
 And seeth how fortunes houshold goeth to wrake.
 Fast by her standeth the wyse Socrates.
 Arristippus, Pythagoras, and many a lese.³
 Of olde Philosophers. And eke agaynst the sonne
 Bekyth⁴ hym poore Diogenes in his tonne.

With her⁵ is Byas, whose countrey lackt defence,
 And whylom of their foes stode so in dout,
 That eche man hastely gan to cary thence,
 And asked hym why he nought caryed out.
 I bere quod he all myne with me about :
 Wisdom he ment, not fortunes brotle fees.
 For nought he counted his that he might leese.⁶

¹ See p. 227.² torcig.³ less.⁴ stoops.⁵ i.e. poverty.⁶ lose.

Heraclitus eke, lyst felowship to kepe
 With glad povertie, Democritus also :
 Of which the fyrst can never cease but wepe,
 To see how thicke the blynded people go,
 With labour great to purchase care and wo.
 That other laugheth to see the foolysh apes,
 Howe earnestly they walke about theyr japes.

Of this poore sect, it is comen usage,
 Onely to take that nature may sustayne,
 Banishing cleane all other surplusage,
 They be content, and of nothyng complayne.
 No nygarde eke is of his good so fayne,
 But they more pleasure have a thousande folde,
 The secrete draughtes¹ of nature to beholde.

Set fortunes servauntes by them and ye wull,
 That one is free, that other ever thrall,
 That one content, that other never full.
 That one in suretye, that other lyke to fall.
 Who lyst to advise them bothe, parceyve he shall,
 As great difference betwene them as we see,
 Betwixte wretchednes and felicite.

Now have I shewed you bothe : chese² whiche ye lyst,
 Stately fortune, or humble povertie :
 That is to say, nowe lyeth it in your fyst,
 To take here bondage, or free libertie.
 But in thys poynte and ye do after me,
 Draw you to fortune, and labour her to please,
 If that ye thynke your selfe to well at ease.

And fyrst, uppon the³ lovely shall she smile,
 And frendly on the cast her wandering eyes,
 Embrace the in her armes, and for a whyle,
 Put the and kepe the in a fooles paradise :
 And fourth with all what so thou lyst devise,
 She wyll the graunt it liberally parhappes :
 But for all that beware of after clappes.

Recken you never of her favoure sure :
 Ye may in clouds as easily trace⁴ an hare,
 Or in drye lande cause fishes to endure,
 And make the burnyng fyre his heate to spare,
 And all thys worlde in compare to *forfare*,⁵

¹ designs.² chese.³ the.⁴ track.⁵ per. b.

As her to make by craft or engine stable,
 That of her nature is ever variable.

Serve her day and nyght as reverently,
 Uppon thy knees as any servaunt may,
 And in conclusion, that thou shalt winne thereby
 Shall not be worth thy servyce I dare say.
 And looke yet what she geveth the to day,
 With labour wonne she shall happily to morow
 Pluck it agayne out of thyne hande with sorow.

Wherefore yf thou in suretye lyst to stande,
 Take poverties parte and let prowde fortune go,
 Receyve nothyng that commeth from her hande :
 Love maner¹ and vertue : they be onely tho.²
 Whiche double fortune may not take the fro.
 Then mayst thou boldly defye her turnyng chaunce :
 She can the neyther hynder nor avaunce.

But and thou wylt nedes medle with her treasure,
 Trust not therein, and spende it liberally.
 Beare the not proude, nor take not out of measure.
 Bylde not thyne house on heyth³ up in the skye
 None falleth farre, but he that climbeth hye,
 Remember nature sent the hyther bare,
 The gyftes of fortune count them borowed ware.

Thomas More to them that seke fortune.

Whoso delyteth to proven and assay,
 Of waveryng fortune the uncertayne lot,
 If that the aunswere please you not alway,
 Blame ye not me : for I commaunde you not,
 Fortune to trust, and eke full well ye wot,
 I have of her no brydle in my fist,
 She renneth⁴ loose, and turneth where she lyst.

The rolling dyse in whome your lucke doth stande,
 With whose unhappy chaunce ye be so wroth,
 Ye knowe your selfe came never in myne hande.
 Lo in this ponde be fyshe and frogges both.
 Cast in your nette : but be you lief or lothe,
 Holde you content as fortune lyst assyne :
 For it is your owne fishyng and not myne.

¹ manners, i.e. moral excellence.² those.³ height.⁴ runneth.

And though in one chaunce fortune you offend,
 Grudge not there at, but beare a mery face.
 In many an other she shall it amende.
 There is no manne so farre out of her grace.
 But he sometyme hath comfort and solace :
 Ne none agayne so farre foorth in her favour,
 That is full satisfyed with her behaviour.

Fortune is stately, solemne, prowde, and hye :
 And rychesse geveith, to have servyce therefore.
 The nedy begger catcheth an halfpenny :
 Some manne a thousande pounce, some lesse some more.
 But for all that she kepeth ever in store,
 From every manne some parcell of his wyll,
 That he may pray therfore and serve her styll.

Some manne hath good,¹ but chyldren hath he none,
 Some man hath both, but he can get none health.
 Some hath al thre, but up to honours trone,
 Can he not crepe, by no maner of stelth.
 To some she sendeth, children, ryches, welthe,
 Honour, woorshyp, and reverence all hys lyfe :
 But yet she pyncheth hym with a shrewde wyfe.

Then for asmuch as it is fortunes guyse,
 To graunt no manne all thyng that he wyll axe,
 But as her selfe lyst order and devyse,
 Dothe every manne his parte divide and tax,
 I counsayle you eche one trusse up your packes,
 And take no thyng at all, or be content,
 With suche rewarde as fortune hath you sent.

*He meaneth
 the booke of
 fortune:*

All thynges in this boke that ye shall rede,
 Doe as ye lyst, there shall no manne you bynde,
 Them to beleve, as surely as your crede.
 But notwithstanding certes in my mynde,
 I durst well swere, as true ye shall them fynde,
 In every poynt eche answere by and by,
 As are the iudgementes of Astronomye.

*Thus endeth the preface to the
 booke of fortune.*

