

The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More, Knight

by Nicholas Harpsfield

Edited by Katherine Stearns and Alexander Taylor

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Nicholas Harpsfield (1519–1575) completed this biography *ca.* 1557, during the reign of Queen Mary, but it was not published until 1932. Indebted to William Roper’s recollections, Harpsfield’s *Life* presents More as both a spiritual and secular figure, and Harpsfield dedicates his biography to William Roper, presenting More as the first English martyr among the laity, who serves as an “ambassador” and “messenger” to them.

Harpsfield was born in London, and was educated at Winchester and then New College at Oxford where he became a perpetual fellow and eventually earned a doctorate in canon law. In 1550, during the reign of Edward VI, he moved to Louvain and come to know many in the More circle such as Antonio Bonvisi, the

Clements, and the Rastells. With Mary’s accession to the throne in 1553, he returned and became archdeacon of Canterbury and worked closely with Cardinal Reginald Pole, the Archbishop of Canterbury. With Mary’s and Pole’s deaths in 1558, and with his refusal to take the oath recognizing Queen Elizabeth’s supremacy, Harpsfield was imprisoned from 1559 to 1574 in Fleet Prison where, as he relates in his Dedicatory Epistle, William Roper supported him generously.

This edition of Harpsfield’s *Life* is based on the critical edition published for the Early English Text Society (EETS) in 1932 by Oxford University Press, edited by E. V. Hitchcock; the cross-references in the headnotes refer to this edition.

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The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More, Knight Sometime Lord High Chancellor of England

Written in the time of Queen Mary by Nicholas Harpsfield

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the right worshipful Master William Roper.

It is, and hath been, an old and most ancient custom, not only among the Christians, but long also before Christ's time, at New-year's tide every man, according to his ability, to visit and gratify with some present his special friends and patrons. Conformable to this custom, I do at this time (being furnished with no worldly treasure to offer you any rich, precious gift) present your worship even with a paper New-year's gift; but yet such as I trust, for the devotion of my poor heart towards your worship, shall be no less acceptable than was the dish of water presented once by a poor man to one of the kings of Persia, where the custom was for every man to welcome and honor the king's first coming into their quarters with some costly gift. Which waterish gift the good king, considering the plain homely dealing and great and grateful good will of the said poor man, not only took in good gree, but made more account of than of his rich and precious gifts. Wherefore I trust, and little doubt, knowing the goodness of your gentle nature, and considering the matter comprised in this book, being the life of the worthy Sir Thomas More, knight, but that you will, of your part, in very good part take and accept this my present.

Neither am I so careful of the acceptation on your behalf as I am afraid on my own behalf, lest by my unskillful handling some part of the worthiness of this man may seem to some men to be somewhat impaired, blemished, or defaced. For I do not so well like of myself, or stand so much in mine own conceit, that I take myself the meetest man to take such an enterprise in hand. I do well remember that the great, famous king Alexander gave in commandment that no man should carve his image but that renowned carver Lysippus, no man paint his image but the excellent painter Apelles, thinking that otherwise it would be some disgracing to himself and his image. How much the more ought the lively image of this worthy man (whom not his dead image,

being never so artificially and exquisitely set forth, but his notable doings and sayings do to us most exactly represent) to be by some singular artificer and workman set forth to the world, and, as I may say, by some other more than myself. But yet, whatsoever my skill be (which I know well is not correspondent to such an enterprise) I have somewhat the better contentation for that, if I have erred, you also have erred in *your* choice in that you appointed no meeter person. And I comfort myself, and it be in nothing else but that I have satisfied your request, and am better content to be taken a person unskillful than a person slothful, unthankful and ungrateful, especially in such a matter as this is, and to such a person as you are. For as this is a matter very profitable, or rather necessary, to be divulged, so surely, if I be able in this or any other matter, with any manner of commendation, to enterprise anything, or to gratify any man with my doings, you are the only man living in all the earth that by your long and great benefits and charges employed and heaped upon me, toward the supporting of my living and learning, have most deeply bound me, or rather bought me, to be at your commandment during my life. Again, if there be any matter in the world meet and convenient to be presented and dedicated to you of any learned man, it is this present treatise.

I am not ignorant that you come of a worthy pedigree, both by the father and mother's side: by the father's side of ancient gentlemen of long continuance; and by the mother's side of the Apuldrefeles, one of the chiefest and ancient families in Kent, and one of the three chief gentlemen that compelled William Conqueror to agree and to confirm the ancient customs of Kent; daughter to the great, wise and right worshipful Sir John Fineux, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, who among his worthy and notable sayings was wont to say that if you take away from a justice the order of his discretion, you take from him more than half his office; whose steps in virtue, wisdom and learning, as also your worshipful father's (who was Attorney to King Henry the Eighth, and whom you in the office of prothonotary

in the King's Bench have immediately succeeded, and shall therein by God's grace long continue) you have, God be thanked, well and graciously trod after. But yet you and your family are by no one thing
 5 more adorned, made illustrious and beautified, than by this worthy man, Sir Thomas More, in marrying his daughter, the excellent, learned and virtuous matron, Mistress Margaret More. He was your worthy father-in-law: what say I? Your father-in-law? Nay,
 10 rather your very father indeed; and though a temporal man, yet your very spiritual father, as one that by his good counsel and advice, or rather by his instant and devout prayers to God, recovered your lost soul, overwhelmed and full deep drowned in the deadly,
 15 dreadful depth of horrible heresies.

You may therefore especially at my hands vindicate and challenge to you this my treatise, and that not only for causes aforesaid but for other also, forasmuch as you shall receive, I will not say a pig of your
 20 own sow (it were too homely and swinish a term) but rather a comely and goodly garland, a pleasant sweet nosegay of most sweet and odoriferous flowers, picked and gathered even out of your own garden; you shall receive a garland decked and adorned
 25 with precious pearls and stones. The most precious whereof you have by your own travail procured and got together, I mean of the good instructions diligently and truly by your industry gathered, and whereof many you know well by your own experience,
 30 which you have imparted to me, and furnished me withal. Wherefore as all waters and rivers, according to the saying of Holy Scripture, flow out of the ocean sea, and thither do reflow again, so it is convenient you should reap the fruit of your own labor
 35 and industry, and that it should redound thither, from whence it originally proceeded. And that we and our posterity should know to whom to impute and ascribe the wellspring of this great benefit, and whom we may accordingly thank for many things
 40 now come to light of this worthy man, which, perchance, otherwise would have been buried with perpetual oblivion. And yet we have also paid some part of the shot, and have not been altogether negligent. We have gleaned, I trust, some good grapes, and have
 45 with poor Ruth leased some good corn, as by the perusing you shall understand.

And thus I commit your worship to the blessed tuition of the Almighty, who sends you this and

many other good and happy New Years.

Your worship's bounden,

N. H. L. D.

Birth in London

This excellent and peerless man, whose life we
 50 have to indite, besides all other great and beautiful outward and perpetual arguments that God and nature adorned him withal, was beautified (if such things may add any weight to his commendation,
 55 as they do in the eyes and consideration of many) as well by the place of his birth, being born at London, the chief and notable principal city of this our noble realm, as by the heritage and worshipful family whereof he sprang.

More's Father, John

His father, Master John More, was very expert
 60 in the laws of this realm, and for his worthiness advanced to be one of the justices of the King's Bench, and to the worshipful degree of knighthood. Who, besides his learning, was endued with many notable and virtuous qualities and gifts: A man very virtuous,
 65 and of a very upright and sincere conscience, both in giving of counsel and judgment; a very merciful and pitiful man; and, among other his good qualities and properties, a companionable, a merry and pleasantly
 70 conceited man. And therefore, in talking of men's wives, he would merrily say that that choice is like as if a blind man should put his hand into a bag full of snakes and eels together, seven snakes for one eel. When he heard folk blame their wives, and say that they be so many of them shrews, he could merrily say
 75 that they defame them falsely, for he would say plainly that there was but one shrewd wife in the world, but he said indeed that every man weeneth that he hath her, and that one was his own wife. But in this kind of proper pleasant talk his son, with whom we
 80 now be in hand, incomparably did exceed him. This good knight and justice lived until he came to a great age, and yet was for the health and use of his body much more fresh and active than men of his years commonly be of. But after he had now so long lived,
 85 and especially that he had seen his son High Chancellor of England, he most gladly and willingly, when God called for it, rendered again his spirit unto God, from whom he had received it.

Early Education

But now to return to his son: Neither was he by his parents, nor by his birth and place, so much adorned and beautified as he did adorn and beautify them both and the whole realm besides. In the said city, at Saint Anthony's school, he learned the principles of the Latin tongue, in the knowledge whereof when he had in short space far surmounted his co-equals, his father, seeing the towardness and activity of his son, and being careful for his further good and virtuous education, procured and obtained that he should be brought up in the house of the right reverend, the wise and learned prelate, Cardinal Morton, who, being a man of quick wit and deep judgment, soon espied the child's excellent disposition and nature; who, among many other tokens of his quick and pregnant wit, being very young, would yet notwithstanding upon the sudden step in among the Christmas players and forthwith, without any other forethinking or premeditation, play a part with them himself, so fitly, so plausibly and so pleasantly, that the auditors took much admiration, and more comfort and pleasure thereof than of all the players besides; and especially the Cardinal, upon whose table he waited. And often would he tell to the nobles sitting at the table with him, "Whosoever liveth to see it, shall see this child come to an excellent and marvellous proof." To whose very likely, then, and probable forejudgment, the end and issue of this man's life hath plainly, openly and truly answered. And so far as we may, as it were for a wonderful and yet for a true surplusage, add to his conjectural forejudgment our sure, constant, stable and grounded judgment, that he was and is the oddest and the noblest man of all England. And that he achieved such an excellent state of worthiness, fame and glory as never did (especially layman) in England before, and much doubt is there whether any man shall hereafter. Which my saying I trust I shall justify hereafter. In the mean season, good reader, if thou think I pass and exceed just measure, and would that I should show by and by what motions I have that lead me to this censure I pray thee spare me a little while, and give the more vigilant and attentive care to the due and deep consideration of that I shall truly and faithfully set forth touching this man. And then I hope I shall, if thou be anything indifferent, satisfy my promise and thy expectation also.

This Cardinal then that had raised both to himself

and others such an expectation to this child, being now more and more careful to have him well trained up, that his goodly bud might be a fair flower, and at length bring forth such fruit as he and the others expected and looked for, thought it best he should be sent to the University of Oxford, and so he was; where, for the short time of his abode (being not fully two years) and for his age, he wonderfully profited in the knowledge of the Latin and Greek tongues; where, if he had settled and fixed himself, and had run his full race in the study of the liberal sciences and divinity, I trow he would have been the singular and the only spectacle of this our time for learning.

Law Studies; Lectures on Augustine

But his father minded that he should tread after his steps, and settle his whole mind and study upon the laws of the realm. And so being plucked from the universities of studies and learnings, he was set to the studies of the laws only of this realm. Which study he commenced first at New Inn, one of the Inns of Chancery. And when he had well-favoredly profited therein, he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, and there, with small allowance, so far forth pursued his study that he was made, as he was well worthy an utter barrister. Now is the law of the realm, and the study thereof, such as would require a whole man, wholly and entirely thereto addicted, and a whole and entire man's life, to grow to any excellency therein. Neither were utter barristers commonly made then but after many years' study. But this man's speedy and yet substantial profiting was such that he enjoyed some prerogative of time; and yet in this notwithstanding did he cut off from the study of the law much time, which he employed to his former studies that he used in Oxford; and especially to the reading of Saint Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, which though it be a book very hard for a well learned man to understand, and cannot be profoundly and exactly understood, and especially cannot be with commendation openly read of any man that is not well and substantially furnished as well with divinity as profane knowledge, yet did Master More, being so young, being so distracted also and occupied in the study of the common laws, openly read in the Church of Saint Lawrence in London the books of the said Saint Augustine *De Civitate Dei*, to his no small commendation, and to the great admiration of all his audience. His lesson was frequented and honored with the presence and resort, as well of that

well learned and great cunning man, Master Grocyn (with whom and with Master Thomas Lupset he learned the Greek tongue) as also with the chief and best learned men of the city of London. About
 5 the same time the said Grocyn read in the aforesaid city the books of Dionysius the Areopagite, but he had not so frequent and so great an auditory as had Master More.

This intermission and interchange of studies was
 10 to Master More no less comfort and recreation than it was to his auditors good and profitable. So that from this, as it were a spiritual exercise, he returned the lustier and fresher again to his old study of the temporal law. And being thought expedient and
 15 meet by the whole bench of Lincoln's Inn that he should not keep and reserve his knowledge to his own self only, but lay it forth and sow it abroad to the use and profit of many others, was made Reader of Furnival's Inn. And in this trade, to the great
 20 commodity of his hearers, he continued three years and more.

First Term in Parliament [1504]

About this time he was chosen a burgess of the Parliament, in the later days of King Henry the Seventh. At which time was there concluded a marriage
 25 between James, the King of Scots, and Lady Margaret, eldest daughter to the said King. And because great charges would grow to the King by reason of setting and sending forth the said Lady, he demanded of the Parliament about three fifteenths, as it
 30 hath been reported. Now considering the continual custom almost of all times and of all princes, at least from Henry the First (who gave his daughter, called commonly Maude the Empress, in marriage to Henry the Emperor, with no small charges put
 35 upon the commons for the same) and as well the great and present as the long durable commodity as it was then likely that should ensue to this realm by the marriage, it was thought there would be small reluctance or repining against this Parliament.

Howbeit Master More, upon some apparent
 40 ground, as there is good likelihood (for he was no rash, willful man, and was easy to be entreated to yield to reason) disliked upon the said payment, and shown openly his mind therein, and with such reasons and arguments debated and enforced the matter that the residue of the Lower House condescended to his mind, and thereby was the bill overthrown. And forthwith Master Tyler, one of the King's Privy

Chamber, that was present in the said House, resorted to the King, declaring unto him that a beardless
 50 boy had disappointed and dashed all his purpose.

The remembrance of this displeasure sank deeply into the King's heart, and bred great and heavy indignation against Master More, ready upon any
 55 small occasion to burst out against him. But yet did the King forbear, as well lest he might seem thereby to infringe and break the ancient liberty of the Parliament House for free speaking touching the public affairs (which would have been taken odiously) as
 60 also for that Master More had then little or nothing to lose. But yet was there a causeless quarrel devised against his father, whereby he was committed to the Tower, from whence he could not get himself out until the King had got out of his purse a fine of one
 65 hundred pounds.

Neither yet for all this was Master More altogether forgotten, but pretty privy ways were devised how to wrap him in. Among other, at a time as he repaired to Doctor Fox, Bishop of Winchester, and one of the King's Privy Council, and waited upon
 70 him for a certain suit, the Bishop called him aside, and pretending much favor, said, "If ye will be ruled and ordered by me, I doubt nothing but I shall recover and win the King's favor to you again," meaning thereby (as it was conjectured) to wring out of
 75 his own mouth some confession of his fault and offense against the King, whereby the King might with some better apparent color fasten his displeasure upon him, and openly revenge the same against him. Returning from the Bishop, he fell in communication with Master Richard Whitford, his familiar
 80 friend, then chaplain to the Bishop, and after one of the Fathers of Syon. To whom after that he had disclosed what the Bishop said to him, craving his good and friendly advice therein: "Master More,"
 85 said he, "follow not his counsel in any wise; for my master, to gratify the King, and to serve his turn, will not stick to condescend and agree and it were to the death even of his own natural father." Whereupon Master More resorted no more to the said Bishop,
 90 and remaining ever after in great fear of the King's indignation hanging upon him, and supposing that his longer abode in England could not be but to his great danger, resolved to pass over the Seas; which his determination was prevented and cut off by the
 95 death of the King not long after ensuing.

Education with the Carthusians

And all this while was he unmarried, and seemed to be in some doubt and deliberation with himself what kind and trade of life he should enter to follow and pursue all his long life after. Surely it seemeth
 5 by some apparent conjectures that he was sometime somewhat propense and inclined either to be a priest, or to take some monastical and solitary life; for he continued after his foresaid reading four years and more full virtuously and religiously in great devotion and prayer with the monks of the Charterhouse of London without any manner of profession or vow, either to see and prove whether he could frame himself to that kind of life, or at least, for a time, to sequester himself from all temporal and worldly exercises. Himself said also afterward, when
 10 his daughter Margaret Roper (whom of all his children he did most lovingly, most entirely and most fatherly tender) escaped against all expectation, as we shall hereafter show, of a most dangerous sickness that if she had died he would never have intermeddled with any worldly affairs after. Furthermore, being prisoner in the Tower, he told his said daughter that his short penning and shutting up did little grieve him; for if it had not been for respect of his wife and children, he had voluntarily long ere that
 15 time shut himself in as narrow or narrower a room than that was.

Now, if any man will say that, seeing the contemplative life far exceedeth the active, according as
 20 Christ himself confesseth: *Optimam partem elegit Maria, quae non auferetur ab ea*, that he marvelleth why Master More did not follow, embrace and pursue the said inclination, to this I answer, that no man is precisely bound so to do; I answer further,
 25 that were it so that he had such propension and inclination, God himself seemeth to have chosen and appointed this man to another kind of life, to serve him therein more acceptably to his divine honor, and more profitably for the wealth of the realm and his own soul also. Of the which our judgment we shall render you hereafter such causes as move us so
 30 to think.

Marries Joanna Colt [1505]

In conclusion therefore he fell to marriage, in and under the which he did not only live free from
 35 dishonoring the same with any unlawful and filthy company, leaving his own wife (as many, especially

such as be of great wealth and authority, the more pity, often do) but lived himself, his wife, his children and family, after such a godly and virtuous sort as his house might rather be a mirror and spectacle,
 40 not only to the residue of the laity, but even to many of the clergy also.

His wife was one Master Colt's daughter, a gentleman of Essex that had often invited him thither, having three daughters, whose honest conversation and virtuous education provoked him there especially to set his affection. And albeit his mind most served
 45 him to the second daughter, for that he thought her the fairest and best favored, yet when he considered that it would be both great grief and some shame also to the eldest to see her younger sister in marriage preferred before her, he then of a certain pity framed his fancy towards her, and soon after married her; never the more discontinuing his study of the law at Lincoln's Inn, but applying still the same until
 50 he was called to the bench, and had read there twice, which is as often as ordinarily any judge of the law doth read.

Before which time he had placed himself and his wife in Bucklersbury in London, where he had by her three daughters and one son (called John More, to whom Erasmus did dedicate Aristotle's works, printed by Bebelius; and three daughters, Margaret, married to Master William Roper; Cecily, married to Master Giles Heron; and Elizabeth, wife to Master William Daunce) – which children from their youth he brought up in virtue and knowledge both
 55 in the Latin and the Greek tongues, whom he would often exhort to take virtue and learning for their meat, and play for their sauce.

Undersheriff and City Lawyer

As he was born in London, so was he as well of others as of the said city dearly beloved, and enjoyed there the first office that he had, being made undersheriff of the said city. The said office, as it is worshipful, so is it not very cumbersome; for the judge
 60 sitteth upon Thursday only, once in the week, before noon; no man dispatched in the same office more causes than he did; no man ever used himself more sincerely and uprightly to the suitors, to whom often times he forgave his own fee and duty. In the said court it is the order, before they commence their matter, that the plaintiff put down three groats, and the defendant as much; more it is not lawful to require of them; by the which office, and his learned
 65

counsel that he gave his clients, he gained without grudge, grief, or touch of his own conscience, and without the grudge, grief or injury of any other man, about four hundred pounds yearly.

5 Neither was there any matter in controversy of weight and importance in any of the Prince's courts of the laws of the realm that he was not retained for counsel of the one or the other party; yea, he grew shortly in such worthy credit for his wit, learning, 10 wisdom and experience, that before he came to the service of King Henry the Eighth, he was at the suit and instance of the English merchants, and by the King's consent, for great important matters between the said merchants and the merchants of the 15 Steelyard (albeit commonly such embassies are committed to civilians) sent twice ambassador over the seas. He of his own self and of nature neither desired nor well liked to be intricated with princes' affairs, and of all other offices he had little mind and fancy 20 to be any ambassador, and least to this embassy, for that he liked not to have his abode (as he had) and, as it were, to be shut up in a town near to the sea, where neither the ground nor the air was good and wholesome. Again, whereas in England of very 25 nature he did abhor from grievous and contentious altercations and strifes, though he felt thereby a gain, such contentions in a strange country were much more grievous and odious to him, and by so much the more as he felt thereby some damage. For though 30 he were worshipfully provided and furnished for the defraying of his charges, yet grew there some charges thereby to him; and he was merrily wont to say that there was between a layman and a priest to be sent in embassy a very great difference; for the priests need 35 not to be troubled or disquieted for the absence of their wives and children (as having none, or such as they may find everywhere) as the layman is, and may carry their whole family with them, as the layman cannot. He would also further pleasantly say 40 that albeit he were no ill husband, no ill father, no ill master, yet could he not entreat his wife, children or family to fast for his pleasure until his return. But yet all this notwithstanding, the office once put upon him, not desired, expected or looked for on his part, 45 he forslowd nothing for the advancing and happy expedition of the same, and so therein demeaned himself that after his return he purchased to himself great advancement of his estimation, both with the merchants and with the King himself; who, at his return, offered him for some recompense of his travail

an annual pension during his life. Which, though it was honorable and fruitful, yet did he refuse it, lest he should be occasioned thereby to relinquish his former state, condition and office (which he preferred to be much better) or keep it with some 55 discontentation of the citizens of London, who perchance might conceive some sinister suspicion of him, that when any controversy should afterward chance (as there did often) between the king and the 60 city for their privileges, he would not bear himself uprightly and sincerely, being, as it were, somewhat wrapped in, entangled and affectionated, by reason of this pension.

Moreover the King was in hand with Cardinal Wolsey, then Lord Chancellor, to win him and procure him to his Grace's service. The Cardinal did not forslow the matter, but incontinently travailed, and that very earnestly with him, with many persuasions, which he did among other enforce with this, 70 that his service must needs be dear to his Majesty, which could not with his honor with less than he should lose thereby seem to recompense him. Yet he, being very loath to shift and change his state and condition, wrought so with the Cardinal that by the Cardinal the King was satisfied for the time, and 75 accepted Master More's excuse. I say for the time. For this man's worthy estimation and fame so grew on every day more than other, that a while after the King could by no manner of entreaty be induced any longer to forbear his service, and that upon this occasion. 80

There chanced a great ship of his that then was Pope to arrive at Southampton, the which the King claimed as a forfeiture. Whereupon the Pope's ambassador, then resident in the realm, upon suit 85 obtained of the King that he might retain for his master some counselors learned in the laws of the realm and that in his own presence (himself being a singular civilian) the matter might in some public place be openly heard, debated and discoursed. 90 Among all the lawyers, no one could be found so apt and meet as Master More, as one that was able to report to the ambassador all the reasons and arguments on both sides proposed and alleged. Upon this the counsellors of either party, in the presence of 95 the Lord Chancellor and other the judges in the Star Chamber, had audience accordingly. At what time Master More was not only a bare reporter to the ambassador, but argued himself also so learnedly and so substantially that he recovered and won to the Pope 100

the said forfeiture, and to himself high commendation and renown.

Joins the King's Service [1518]

Being then upon this occasion retained in the King's service, the King gave him a notable and worthy lesson and charge, that in all his doings and affairs touching the King, he should first respect and regard God, and afterwards the King his master. Which lesson and instruction never was there, I trow, any prince's servant that more willingly heard, or more faithfully and effectually executed and accomplished, as ye shall hereafter better understand.

At his first entrance, being then no better room void, he was made Master of the Requests, and within a month he was made knight and one of the King's Privy Council. After the death of Master Weston, he was made Under-Treasurer of the Exchequer; and then afterward, upon the death of Sir Richard Wingfield, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and at length advanced to be Lord Chancellor of England. The which offices, as he obtained by the King's goodness, by his mere voluntary and free disposition, without any suit or solicitation of his own behalf, so did he use himself therein with all good dexterity, wisdom and equity, sincerity and incorruption, and in this race of the King's service he ran painfully, wisely and honorably, twenty years and above.

Friendship with the King

Neither was there any one man that the King used more familiarly, nor with whom he more debated, not only for public affairs, but in matters of learning, withal taking a great comfort besides in his merry and pleasantly conceited wit. And took such pleasure in his company that he would sometimes, upon the sudden, come to his house at Chelsea to be merry with him. Whither on a time, unlooked for, he came to dinner to him; and after dinner, in a fair garden of his, walked with him by the space of an hour, holding his arm about his neck. Of all the which favor he made no more account than a deep wise man should do, and as the nature and disposition of the King (which he deeply and thoroughly perceived) did require, and as indeed he afterward in himself most of all men experienced. Wherefore even at this time, when flattering fortune seemed most pleasantly to smile upon him, and all things seemed as fair and beautiful as the luster of a bright

diamond, he well thought as well upon the disposition and inclination of the said prince as upon the frail, instable and brittle state of such as seem to be in high favor of their princes.

Wherefore, when that after the King's departure his son-in-law, Master William Roper, rejoicingly came to him, saying these words: "Sir, how happy are you whom the King hath so familiarly entertained, as I never have seen him to do any other except Cardinal Wolsey, whom I saw his Grace walk withal arm in arm." Sir Thomas More answered in this sort: "I thank our Lord, son, I find his Grace my very good Lord indeed; and I believe he doth as singularly favor me as he doth any subject within this realm. Howbeit, son Roper, I may tell thee I have no cause to be proud thereof; for if my head could win him a castle in France" (for then was there war between France and us), "it should not fail to serve his turn."

After that Sir Thomas More had now continued about nine years in the King's service, Charles the Emperor came into the realm, and was most honorably and magnificently received in the city of London. At which time Sir Thomas More made a fine and eloquent oration in the presence of the Emperor and the King, in their praise and commendation, and of the great amity and love that the one bore to the other, and the singular comfort that the subjects of both realms received thereof.

Speaker of the House [1523]

The said year (which was the fourteenth year of the King's reign) a Parliament was summoned, where the Commons chose for their Speaker Sir Thomas More, and presented him the Saturday after in the Parliament Chamber, where he disabled himself as a man not meet for that office. Among other things he brought forth a story of the noble captain Hannibal, to whom at a certain time Phormio commenced a solemn declaration touching chivalry and the feats of war, which was well liked and praised of many; but Hannibal, being demanded what he thought thereof, answered: "I never heard a more proud, arrogant fool, that durst take upon him to instruct the flower and master of chivalry in the feats and affairs of war." "So," saith Sir Thomas, "I may well look for and fear the like rebuke at the King's hands, if I should arrogate so much to myself as to speak before a king of such learning, wisdom and experience in public affairs, of the manuring, welding and ordering of of the same. Wherefore my humble petition

is, that the Commons may freely choose some other for their Speaker.” But the Cardinal answered that the king by good proof and experience knew his wit, learning and discretion to be such as he might well
 5 bear and satisfy the office, and that the Commons could not choose a meeter.

In the end, when the King would not consent to the election of any other, he spoke to his Grace in form following:

Since I perceive, most redoubted Sovereign, that it standeth not with your high pleasure to reform this election, and cause it to be changed, but have by the mouth of the most reverend father in God, the Legate, your High Chancellor, thereunto given your most royal assent, and have of your benignity determined, far above that I may bear, to enable me and for this office to repute me meet, rather than ye should seem to impute unto your Commons that they had unmeetly chosen; I am therefore, and always shall be, ready obediently to conform myself to the accomplishment of your high commandment, in my most humble wise beseeching your most noble Majesty that I may, with your Grace’s favor, before I farther enter there into, make my humble intercession unto your Highness for two lowly petitions: the one privately concerning myself, the other the whole assemble of your Common House.

For myself, gracious Sovereign, that if it mishap me, in anything hereafter that is on the behalf of your Commons in your high presence to be declared, to mistake my message, and in the lack of good utterance by my misrehearsal to pervert or impair their prudent instructions, it may then like your most noble Majesty, of your abundant grace, with the eye of your accustomed pity, to pardon my simpleness, giving me leave to repair again unto the Common House, and there to confer with them, and to take their substantial advice what thing, and in what wise, I shall on their behalf utter and speak before your noble Grace to the intent their prudent devices and affairs be not by my simpleness and folly hindered or impaired. Which thing, if it should mishap, as it were well likely to mishap me, if your gracious benignity relieved not my oversight, it could not fail to be, during my life, a perpetual grudge and heaviness to my heart; the help and remedy whereof, in manner afore remembered, is, most gracious Sov-

ereign, my first lowly suit and humble petition unto your most noble Grace.

Mine other humble request, most excellent Prince, is this: That forasmuch as there be of your Commons, here by your high commandment assembled, of your Parliament, a great number, which are, after the accustomed manner, appointed in the Common House to treat and devise of the common affairs among themselves apart: and albeit, most dear liege Lord, that according to your most prudent device, by your honorable writs everywhere declared, there hath been as due diligence used in sending up to your Highness’s Court of Parliament the most discreet persons out of every quarter that men could esteem meet thereunto, whereby it is not to be doubted but that there is a very substantial assembly of right wise and politic persons; yet, most victorious Prince, since among so many wise men neither is every man wise alike, nor, among so many men all like well witted, every man like well spoken, and it often happeth that likewise as much folly is uttered with painted, polished speech, so many men, boisterous and rude in language, so deep in deed, and give right substantial counsel; and since also in matters of great importance the mind is often so occupied in the matter, that a man rather studieth what to say than how; by reason whereof the wisest man, and the best spoken, in a whole country fortuneth among, while his mind is fervent in the matter, somewhat to speak in such wise as he would afterward wish to have been uttered otherwise, and yet no worse will had when he spoke it, than he hath when he would so gladly change it; therefore, most gracious Sovereign, considering that in your high Court of Parliament is nothing entreated but matter of weight and importance concerning your realm and your own royal estate, it could not fail, but to let and put to silence from the giving of their advice and counsel many of your discreet Commons, to the great hindrance of the common affairs, except that every of your Commons were utterly discharged of all doubt and fear how anything that it should happen them to speak, should happen of your Highness to be taken. And in this point, though your well known and proud benignity putteth every man in right good hope, yet such is the weight of the matter, such is the reverend dread that the timorous hearts of your natural subjects conceive

toward your High Majesty, our most redoubted King and undoubted Sovereign, that they cannot in this point find themselves satisfied, except your gracious bounty therein declared put away the scruple of their timorous minds and animate and encourage them, and put them out of doubt. It may therefore like your most abundant Grace, our most benign and godly king, to give to all your Commons here assembled your most gracious license and pardon, freely, without doubt of your dreadful displeasure, every man to discharge his conscience, and boldly in anything incident among us to declare his advice; and whatsoever happen any man to say, that it may like your noble Majesty of your inestimable goodness to take all in good part, interpreting every man's words, how uncomely soever they be couched, to proceed yet of good zeal toward the profit of your realm and honor of your royal person; the prosperous estate and preservation whereof, most excellent Sovereign, is the thing which we all, your most humble loving subjects, according to the most bounden duty of our natural allegiance, most highly desire and pray for.

Defends the Liberty of the House

At this Parliament Cardinal Wolsey found himself much grieved with the Burgesses thereof, for that nothing was so soon done or spoken therein, but that it was immediately blown abroad in every
5 alehouse. It fortun'd at that Parliament a very great subsidy to be demanded, which the Cardinal fearing would not pass the Common House, determin'd for the furtherance thereof to be there personally himself. Before whose coming, after long debating
10 there, whether it were better but with a few of his lords (as the most opinion of the House was) or with his whole train royally to receive him there among them: "Masters," quoth Sir Thomas More, "Forasmuch as my Lord Cardinal lately, you wot well, laid
15 to our charge the lightness of our tongues for things uttered out of this house, it shall not in my mind be amiss with all his pomp to receive him, with his maces, his pillars, his poleaxes, his crosses, his hat and the Great Seal too, to the intent, if he find the like
20 fault with us hereafter, we may be the bolder from ourselves to lay the blame upon those that his Grace bringeth hither with him." Whereunto the House wholly agreeing, he was received accordingly.

Where, after that he had in a solemn oration

by many reasons proved how necessary it was the demand there moved to be granted, and further
25 showed that less would not serve to maintain the Prince's purpose, he seeing the company sitting still silent and thereunto nothing answering, and contrary to his expectation showing themselves towards
30 his requests no towardness of inclination, said unto them: "Masters, you have many wise and learned men among you; and since I am from the King's own person sent hither unto you for the preservation of yourselves and all the realm, I think it meet
35 you give me some reasonable answer." Whereat every man holding his peace, then began he to speak to one Master Marney (afterwards Lord Marney), who making him no answer neither, he severally
40 asked the same question of diverse others accounted the wisest of the company. To whom, when none of them all would give so much as one word, being before agreed (as the custom was) by their Speaker to make answer: "Masters," quoth the Cardinal, "unless
45 it be the manner of your House, as of likelihood it is, by the mouth of your Speaker, whom ye have chosen for trusty and wise, as indeed he is, in such cases to utter your minds, here is, without doubt, a marvelous obstinate silence." And thereupon required
50 he answer of Master Speaker, who first reverently upon his knees excusing the silence of the House, abashed at the presence of so noble a personage, able to amaze the wisest and best learned in a realm, and after by many and probable arguments proving that
55 for them to make answer was it neither expedient nor agreeable with the ancient liberty of the House, in conclusion for himself showed, that though they had all with their voices trusted him, yet except every one of them could put into his one head all their
60 several wits, he alone in so weighty a matter was unmeet to make his Grace answer.

Whereupon the Cardinal, displeas'd with Sir Thomas More, that had not in this Parliament in all things satisfied his desire, suddenly arose and departed; and after the Parliament ended, in his
65 gallery at Whitehall at Westminster, uttered unto him his griefs, saying: "Would to God you had been at Rome, Master More, when I made you Speaker." "Your Grace not offended, so would I too, my lord," quoth he. And to wind such quarrels out of
70 the Cardinal's head, he began to talk of that gallery, and said, "I like this gallery of yours, my lord, much better than your gallery at Hampton Court." Wherewith so wisely he broke off the Cardinal's

displeasant talk that the Cardinal, at that present, as it seemed, wist not what more to say to him; but, for revengement of his displeasure, counseled the King to send him ambassador into Spain, commending to
 5 his Highness his wisdom, learning and meetness for that voyage; and the difficulty of the cause considered, none was there, he said, so well able to serve his Grace therein. Which when the King had broken to Sir Thomas More, and that he had declared unto his
 10 Grace how unfit a journey it was for him, the nature of the country and disposition of his complexion so disagreeing together that he should never be likely to do his Grace acceptable service there, knowing right well that, if his Grace sent him thither, he should
 15 send him into his grave, but showing himself nevertheless ready, according to his duty, all were it with the loss of his life, to fulfill his Grace's pleasure in that behalf; the King, allowing well his answer, said unto him, "It is not our meaning, Master More, to
 20 do you hurt, but to do you good would we be glad. We will therefore for this purpose devise upon some other, and employ your service otherwise."

Truly this Cardinal did not heartily love Sir Thomas More; yea, he rather feared him than loved
 25 him. And albeit he were adorned with many goodly graces and qualities, yet was he of so outrageous aspiring, ambitious nature, and so fed with vainglory and with the hearing of his own praise, and by the excess thereof fallen, as it were, into a certain pleasant
 30 frenzy, that the enormous fault overwhelmed, defaced and destroyed the true commendation of all his good properties. He sore longed and thirsted after the hearing of his own praise, not only when he had done some things commendable, but even when
 35 he had sometimes done that that was naught indeed.

Of this vainglorious, scabbed, itching folly to hear his own praise, leaving diverse other that we have in store, we will show you one example, and the rather because Sir Thomas More doth both tell it, and was
 40 also present the same time. Albeit he telleth it under dissembled and counterfeit names, as well of the persons as country described, wherein I will shift none of the author's words, but as he wrote them, recite them, saving I will recite them in his own person,
 45 and somewhat abridge them:

So it happened one day that the Cardinal had in great audience made an oration, etc., in a certain matter, wherein he liked himself so well that at his dinner he sat, he thought, on thorns, till

he might hear how they that sat with him at his board would commend it. And when he had sat musing a while, devising (as I thought after) upon some proper pretty way to bring it in withal, at the last, for lack of a better (lest he should have let the matter go too long) he brought it even bluntly forth, and asked us all that sat at his board's end (for at his own mess in the middle there sat but himself alone) how well we liked his oration that he had made that day.

When the problem was once propounded, till it was full answered, no man (I ween) ate one morsel of meat more, every man was fallen into so deep a study for the finding of some exquisite praise. For he that should have brought out but a vulgar and a common commendation, would have thought himself shamed forever. Then said we our sentences by row as we sat, from the lowest unto the highest, in good order, as it had been a great matter of the common weal in a high solemn council. When it came to my part, I will not say for any boast, methought, by our Lady, for my part I quit myself meetly well, but I liked myself the better because, methought, my words went with some grace in the English tongue, wherein, letting my Latin alone, me listed to show my cunning. And I hoped to be liked the better because I saw that he that sat next to me, and should say his sentence after me, was an unlearned priest, for he could speak no Latin at all. But when he came forth with his part with my lord's commendation, the wily fox had been so well accustomed in court with the craft of flattery that he went beyond me too too far. And then might I see by him what excellency a right mean wit may come to in one craft, that in all his whole life studieth and busieth his wit about no more but that one. But I made after a solemn vow unto myself, that if ever he and I were matched together at that board again, when we should fall to our flattery, I would flatter in Latin, that he should not contend with me anymore; for though I could be content to be outrun of a horse, yet would I no more abide it to be outrun of an ass.

But here now began the game. He that sat highest, and was to speak, was a great benefited man, and not a doctor only, but also somewhat learned in the laws of the Church. A world it was to see how he marked every man's word that spoke before him, and it seemed that every word,

the more proper it was, the worse he liked it, for the cumbrance that he had to study out a better to pass it. The man even so sweat with labor, so that he was fain in the while, now and then, to wipe his face. Howbeit, in conclusion, when it came to his course, we that had spoken before him had so taken up all among us before, that we had not left him one wise word to speak after. And yet found he out such a shift, that in his flattering he passed all the many of us. For when he saw that he could find no words of praise that would pass all that had been spoken before already, the wily fox would speak never a word, but as he that was ravished with the wonder of the wisdom and eloquence that my lord's Grace had uttered in that oration, he fetched a long sigh, with an "Oh," from the bottom of his breast, and held up both his hands, and lift up his head, and cast up his eyes into the welkin and wept.

In this vainglorious pageant of my Lord Cardinal, though, as it appeareth, Sir Thomas More was in a manner forced, contrary to his sober and well known modest nature, to play a part to accommodate himself somewhat to the players in this foolish, fond stage play, yet I doubt nothing, if his answer were certainly known, he played no other part than might beseem his grave, modest person, and kept himself within reasonable bounds, and yielded none other than competent praise. For in very deed the oration was not to be dispraised or disliked. But, as we began to say, whether it were for that, as it is not unlikely, that Sir Thomas More would not magnify all the Cardinal's doings and sayings above the stars (as he many times expected) and cry, *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*, etc., or that the Cardinal feared him for his excellent qualities, and envied him for the singular favor that he well knew the King bore to him, and thereby doubted lest he might stand in his way to shadow and obscure some part of his great shining luster and glory (which thoughts that he had now and then among other it is very probable), or were it for the Parliament sake we spoke of, or for some other causes, he never entirely and from the heart loved him. And doubtless, if Sir Thomas More had been of so high, immoderate, aspiring mind as was the Cardinal, he might have perchance given him a fall long ere he took his fall, and have shifted him from the saddle of the Lord Chancellorship, and might have sat therein before he did; whose fall and

ruin he neither procured nor desired, as the world well knoweth, and much less his great office, whereunto he worthily succeeded. Yea, the Cardinal himself, when he saw he should needs forgo the same, though he never bore him as I have said, true hearty affection, yet did he confess that Sir Thomas More was the aptest and fittest man in the realm for the same: whose great excellent wit and learning, whose singular qualities, graces and gifts, whose profound politic head in the civil affairs, as well inwardly as outwardly, the said Cardinal by long time certainly, and, as I might say, feelingly knew; as with whom, beside all other experiences of him, he had been twice joined in commission and sent ambassador, once to the Emperor Charles into Flanders, the other time to the French King into France.

And thus much by the way of this Cardinal, whose remembrance and doings I would to God I might now put away, and here break off, or that I might have better matter to write on. But as our former declaration is incident to our matter, so now the very consequence and course of our story taken in hand forceth further to enlarge of his doings, as alas, and woe the time that ever he was born. And thrice happy had he been if he had trod the virtuous steps that this worthy man, who followed him in the office of the Lord Chancellor, treaded. If he had, I say, followed his modest, soft, sober, nothing revenging and nothing ambitious nature, if he had shown himself a true, faithful, virtuous counselor to his prince, then had he preserved himself from the foul shameful fall and ruin that he headlong, by his outrageous ambition and revengeable nature, cast himself in; then had he preserved his prince from the foul enormous faults and cruelties he after fell to; then had he preserved this worthy man, of whose story we be in hand, and that noble prelate, the good Bishop of Rochester, and also the blessed, and, as I may say, the living saints, the monks of the Charterhouse, with many other, from foul butchery slaughter; then finally had he preserved the whole realm from the heinous and hideous schisms and heresies wherewith since it hath been lamentably overwhelmed. Which things, though he never intended, or once, I suppose, thought should so chance, yet did all these and other many and main mischiefs rise and spring originally, as it were certain detestable branches out of the root of his cursed and wicked ambition and revenging nature. A pitiful and lamentable example of all posterity to mark and behold, and thereby the

better to detest and eschew all such wretched and wicked ambition.

The King's Divorce [1527]

The beginning and spring, the true though lamentable process of the which doings, albeit it be
 5 loathsome and rueful to be remembered, I am now driven, for the better and fuller understanding of our matter taken in hand, a little at large to open and discover; I mean of the divorce between King Henry and Queen Catherine, moved and procured
 10 by the said Cardinal: who, for the better achieving of his purpose requested (as it is commonly reported) Langland, Bishop of Lincoln, and ghostly father to the King, to put a scruple into his Grace's head that it was not lawful for him to marry his brother's wife. Howbeit, concerning the said Bishop, though
 15 it were so commonly bruited abroad and believed, yet have I heard Doctor Draycot, that was his chaplain and chancellor, say that he once told the Bishop what rumor ran upon him in that matter, and desired to know of him the very truth. Who answered that in very deed he did not break the matter after that sort as is said, but the King broke the matter to him first, and never left urging of him until he had won him to give his consent to others that were the
 20 chief setters forth of the divorce between the King and Queen Catherine. Of the which his doings he did sore forethink himself, and repented afterward, declaring to the said doctor that there was never any one thing that did so much and so grievously nip his heart as did that his consent and doing toward the said divorce.

Yet is it most credible that the said Cardinal was the first author and incenser of this divorce, and that for this cause, as Queen Catherine herself laid
 35 afterward to his charge. The See of Rome being at that time void, the Cardinal, being a man very ambitious and desirous to aspire to that dignity, wherein he had good hope and likelihood, perceiving himself frustrate and eluded of this his aspiring expectation
 40 by the means of the Emperor Charles commending Cardinal Adrian, sometime his schoolmaster, to the cardinals of Rome, for his great learning, virtue and worthiness, who thereupon was elected Pope (and coming from Spain, whereof he had under the said
 45 Charles the chief government, before his entry into the City of Rome putting off his hose and shoes, and, as I have heard it credibly reported, barefoot and barelegged passed through the streets towards

his palace with such humbleness as all the people had him in great reverence) – the Cardinal, I say, waxed so wood therewith that he studied to invent
 50 all ways of revengement of his grief against the Emperor: which, as it was the beginning of a lamentable tragedy, so some part of it, not as impertinent to my present purpose, I reckon requisite here to put in remembrance.

This Cardinal therefore, not ignorant of the King's unconstant and mutable disposition (soon inclined to withdraw his devotion from his own most noble, virtuous and lawful wife, Queen Catherine, aunt to
 60 the Emperor, upon every light occasion, and upon other, to her in nobility, wisdom, virtue, favor and beauty far incomparable, to fix his affection), meaning to make this his so light disposition an instrument to bring about his ungodly intent, devised to allure the King to cast his fantasy unto one of the French King's sisters, the Duchess of Alençon, because of the enmity and war that was at that time between the French King and the Emperor, whom for
 70 the cause afore-remembered he mortally maligned.

And not long after was he sent ambassador to entreat and conclude for the perfecting of the said marriage. But O the great providence and just judgment of God, O the unfortunate (but yet condign) events
 75 of wretched and mischievous counsel! This Cardinal then, though never ambassador, I trow, before in this realm set forth himself so costly, so pompously and so gorgeously, though he thought by this means to make himself in the King's Grace's favor (whom he already thoroughly possessed, and altogether ruled)
 80 more steadfast, sure and fast, yet was there never man that either had less honor or worse luck of his embassy or of his whole enterprise, as being the very means and occasion that he was utterly undone and overthrown.

For in the mean season had the King (contrary to his mind, nothing less looking for) fallen in love with Lady Anne Boleyn, upon whom his heart was now so thoroughly and entirely fixed, that there was
 90 a messenger dispatched with letters after the Cardinal, willing him that of other matters he should break with the French King, but in no case of any marriage. The Lady Anne Boleyn was so grievously offended with the Cardinal for moving the King touching the said French King's sister, that she never
 95 ceased to press and urge the King utterly to undo the Cardinal. Whereunto the King was otherwise also incensed, as we shall hereafter declare, thinking that

either the Cardinal had changed his mind and disliked the whole marriage, or at least was nothing so forward therein, nor conformable to his mind, as he had looked for at his hands.

The King Consults More on the Divorce

5 Now when this matter was once broached, the King opened it with the first to Sir Thomas More, whose counsel he required therein, showing him certain places of Scripture that somewhat seemed to serve his appetite: which, when he had perused, and
10 thereupon, as one that had never professed the study of divinity, himself excused to be unmeet many ways to meddle with such matters, the King, not satisfied with this answer, so sore still pressed upon him therefore, that in conclusion he condescended to his
15 Grace's motion. And forasmuch as the case was of such importance as needed good advisement and deliberation, he besought his Grace of sufficient respite advisedly to consider of it. Wherewith the King, well contented, said unto him that Tunstall and Clark,
20 Bishops of Durham and Bath, with other learned of his Privy Council, should also be doers therein.

So Sir Thomas More departing, conferred those places of Scripture with the expositions of diverse of the old holy doctors. And at his next coming to the
25 court, in talking with his Grace of the aforesaid matter, he said, "To be plain with your Grace, neither my Lord of Durham, nor my Lord of Bath, though I know them both to be wise, virtuous, learned and honorable prelates, nor myself, with the rest of
30 your Council, being all your Grace's own servants, for your manifold benefits daily bestowed upon us most bounden unto you, be, in my judgment, meet counselors for your Grace therein. But if your Grace mind to understand the truth, such counselors may
35 you have devised as neither for respect of their own worldly commodity, nor for fear of your princely authority, will be inclined to deceive you." To whom he named then Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine and diverse others old holy doctors, both Greeks and
40 Latins; and moreover showed him what authorities he had gathered out of them: which although the King, as disagreeable with his desire, did not very well like of, yet were they by Sir Thomas More (who in all his communication with the King in that matter
45 had always most discreetly behaved himself) so wisely tempered, that he both presently took them in good part, and often times had thereof conference with him again.

After this were there certain questions among the Council propounded, whether the King need- 50 ed in this case to have any scruple at all, and if he had, what way were best to be taken to deliver him of it. The most part of whom were of the opinion that there was good cause of scruple, and that for discharge of it, suit were meet to be made to the See of 55 Rome, where the King hoped by liberality to obtain his purpose; wherein, as it afterward appeared, he was far deceived.

Marriage Commission Appointed

Then was there for the trial and examination of this matrimony procured from Rome a commission, in which Cardinal Campeggio and Cardinal Wol- 60 sey were joined commissioners, who for the determination thereof sat at the Blackfriars in London, where a libel was put in for the annulling of the said matrimony, alleging the marriage between the King and the Queen to be unlawful. And for proof of the 65 marriage to be lawful was there brought in a dispensation, in which, after diverse disputations thereupon held, there appeared an imperfection, which by an instrument or brief, upon search found in the Treasury of Spain, and sent to the commissioners into England, was supplied; and so should judg- 70 ment have been given by the Pope accordingly, had not the King, upon intelligence thereof, before the same judgment, appealed to the next General Council. After whose appellation the Cardinal upon that matter sat no longer. 75

The supplying we spoke of was thus. When that Prince Arthur was dead, to whom Lady Catherine was married, there was by the suit of King Henry the 80 Seventh, after long consultation and debating the matter both in Spain and Rome, a dispensation gotten that Lord Henry, Prince Arthur's brother, might marry her; but yet because some doubted whether that the said Prince Arthur did ever carnally know 85 her or no before his death, whereof might perchance in time grow a question against the validity of the marriage (as indeed afterward there did) the two wise Kings of England and Spain procured another brief, in the which (for more abundant caution) it was particularly specified that notwithstanding any carnal copulation, if any such haply were between the said Arthur and Lady Catherine, the marriage should be good and available. 90

Before the Cardinal Campeggio and Cardinal 95 Wolsey, the Pope's legates, sat upon this matter, Sir

Thomas More was sent beyond the sea for certain of the King's affairs. At his return, when he repaired to the King at Hampton Court, the King broke again with him of this matter, and showed him that it was perceived that his marriage was not only against the positive laws of the Church and the written law of God, but also in such sort against the law of nature that it could in no wise by the Church be relieved or dispensed withal; and incontinently laid the Bible open before him, and there read such words as moved him and other learned persons so to think. But when he had asked Sir Thomas More what he thought upon these words, and perceived that Sir Thomas More's mind was not correspondent to his own mind, willed him to commune further with Master Foxe his almoner, and to read a book with him that then was in making for the matter.

Ambassador to Cambrai [Summer 1529]

After which time the suit began, and the Legates, as we have shown, sat upon the matter. And while the Legates were yet sitting, it pleased the King to send Sir Thomas More with Doctor Tunstall, then Bishop of London and afterward of Durham, in embassy about the peace, that at their being there was concluded at Cambrai between the Emperor, his Highness and the French King. In the concluding whereof Sir Thomas More so worthily handled himself (procuring in our league more benefits into this realm than at any time by the King and his Council was thought possible to be compassed) that for his good service in that voyage, the King, when he after made him Lord Chancellor, caused the Duke of Norfolk openly to declare to the people how much all England was bound to him.

Consulted Again on the Divorce

Now upon his coming home from Cambrai, the King earnestly persuaded Sir Thomas More to condescend to the matter of the marriage, by many ways provoking him thereto; for which, it was thought, he the rather soon after made him Lord Chancellor; eftsoons repeating unto him among other motives the new scruple that was found (as we have declared) that the former marriage was so directly against the law of nature that no dispensation could repair, reform and supply that defect, as Doctor Stokesley (whom he had preferred to the Bishopric of London and in that case chiefly credited) was able to instruct him, with whom he prayed him in that point to

confer. But for all his conference with him, he saw nothing of such force as could induce him to change his opinion therein; which, notwithstanding, the Bishop showed himself in his report of him to the King's Highness so good and favorable, that he said he found him in his Grace's cause very toward, and desirous to find some matter wherewith he might truly serve his Grace to his contentation.

This Bishop Stokesley, being by the Cardinal not long before in the Star Chamber openly put to rebuke, and afterward sent to the Fleet, thought that forasmuch as the Cardinal, for lack of such forwardness in setting forth the King's divorce as his Grace looked for, was out of his Highness's favor, he had now a good occasion offered him to revenge his quarrel against him, further to incense the King's displeasure toward him busily travailed to invent some colorable device for the King's furtherance in that behalf; which, as before is mentioned, he to his Grace revealed hoping thereby to bring the King to the better liking of himself and the more misliking of the Cardinal, whom his Highness therefore soon after of his office displaced, and to Sir Thomas More (the rather to move him to incline to his side) the same in his stead committed.

Praemunire; Fall of Wolsey

The said Cardinal, a while after, albeit he was taken and received and used as a legate from the ninth year of the King's reign, as well by the whole realm as by the King himself (and the said office procured, as it was thought, to him not without the King's help and mediation) yet beside many other great and heinous offenses laid to his charge, was by the King's learned counsel, for the practicing and exercising of the same office without the King's special license in writing, and the whole clergy withal, for acknowledging the said legatine authority, found fallen into a Praemunire. And the Province of Canterbury, to recover the King's favor and grace (beside like contribution for the rate of the Province of York) was fain to defray to the King's use one hundred thousand pounds.

The Cardinal, being in his diocese of York, was arrested, and sent for to make answer to such accusations as were laid against him. But the main sorrow and grief that he had conceived of these his troubles, with further fear of other grievous events, had so deeply sunk into his heart that it cut off a great part of his journey and his life withal. And this end fell upon him that was the first and principal instrument

of this unhappy divorce.

More Becomes Lord Chancellor

But now let us return to Sir Thomas More, newly made Lord Chancellor, which office, I suppose, verily he was of himself very unwilling to take upon
 5 him, and would have earnestly refused the same, but that he thought it unmeet and unseemly to gain-say and contrary the will and pleasure of the King, that so highly and entirely favored and loved him, and also an evil part to withdraw and deny his service to the whole realm, that with gladful and marvelous good mind toward him wished and desired
 10 that he of all men might enjoy the said office; who between the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk being brought through Westminster Hall to his place in the Chancery, the Duke of Norfolk, in open audience of all the people there assembled, shewed that he was from the King himself straightly charged by special commission, there openly in the presence of them all, to make declaration how much all England
 15 was beholding unto Sir Thomas More for his good service, and how worthy he was to have the highest room in the realm, and how dearly his Grace loved and trusted him, for which (said the Duke) he had great cause to rejoice. Whereunto Sir Thomas More, among many other his humble and wise sayings not now in my memory, answered that although he had good cause to take comfort of his Highness's singular favor towards him, that he had, far above his deserts, so highly commended him, to whom therefore
 20 he acknowledged himself most deeply bounden; yet nevertheless he must for his own part needs confess that in all things by his Grace alleged he had done no more than was his duty, and further disallowed himself as unmeet for that room, wherein, considering how wise and honorable a prelate had lately before taken so great a fall, he had, he said, thereof no cause to rejoice. And as they had before, on the King's behalf, charged him uprightly to minister indifferent justice to the people, without corruption or
 25 affection, so did he likewise charge them again, that if they saw him at any time, in anything, digress from any part of his duty in that honorable office, even as they would discharge their own duty and fidelity to God and the King, so should they not fail to disclose it to his Grace, who otherwise might have just occasion to lay his fault wholly to their charge.

"the devil should have right"

While he was Lord Chancellor, being at leisure, as seldom he was, one of his sons-in-law on a time said merrily to him, "When Cardinal Wolsey was Lord Chancellor, not only diverse of his privy chamber, but such also as were but his doorkeepers, got great
 5 gain." And since he had married one of his daughters, and gave still attendance upon him, he thought he might of reason look for something; where he indeed, because he was so ready himself to hear every man, poor and rich, and kept no doors shut from them, could find none, it was to him a great discour-
 10 age. And whereas else some for friendship, some for kindred, and some for profit, would gladly have had his furtherance in bringing them to his presence, if he should now take anything of them, he knew, he said, he should do them great wrong, for that they might do as much for themselves as he could do for them; which condition, though he thought it in Sir Thomas More very commendable, yet to him, said
 15 he, being his son, he found it nothing profitable.

When he had told him this tale: "You say well, son," quoth he. "I do not mislike that you are of conscience so scrupulous; but many other ways be there, son, that I may both do yourself good, and pleasure
 20 your friend also; for sometime may I by my word stand your friend in stead, and sometime may I by my letter help him; or if he have a cause depending before me, at your request I may hear him before another; or if his cause be not all the best, yet may I
 25 move the parties to fall to some reasonable end by arbitrament. Howbeit, this one thing, son, I assure you on my faith, that if the parties will at my hands call for justice, then, all were it my father stood on the one side, and the devil on the other, his cause being good, the devil should have right." So offered he his son, as he thought, he said, as much favor as with reason he could require.

And that he would for no respect digress from justice, well appeared by a plain example of another of his sons called Master Heron: for when he, having a matter before him in the Chancery, and presuming too much of his favor, would by him in no wise be persuaded to agree to any indifferent order, then made he in conclusion a flat decree against him.
 30

This Lord Chancellor used commonly every afternoon at his house at Chelsea to sit in his open hall, to the intent that, if any persons had any suit unto him, they might the more boldly come to his presence, and thereupon bring their complaints before
 35

him; whose manner was also to read every bill himself, ere he would award any subpoena: which bearing matter sufficient worthy of a subpoena, would he set his hand unto, or else cancel it.

Love for His Father

5 Whensoever he passed through Westminster Hall to his place in the Chancery by the Court of the King's Bench, if his father (one of the judges thereof) had been sat ere he came, he would go into the same Court, and there reverently kneeling down in
10 the sight of them all, duly ask his father's blessing. And if it fortun'd that his father and he at readings in Lincoln's Inn met together, as they sometime did, notwithstanding his high office he would offer in
15 argument the pre-eminence to his father, though he, for his office sake, would refuse to take it. And for better declaration of his natural affection toward his father, he not only while he lay on his death-bed, according to his duty, often times with comfortable words most kindly came to visit him, but also at his
20 departure out of this world, with tears taking him about the neck, most lovingly kissed and embraced him, commending him into the merciful hands of almighty God, and so departed from him.

Correcting Judges

25 And as few injunctions as he granted while he was Lord Chancellor, yet were they by some of the judges of the law misliked; which Master William Roper understanding, declared the same unto Sir Thomas More, who answered him that they should have little cause to find fault with him therefore; and thereupon caused he one Master Croke, chief of
30 the six clerks, to make a docket containing the whole number and causes of all such injunctions as either in his time had already passed, or at that present depended in any of the King's courts at Westminster. Which done, he invited all the judges to dine with
35 him in the Council Chamber at Westminster; where after dinner, when he had broken with them what complaints he had heard of his injunctions, and moreover showed them both the number and causes
40 of every one of them, in order, so plainly that, upon full debating of those matters, they were all enforced to confess that they, in like case, could have done no otherwise themselves. Then offered he this unto
45 them: that if the justices of every court (unto whom the reformation of the rigor of the law, by reason of their office, most especially appertained) would,

upon reasonable considerations, by their own discretions (as they were, as he thought, in conscience bounden) mitigate and reform the rigor of the laws themselves, there should from henceforth by him
50 no more injunctions be granted. Whereunto, when they refused to condescend, then said he unto them, "Forasmuch as yourselves, my lords, drive me to that necessity for awarding out injunctions to relieve the people's injury, you cannot hereafter any more justly
55 blame me." After that he said secretly to Master William Roper, "I perceive, son, why they like not so to do, for they see that they may by the verdict of the jury cast off all quarrels from themselves upon the jury, which they account their chief defense; and
60 therefore am I compelled to abide the adventure of all such reports."

All the while he was Lord Chancellor, yea, and before also, there was nothing in the world that more pleased or comforted him than when he had done
65 some good to other men; of whom some he relieved with his money, some by his authority, some by his good word and commendation, some with his good counsel. Neither was there ever any man (worthy to be relieved) that sought relief and help at his hand, that went not from him merry and cheerful. For he
70 was (as a man may say) the public patron of all the poor, and thought that he did procure to himself a great benefit and treasure as often as he could by his counsel deliver and rid any man in any perplexity and difficult cause, as often as he could pacify and
75 reconcile any that were at variance and debate.

Consulted Yet Again on the Divorce

Now a little to speak again of the King's great affairs then in hand. The King, shortly upon his entry into the office of the Chancellorship, moved
80 eftsoons Sir Thomas More to weigh and consider his great matter; who, falling down upon his knees, humbly besought his Highness to stand his gracious Sovereign, as he ever since his entry first into his Grace's service had found him, saying there was
85 nothing in the world had been so grievous unto his heart as to remember that he was not able, as he willingly would with the loss of one of his limbs, for that matter anything to find whereby he could with his conscience safely serve his Grace's contentation; as
90 he that always bore in mind the most godly words that his Highness spoke unto him at his first coming into his noble service, the most virtuous lesson that ever Prince taught his servant, willing him first to

look unto God, and after God unto him, as, in good faith, he said he did, or else might his Grace well account him his most unworthy servant. To this the King answered, that if he could not therein with his conscience serve him, he was content to accept his service otherwise; and using the advice of other of his learned Council, whose consciences could well enough agree therewith, would nevertheless continue his gracious favor toward him, and never with that matter molest his conscience after.

But Sir Thomas More, in process of time, seeing the King fully determined to proceed forth in the marriage of Queen Anne, when he with Bishops and nobles of the higher House of the Parliament were, for the furtherance of that marriage, commanded by the King to go down to the Common House, to show unto them both what the universities, as well of other parts beyond the seas as of Oxford and Cambridge, had done in that behalf, and their seals also testifying the same – all which matters, at the King's request, not showing of what mind himself was therein, he opened to the Lower House of the Parliament; nevertheless, doubting lest further attempts should after follow, which, contrary to his conscience, by reason of his office, he was likely to be put unto, he made suit to the Duke of Norfolk, his singular dear friend, to be a means to the King that he might with his Grace's favor, be discharged of that chargeable room of the Chancellorship, wherein, for certain infirmities of his body, he pretended himself unable any longer to serve.

At the commencement of which Parliament, Sir Thomas More, standing at the right hand of the King, behind the bar, made an eloquent oration. The effect whereof was that the office of a shepherd did most lively resemble the office and government of a King, whose riches if ye respect, he is but a rich man; if his honor, he is but honorable; and so forth; but the office of a shepherd, as he well and wittily declared, accommodating the prosecution thereof to his purpose and the summoning of the present Parliament, comprised in a manner all or the chief and principal function of a king.

Now, whereas I declared that Sir Thomas More, upon consideration and deep foresight of things hanging upon the realm and imminent, was desirous to be exonerated and discharged of that office, pretending infirmities, truth it is that this was no bare and naked pretense, but that it was so with him very indeed; for he was troubled with a disease in his

breast, which continuing with him many months, after he consulted with the physicians, who made him answer that long diseases were dangerous, adding further that his disease could not shortly be helped, but by a little and little, with continuance of long time, by rest, good diet and physic, and yet could they not appoint any certain time when he should recover, or be quite rid and cured. This thing Sir Thomas More well weighing with himself, and that either he must forgo the office, or forswear some part of his requisite and dutiful diligence, seeing himself not able to wield and dispatch the manifold and weighty affairs of that office, and that with long continuance in the office he was like to be bereaved of the office and his life withal, determined with himself rather to forgo the one than both.

Resignation [15 May 1532]

And yet his adversaries and evil willers did spread and cast rumors abroad to make him the more odious, that with the King's displeasure he was against his will thrust out of the Chancellorship. And news thereof came with marvelous speed into far countries, and that his successor had dismissed out of prison such as he had imprisoned for religion. But a world it is to see the wonderful malice of these men, who knew, or might have soon learned, that at the very same time that his successor, the Lord Audley, was first placed in Westminster, the Duke of Norfolk, High Treasurer of England, did openly, by the King's special commandment, declare that Sir Thomas More with much ado, and after his earnest suit and supplication, was hardly suffered to dismiss the said office. And surely as the King, in preferring him to that room, tendered the commonwealth in choosing Sir Thomas More as the meetest man for it (as he was in very deed) so dismissed him upon his earnest suit, tendering Sir Thomas More's health.

Now the very same that the Duke declared, the said Lord Audley, his successor, in the King's own presence and by his commandment, did declare and notify in his oration made the Parliament following.

Yes, the very same (to repress malicious talk and rumors) Sir Thomas More himself declared, with the summary and effectual discourse of his life, in a certain epitaph, which he caused to be put upon his sepulcher, that he had provided for himself and his wives at Chelsea. His adversaries' mouths being at length stopped with so manifest and manifold apparent matter to the contrary, left that prattling

and talking and began, causeless, to prattle and talk against his said epitaph as very vainglorious. Against whose false slanderous calumnies, the open tried truth of all his virtuous innocent life doth defend itself, and I doubt not God's own judgment agreeable thereto, as it did long before the blessed patient man Job, whom his friends that came in his woeful distress to visit him, did much after like manner charge him as these his enemies charged Sir Thomas More.

For surely he was a man of so excellent and singular gifts and qualities (into the breast of which kind of men some spice of vainglory often times creepeth) so far from it as lightly a man might be. And in very truth, in the inditing of this his epitaph, he had not so much regard unto himself, or his own estimation, as to God's cause and religion, which he had by open books against the Protestants defended, lest it might (if such rumors blown and sown abroad by them were taken for truth, that for his fault, or upon displeasure, he was displaced) somewhat be impaired or hindered. Wherefore true it is, for all their babbling, that as he entered into the office with the King's high and singular favor, with the great good will of the nobility, and wonderful rejoicing of the whole people, and used the office to the contentation of the King and all sort of good people, and the profit of the whole commonwealth, so it is true also that he was most favorably and honorably dismissed, after long suit, from the said office. At the which time the King said to him that in any suit that he should afterward have to his Grace, that either should concern the said Sir Thomas More's honor (for that word it liked his Highness to use to him) or that should appertain to his profit, he should find his Highness a good and gracious lord to him.

2. *More's Private Life*

True it is also, that notwithstanding the like calumniations and false slanders of his adversaries, he lived and died also afterward (though these men defame him with a newfound fond kind of treason) most innocently and most honorably. The full declaration of which his life and death doth now remain to be by us opened and declared.

But inasmuch as we have many other things touching this man worthy to be remembered, we will interlace them before. And as we have hitherto prosecuted his public doings in the common affairs of the realm, himself being the highest magistrate, after the King, in the same, and will hereafter also in

convenient place declare what account he rendered to the Prince and magistrates, being afterward a private man, of his public doings, so will we now in the meanwhile recount unto you, first, his private, secret and domestical life and trade with his wife, children, family and others. And then, because the world well knew him, and so took him, and the testimony of learned men and his own books withal bore good and substantial record thereof, for a great excellent learned man, we will not altogether pretermit his said books, but speak so much as shall seem to serve the turn.

First then will we lay before you a description and declaration of some part of his said private life and doings. In whom this is principally to be considered, as the root and head of all his well doings, that always he had a special and singular regard and respect to Godward, and to keep his conscience whole, sincere and upright. And this among other was one of his good, virtuous and godly properties, conditions and customs, that when he entered into any matter or office of importance, as when he was chosen one of the King's Privy Council, when he was sent ambassador, appointed Speaker of the Parliament, made Lord Chancellor or when he took any other weighty matter or affair upon him, he would go to the Church and be confessed, he would hear Mass and be houseled.

He used, yea, being Lord Chancellor, to sit and sing in the choir with a surplice on his back. And when that the Duke of Norfolk coming at a time to Chelsea to dine with him, fortun'd to find him in his attire and trade, going homeward after service, arm in arm with him, said after this fashion, "God body, God body, my Lord Chancellor, a parish clerk, a parish clerk! You dishonor the king and his office"; "Nay," quoth Sir Thomas More, smiling upon the Duke, "your Grace may not think that the King, your master and mine, will with me, for serving of God his master, be offended, or thereby account his office dishonored." Wherein Sir Thomas More did very godly and devoutly, and spoke very truly and wisely. What would the Duke have said, if he had seen that mighty and noble Emperor, Charles the Great, playing the very same part; or King David, long before, hopping and dancing naked before the ark?

He was sometimes for godly purpose desirous to be solitary, and to sequester himself from worldly company. And therefore the better to satisfy and

accomplish this his godly desire, he built, a good distance from his mansion house at Chelsea, a place called the New Building, wherein there was a chapel, a library and a gallery. In which, as his use was upon
 5 other days to occupy himself in prayer and study together, so on the Friday there usually continued he from morning till evening, spending his time only in devout prayers and spiritual exercises.

As to the poor for God's sake he was good and pitiful, so used he another rare and singular kind of alms of his own body, as to punish the same with whips, the cords knotted. And albeit by reason he would not be noted of singularity, he conformed himself outwardly to other men in his apparel, according to his state and vocation, yet how little he
 15 inwardly esteemed such vanities, it well appeared by the shirt of hair that he wore secretly next his body; whereof no person was privy but his daughter only, Mistress Margaret Roper, whom for her secrecy he above all other trusted, causing her, as need required, to wash the same shirt of hair; saving that it chanced once that as he sat at supper in the summer, singly in his doublet and hose, wearing upon the said secret shirt of hair a plain linen shirt without ruff or collar,
 20 that a young gentlewoman, Mistress More, sister to the said Margaret, chancing to espy the same, began to laugh at it. His daughter Margaret, not ignorant of his manner, perceiving the same, privily told him of it. And he, being sorry that she saw it, presently amended it.
 30

As he was not ambitious and greedy of honor and worldly preferment, and one that in twenty years' service to the King never craved of him anything for himself, and as he, after that he was by his well
 35 deserving and by the King's free and mere goodness advanced and promoted, did not look up on high, and solemnly set by himself with the contempt and disdain of other, so was he nothing grieved, but rather glad (for, as I have shown, he did procure it)
 40 when he was rid of the Chancellorship. And whereas upon the holy-days, during his high office, one of his gentlemen, when service at the church was done, ordinarily used to come to my Lady his wife's pew, and say unto her, "Madame, my Lord is gone," the
 45 next holy-day after the surrender of his office and departure of his gentleman, he came unto my Lady his wife's pew himself, and making a low curtsy, said unto her, "Madame, my Lord is gone."

As prosperity did nothing lift him up with haughtiness and pride, so no mischance or trouble that

very heavily fell upon him afterward, could infringe or break his great patience and constancy, as we shall declare hereafter more at large. A little before he was made Lord Chancellor, it chanced his barns
 55 and all his corn at Chelsea by retchless negligence, to be burnt and consumed with fire, with some of his neighbors' houses; whereof he being at the Court and understanding, wrote to his wife a comfortable letter, willing her, their children and all their family to repair to the church and give God thanks, who
 60 might take away all the residue they had besides. And willed diligent search and inquiry to be made what damage his poor neighbors had taken thereby, which, he said, should be recompensed and restored (as it was) to the uttermost farthing.
 65

His Foresight and Three Wishes

And as in all other things he had a grounded and a profound judgment, so had he a deep foresight (when few thought little of it) and, as it proved, a sure aim of the lamentable world that followed, and that we have since full heavily felt. And long before
 70 took it so in his heart, and such compassion of it, that he gladly would have with his own present destruction repulsed and redeemed the imminent mischances.

It fortun'd he walked on a time with Master William Roper, his son-in-law, along the Thames side at Chelsea, and in talking of other things, he said unto him:
 75

"Now would to our Lord, son Roper, upon condition that three things were well established in Christendom, I were put in a sack, and here presently cast into the Thames."
 80

"What great things be those, sir," quoth Master William Roper, "that should move you so to wish?"

"Wouldst thou know what they be, son Roper?"
 85 quoth he.

"Yea, marry, with good will, sir, if it please you," quoth Master William Roper.

"In faith, son, they be these," said he. "The first is, that where the most part of Christian princes be at mortal war, they were all at a universal peace. The second, that where the Church of Christ is at this present sore afflicted with many errors and heresies, it were settled in a perfect uniformity of religion. The third, that where the King's matter of his marriage is now come in question, that it were to the glory of God and quietness of all parties brought to a good conclusion." Whereby, as it was to be gathered,
 90
 95

he judged that otherwise it would be a disturbance to a great part of Christendom.

It fortun'd also at another time, before the matter of matrimony was brought in question, when Master William Roper, in talk with Sir Thomas More, of a certain joy commended unto him the happy state of this realm, that had so Catholic a prince that no heretic durst show his face, so virtuous and learned a clergy, so grave and sound a nobility, and so loving obedient subjects all in one faith agreeing together; "Troth it is, indeed, son Roper," quoth he, and in commending all degrees and states of the same, went far beyond Master William Roper. "And yet, son Roper, I pray God," said he, "that some of us, as high as we seem to sit upon the mountains, treading heretics under our feet like ants, live not the day that we gladly would wish to be at a league and composition with them, to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be content to let us have ours quietly to ourselves."

And when that Master William Roper had told him many considerations why he had no cause so to say, "Well," said he, "I pray God, son, some of us live not till that day," showing no reason why he should put any doubt therein.

To whom the said Master Roper said: "Sir, it is very desperately spoken." For that word used Master Roper, for the which afterward, as he hath told his friends, he cried God mercy, calling it a vile word.

Who, by those words perceiving Master Roper in a fume, said merrily to him: "Well, well, son Roper, it shall not be so, it shall not be so."

Again, when Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, had determined the matter touching the King's marriage (to whom a commission was from the King to that intent directed) even according to the King's own mind, and that thereupon the King had sequestered himself from the Church of Rome, pretending that he had no justice at the Pope's hands, Sir Thomas More said to his son-in-law, Master William Roper: "God give grace, son, that these matters be not within a while confirmed with oaths." At the which time the said Master William, seeing little likelihood thereof and yet fearing lest for his fore-speaking it would the sooner come to pass, waxed therefore for this his so saying much offended with him.

SUPPLICATION OF SOULS

And whereas in a book entitled *The Supplication of Beggars* the author, under a holy, fond, pretended

color of helping the poor and impotent, craftily goeth about to oppress and cast out the clergy, bearing men in hand that then, after that the Gospel should be preached, beggars and bawds should decrease, idle folks and thieves be the fewer, and the realm increase in riches, and so forth; Sir Thomas More showeth, and truly, as it were an ocean sea of many and great mischievous events that would (as have indeed) thereof redound and overwhelm the realm. "Then," saith he, "shall Luther's gospel come in, then shall Tyndale's Testament be taken up, then shall false heresies be preached, then shall the sacraments be set at nought, then shall fasting and prayer be neglected, then shall holy saints be blasphemed, then shall almighty God be displeased, then shall he withdraw his grace and let all run to ruin, then shall all virtue be had in derision, then shall all vice reign and run forth unbridled, then shall youth leave labor and all occupation, then shall folk wax idle and fall to unthriftiness, then shall whores and thieves, beggars and bawds increase, then shall unthrifits flock together and swarm about, and each bear him bold of other, then shall all laws be laughed to scorn, then shall the servants set nought by their masters, and unruly people rebel against their rulers. Then will rise up rifling and robbery, murder and mischief and plain insurrection, whereof what would be the end, or when you should see it, only God knoweth." And that Luther's new gospel hath taken such effect, not only in Allemagne, but in other countries also, in Flanders and France, and even nearer home, the woeful experience doth certainly and feelingly to the great grief of all the good, testimony to the world.

But that I shall now declare, me thinketh may rather hang upon some private and secret revelation and divine information than any worldly and wise conjecture or foresight; by what means soever he thought it, or for what cause soever he spoke it, truth it is that at a certain time when his daughter Margaret resorted to him to the Tower, after that he had first questioned with her awhile of the order of his wife, children and state of his house in his absence, he asked her how Queen Anne did.

"In faith, father," quoth she, "never better."

"Never better, Meg!" quoth he. "Alas! Meg, it pitieth me to remember into what misery, poor soul, she shall shortly come."

Into what misery she within a while after fell, and ere that year turned over wherein Sir Thomas More died, all England did well know, and was not a little

astonished at so strange a sight and event, which neither Sir Thomas nor any man else by his mere naturals foresee or foretell.

He was also of so mild, gentle and patient nature, that of all such as falsely slandered him, and wretchedly railed against him, albeit he knew them, and might easily for that have punished them, or otherwise wait them a shrewd turn, he would never revenge himself. On a time when he was Lord Chancellor of England, the water-bailiff of London, sometime his servant, hearing where he had been at dinner certain merchants liberally rail against his old master, waxed so discontented therewith that he hastily came to him and told him what he had heard. 15 "And were I, sir," quoth he, "in such favor and authority with my Prince as you are, such men surely would not be suffered so villainously and falsely to misreport and slander me. Wherefore I would wish you to call them before you, and, to their shame, for their lewd malice to punish them."

Who, smiling upon him, said: "Why, Master Water-bailiff, would you have me punish those by whom I receive more benefit than by all you that be my friends? Let them a' God's name speak as lewdly 25 as they list of me, and shoot never so many arrows at me, as long as they do not hit me, what am I the worse? But if they should once hit me, then would it indeed not a little trouble me. I have more cause, I assure thee, Master Water-bailiff, to pity them than to be angry with them."

Neither would he sinisterly or suspiciously take anything written, spoken, or done by his friends, perverting, contorting and wringing it to the worst (as many do) but rather make the best of all things.

His Family and Friends

And let us now a little consider his demeanor and trade with and towards his said friends, his wife, his children and family, and otherwise also. As he was not very curious in choosing and picking out his friends, and easy to be entreated to enter friendship 40 with such as desired it, so when he was once entered in friendship with any man, to keep, nourish and maintain the same he was very vigilant and careful. And in his own business and affairs as he was somewhat negligent, so in following and dispatching his friends' matters and affairs there was no man more 45 painful and diligent.

In conversation with his said friends he was not very scrupulous and ceremonious, though he never

omitted that that common honesty and civility required. But he was therein so sweet and pleasant that there was no man of so dull and heavy disposition 50 that he did not with his company quicken, refresh and exhilarate. For he had a special notable gift of eloquence, merry and pleasant talk, and yet without any gall or bitterness, hurt or slander, in his jesting 55 to any man. This grace is called in Greek *aimulia*, whereof that noble Roman, Paulus Aemilius, was so called, and surely Master More is, if ever there were any, our English, though not Paulus, yet Thomas Aemilius. 60

When he was at home, as his custom was daily, beside his private prayers, with his children to say the Seven Psalms, Litany and suffrages following, so was his guise nightly, before he went to bed, with his wife, children and household to go to his chapel, and there upon his knees ordinarily to say certain psalms 65 and collects with them.

And to provoke his wife and children to the desire of heavenly things, he would sometime use these words following unto them: "It is now no mastery for 70 you children to go to heaven, for everybody giveth you good counsel, everybody giveth you good example; you see virtue rewarded and vice punished, so that you are carried up to heaven even by the chins. But if you shall live the time when no man will give 75 you good counsel, nor no man will give you good example, when you shall see virtue punished and vice rewarded, if you will then stand fast and firmly stick to God, upon pain of my life, though you be but half good, God will allow you for whole good." 80

If his wife or any of his children had been diseased or troubled, he would say unto them: "We may not look at our pleasures to go to heaven in feather-beds. It is not the way; for our Lord himself went thither 85 with great pain and by many tribulations, which was the path wherein he walked thither, leaving us example to follow him; for the servant may not look to be in better case than his master."

And as he would in this sort persuade them to take their troubles patiently, so would he in the like sort teach them to withstand the devil and his temptations valiantly, saying: "Whosoever will mark 90 the devil and his temptations, shall find him therein much like to an ape; for like as an ape, not well looked unto, will be busy and bold to do shrewd turns, and contrariwise, being spied will suddenly leap back and adventure no further, so the devil, finding a man idle, slothful and without resistance 95

ready to receive his temptations, waxeth so hardy that he will not fail still to continue with him until to his purpose he hath thoroughly brought him. But on the other side, if he see a man with diligence persevere to prevent and withstand his temptations he waxeth so weary that in conclusion he utterly forsaketh him. For as the devil of disposition is a spirit of so high a pride that he cannot abide to be mocked, so is he of nature so envious that he feareth any more to assault him, lest he should thereby not only catch a foul fall himself, but also minister to the man more matter of merit.”

“never . . . once in any fume”

This and such like was the virtuous talk and trade with his said wife and children. In whom, among his other excellent gifts and graces, this was one notable, that you should never see him in any chafe or fretting with his said wife, children, or family. Master William Roper, his son, hath reported that in sixteen years and more, being in his house, he could never perceive him as much as once in any fume.

In the time somewhat before his trouble he would talk with his wife and children of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell, of the lives of the holy martyrs, of their grievous martyrdoms, of their marvelous patience, of their passions and deaths that they suffered rather than they would offend God; and what a happy and blessed thing it was for the love of God to suffer loss of goods, imprisonment, loss of lands and life also. He would further say to them that, upon his faith, if he might perceive his wife and children would encourage him to die in a good cause, it should so comfort him that, for very joy thereof, it would make him merrily run to death. He showed to them before what trouble might after fall to him; wherewith and the like virtuous talk he had so long before his trouble encouraged them, that when he after fell into the trouble indeed, his trouble to them was a great deal the less: *quia spicula praevisa minus laedunt*. No marvel now, if they having such a patient master and governor, his children and family followed, as they did indeed, his good advisements and virtuous behavior.

We have before shown how he trained up his son and three daughters in virtue and learning and the knowledge of the Latin and Greek tongues, in all which they did not (for their age) a little profit; which was to Sir Thomas More no small comfort and no little increase of the love that otherwise

(as a most natural father) he bore to them. Of the which their great towardness and profiting, not only Sir Thomas More plainly testifieth in his epigrams, but the renowned clerk also, Erasmus Roterodamus, who received from them sundry letters, written, as he saith, not only in pure Latin, but full also of good substantial, witty matter, which he certainly knew to have been of their own inditing, though he could hardly persuade the same to other strangers.

Daughter Margaret

But of all other Mistress Margaret Roper did prick nearest her father, as well in wit, virtue and learning, as also in merry and pleasant talk. She was to her servants a meek and gentle mistress, to her brother and sisters a most loving, natural and amiable sister, to her friends a very sure, steadfast and comfortable friend; yea, which is a rare thing in a woman, accounted of them to be of such gravity and prudent counsel that diverse men of good calling and experience would in their perplexed and difficult cases consult and deliberate with her, and found, as they have reported, as grave and as profitable counsel at her hands as they doubted to have found the like at many of their hands that were for their wit, virtue, learning and experience, men of whom there was made very good account.

To her children she was a double mother, as one not content to bring them forth only into the world, but instructing them also herself in virtue and learning. At what time her husband was upon a certain displeasure taken against him in King Henry's days sent to the Tower, certain sent from the King to search her house, upon a sudden running upon her, found her not puling and lamenting but full busily teaching her children: whom they, finding nothing astonished with their message, and finding also, besides this her constancy, such gravity and wisdom in her talk as they little looked for, were themselves much astonished, and were in great admiration, neither could afterward speak too much good of her, as partly myself have heard at the mouth of one of them.

But above all other she was to her father, and to her husband, such a daughter, such a wife, as I suppose it was hard to match her in all England. And albeit this her daughterly behavior and reverence was in her notable all her life before, yet never so notable as after her father's trouble, affliction and imprisonment; all the which time, as well for her great pains

and travail she took to procure some relief and ease to her father, as for her wise and godly talk with him, as also for such letters she sent him, and for diverse other considerations, it appeareth she was the chiefest and almost the only worldly comfort Sir Thomas More had. To whom he wrote in that time diverse letters, and among other one answering a letter of hers, in the which he merrily writeth that to declare what pleasure and comfort he took of her said letters, a peck of coals would not suffice to make him pennies: meaning that he had none other pennies at that time, as he had not indeed.

Now on the other side, she was so good, so debonaire and so gentle a wife, that her husband thought himself a most happy man that ever he happened upon such a treasure – a treasure, I may well say, for such a wife incomparably exceedeth (as Solomon saith) all worldly treasure. Who was on his part again to her so good, so sweet, so sober, so modest, so loving a husband that, as Erasmus long ago writeth, if he had not been her husband, he might seem to have been her own germaine brother. Surely, the said Master Roper had her in such estimation, or rather admiration, that he thought, and hath also said, that she was more worthy for her excellent qualities to have been a prince's wife.

And the said Erasmus, for her exquisite learning, wisdom and virtue, made such an account of her, that he called her the flower of all the learned matrons in England. To whom, being as yet very young, but yet adorned with a child, he dedicated his commentaries made upon certain hymns of Prudentius. And to say the truth, she was our Sappho, our Aspasia, our Hypathia, our Damo, our Cornelia. But what speak I of these, though learned, yet infidels? Nay, rather, she was our Christian Fabiola, our Marcella, our Paula, our Eustochium.

We will now, reader, give thee a little taste of her learning and of her ready, pregnant wit. Saint Cyprian's works had been in those days many times printed, and yet after so oft printing there remained among other defects and faults, one notable among all these prints uncorrected and unreformed. The words are these: *Absit enim ab Ecclesia Romana vigorem suum tam prophana facilitate dimittere, et nisi vos severitatis eversa fidei maiestate, dissolvere.* Which place when Mistress Margaret had read, without any help of other example, or any instruction: "These words *nisi vos* should be," quoth she, "I trow" (wherein she said a very truth) '*nervos.*'

This gentlewoman chanced among other to fall sick in the time of the great sweat, whose recovery being desperated of her father, of the physicians and all others, God seemed to show to Sir Thomas More a manifest, and, as it were, a miraculous token of his special favor. She being then in so great extremity of that disease as by no inventions or devices that physicians in such case commonly use (of whom he had diverse, both expert and wise and well learned, then continually attendant upon her) could be kept from sleep, so that both physicians and all other there despaired of her recovery and gave her over; her father, as he that most entirely tendered her, being in no small heaviness for her, by prayer at God's hand sought to get her remedy. Whereupon going up after his usual manner into his aforesaid new building, there in his chapel, upon his knees, with tears most devoutly besought almighty God that it would like his goodness, unto whom nothing was impossible, if it were his blessed will, at his mediation to vouchsafe graciously to hear his humble petition, where came incontinent into his mind that a glister should be the only remedy to help her. Which, when he told the physicians, they by and by confessed that if there were any hope of health, that was the very best help indeed, much marveling of themselves that they had not before remembered it. Then was it immediately administered upon her sleeping, which she could by no means have been brought unto waking. And albeit after that she was thereby thoroughly awakened, God's marks (an evident undoubted token of death) plainly appeared upon her, yet she, contrary to all their expectations, was, as it was thought, by her father's fervent prayer miraculously recovered, and at length again to perfect health restored. Whom if it had pleased God at that time to have taken to his mercy, her father said that he would never have meddled with worldly matters after, as we have before touched.

By this gentlewoman Master William Roper hath yet living two young gentlemen, his sons, being brought up and learned in the liberal sciences and the laws of the realm; and one daughter, late wife to Master Clarke, and now wife to Master Bassett, one of our gracious sovereign Queen Mary's Privy Chamber, who in the late King Edward's days, because he would the better preserve himself not to be entangled with the schism, withdrew himself into Flanders. This Mistress Bassett is very well experted in the Latin and Greek tongues; she hath

very handsomely and learnedly translated out of the Greek into the English all the ecclesiastical story of Eusebius, with Socrates, Theodoretus, Sozomenus and Evagrius, albeit of modesty she suppresseth it, and keepeth it from the print. She hath also very aptly and fitly translated into the said tongue a certain book that Sir Thomas, her grandfather, made upon the Passion, and so elegantly and eloquently penned that a man would think it were originally written in the said English tongue.

William Roper Favors Luther

Here now have I occasion somewhat to interlace of the said Master William Roper, but it would require a proper and peculiar narration to discourse this man condignly as his worthiness requireth, but we will, cutting off all other things, speak of a point or two only. The said Master William Roper, at what time he married with Mistress Margaret More, was a marvelous zealous Protestant, and so fervent, and withal so well and properly liked of himself and his divine learning, that he took the bridle into the teeth, and ran forth like a headstrong horse, hard to be plucked back again.

Neither was he content to whisper it in hugger-mugger, but thirsted very sore to publish his new doctrine and divulge it, and thought himself very able so to do, and it were even at Paul's Cross; yea, for the burning zeal he bore to the furtherance and advancement of Luther's new broached religion, and for the pretty liking he had of himself, he longed so sore to be pulpited, that to have satisfied his mad affection and desire, he could have been content to have foregone a good portion of his lands. At which time there were some others of that sect detected for maintaining of heresies, that caught such an itch of preaching that, though their heresies lay festering still in the bottom of their hearts, at what time with their lips they professed the contrary, yet, as it is well known and themselves confessed, upon hope of preaching again they were content openly to abjure.

This fall into heresy of the same Master Roper, as he can conjecture, first did grow of a scruple of his own conscience, for lack of grace and better knowledge, as some do upon other occasions. He daily did use immoderate fasting and many prayers, which with good discretion well used had not been to be misliked, but using them without order and good consideration, thinking God therewith never to be pleased, did weary himself even *usque ad taedium*.

Then did he understand of Luther's works brought into the realm, and as Eve of a curious mind desirous to know both good and evil, so did he, for the strangeness and delectation of that doctrine, fall into great desire to read his works: who, amongst other his books, had read a book of Luther's *De libertate Christiana*, and another *De captivitate Babylonica*, and was with them in affection so bewitched that he then did believe every matter set forth by Luther to be true. And was with these books, by ignorance, pride and false allegations, sophistical reasons and arguments, and with his own corrupt affections deceived, and fully persuaded that faith only did justify, that the works of man did nothing profit, and that, if man could once believe that our Savior Christ shed his precious blood and died on the cross for our sins, the same only belief should be sufficient for our salvation. Then thought he that all the ceremonies and sacraments in Christ's Church were very vain, and was at length so far waded into heresy and puffed up with pride that he wished he might be suffered publicly to preach, thinking, as we have said, that he should be better able to edify and profit the people than the best preacher that came to Paul's Cross, and that he in that doctrine was able to convince the best doctor in the realm; and so much the rather for that he had in open presence (before the world was well acquainted with that doctrine) defaced some that were named Doctors of Divinity, and thought there could be no truth but that which was come forth then out of Germany.

Who, for his open talk and companying with diverse of his own sect, of the Steelyard and other merchants, was with them before Cardinal Wolsey convicted of heresy, which merchants for their opinions were openly for heresy at Paul's Cross abjured; yet he, for love borne by the Cardinal to Sir Thomas More, his father-in-law, was with a friendly warning discharged. And, albeit he had married the eldest daughter of Sir Thomas More, whom then of all the world he did, during that time, most abhor, though he was a man of most mildness and notable patience.

Now these easy, short, pleasant and licentious lessons did cast him into so sweet a sleep as he was after loath to wake from it. And those lessons he did so well like as he soon after gave over his fasting, praying, his primer and all his other prayers, and got him a Lutheran Bible, wherein upon the holy-days, instead of his prayers, he spent his whole time, thinking it for him sufficient to get only thereby knowledge to

be able among ignorant persons to babble and talk, as he thought, like a great doctor.

And so after continued he in his heresies, until upon a time Sir Thomas More privately talked in his garden with his daughter Margaret, and amongst other his sayings said:

Meg, I have borne a long time with thy husband; I have reasoned and argued with him in those points of religion, and still given to him my poor fatherly counsel, but I perceive none of all this able to call him home, and therefore, Meg, I will no longer argue and dispute with him, but will clean give him over, and get me another while to God and pray for him.

And soon after, as he verily believed, through the great mercy of God, at the devout prayer of Sir Thomas More, he perceived his own ignorance, oversight, malice and folly, and turned him again to the Catholic faith, wherein, God be thanked, he hath hitherto continued. And thus was he induced into these wretched heresies, and now perceiveth what deceived him and many moe, who for the most part through ignorance do begin to walk in this way of heresy, and after in that wicked way do stand, and finally through malice do desperately fast sit in the chair of all iniquity.

And in this notable reclaiming and recovering of this gentleman, God, methinketh, at the hearty and devout prayers of Sir Thomas More, hath shown his great tender mercy, as he did long ago upon the great, learned, virtuous clerk Saint Augustine, who, after he had continued nine years a detestable Manichee, and being so nousled and riped in their sect that there was no like pleasure to him in the world as to match in reasoning with some Catholic – whom he, as himself thought, was able and did wonderfully confound – was at length, by the fervent devout prayers and tears of his good mother Monica, reduced to the true Catholic faith.

The said Master Roper, being thus by the great mercy of God reclaimed from his errors and heresies (a goodly fair precedent for many other of our time, being of much less wit, virtue and learning, to reform themselves and to conform themselves to the Catholic faith of their mother, the Holy Church) hath been ever since by the goodness of God so steadfastly and so firmly rooted and fixed in the Catholic faith, and all his children also, that a man may well say: *Haec*

mutatio dexteræ Excelsi. And he hath been since the singular helper and patron of all Catholics, to relieve and aid them in their distress, especially such as either were imprisoned or otherwise troubled for the Catholic faith. For which cause in the latter time of King Henry the Eighth, for relieving by his alms a notable learned man, Master Beckenshaw, he suffered great trouble and imprisonment in the Tower. But his great alms do not stand within this list only, but it reacheth far further, and so far that it reacheth to all kind of poor and needy persons, that, as I trow, in this kind no one man of his degree and calling in all England is comparable to him. So that a man may, not without cause, accommodate that place of Holy Scripture to him: *Cor viduae consolatus est, oculus fuit caeco, et pes claudo,* and to conclude, *pater erat pauperum.* For the which his great alms sown upon the poor so liberally, I doubt nothing but in the heavenly harvest he shall plentifully reap mercy and grace and the inestimable reward of eternal bliss.

Margaret (Giggs) and John Clement

Let us now see of some other that were of the family of this worthy man, Sir Thomas More. Among other Doctor Clement, also his wife (a woman furnished with much virtue and wisdom, and with the knowledge of the Latin and Greek tongues, yea, and physic too, above many that seem good and cunning physicians) were brought up in his house. The said Clement was taken by Sir Thomas More from Paul's school in London, and hath since proved a very excellent good physician, and is singularly seen in the Greek tongue. And yet his virtue surmounteth his learning, and hath answered to the expectation of Sir Thomas More, who writeth thus of him, being yet a child, to Erasmus: *Uxor mea te salutat, et item Clemens, qui literis et latinis et graecis ita proficit indies, ut non exiguam de eo spem concipiam, futurum eum aliquando et patriae et literis ornamento.*

Now to what excellence she grew in knowledge, and especially of physic, in her ripe and later years is easy to be known by that I shall now tell you. It fortuneth that Sir Thomas More, about a fifteen or sixteen years before his death, fell into a tertian ague, and had passed three or four fits. But afterward fell there on him one fit out of course, so strange and marvelous that a man would have thought it impossible, for suddenly he felt himself both hot and cold throughout all his body, not in some part the one, and in some part the other, for that had been, ye wot

well, no very strange thing, to feel the head hot while the hands were cold, but the very selfsame parts he sensibly felt, and right painfully too, all in one instant both hot and cold at once. Upon this so sudden and rare a chance, he asked a physician or twain that then looked unto him, how this should be possible, and they twain told him that it could not be so, but that he was fallen into some slumber, and dreamed that he felt it so. Then Mistress Clement, being at that time a young girl, whom a kinsman of hers had begun to teach physic, told Sir Thomas More that there was such a kind of fever indeed, and forthwith showed a work of Galen, *De differentiis februm*, where Galen affirmeth the same.

15 This godly couple hath, and doth yet continue full blessedly together. Besides all other excellent qualities, this couple is notable for their great constancy in the Catholic faith; for the which they voluntarily and willingly relinquished their country, and banished themselves in the late reign of King Edward the Sixth.

There was also in his house a learned and virtuous man called John Harris, that godly and diligently instructed his youth. Surely, if a man had seen and fully known the order, demeanor and trade of his children, and of this young Clement, and the aforesaid maid that was after his wife, and of his other family, he would have taken great spiritual and ghostly pleasure thereof, and would have thought himself to have rather been in Plato's Academy – nay, what say I, Plato's? Not in Plato's, but in some Christian well-ordered academy and university – rather than in any layman's house. Everybody there so beset himself and his time upon such good and fruitful reading and other virtuous exercises. There should you hear of no strife or debate, of no wanton and unseemly talk, which, with diverse other enormities, were cut away, because idleness, the very pestiferous poisoned bane of youth, was quite excluded, and every person well and virtuously set a-work.

Wife Joanna

His first wife he married a young maid, which was very virtuous and very pliable to all his will and pleasure. By her he had the aforesaid three daughters and Master John More. And the said wife died very young. The said gentlewoman, though she were very young and rude, as one brought up only in the country under her parents, he was the better content to marry that he might the sooner frame her to his

own will, appetite and disposition, as he did indeed; whom he caused to be instructed in learning and all kind of music, and had now so fashioned her according to his own mind, that he had, and should ever after have had, a most delectable, sweet, pleasant life with her, if God had sent her longer life.

The said three daughters, with their husbands, and his son and heir, with eleven nephews and nieces of his aforesaid children, continued in house with him until such time as he was sent to the Tower.

Wife Alice

After the death of his first wife, he married a widow, which continued with him till he suffered, whom he full entirely loved and most lovingly used, though he had by her no children, and though she were aged, blunt and rude. And in this he showed his great wisdom, or rather piety and godliness: wisdom in taking that for the best, or rather making that the best, that otherwise could not be helped; his piety and godliness in cherishing her no less lovingly and tenderly than if she had been his first young wife, blessed and adorned with happy and diverse issue of her body; whom in very deed he rather married for the ruling and governing of his children, house, and family, than for any bodily pleasure. And yet, such as she was, being also spareful and given to profit, he so framed and fashioned her by his dexterity that he lived a sweet and pleasant life with her, and brought her to that case that she learned to play and sing at the lute and virginals, and every day at his returning home he took a reckoning and account of the task he had enjoined her touching the said exercise.

This wife, on a time after shrift, bade Sir Thomas be merry. "For I have," saith she, "this day left all my shrewdness, and will begin afresh." Which merry conceited talk, though now and then it proved true in very deed, Sir Thomas More could well digest and like in her and in his children and other.

Neither was he in her debt for repaying home again often time such kind of talk. Among other things, when he diverse times beheld his wife, what pain she took in straight binding up her hair to make her a fair, large forehead, and with strait bracing in her body to make her middle small, both twain to her great pain, for the pride of a little foolish praise, he said to her: "Forsooth, madame, if God give you not hell, he shall do you great wrong, for it must needs be your own of very right, for you buy it very dear, and take very great pain therefor."

This wife, when she saw that Sir Thomas More, her husband, had no list to grow greatly upward in the world, nor neither would labor for office of authority, and over that forsook a right worshipful room when it was offered him, she fell in hand with him and all too rated him, and asked him:

5 “What will you do, that you list not to put forth yourself as other folk do? Will you sit by the fire, and make goslings in the ashes with a stick as children do?”

10 “What would you do, I pray you?”

“By God, go forward with the first; for, as my mother was wont to say, God have mercy on her soul, it is ever better to rule than to be ruled. And therefore, by God, I would not, I warrant you, be so foolish to be ruled where I might rule.”

15 “By my troth, wife,” quoth her husband, “in this I dare say you say truth, for I never found you willing to be ruled yet.”

20 When he was prisoner in the Tower, and there had continued a good while, his said wife obtained license to see him. Who, at the first coming, like a simple ignorant woman, and somewhat worldly too, with this manner of salutation bluntly saluted him:

25 “What the good-year, Master More,” quoth she, “I marvel that you that have been always hitherto taken for so wise a man, will now so play the fool to lie here in this close, filthy prison, and be content thus to be shut up among mice and rats, when you might be abroad at your liberty, with the favor and good will both of the King and his Council, if you would but do as all the bishops and best learned of this realm have done. And seeing you have at Chelsea a right fair house, your library, your books, your gallery, your garden, your orchard and all other necessities so handsome about you, where you might in the company of me your wife, your children and household, be merry, I muse what a’ God’s name you mean here still thus fondly to tarry.”

40 After he had a while quietly heard her, with a cheerful countenance he said unto her:

“I pray thee, good Mistress Alice, tell me one thing.”

“What is that?” quoth she.

45 “Is not this house,” quoth he, “as nigh heaven as mine own?”

To whom she, after her accustomed homely fashion, not liking such talk, answered, “Tilly-vally, tilly-vally!”

50 “How say you, Mistress Alice?” quoth he. “Is it

not so?”

“*Bone Deus, Bone Deus*, man, will this gear never be left?” quoth she.

“Well, then, Mistress Alice, if it be so,” quoth he, “it is very well. For I see no great cause why I should much joy either of my gay house or of anything belonging thereunto, when, if I should but seven years lie buried under the ground, I should not fail to find some therein that would bid me get me out of doors, and tell me it were none of mine. What cause have I then to like such a house as would so soon forget his master?”

So her persuasions moved him but a little.

Of some other talk in the Tower with his wife, Sir Thomas More telleth a merry, pretty narration, but, as his fashion is, under shadow of dissembled persons, but indeed meaning of himself and this his wife, which you shall now hear, speaking himself:

Indeed, I wist a woman once that came into a prison to visit of her charity a poor prisoner there, whom she found in a chamber (to say the truth) meetly fair, and at the least wise it was strong enough; but with mats of straw the prisoner had made it so warm, both under the foot and round about the walls, that in these things for the keeping of his health she was on his behalf glad and very well comforted. But among many other displeasures that for his sake she was sorry for, one she lamented much in her mind, that he should have the chamber door upon him by night made fast by the jailer that should shut him in. “For by my troth,” quoth she, “if the door should be shut upon me, I would ween it would stop up my breath.”

At that word of hers the prisoner laughed in his mind, but he durst not laugh aloud, nor say anything to her, for somewhat indeed he stood in awe of her, and had his finding there, much part, of her charity for alms; but he could not but laugh inwardly, while he wist well enough that she used on the inside to shut every night full surely her own chamber to her, both door and windows too, and used not to open them of all the long night. And what difference then as to the stopping of the breath whether they were shut up within or without?

Which narration he doth handsomely apply and accommodate to his purpose.

And thus, lo, though Eve supplanted and overthrew by her pleasant persuasions her husband, our first father, Adam, in Paradise, yet could not this woman anything infringe or break the constant settled good purposes of this worthy man, her husband, no, not in his extreme adversity; no more than blessed Job's wife could shake and overturn any part of his good patience. And yet surely no stronger nor mightier temptation in all the world is there than that proceedeth from the wife. And therefore some think and write that though the devil might have, by the words of his commission given to him from God, destroyed also Job's wife as well as he did his children, yet did the wretched malicious caitiff full wilily spare her, to make her his instrument to the destruction of her husband's patience.

3. *More's Writings*

It remaineth now then, that seeing as well the matter itself we have in hand, as our promise, craveth it at our hands, that we speak somewhat of his books, whereby he hath consecrate his worthy name to immortality in this transitory world to the world's end. And I doubt not, for his great pains and travail therein especially for God's sake, to whom he had his principal respect, he hath received his condign reward in the celestial world that never shall have end. Whereof some are written in Latin only, some in English only, some certain in both tongues. We will touch summarily of both sorts so much as may seem convenient to our present purpose. And the more willingly this do we because his books be rare, and the print spent up, and some as well Latin as English never yet put to the print. Howbeit, we trust shortly to have all his English works, as well those that have been set forth ere this, as some others, in print, wherein Master Sergeant Rastell doth now diligently travail, and employeth his good and careful endeavor to the furthering of the said good purpose.

Among other his Latin books are his epigrams, partly translated out of Greek, partly so wittily and pleasantly devised and penned of his own, as they may seem to be nothing inferior or to yield to any of like kind written in our days, and perchance worthy to be set and compared with many like writers of the old forerun days. These epigrams, as they be learned and pleasant, so are they nothing biting or contumelious.

Howbeit, certain merry conceited epigrams that

he made of Germanus Brixius, a Frenchman, untruly and falsely setting forth and advancing the valiant doings of the French captain Herveus by the sea against the Englishmen, so incensed the said Brixius, albeit the things that Sir Thomas More wrote were true, and yet written in the time of hostility and war, that he wrote a very spiteful book against the said Sir Thomas More, and so far forgot himself that he went about, as far as in him lay, to bring him in discredit with King Henry the Eighth as one that was the King's enemy. And so when the kings were at peace, Brixius long after began with Master More his new and cruel war. His book he entitled *Anti-morus*, which Master More answered. And albeit he had a great deal the better hand against Brixius, and that not only by censure and judgment of Erasmus, Brixius's great friend, but many other learned men Brixius's friends also, yet at the desire of Erasmus, and upon sight of his letters, he stayed all his books, newly printed, from further sale, and recovered into his hands some copies that his friends had, to suppress them. So much of Brixius, which I have the sooner planted in here because I know Master More is herein by some Protestants noted and slandered.

He wrote also most elegantly and eloquently the life of King Richard the Third, not only in English, which book is abroad in print, but corrupted and vitiated, but in Latin also, not yet printed. He did not perfect and finish the same book, neither any since durst take upon himself to set his hand to the pen to finish it, either in the one or other tongue, all men being deterred and driven from that enterprise by reason of the incomparable excellency of the said work, as all other painters were afraid in the old time to supply and perfect the image of Venus painted, but imperfectly, by Apelles, for his excellent workmanship therein.

UTOPIA

But the book that beareth the prick and price of all his other Latin books of witty invention, for profane matters, is his *Utopia*. He painteth me it forth so lively and so pleasantly, as it were an exquisite platform, pattern and example of a singular good commonwealth, as to the same neither the Lacedaemonians, nor the Athenians, nor yet, the best of all other, the Romans' commonwealth is comparable; full prettily and probably devising the said commonwealth to be in one of the countries of the newfound lands declared unto him at Antwerp by Hythloday,

a Portuguese, and one of the sea companions of Amerigo Vespucci, that first sought out and found these lands; such an excellent and absolute state of commonwealth that, saving the people were unchristened, might seem to pass any state and commonwealth; I will not say of the old nations by me rehearsed, but even of any other even in our time.

Many great learned men, as Budé and Johannes Paludanus, seemed to take the same story as a true story. And Paludanus upon a fervent zeal wished that some excellent divines might be sent thither to preach Christ's Gospel; yea, then were here among us at home sundry good men and learned divines very desirous to take that voyage, to bring that people to Christ's faith, whose manners they did so well like upon. And surely this said jolly invention of Sir Thomas More seemed to bear a good countenance of truth, not only for the credit Master More was in with the world, but even for that about that time many strange and unknown nations and many conclusions were discovered, such as our forefathers did neither know nor believe; it was by most certain experience found, especially by the wonderful navigation of *navis* called Victoria that sailed the world round about, that ships sail bottom to bottom, and that there be Antipodes, that is to say, that walk foot against foot; which thing Lactantius and others do flatly deny, laughing them to scorn that did so write. Again, it is certainly found that there is under the Zodiac (where Aristotle and others say that for the immoderate and excessive heat is no habitation) most pleasant and temperate dwelling and the most fruitful countries of all the world. These and other considerations caused many wise, learned men nothing less to distrust that this had been nothing but an inventive drift of Sir Thomas More's own imagination and head, but took it for a very sure known story. Wherein they were deceived by Master More, as wise and as well learned as they were, as Zeuxis the painter was in the old time, notwithstanding he painted grapes so lively and exquisitely that the birds came to pick upon them as upon very grapes indeed. But when Parrhasius, another exquisite painter, had shown him a certain table, wherein he had painted a veil or curtain: "Take away," quoth Zeuxis, "this veil and curtain, that I may see your painting itself." Whereat Parrhasius fell upon a great laughter, saying, "Yesterday, thou didst deceive the birds, but this day I have deceived thee, as cunning a painter as thou art." For indeed it was no curtain, but a table

so artificially painted that it seemed to Zeuxis a very curtain.

In this book, among other things, he hath a very goodly process how there might be fewer thieves in England, and a marvellous inopinable problem of sheep: that whereas men were wont to eat the sheep, as they do in other countries, now contrariwise sheep in England pitifully do devour man, woman and child, houses, yea, and towns withal.

And like a most thankful man, he maketh honorable mention of Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England, in whose house, as we have said, himself in his tender youth was brought up, albeit it be by the dissembled name of the said Hythloday, whom he imagineth to have been in England, and to have been acquainted with the said Cardinal.

RESPONSE TO LUTHER

And as this book in his kind is singular and excellent, containing and prescribing a commonwealth far passing the commonwealths devised and instituted by Lycurgus, Solon, Numa Pompilius, Plato and diverse other; so wrote he in another kind and sort a book against Luther no less singular and excellent. King Henry the Eighth had written a notable erudite book against Luther's *De captivitate Babylonica*, most evidently and mightily refuting his shameful, vile heresies against the Catholic faith and Christ's Holy Sacraments, which did so grieve and irk Luther to the very heart, that having no good substantial matter to help himself withal, he fell to scoffing and saucy jesting in his answer to the King's book, using almost nothing else throughout his answer but the fair figure of rhetoric called sauce malapert, and playeth the very varlet with the King. To whom Sir Thomas More made a reply, and so doth decipher and open his wretched, vile handling of the sacred Scripture, his monstrous opinions, and manifest and manifold contradictions, that neither he nor any of his generation durst ever after put pen to the book to encounter and rejoin with his reply. In the which answer, besides the deep and profound debating of the matter itself, he so dresseth him with his own scoffing and jesting rhetoric as he worthily deserved. But because this kind of writing, albeit a meet cover for such a cup, and very necessary to repress and beat him with his own folly, according to Scripture, *Responde stulto secundum stultitiam ejus*, seemed not very agreeable and correspondent to his said gravity

and dignity, the book was set forth under the name of one Gulielmus Rosseus only, suppressing his own name.

He made also in Latin another proper and witty treatise against a certain epistle of John Pomeranus, one of Luther's standard-bearers in Germany.

And after he was shut up in the Tower, he wrote a certain exposition in Latin upon the Passion of Christ, not yet printed, which was not perfected, and is so plainly and exquisitely translated into English by his foresaid niece, Mistress Basset, that it may seem originally to have been penned in English by Sir Thomas More himself.

Some other things he wrote also in Latin which we pretermitt, and will now somewhat talk of his English works, which all, beside the translation of John Picus, Earl of Mirandula, and the foresaid life of King Richard, and some other few profane things, concern matters of religion for the most part.

DIALOGUE OF SIR THOMAS MORE, KNIGHT

The first book of this sort was his books of dialogues, made by him when he was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which books occasioned him afterward (as, according to the old proverb, one business begetteth another) to write diverse other things, for whereas he had among many other matters touched and reprov'd William Tyndale's adulterate and vitiate translation of the New Testament, Tyndale, not able to bear to see his new religion and his own doings withal to have so foul an overthrow as Sir Thomas More gave him, after great and long deliberation and consultation with his evangelical brethren, took in hand to answer some part of his said dialogues, especially touching his aforesaid corrupt translation. But what small worship he won thereby, it is easy for every man to see that with indifferent affection will vouchsafe to read Sir Thomas More's reply, whereof we shall give you a small taste.

But first we will note unto you the integrity, the sincerity and uprightness, the good and gracious nature and disposition of the said Sir Thomas More in his writing, not only against Tyndale, but generally against all other Protestants. First then it is to be considered in him that he doth not, as many writers do against the adversaries, and all the Protestants do against him and other Catholics, writhe and wrest their words to the worst, and make their reasons more weak and feeble than they are, but rather enforceth them to the uttermost, and often

times farther than the party himself doth, or perchance could do. And was of this mind, that he said he would not let while he lived, wheresoever he perceived his adversary to say well, or himself to have said otherwise, indifferently for both to say and declare the truth. And therefore himself, finding after the printing and the books divulged and commonly read of the *Debellation of Salem and Bizance* (albeit many had read the place, and found no fault therein) yet he, finding afterward that he mistook certain words of the pacifier without any other man's controlment, of himself reformed them. The like he counselled his learned friends, especially Erasmus, to do, and to retract many things that he had written, whose counsel (wherein he had a notable precedent so to do in the worthy doctor Saint Augustine) if Erasmus had followed, I trow his books would be better liked of our posterity, which perchance shall be fain either utterly to abolish some of his works, or at least to redress and reform them.

Here is now further to be considered in his writings that he neither hunted after praise and vainglory, nor any vile and filthy gain or worldly commodity; yea, so that envenomed and poisoned heretical books might be once suppressed and abolished, he wished his own in a light and fair fire also. Yet did the Evangelical brethren, after he had abandoned the office of the Lord Chancellor (as they otherwise spread and wrote many vain and false rumors to the advancement of their own new Gospel and pressing of the Catholics) lay to his charge in their books that he was partial to the clergy, and had for his books received a great mass of money of the said clergy. And Tyndale and diverse other of the good brethren affirmed that they wist well that Sir Thomas More was no less worth in money and plate and other movables than twenty thousand marks. But it was found far otherwise when his house was searched after that he was committed to the Tower, where a while he had some competent liberty, but afterward upon a sudden he was shut up very close. At what time he feared there should be a new and a more narrower search in all his houses, because his mind gave him that some folk thought that he was not so poor as it appeared in the search. But he told his daughter Mistress Margaret Roper that it should make but a game to them that knew the truth of his poverty, unless they should find out his wife's gay girdle and her golden beads. The like poverty of any man that so long continued a counselor with the King, and

had borne so many great offices, hath, I trow, seldom been found in any layman before, and much less since his time.

As for partiality to the clergy, saving the reverence due to the said sacred order of priests, by whom we are made Christian men in Baptism, and by whom we receive the other blessed sacraments, there was none in him. And that well felt they that were nought of the said clergy, that had so little favor at his hands that there was no man, that any meddling had with them, into whose hands they were more loath to come than into his.

No Income from Polemical Writings

As for fees, annuities, rewards or other commodities that should incline him to be over propense and partial to the clergy: First, touching any fees that he had to his living after that he had left the said Chancellorship, he had not one groat granted him since he first wrote or went about to write the dialogues, and that was the first work that ever he wrote in matters of religion. And as for all the lands and fees that he had beside such lands and fees as he had of the King's gift, was not, nor should be, during his mother-in-law's life (which lived after he relinquished the office of the Chancellorship) worth yearly the sum of one hundred pounds. And thereof had he some by his wife, some left by his father, some he purchased, and some fees had he of temporal men. And so may every man soon guess that he had no very great part of his living by the clergy to make him very partial to them.

Now, touching rewards or lucre that did rise to him by his writing – for the which good Father Tyndale said he wrote his books, and not for any affection he bore to the clergy, no more than Judas betrayed Christ for any favor he bore to the bishops, scribes and Pharisees – it is a most open shameful lie and slander. Truth it is, that the bishops and the clergy of England, seeing (besides the continual pains he employed in the affairs of the King and of the realm) the great travail and labor he took in writing against heretics, for the defense of the Catholic faith and the repressing of damnable heresies, the reformation whereof principally appertained to their pastoral cure, and thinking themselves by his travails (wherein by their own confession they were not able with him to make comparison) of their duties in that behalf discharged, and considering that for all his prince's favor he was no rich man, nor in yearly

revenues advanced as his worthiness deserved, therefore at a convocation among themselves and other of the clergy, they agreed together and concluded upon a sum of four or five thousand pounds, at the least, to my remembrance, for his pains to recompense him; to the payment whereof every bishop, abbot, and the rest of the clergy were after the rate of their abilities liberal contributors, hoping this portion should be to his contentation.

Whereupon, Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, Clark, Bishop of Bath, and as far as I can call to mind, Veysey, Bishop of Exeter, repaired unto him, declaring how thankfully for his travails, to their discharge, in God's cause bestowed, they reckoned themselves bounden to consider him. And that albeit they could not according to his deserts so worthily as they gladly would requite him therefore, but must reserve that only to the goodness of God, yet for a small part of recompense, in respect of his estate, so unequal to his worthiness, in the name of their whole convocation they presented to him that sum, which they desired him to take in good part.

Who, forsaking it, said, that like as it was no small comfort unto him that so wise and learned men so well accepted his simple doings, for which he never intended to receive reward but at the hands of God only, to whom alone was the thanks chiefly to be ascribed, so gave he most humble thanks unto their honors for all their so bountiful and friendly consideration.

When they, for all their so importune pressing upon him that few would have weened he could have refused it, could by no means make him to take it, then besought they him to be content yet that they might bestow it upon his wife and children. "Not so, my lords," quoth he,

I had liefer see it all cast into the Thames than I or any of mine should have thereof the worth of one penny; for though your offer, my lords, be indeed very friendly and honorable, yet set I so much by my pleasure, and so little by my profit, that I would not, in good faith, for so much, and much more too, have lost the rest of so many nights' sleep as was spent upon the same.

Against Tyndale, Barnes, Frith

These things then being thus premised, let us now see how substantially Tyndale and his fellows have handled their matters, and let us begin with that

that most pinched Tyndale to hear of, that is, of his false and corrupt translation of the New Testament, wherein it is to be considered that, as these good brethren partly deny the very text itself and whole
 5 books of the sacred Scripture (as the books of the Maccabees and certain others, and Luther Saint James epistle also) and as they adulterate, commaculate and corrupt the whole corps of the same with their wrong and false expositions, far disagreeing
 10 from the consent of the holy, ancient Fathers and Doctors and from the faith of the whole Catholic Church, so for the advancing and furthering of their said heresies, they have of a set purpose perverted and mistranslated the said Holy Scripture, and after such shameful sort that amongst other their mischievous practices, whereas in the Latin Epistle of Saint Paul is read in the old translation *fornicarii* and in the new *scortatores*, they have *sacerdotes*, that is, “priests,” for the good devotion they bear to the
 20 sacred order of priesthood. And their patriarch Luther with his translation in the Dutch tongue hath wonderfully depraved, corrupted and defiled the said Holy Scripture, as we could by diverse means easily show.

Whom his good scholar Tyndale in his English translations doth match, or rather pass; wherein he turneth me this word “church” into “congregation,” “priest” into “senior” and “elder”; which word “congregation” absolutely of itself (as Tyndale useth it)
 30 doth no more signify the congregation of Christian men than a fair flock of unchristian geese. Neither “elder” signifieth any whit more “a priest” than this word *presbyteros* an “elder stick.” Many other parts of his translation are suitable to this, as where, in spite of Christ’s and his Holy Saints’ images, he turneth
 35 “idols” into “images,” and for like purpose of setting forth his heresies, “charity” into “love,” “grace” into “favor,” “confession” into “knowledge,” “penance” into “repentance,” with such like.

40 For the which – as also for diverse of his false, faithless, heretical assertions as well:

that the Apostles left nothing unwritten that is of necessity to be believed;

that the Church may err in matters of faith;

45 that the Church is only of chosen unknown elects, touching the manner and order of our election;

touching his wicked and detestable opinion against the free will of man;

50 touching his fond, foolish, and inopinable paradoxes of the elect, though they do abominable

heinous acts, yet they do not sin, and that the elect that once heartily repent, can sin no more –

he doth so substantially and so pleasantly confute and overthrow Tyndale, that if these men that be envenomed and poisoned with these pestilent heresies
 55 would with indifferent mind read the said Sir Thomas More’s answers, there were good hope (as it hath, God be thanked, chanced to many already) of their good and speedy recovery. But alack the while, and woe upon the subtle craft of the cursed devil that so
 60 blindeth them, and the retchlesse, negligent regard that these men have to their souls’ health, that can be content greedily to glut in the deadly poison of their souls by reading and crediting of these mischievous books, and yet will not once vouchsafe to take the
 65 wholesome, depulsive treacle, not to be fetched from Geneva, but even ready at home at their hand in Sir Thomas More’s books against this deadly, dreadful infection.

But to return now again to the said Tyndale. Lord, what open, foul and shameful shifts doth he make for the defense of his wrong and naughty pestiferous assertions, and with what spiteful, shameful lies belieth he Sir Thomas More, and wretchedly depraveth his writings; not being ashamed (though
 75 his plain manifest words lie open to the sight of all men to the contrary) to deprave his answers, and among other, that he should affirm that the Church of Christ should be before the Gospel was taught or preached: which thing he neither writeth, nor once
 80 thought (as a most absurd untruth), but that it was (as it is very true) before the written Gospel. And the said Sir Thomas More, seeing that by Tyndale’s own confession the Church of God was in the world many hundred years before the written laws of Mo-
 85 ses, doth well thereof gather and conclude against Tyndale that there is no cause to be yielded but that much more it may be so, and is so indeed, that in the gracious time of our redemption the Holy Ghost, that leadeth the Church from time to time into all
 90 truth, being so plentifully effused upon the same, the Church of Christ is and hath ever been in many things instructed necessary to be believed, that be not in any Scripture comprised.

These and many other strong reasons to prove the
 95 common known Catholic Church, and none other, to be the true Church of Christ, and that seeing we do not know the very books of Scripture (which thing Luther himself confesseth) but by the known Catholic Church, we must of necessity take the
 100

sound and true understanding of the said Scriptures, and of all our faith, of the said Church (which understanding is confirmed in the same Church from the Apostles' time, and by infinite miracles, and with
 5 the consent of all the old fathers and holy martyrs) with other substantial reasons that Sir Thomas More layeth forth, have so appalled and amazed Tyndale that he is like a man that were in an inexplicable labyrinth and maze, whereof he can by no means get
 10 out. And Tyndale, being thus brought often times to a bay and utter distress, he scuddeth in and out like a hare that had twenty brace of greyhounds after her, and were afeared at every foot to be snatched up. And as Sir Thomas More also merrily, and yet truly,
 15 writeth, he windeth him so wilily this way and that way, and so shifteth in and out, and with his subtle shifting he so bleareth our eyes that he maketh us as blind as a cat, and so mazeth us in his matters that we can no more see whereabout he walketh than if he
 20 went visible before us all naked in a net, and in effect playeth the very blind hob about the house.

Sometimes when there is none other shift, Tyndale is driven to excuse himself and his doings, as he doth for the word *presbyteros*, that he translated first
 25 "senior" and then "elder": wherein for excuse of his fault, at great length he declareth four fair virtues in himself: malice, ignorance, error and folly. And where he said he had amended his fault with translating "elder" for "senior," this was a like amending as
 30 if he would, where a man were blind of the one eye, amend his sight by putting out the other.

As Sir Thomas More answered Tyndale touching his unknown church, so did he also Friar Barnes; for in that point both agreed, and would have the
 35 Church secret and hid in hugger-mugger. But in the mean season they handle their matter so handsomely and so artificially that their own reasons pluck down their own unknown church. And albeit they would have us believe the Church were unknown, yet do
 40 they give us tokens and marks whereby it should be known; and in perusing their unknown church, they fall into many absurd, fond, foolish paradoxes, that Sir Thomas More discovereth. And this unknown church would they fain rear up in the air, to pluck
 45 down the known Catholic Church in the earth, and so leave us no church at all. Which Church to overthrow is their final and only scope; for that standing, they well know their malignant church cannot stand, being by the Catholic Church both now and
 50 many hundred years before condemned.

These and many other things doth Sir Thomas More at large full well declare, and setteth the limping and halting goodwife of the Botolph at Botolph's Wharf in disputations with Friar Barnes. In the which the indifferent reader shall soon see that
 55 she did not so much limp and halt as did the weak and lame reasons that Friar Barnes brought against her of his unknown Church, which she utterly overthroweth.

But yet, as they do, both Tyndale and Barnes agree, 60 as we have said, in their secret, unknown Church, so in other points touching their said Church, and in many articles besides, they do far square and disagree, and not so much the one from the other as from their own self, as Sir Thomas More showeth
 65 more at large. "For," saith he,

as they that would have built up the Tower of Babylon for themselves against God, had such a stop thrown upon them that suddenly none understood what another said, surely so God upon these heretics of our time that go busily about to heap up to the sky their foul, filthy dunghill of all old and new false, stinking heresies gathered up together against the true Catholic faith of Christ that himself hath ever hitherto taught his true Catholic Church – God, I say, which, when the Apostles went about to preach the true faith, sent down his own Holy Spirit of unity, concord and truth unto them, with the gift of speech and understanding, so that they understood every man and every man understood them, hath reared up and sent among these heretics the spirit of error and lying, of discord and division, the damned devil of hell, which so entangleth their tongues, and so distempereth their brains, that they neither understand well one of them another, nor any of them well himself.

The books of the said Tyndale and Barnes are farced and stuffed more with jesting and railing than with any good substantial reason. And notwithstanding a man would think that Tyndale were in
 70 fond scoffing peerless, yet, as Sir Thomas More declareth, Friar Barnes doth far overrun him and often times fareth as he were from a friar waxen a fiddler, and would at a tavern go get him a penny for a fit of mirth. And yet sometime will he full demurely
 75 and holily preach and take too upon him as he were Christ's own dear apostle, as do also the residue of

brethren that write, and especially Tyndale, who be-
 ginneth the preface of his book with “the grace of our
 Lord, the light of his spirit,” and so forth, with such
 a solemn, glorious, glistening salutation as though it
 5 were Saint Paul himself. But Sir Thomas More doth
 accordingly dress him, and discover to the world
 Friar Luther’s and Tyndale’s and such other false,
 feigned, hypocritical holiness in their so high and
 solemn salutations and preachings, and concludeth
 10 not more pleasantly than truly, that when a man well
 considereth those their salutations and holy preach-
 ings, and considereth their lying and pestiferous her-
 esies in these their holy salutations and preachings,
 he may well and truly judge these their holy counter-
 15 feited salutations and sermons to be a great deal worse
 than ever Friar Frappe, who first gapeth and then
 blesseth, and looketh holily, and preacheth ribaldry,
 was ever wont at Christmas to make.

And thus will we leave Tyndale and Barnes and
 20 speak of some other of the holy fraternity. Among
 whom there was one that made *The Supplication of*
Beggars, the which Sir Thomas More answered very
 notably, before he wrote against Tyndale and Barnes.
 This *Supplication* was made by one Simon Fish, but
 25 God gave him such grace afterward that he was sorry
 and repented himself, and came into the Church
 again, and forsook and forswore all the whole hill of
 those heresies out of the which the fountain of his
 great zeal, that moved him to write, sprang.

30 After this Sir Thomas More wrote a letter im-
 pugning the erroneous writing of John Frith.

APOLOGY

And whereas after that he had given over the of-
 fice of the Lord Chancellor, the heretics full fast did
 write against him, and found many faults with him
 35 and his writings, he made a goodly and a learned
Apology (of some of his answers in the said *Apologye*
 we have already, upon occasion, somewhat touched)
 especially of that they laid to his charge of the slen-
 der recital or misrehearsing of Tyndale’s and Barnes’s
 40 arguments, and showeth that they were calumnious
 slanders, and that himself used Tyndale and Barnes
 after a contrary and better manner than they used
 him: “For he rehearseth” Sir Thomas More’s “argu-
 45 ments in every place faintly and falsely too, and
 leaveth out the pith and the strength and the proof
 that most maketh for the purpose; and he fareth
 therein as if there were one that having day of chal-
 lenge appointed, in which he should wrestle with

his adversary, would find the means by craft to get
 his adversary before the day into his own hands, and
 50 there keep him and diet him with such a thin diet,
 that, at the day, he bringeth him forth feeble, faint
 and famished, and almost hunger starved, and so
 lean that he can scant stand on his legs, and then is
 it easy, ye wot well, to give the silly soul a fall. And
 55 yet when Tyndale” had “done all this, he taketh the
 fall himself.”

But every man may well see that Sir Thomas
 More never useth that way with Tyndale, nor with
 any of those folk, but rehearseth their reason to the
 60 best that they can make it themselves, and rather
 enforceth and strengtheneth it (as we have before
 declared) of his own, than taketh any part of theirs
 therefrom.

Whereas now further they found fault with the
 65 length of his books, he writeth, among other things,
 that “it is little marvel that it seems long and tedious
 unto them to read it over within, whom it irketh to
 do so much as look it over without, and every way
 seemeth long to him that is weary ere he begin.”
 70 “But I find,” saith he, “some men again to whom the
 reading is so far from tedious, that they have read the
 whole book over thrice, and some that make tables
 thereof for their own remembrance, and that such
 75 men as have as much wit and learning both, as the
 best of all this blessed brotherhood that ever I heard
 of.”

And then for the shortness of Barnes’s books, that
 the adversaries did commend, he writeth that he
 woteth never well whether he may call them long or
 80 short:

For sometimes they be short indeed, because they
 would be dark and have their false follies pass and
 repass all unperceived. Sometimes they can use
 such compendious kind of eloquence that they
 convey and couch up together with a wonder-
 ful brevity four follies and five lies in less than as
 many lines. But yet for all this, I see not in effect
 any men more long then they, for they preach
 sometimes a long process to very little purpose.
 And since that of all their whole purpose they
 prove in conclusion never a piece at all were their
 writings never so short, yet were their whole work
 at last too long by altogether.

Besides many other things, his adversaries laid to
 his charge that he handled Tyndale, Frith and Barnes

ungodly and with uncomely words, wherein he thus answereth,

Now when that against all the whole Catholic Church, both that now is, and that ever before hath been from the Apostles' days hitherto, both temporal and spiritual, laymen and religious, and against all that good is, saints, ceremonies, service of God, the very sacraments and all, and most against the best, that is, to wit, the precious body and blood of our Savior himself in the Holy Sacrament of the altar, these blasphemous heretics in their ungracious books so villainously jest and rail, were not a man, ween you, very far overseen, and worthy to be counted uncourteous, that would in writing against their heresies presume without great reverence to rehearse their worshipful names? If any of them use their words at their pleasure, as evil and as villainous as they list, against myself, I am content to forbear any requiting thereof, and give them no worse words again than if they spoke me fair, nor using themselves towards all other folk as they do, fairer words will I not give them than if they spoke me foul. For all shall be one to me, or rather the worse the better; for the pleasant oil of heretics cast upon mine head can do my mind no pleasure; but, contrariwise, the worse that folk write of me for hatred that they bear to the Catholic Church and faith, the greater pleasure (as for mine own part) they do me. But surely their railing against all other I purpose not to bear so patiently as to forbear to let them hear some part of like language as they speak. Howbeit, utterly to match them therein I neither can though I would, nor will though I could, but am content (as I needs must) to give them therein the mastery, wherein to match them were more rebuke than honesty. For in their only railing standeth all their revel; with only railing is all their roast meat basted, and all their pot seasoned, and all their pie meat spiced, and all their manchets, and all their wafers, and all their hipocras made.

He addeth further, "If they," saith he, "will not (which were the next) be heretics alone themselves, and hold their tongues and be still, but will needs be babbling and corrupt whom they can, let them yet at the leastwise be reasonable heretics and honest, and write reason, and leave railing, and then let

the brethren find the fault with me, if I use them not after that in words as fair and as mild as the matter may suffer and bear." 10

About this time there was one that had made a book *Of the Division of the Spirituality and Temporality*, of the which book the brethren made great store, and blamed Sir Thomas More that he had not used in his writing such a soft and mild manner and such an indifferent fashion as the said person did. 15 By occasion whereof Sir Thomas More discourseth upon the said book (the author whereof pretended to make a pacification of the foresaid division and discord), and openeth many faults and follies and heinous false slanders against the clergy, craftily and smoothly, under a holy collusion and pretense of pacification, in the said books. To the which Sir Thomas More's discourse there came an answer afterward in print under the title of *Salem and Bizance*. To the which Sir Thomas More replied, and so dressed this pretty, politic pacifier that he had no lust, nor any man for him, to encounter afterwards with the said Sir Thomas. 20 25 30

SALEM AND BIZANCE

The pretty, pleasant, witty declaration of the title of the said book (because it is seldom and rare to be gotten) I will now, gentle reader, set before thine eyes. The title is framed in this sort:

The Debellation of Salem and Bizance

– sometime two great towns, which being under the great Turk, were between Easter and Michaelmas last passed, this present year of our Lord 1533, with a marvelous metamorphosis enchanted and turned into two Englishmen, by the wonderful inventive wit and witchcraft of Sir John Somesay, the pacifier, and so by him conveyed hither in a dialogue, to defend his *Division* against the *Apology of Sir Thomas More, knight*. But now being thus, between the said Michaelmas and Allhallowtide next ensuing, in this debellation vanquished, they be fled hence and vanished, and are become two towns again, with those old names changed, Salem into Jerusalem, and Bizance into Constantinople, the one in Greece and the other in Syria, where they may see them that will and win them that can. And if the Pacifier convey them hither again, and ten such other towns with them, embattled in such

dialogues, Sir Thomas More hath undertaken to put himself in the adventure alone against them all. But and if he let them tarry still there, he will not utterly forswear it, but he is not much minded as yet, age now so coming on, and waxing all unwieldy, to go thither and give the assault to such well walled towns, without some such lusty company as shall be somewhat likely to leap up a little more lightly.

This is the title of the foresaid book. And that in very deed the said Sir Thomas More hath most valiantly discomfited the pacifier, and overthrown his two great towns, may easily appear to such as will vouchsafe to read the said Sir Thomas More his answer, the circumstances and particularities whereof to rehearse, would make our present treatise to grow too big.

I will only shew you a declaration or two of Sir Thomas More, whereby you may make some aim to judge by the whole doings of the said pacifier. "If it were so," saith Sir Thomas More, "that one found two men standing together, and would come step in between them, and bear them in hand they were about to fight, and would with that word put the one prettily back with his hand, and all to buffer the other about the face, and then go forth and say that he had parted a fray and pacified the parties, some men would say again (as I suppose) that he had as lief his enemy were let alone with him, and thereof abide the adventure, as have such a friend step in between to part them."

Another of a man that were angry and fallen out with his wife, and haply not without cause. "Now," saith Master More, "if the author of this book would take upon him to reconcile them together, and help to make them at one; and therein would use this way, that when he had them both before him, would tell all the faults of the wife, and set among them some of his own imagination and assertion, and then would go about to avoid his words under the color of his fair figure of *Somesay* (which he commonly useth in his book of pacification) either by forgetfulness or by the figure of plain folly, and then would afterwards tell her husband his pars verse too, and tell him that he himself had not dealt well with her, but have used to make her too homely with him, and have suffered her to be too much idle, and suffered her to be too much conversant among her gossips, and have given her over gay gear, and sometimes given her evil

words, and call her (as I hear say) cursed quean and shrew, and some say that she behind your back calleth you knave and cuckold" – were not this a proper kind of pacification?

And yet is this the lively pattern and image of Master Pacifier's doings. Of the which and of his spinning fine lies with flax, fetching it out of his own body as the spider doth her cobweb, feigning and finding fault with Sir Thomas More for these matters and words whereof he saith the plain contrary, he had great cause to be ashamed. Howbeit little shame could cleave to his cheeks, but that he would soon shake it away while his name was not at his book.

ANSWER TO A POISONED BOOK

We have now one book more written in matter of religion, and of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar by the said Sir Thomas More. We told you before of a letter of his wherein he impugned the wicked heresy of John Frith. Now had the said Frith, albeit he were prisoner in the Tower of London, found the means to make answer to the said letter, and to convey it beyond the seas, where it was printed. And it was afterward brought into this realm, as Sir Thomas More did certainly understand: who minded, when the book came into his hands, to answer it. But now in the mean season came there from beyond the sea an answer to the said letter, made by some other, and printed without the author's name, entitled *The Supper of our Lord*. "But I beshrew," quoth Sir Thomas More, "such a sewer as so serveth in the supper that he conveyeth away the best dish and bringeth it not to the board, as this man would, if he could, convey from the Blessed Sacrament Christ's own blessed flesh and blood, and leave us nothing therein but for a memorial only bare bread and wine. But his hands are too lumpish, and this mess also too great for him to convey clean, especially since the dish is so dear and so dainty that every Christian man hath his heart bent thereto, and therefore his eye set thereon to see where it becometh." This naughty, nameless author Sir Thomas More doth not only by the authority of the sacred Scripture and holy ancient fathers, but by his own reasons and texts that himself bringeth forth, plainly and evidently convince.

Books Written in the Tower

Now have we besides other excellent and fruitful books of his which he made being prisoner in the

Tower, as his three books of *Comfort against Tribulation*, *A Treatise to Receive the Blessed Sacrament Sacramentally and Virtually Both*, *A Treatise upon the Passion*, with notable introductions to the same.

5 He wrote also many other godly and devout instructions and prayers.

And surely, of all the books that ever he made, I doubt whether I may prefer any of them to the said three books, yea, or any other man's, either heathen or Christian, that have written (as many have) either in the Greek or Latin of the said matter. And as for heathen, I do this worthy man plain injury, and do so much abase him in matching and comparing him with them, especially in this point seeing that though they were never otherwise so incomparable, they lacked yet and knew not the very special and principal ground of comfort and consolation, that is the true faith in Christ, in whom, and for whom, and his glory, and from whom, we must seek and fetch all our true comfort and consolation. Well, let them pass, and let us then further say, that as the said Sir Thomas More notably passeth many learned Christians that have of the same matter written before, so let us add that it may well be doubted, all circumstances well considered and weighed if any of the residue may seem much to pass him, or to be far preferred afore him. There is in these books so witty, so pithy, and so substantial matter for the easing and remedying and patiently suffering of all manner of griefs and sorrows that may possibly encumber any man, by any manner or kind of tribulation, whether their tribulation proceed of any inward temptation of our ghostly enemy the devil, or by any outward temptation of the world threatening to spoil and bereave us of our goods, lands, honor, of our liberty and freedom, by grievous and sharp imprisonment, or finally of our life withal, by any painful and exquisite cruel death; against all which he doth so wonderfully, so effectually, and so strongly prepare, defense and arm the reader, that a man cannot desire or wish anything of more efficacy or importance thereto to be added. In the which books his principal drift and scope was to stir and prepare the minds of Englishmen manfully and courageously to withstand, and not to shrink at, the imminent and open persecution which he foresaw, and immediately followed, against the unity of the Church and the Catholic faith of the same. Albeit full wittily and wisely that the books might the more safely go abroad, he doth not expressly meddle with those matters, and colareth the matter under

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the name of an Hungarian, and of the persecution of the Turk in Hungary, and of a book translated out of the Hungarian's tongue into the Latin, and then into the English tongue.

Of these books there is then great account to be made, not only for the excellent matters comprised, and most wittily and learnedly handled therein, but for that also they were made when he was most straitly enclosed and shut up from all company in the Tower. In which sort I doubt whether a man should find any other book of like worthiness made by any Christian. And yet if any such be to be found, and such as this, much soon should yield and give place to the same; yet, surely, there is one thing wherein these books of Sir Thomas More by an especial prerogative surmount, or else I am deceived, all other of this sort, and that is, that they were for the most part written with none other pen in the world than with a coal, as was also his *Treatise upon the Passion*, which copy, if some men had, they might and would more esteem than other books written with golden letters, and would make no less account of it than Saint Jerome did of certain books of the learned martyr Lucian written with his own hand, that perchance he happened upon and esteemed them as a precious jewel.

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And yet is there one thing that in the valuing and prizing of these books I esteem above all other, and that is, that in these books he is not, as many great clerks in their books sometimes are, like to a whetstone, that being blunt and dull itself, whetteth and sharpeneth other things; it was not so with this man; for albeit he wrote these books with a dead black coal, yet was there another and a most hot burning coal, such a one, I say, as touched and purified the lips of the holy prophet Isaiah, that directed his hand with the dead coal, and so inflamed and incensed his heart with all to heavenward, that the good and wholesome instructions and counsel that he gave to other men in his books he himself shortly after, in most patient suffering of the loss of his goods, lands, of imprisonment, and of death withal, for the defense of justice and the Catholic faith, experimented and worthily practiced in himself, as we shall hereafter in place convenient more largely show and declare.

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4. *Reputation for Wit and Learning*

And these be in effect the books he made either in Latin or English: which his English books, if they had been written by him in the Latin tongue

also, or might be, with the like grace that they now have, translated into the Latin speech, they would surely much augment and increase the estimation and admiration that the world hath already in foreign countries of his incomparable wit and learning, for the which he was even while he lived throughout all Christendom marvelously accounted upon and renowned, as appeareth by the writings of sundry learned men, with many of which he was well acquainted also by reason of his embassies into France and Flanders, especially with Erasmus and Petrus Aegidius: which two persons, when that one Quintinius, a singular good painter, had set forth and painted in a certain table, Sir Thomas More made thereof certain verses, declaring that he was sorry that himself was not set in the same table, who did so entirely love them both. The said Erasmus of all men in the world most delighted in the company of Sir Thomas More, whose help and friendship he much used when he had any affairs with King Henry the Eighth.

The which King, for the exquisite learning that he well knew, not only by his erudite books, but by good experience of him otherwise, he was adorned withal, for many years used upon the holy-days, when he had done his devotions to send for him into his traverse and there to sit and confer with him, not only in matters and affairs of this realm, but also in astronomy, geometry, divinity and other faculties. And otherwhiles would he in the night have him into his leads, there to consider with him the diversities, courses, motions and operations of the stars and planets; with whom he was, as not lightly with any man more, at other times wonderfully familiar, as we have partly touched before, not only for his learning's sake, but because he was of so merry and pleasant disposition. And therefore both he and the Queen, after the Council had supped, at the time of their supper, for their pleasure would be merry with him. Whom when he perceived so much in his talk to delight that he could not once in a month get leave to go home to his wife and children, whose company he most desired, and to be absent from the Court two days together but that he should be thither sent for again, he, much misliking this restraint of his liberty, began thereupon somewhat to dissemble his nature, and so little and little from his accustomed mirth to disuse himself, that he was of them from thenceforth at such seasons no more so ordinarily sent for as he was wont to be.

Now for his wise, pleasant, witty talk and for his other qualities, he had besides his learned friends many other as well in England as elsewhere, but yet none so dear and so entire to him as was the good and gracious right worshipful merchant Master Antonio Bonvisi. To whom he, being prisoner in the Tower, a little before he was arraigned and condemned, wrote a Latin letter with a coal, wherein among other things he confesseth himself that he had been almost forty years not a guest but a continual nursling, in his house, and the singular favor, help and aid that he had at all times, especially in his adversities and troubles, felt at his hands; and that few did so fawn upon their fortunate friends as he did favor, love, foster and honor him being overthrown, abjected, afflicted and condemned to prison. And Sir Thomas More was wont to call him the apple of his eye.

This worthy merchant would oft talk of him and also of Sir Thomas Cromwell, with whom he was many years familiarly acquainted, and would report many notable and as yet commonly unknown things, and of their far squaring, unlike and disagreeable natures, dispositions, sayings and doings, whereof there is now no place to talk.

But because we are in hand with the books and learning of the said Sir Thomas More, I will now tell you this one thing only, that I have heard him report that he would at table and elsewhere wonderful deeply and clerkly talk with learned men, as well English as of other countries, and that he once knew when a very excellent learned man (as he was taken), a stranger, being in this realm, chanced to be at the table with Sir Thomas More, whom he knew not. At which table there was great reasoning between the said stranger and others of many great points of learning. At length Sir Thomas More set in a foot and coped with the said stranger, and demeaned himself so cunningly and so learnedly that the said stranger, who was a religious man, was much astonished and abashed to hear such profound reasons at a layman's hands. And thereupon inquired of such as were nearest at hand to him what his name was, which when he once understood, he had no great pleasure afterward to encounter any more with him.

And his good blessed disposition and wise behavior in such kind of disputations is worth the noting. For among all other his virtues, he was of such meekness that, if it fortun'd him with any learned man resorting to him from Oxford, Cambridge, or elsewhere (as there did diverse, some for desire

of his acquaintance, some for the famous report of his wisdom and learning, and some for suits of the universities) to have entered into arguments (wherein few were comparable to him) and so far to have
 5 discoursed with them therein that he might perceive they could not without some inconvenience hold out much further disputation against him; then, lest he should discomfort them (as he that sought not his own glory, but rather would seem conquered
 10 than discourage students in their studies, ever shewing himself more desirous to learn than to teach) would he by some witty device courteously break off into some other matter, and give over.

Of whom for his wisdom and learning had the
 15 King such an opinion that, at such times as he attended upon his Highness taking his progress either to Oxford or Cambridge, where he was received with very eloquent orations, his Grace would always assign him, as one that was prompt and ready therein, *ex tempore*, to make answer thereunto: whose
 20 manner was, whensoever he had occasion, either here or beyond the sea, to be in any university, not only to be present at the readings and disputations there commonly used, but also learnedly to dispute among them himself.

But now it is time to cease from further entreating of his learning and books, saving I think good to be by the way marked and noted how he could possibly write so many and excellent works, either
 30 being out of prison, though furnished with books, being so continually travailed in the affairs of the King's Council and of his great offices, but that one great help was the excellency of his wit and memory, which were both twain singular, and one other, that
 35 he spared and saved much time that men commonly misspend in eating and sleeping; or being in prison, being, as he was, so unfurnished of books.

We will now pursue the form and trade of his other actions and doings, after the time that he had
 40 abandoned the aforesaid office of the Lord Chancellor until the time that he suffered at Tower Hill. But yet it shall not be perchance amiss, seeing we have set forth to your sight his excellent learning and some singular qualities of his blessed soul and mind, somewhat also here to interlace to the contentation of
 45 such as be desirous thereof, before we go further, of his body also, and of other things thereto belonging.

His Appearance and Manner

Then, as he was no tall man so was he no notable

low and little man, all the parts of his body were in
 50 as good proportion and congruence as a man would wish. His skin was somewhat white, and the color of his face drew rather to whiteness than to paleness, far from redness, saving that some little thin red sparkles everywhere appeared. His hair was blackish yellow, or rather yellow blackish, his beard thin, his eyes
 55 grey and speckled, which kind of eyes do commonly betoken and signify a very good and sharp wit. And they say that such kind of eyes are least encumbered with diseases and faults. His countenance was conformable to his nature and disposition, pleasant and
 60 amiable, somewhat resembling and tending to the fashion of one that would laugh.

His voice was neither too boisterous and big, neither too small and shrill. He spoke his words very distinctly and treatably, without any manner of hastiness or stuttering. And albeit he delighted in all
 65 kinds of melody, yet he seemed not of nature to be apt and meet to sing himself.

He enjoyed the health of his body full well; and though he were not very strong of body, yet was he
 70 able to go through with any labor and pain meet and convenient for him for to dispatch his business and affairs. He was very little infested and encumbered with sickness, saving a little before he gave over the office of the Lord Chancellor, and especially after-
 75 ward, when he was shut up in the Tower.

And now somewhat to speak of his diet. Being a young man, he used and delighted much in drinking of water. He used very small ale, and as for wine, he did but sip of it only for company's sake and pledg-
 80 ing of his friends. He more delighted to feed upon beef, salt meats and coarse bread, and that very well leavened, than upon fine meats and bread. He loved very well milk and fruit and especially eggs.

It was great pleasure to him to see and behold the
 85 form and fashion, the manner and disposition, of diverse beasts. There was not lightly any kind of birds that he kept not in his house, as he kept also the ape, the fox, the weasel, the ferret and other beasts that were rare and not common. Besides, if there had
 90 been anything brought out of strange countries, or worthy to be looked upon, that was he very desirous to buy, and to adorn and furnish his house withal, to the contentation and pleasure of such as came to him, who took great pleasure in the beholding of
 95 such things and himself also with them.

5. *After Resignation to Execution*

Now then, when he had rid himself of that office, and obtained that which neither chanced to Scipio Africanus, the Great Pompey, Marcus Tullius Cicero, nor to the Emperor Augustus, to be discharged, when they most desired, of the cumbersome affairs of the commonwealth, nor lightly doth chance to men that be entangled therein, and had now gotten that which he ever most desired, that, being discharged of such offices and troubles, he might beset and bestow the residue of his life in ghostly and spiritual studies, meditations and exercises to heavenward; this his desire, I say, when God had mercifully and graciously granted him, he was the gladdest man thereof in the world, and, as partly ye may understand by the premises, employed his time accordingly.

After he had thus given over the Chancellorship, and placed all his gentlemen and yeomen with bishops and noblemen, and his eight watermen with the Lord Audley, that in the same office next succeeded him, to whom also he gave his great barge, then calling all his children unto him, and asking their advice how they might now in this decay of his ability (by the surrender of his office so impaired that he could not, as he was wont, and gladly would, bear out the whole charges of them all himself) from thenceforth be able to live and continue together, as he would wish they should, when he saw them silent, and in that case not ready to show their opinions unto him, "Then will I," said he "show my poor mind to you. I have been brought up," quoth he, "at Oxford, at an Inn of Chancery, at Lincoln's Inn and also in the King's Court, and so forth from the lowest degree to the highest, and yet have I in yearly revenues at this present left me little above a hundred pounds by the year; so that now must we hereafter, if we like to live together, be content to become contributories together. But by my counsel it shall not be best for us to fall to the lowest fare first. We will not therefore descend to Oxford fare, nor to the fare of New Inn, but we will begin with Lincoln's Inn diet, where many right worshipful and of good years do live full well. Which if we find not ourselves the first year able to maintain, then will we the next year go one step down to New Inn fare, wherewith many an honest man is well contented. If that exceed our ability too, then will we the next year after descend

to Oxford fare, where many grave, learned and ancient fathers be continually conversant. Which if our power stretch not to maintain neither, then may we yet, like poor scholars of Oxford, go a-begging with our bags and wallets, and sing *Salve Regina* at rich men's doors, where for pity some good folks will give us their merciful charity, and so still keep company, and go forth and be merry together."

And whereas you have heard before he was by the King from a very worshipful living taken into his Grace's service, with whom, in all the great and weighty causes that concerned his Highness or the realm, he consumed and spent with painful cares, travails and troubles, as well beyond the seas as within this realm, in effect the whole substance of his life; yet with the gain he got thereby, being never wasteful spender thereof, was he not able, after the resignation of his office of the Lord Chancellor, for the maintenance of himself and such as necessarily belonged unto him, sufficiently to find meat, drink, fuel, apparel, and such other necessary charges. But was enforced and compelled, for lack of other fuel, every night before he went to bed, to cause a great burden of fern to be brought into his own chamber, and with the blaze thereof to warm himself, his wife and his children, and so without any other fires to go to their beds.

Our Christian Zimachus, Aristides, Epaminondas, Agrippa, Publicola, Servilius, who are with immortal fame and glory renowned for their integrity, and for that which, notwithstanding they had the greatest sway and offices in the commonwealth, the first two at Athens, the third at Thebes, the residue at Rome, yet died they very poor and needy.

And now let Tyndale and his other good brethren say and lie on apace, that he well wist that Sir Thomas More, after he gave over the Chancellorship, was no less worthy in money, plate and other movables than twenty thousand marks. The which report the said Sir Thomas hearing, confessed, if he had heaped up so much goods together, he had not gotten the one half by right.

As for the lands that he ever purchased, they were not above the value of twenty marks by the year. And after his debts paid, he had not, his chain excepted, in gold and silver left him the worth of one hundred pounds.

And that he might the more quietly settle himself to the service of God, then made he a conveyance for the disposition of all his lands, reserving to himself

an estate thereof only for term of his own life; and after his decease assuring some part of the same to his wife, some to his son's wife for a jointure in consideration that she was an inheritrix in possession of
 5 more than an hundred pounds of land by the year, and some to Master William Roper and his wife in recompense of their marriage money, with diverse remainders over. All which conveyance and assurance was perfectly finished long before that matter
 10 whereupon he was attainted was made an offense, and yet after by statute clearly avoided, and so were all his lands that he had to his wife and children by the said conveyance in such sort assured, contrary to the order of the law, taken away from them, and
 15 brought into the King's hands, saving that portion that he had appointed to Master William Roper and his wife. Which, although he had in the foresaid conveyance reserved, as he did the rest, for term of life to himself, nevertheless upon further consider-
 20 ation, two days after, by another conveyance, he gave the same immediately to Master William Roper and his wife in possession. And so because the Statute had undone only the first conveyance, giving no more to the King but so much as passed by that, the
 25 second conveyance, whereby it was given to the foresaid Master Roper and his wife, being dated two days after, was without the compass of the Statute, and so was that portion to them by that means clearly reserved.

30 Now upon this resignation of the foresaid office, came Master Thomas Cromwell, then high in the King's favor, to Chelsea to him, with a message from the King. Wherein when they had thoroughly communed together: "Master Cromwell," quoth
 35 he, "you are now entered into the service of a most noble, wise and liberal prince; if you will follow my poor advice, you shall, in your counsel giving to his Grace, ever tell him what he ought to do but never what he is able to do; so shall you show yourself a
 40 true, faithful servant and a right worthy Counselor; for if a lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him." Which wise and wholesome advice of Sir Thomas More, if the said Cromwell had followed accordingly, he had done the part of a good
 45 Counselor, and perchance preserved the King and the realm from many grievous enormities they fell in, and himself from the utter ruin and destruction he at length fell in.

50 A while after this, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, having a commission sent to him to decide,

end and determine the matter of the King's marriage, in open consistory pronounced at Saint Albans and gave sentence definitive against the marriage of Queen Catherine, and declared the same
 55 void, frustrate and of no manner of validity or force. Whereupon the King married with the Lady Anne Boleyn, to whom long before, as it is well known, he bore marvelous great love and affection, and caused her afterward solemnly to be crowned.

Invitation to Anne Boleyn's Coronation

It fortun'd that not long before the King's coming through the streets of London from the Tower to
 60 Westminster to the said coronation that Sir Thomas More received a letter from the bishops of Durham, Bath and Winchester, requesting him both to keep them company from the Tower to the coronation,
 65 and also to take twenty pounds that by the bearer thereof they had sent him, to buy him a gown, which he thankfully receiving, and at home still tarrying, at their next meeting, said merrily unto them,

My lords, in the letter which you lately sent me, you required two things of me, the one whereof since I was so well content to grant you, the other therefore I thought I might be the bolder to deny you. And like as the one, because I took you for no beggars, and myself I knew to be no rich man, I thought I might the rather fulfill, so the other did put me in remembrance of an Emperor, that had ordained a law that whosoever committed a certain offense (which I now remember not) except it were a virgin, should suffer the pains of death, such reverence had he for virginity. Now, so happed it that the first committer of that offense was indeed a virgin. Whereof this Emperor, hearing, was in no small perplexity, as he that by some example fain would have had that law to have been put in execution. Whereupon when his Council had sat long, solemnly debating this case, suddenly rose there up one of his Council, a good plain man among them, and said,

"Why make ye so much ado, my lords, about so small a matter? Let her first be deflowered, and then after may she be devoured."

And so, though your lordships have in the matter of the matrimony hitherto kept yourselves pure virgins, yet take good heed, my lords, that you keep your virginity still; for some be there that by procuring your lordships first at the cor-

onation to be present, and next to preach for the setting forth of it, and finally to write books unto all the world in defense thereof, are desirous to deflower you and when they have deflowered you, then will they not fail soon after to devour you.

“Now, my lords,” quoth he, “it lieth not in my power but that they may devour me; but God being my good Lord, I will provide that they shall never deflower me.”

5 After the said marriage and coronation so solemnized, Sir Thomas More, partly (as a deep wise man) foreseeing what inconveniences and troubles he might purchase himself with intermeddling of the princely affairs, and foreseeing the tempestuous stormy world that indeed afterwards did most terribly 10
insurge, and partly for that he had principally relinquished that office, as well because his health was decayed, as that he would now the residue of his life withdraw and sequester from all manner worldly 15
business, and wholly beset it upon godly, spiritual and heavenly affairs, did not in any wise intermeddle and cumber himself with any worldly matters, and least of all with the King’s great cumbersome matter of his marriage, or any other of his public proceedings. Concerning the which marriage he was not 20
slenderly and hoverly informed, but long, painfully and deeply travailed, as appeareth by that we have already said, and by his conference with such persons, and at such times, and in such manner, as we 25
have before declared; but further also by such conference as he had, as well and above all other, with Doctor Wilson, being both twain in every point of one opinion (for the which the said doctor was sent to the Tower, albeit he did afterward relent) as with 30
the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and Doctor Nicholas, the Augustine friar. Howbeit, finding in all this conference no substantial and sufficient matter to remove him from his first opinion, with most mildness and humility declared the same to 35
the King, adding that if he might have been able to have done him service in that matter, he would have been more glad than of all such worldly commodities as either he then had or ever should come to, whose good mind in that behalf the King, taking in 40
good gree, used in persecuting his great matter only those whose conscience he perceived well and fully persuaded upon that point.

After which time Sir Thomas More neither did anything, nor wrote word, to the impairing of the

King’s part. And though himself were fixed and settled, as the event did show, that neither the King’s 45
fawning and flattering of the world upon him, nor yet any adversity or imprisonment, could break his constancy, yet the matter once passed by law, he did keep his conscience to himself, and would not open 50
his opinion in that matter, especially the causes why he refused the oath, either to the Bishop of Rochester demanding his judgment, either to Doctor Wilson requiring it at his hand, as well before the said 55
doctor was imprisoned as afterward, but did send him this word only, that he had quieted, fixed and settled his conscience, and so he would they should do theirs. And as for the causes of refusing the said 60
oath, as no man knew but himself, and were kept secret in his own conscience, so (as himself writeth to the said Doctor Wilson) they were per chance some other than those that other men would ween, such as he never disclosed to any man, nor never intended to do whiles he lived.

So much have I said, and the sooner, of his moderate and quiet doings, because it hath been otherwise 65
reported that he was a busybody, and that there ran a bruit and report upon him that he was about the making and devising, and meant to divulge and publish in print, an answer to certain articles put 70
forth by the King and his Council, wherein he was most guiltless, and purged himself thereof by his letters sent to Sir Thomas Cromwell.

The said marriage being thus passed, and the authority of the Pope thereupon passing away withal, 75
upon displeasure that he would not pass, by sentence definitive, against the King’s marriage with Queen Catherine, there rose every day more and more some quarrelling matter against Sir Thomas More. And albeit as well in his other offices as in the high office of the Lord Chancellor there were few or none 80
that ever were farther from corruption, oppression, extortion and bribery than this worthy man that for his integrity may be well compared with Fabricius and such other noble Romans, yet, as the good king of the Lacedemonians, Agis, was called to 85
an account for his misruling and misgovernment, whereas he most nobly and worthily governed the said commonwealth, or rather as Blessed Saint Job was falsely and wrongfully noted of Eliphaz for such 90
matters, so was this innocent, good man called to a reckoning before the King’s Council as, forsooth, a great briber and extortioner.

Accusations of Corruption Disproved

He had made, being Lord Chancellor, a decree against one Parnell, at the suit of one Vaughan, his adversary. This Parnell complained most grievously to the King's Highness that, for making of the same
 5 decree, he had of the same Vaughan, unable for the gout to travel abroad himself, by the hands of his wife taken a fair gilded cup for a bribe. Who thereupon, by the King's appointment, being called before the whole Council (where that matter was heinously laid to his charge) forthwith confessed that
 10 forasmuch as that cup was long after the foresaid decree brought him for a New Year's gift, he, at her importunate pressing upon him therefore, of courtesy refused not to receive it. Then the Lord of Wiltshire, for hatred of his religion preferer of this suit with much rejoicing said unto the lords: "Lo, did not I tell you, my lords, that you should find this matter true?" Whereupon Sir Thomas More desired their lordships that as they had courteously heard him tell
 20 the one part of his tale, so they would vouchsafe of their honors indifferently to hear the other. After which obtained, he further declared unto them that albeit he had indeed with much work received that cup, yet immediately thereupon he had caused his butler to fill it with wine, and of that cup drank to her; and that when he had so done, and she pledged him, then as freely as her husband had given it to him, even so freely gave he the same to her again, to give unto her husband for his New Year's gift, which,
 30 at his instant request, though much against her will, at length yet she was fain to receive, as herself and certain others there presently before them deposed. Thus was this great mountain turned scant to a little molehill.

So at another time, upon a New Year's day, there came unto him one Mistress Crocker, a rich widow (for whom with no small pain he had made a decree in the Chancery against the Lord of Arundel) to present him with a pair of gloves, and forty pounds of angels in them for a New Year's gift. Of whom he thankfully receiving the gloves, but refusing the money, said unto her: "Mistress, since it were against good manners to forsake a gentlewoman's New Year's gift, I am content to take your gloves; but as for your
 45 money, I utterly refuse." So, much against her mind, enforced he her to take her gold again.

And one Master Gresham likewise, having at the same time a cause depending in the Chancery before him, sent him for a New Year's gift a fair gilded cup,

the fashion whereof he very well liking, caused one of his own, though not in his fantasy of so good a fashion, yet better in value, to be brought him out of his chamber, which he willed the messenger in recompense to deliver to his master; and under other condition would he in no wise receive it. 55

Many things more of like effect, for the declaration of his innocence and clearness from all corruption or evil affection, could I here rehearse besides, which for tediousness omitting, I refer to the readers, by these few fore-remembered examples, with their own judgments wisely to weigh and consider the same. 60

The Nun of Kent

But then was there a more grievous and dangerous quarrel sought against him by reason of a certain nun dwelling in Canterbury, for her virtue and holiness among the people not a little esteemed; unto whom, for that cause, many religious persons, doctors of divinity and diverse others of good worship of the laity used to resort. Who, affirming that she had revelations from God to give the King warning of his wicked life and of the abuse of the sword and authority committed to him by God, and understanding my Lord of Rochester, Bishop Fisher, being her ordinary, to be a man of notable virtuous living and learning, repaired to Rochester and there disclosed to him all her revelations, desiring his advice and counsel therein. Which the Bishop perceiving might well stand with the laws of God and his holy Church, advised her (as she before had warning and intended) to go to the King herself, and to let him understand the whole circumstance thereof. Whereupon she went to the King, and told him all her revelations, and so returned home again. 70 75 80

And in short space after, she, making a voyage to the nuns of Syon, by means of one Master Reynolds, a father of the same house, there fortunated concerning such secrets as had been revealed unto her (some part whereof seemed to touch the matter of the King's supremacy and marriage which shortly thereupon followed) to enter into talk with Sir Thomas More, who, notwithstanding he might well at that time, without danger of any law (though after, as himself had prognosticated before, those matters were established by statutes and confirmed by oaths) freely and safely have talked with her therein; nevertheless, in all the communication between them (as in process it appeared) had always so 85 90 95

discreetly demeaned himself, that he deserved not to be blamed, but contrariwise to be commended and praised.

Concerning the said nun, Sir Thomas More at large to the foresaid Sir Thomas Cromwell discourseth, and plainly showeth himself most innocent and far from all blame and sinister suspicion, as well in all his doings with the said nun as in all other his proceedings, either touching the King's marriage or his supremacy. Yet all this notwithstanding, at the Parliament following was there put into the Lords' House a bill to attain the said nun and diverse other religious persons of high treason, and the Bishop of Rochester, Sir Thomas More and certain others of misprision of treason, the King presupposing of likelihood that this bill would be to Sir Thomas More so troublous and terrible that it would force him to relent and condescend to his request, wherein his Grace was much deceived. To which bill Sir Thomas More was a suitor personally to be received in his own defense to make answer, but the King, not liking that, assigned the Bishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Norfolk and Master Cromwell at a day and place appointed, to call Sir Thomas More before them. At which time Master William Roper, thinking that then he had a good opportunity, earnestly advised him to labor unto those lords for the help of his discharge out of that Parliament bill, who answered the said Master Roper he would.

And at his coming before them according to their appointment, they entertained him very friendly, willing him to sit down with them, which in no wise he would. Then began the Lord Chancellor to declare unto him how many ways the King had showed his love and favor towards him; how fain he would have had him to continue in his office; how glad he would have been to have heaped more benefits upon him; and finally, how he could ask no worldly honor nor profit at his Highness's hands that were likely to be denied him; hoping, by the declaration of the King's kindness and affection toward him, to provoke him to recompense his Grace with the like again, and unto those things that the Parliament, the bishops and universities had already passed, to add his consent.

To this Sir Thomas More mildly made answer, saying: "No man living is there, my lords, that would with better will do the thing that should be acceptable to the King's Highness than I, which must

needs confess his manifold goodness and bountiful benefits most benignly bestowed upon me; howbeit, I verily hoped that I should never have heard of this matter more, considering that I have, from time to time, always from the beginning, so plainly and truly declared my mind unto his Grace, which his Highness to me ever seemed, like a most gracious prince, very well to accept, never minding, as he said, to molest me more therewith. Since which time any further thing that was able to move me to any change could I never find. And if I could, there is none in all the world that would have been gladder of it than I."

Many things more were there of like sort uttered on both sides. But in the end, when they saw they could by no manner of persuasion remove him from his former determination, then began they more terribly to touch him, telling him that the King's Highness had given them in commandment, if they could by no gentleness win him, in his name with his great ingratitude to charge him, that never was there servant to his Sovereign so villainous, nor subject to his prince so traitorous as he. For he, by his subtle sinister sleights most unnaturally procuring and provoking him to set forth a book of *The Assertion of the Seven Sacraments* and maintenance of the Pope's authority, had caused him, to his dishonor throughout all Christendom, to put a sword into the Pope's hands to fight against himself.

"terrors . . . for children and not for me"

When they had thus laid forth all the terrors they could imagine against him: "My lords," quoth he, "these terrors be arguments for children, and not for me; but to answer that wherewith you do chiefly burden me, I believe the King's Highness of his honor will never lay that to my charge; for none is there that can in that point say in mine excuse more than his Highness himself, who right well knoweth that I was never procurer or counselor of his Majesty thereunto; but after it was finished, by his Grace's appointment and consent of the makers of the same, only a sorter out and placer of principal matters therein contained. Wherein when I found the Pope's authority highly advanced and with strong arguments mightily defended, I said unto his Grace, 'I must put your Highness in remembrance of one thing, and that is this. The Pope, as your Grace knoweth, is a prince as you are, and in league with all other Christian princes. It may hereafter so fall out that your Grace and he may vary upon some points

of the league, whereupon may grow breach of amity and war between you both. I think it best therefore that that place be amended, and his authority more slenderly touched.'

5 "Nay," quoth his Grace, 'that shall it not. We are so much bounden to the See of Rome that we cannot do too much honor to it.'

"Then did I further put him in remembrance of the Statute of Praemunire, whereby a good part of the Pope's pastoral cure here was pared away.

10 "To that answered his Highness, 'Whatsoever impediment be to the contrary, we will set forth that authority to the uttermost, for we received from that See our crown imperial,' which till his Grace with his own mouth told it me, I never heard of before. So that I trust, when his Grace shall be once truly informed of this, and call to his gracious remembrance my doing in that behalf, his Highness will never speak of it more, but clear me thoroughly therein himself."

20 And thus displeasantly departed they.

Then took Sir Thomas More his boat toward his house at Chelsea, wherein by the way he was very merry, and for that was Master Roper nothing sorry, hoping that he had gotten himself discharged out of the Parliament bill. When he was landed and come home, then walked he and Master William Roper alone into the garden together, where the aforesaid Master Roper, desirous to know how he had sped, said, "I trust, sir, that all is well because you be so merry."

30 "It is so indeed, son Roper, I thank God," quoth he.

"Are you then put out of the Parliament bill?" said Master William Roper.

"By my troth, son Roper," quoth he, "I never remembered it."

"Never remembered it, sir?" said his son-in-law. "A case that toucheth yourself so near, and us all for your sake. I am very sorry to hear it; for I verily trusted, when I saw you so merry, that all had been well."

40 Then said he, "Wilt thou know, son Roper, why I was so merry?"

"That would I gladly, sir," said he.

45 "In good faith, I rejoiced, son," quoth he, "that I had given the devil a foul fall, and that with those lords I had gone so far as without great shame I could never go back again."

50 At which words waxed Master Roper very sad; for though himself liked it well, yet liked it him but a

little.

Concerning the said bill put into the Parliament against him, he wrote a letter to the King. In the which, among other things, he writeth thus: "In this matter of the Nun of Canterbury, I have unto your trusty councilor, Master Thomas Cromwell, by my writing as plainly declared the truth as I possibly can, which my declaration of his duty toward your Grace and his goodness towards me he hath, I understand, declared unto your Grace. In any part of all which my dealing, whether any other man may peradventure put any doubt, or move any scruple of suspicion, that can I neither tell, nor lieth in my hand to let. But unto myself it is not possible any part of my said demeanor to seem evil, the very clearness of my own conscience knoweth in all the matter my mind and intent so good. Wherefore, most gracious Sovereign, I never will, nor it can well become me, with your Highness to reason or argue the matter; but in my most humble manner, prostrate at your gracious feet, I only beseech your Grace with your own high prudence and your accustomed goodness consider and weigh the matter. And if that in your so doing, your own virtuous mind shall give you that, notwithstanding the manifold and excellent goodness that your gracious Highness hath by so many manner ways used unto me, I were a wretch of such a monstrous ingratitude as could with any of them all, or any other person living, digress from my bounden duty of allegiance toward your good Grace, then desire I no further favor at your gracious hand than the loss of all that ever I may lose, goods, lands, liberty and finally my life withal, whereof the keeping of any part unto myself could never do me pennyworth of pleasure; but only should my comfort be, that after my short life and your long (which with continual prosperity to God's pleasure Our Lord of his mercy send you) I should once meet with your Grace again in heaven, and there be merry with you, where among mine other pleasures this should yet be one, that your Grace should surely see there then, that, howsoever you take me, I am your true beadsman now, and ever have been, and will be till I die, howsoever your pleasure be to do by me." And he desireth the King afterward that he would never suffer by the means of such a bill any man to take occasion afterward to slander him. "Which yet," saith he, "should be the peril of their own souls and do themselves more hurt than me: which shall, I trust," saith he, "settle my heart, with your gracious favor, to

depend upon the comfort of the truth, and not upon the fallible opinion or soon spoken words of light and soon changeable people.”

5 All this notwithstanding, and the report made by the Lord Chancellor and the others to the King of all their whole discourse had with Sir Thomas More, the King was so highly offended with him that he plainly told them he was fully determined that the aforesaid Parliament bill should undoubtedly proceed forth against him. To whom the Lord Chancellor and the rest of the lords said that they perceived the lords of the Upper House so precisely bent to hear him, in his own defense, make answer himself, that if he were not put out of the bill, it would without fail be utterly an overthrow of all. But for all this, 10 needs would the King have his own will therein, or else, he said, that at the passing thereof he would be personally present himself.

20 Then the Lord Audley and the rest, seeing him so vehemently set thereupon, on their knees most humbly besought his Grace to forbear the same, considering that if he should there in his own presence receive an overthrow, it would not only encourage his subjects ever after to contemn him, but also throughout all Christendom redound to his dishonor forever, adding thereunto that they mistrusted not in time against him to find some other meeter matter to serve his turn better; for in this cause of the nun he was accounted, they said, so innocent and clear, that for his dealing therein men reckoned him far worthier of praise than reproof. Whereupon at length, through their earnest persuasion, he was content to condescend to their petition.

35 And in the morrow after, Master Cromwell, meeting with Master William Roper in the Parliament House, willed him to tell his father that he was put out of the Parliament bill; but because he had appointed to dine that day in London, he sent the message by his servant to his wife at Chelsea; whereof 40 when she informed her father, “In faith, Meg,” quoth he, “*Quod differtur, non aufertur.*”

After this, as the Duke of Norfolk and Sir Thomas More chanced to fall in familiar talk together, the Duke said unto him:

45 “By the Mass, Master More, it is perilous striving with princes, and therefore I would wish you somewhat to incline to the King’s pleasure, for by God’s body, Master More, *Indignatio principis mors est.*”

50 “Is that all, my lord?” quoth he. “Then in good faith is there no more difference between your Grace

and me but that I shall die today and you tomorrow.”

The Oath of Succession [1534]

So fell it out within a month or thereabouts after the making of the statute for the oath of the supremacy and matrimony that all the priests of London and Westminster, and no more temporal man 55 but he, were sent for to appear at Lambeth before the Bishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and Secretary Cromwell, commissioners appointed there to tender the oath unto them.

Then Sir Thomas More, as his accustomed manner 60 was (as we have declared) when he had any matter of weight in hand, went to church and was confessed, and heard Mass, and was houseled, in the morning early the selfsame day that he was summoned to appear before the lords at Lambeth. And whereas 65 he evermore used before, at his departure from his wife and children, whom he tenderly loved, to have them bring him to his boat, and there to kiss them all and bid them farewell, then would he suffer none of them forth of the gate to follow him, but pulled the wicket after him, and shut them all from him. 70 And with a heavy heart, as by his countenance it appeared, with Master William Roper and their four servants took he his boat there toward Lambeth. Wherein sitting still sadly awhile, at the last he suddenly rounded Master William Roper in the ear, and said, “Son Roper, I thank our Lord the field is won.” 75 What he meant thereby Master Roper then wist not, yet loath to seem ignorant, he answered: “Sir, I am thereof very glad.” But, as he conjectured afterwards, 80 it was for that the love he had to God wrought in him so effectually that it conquered all his carnal affections utterly from his wife and children, whom he most dearly loved.

The said commissioners required him to take the 85 oath lately appointed by the Parliament for the succession; to whom Sir Thomas More answered that his purpose was not to put any fault either in the act or any man that made it, or in the oath or any man that swore it, nor to condemn the conscience of any other man. “But as for myself,” saith he, “my conscience so moveth me in the matter, that though I would not deny to swear to the succession, yet 90 unto that oath that there was offered me I cannot swear without the hazarding of my soul to perpetual damnation.” And further said that if they doubted whether he did refuse the oath only for the grudge of his conscience, or for any other fantasy, he was 95

ready therein to satisfy them by his oath. Which, if they trusted not, what should they be the better to give him any oath? And if they trusted that he would therein swear true, then trusted he that of
 5 their goodness they would not move him to swear the oath that they offered him, perceiving that for to swear it was against his conscience.

Upon this they showed him a roll wherein were the names of the lords and the commons which at
 10 the determination and ending of the said Parliament had sworn to the said succession, and subscribed their names. Which when they saw that notwithstanding Sir Thomas More still refused it, they commanded him to go down to the garden.

In the meanwhile were there called in Doctor Wilson and all the clergy of the city of London, who all received the oath, saving the said Doctor Wilson. Whereupon he was committed to the Tower; and so
 15 was also the good Bishop of Rochester, John Fisher, that was called in before them that day, and refused the foresaid oath.

When they were gone, then was Sir Thomas More called up again, and there was declared unto him what a number had sworn even since he went aside,
 25 gladly, without any sticking. And laid to him obstinacy, that he would neither take the oath, nor yet tell the cause why he refused to swear, which, he said, he would do, saving he feared that he should exasperate thereby the King's displeasure the more against
 30 him. And yet at length, when they pressed him, he was content to open and disclose the said causes in writing upon the King's gracious license, or upon his commandment. But it was answered that if the King would give license, it would not serve against
 35 the statute. Whereupon Sir Thomas More by and by inferred that seeing he could not declare the causes without peril, then to leave them undeclared was no obstinacy in him.

And whereas he said that he did not condemn the conscience of other men, the Archbishop of Canterbury taking hold thereon, said that it seemed by that
 40 the matter whereupon he stood was not very sure and certain; and therefore he should therein obey his sovereign lord and king, to whom he was certain
 45 he was bound to obey. Sir Thomas More answered that he thought that was one of the causes in which he was bound not to obey his prince. And if that reason may conclude, then have we a way to avoid all perplexities; for in whatsoever matters the doctors stand in great doubt, the king's commandment,
 50

given upon whether side he list, assoileth all the doubts.

When they could get none other answer of him, he was committed to the custody of the Abbot of Westminster by the space of four days, during which
 55 time the King consulted with his council what order were meet to be taken with him. And albeit in the beginning they were resolved that with an oath, not to be known whether he had to the supremacy been
 60 sworn, or what he thought thereof, he should be discharged, yet did Queen Anne by her importunate clamor so sore exasperate the King against him that, contrary to his former resolution, he caused the said oath of the supremacy to be ministered unto him,
 65 who, albeit he made a discreet qualified answer, nevertheless was forthwith committed to the Tower.

Imprisonment in the Tower

Whom, as he was going thitherward, wearing (as he commonly did) a chain of gold about his neck, Sir Richard Cromwell, that had the charge of his conveyance thither, advised to send home his chain to
 70 his wife or to some of his children. "No, sir," quoth he, "that I will not; for if I were taken in the field by mine enemies, I would they should somewhat fare the better by me."

At whose landing Master Lieutenant at the Tower Gate was ready to receive him, where the Porter demanded of him his upper garment. "Master Porter,"
 75 said he, "here it is," and took off his cap, and delivered it to him, saying: "I am very sorry it is no better for you." "No, sir," quoth the Porter, "I must have
 80 your gown."

And so was he by Master Lieutenant conveyed to his lodging, where he called unto him one John á Wood, his own servant, there appointed to attend
 85 upon him, who could neither write nor read, and swore him before the Lieutenant that if he should hear or see him at any time speak or write anything against the King, the Council, or the state of the realm, he should open it to the Lieutenant, that the
 90 Lieutenant might incontinent reveal it to the Council.

And not long after his coming to the Tower, he wrote certain letters to his daughter, Mistress Margaret Roper, whereof one was written with a coal. And when he had remained in the Tower little more
 95 than a month, Mistress Margaret, longing to see her father, by her earnest suit at length got leave to go to him. At whose coming, after the Seven Psalms and

Litany said (which whensoever she came to him, ere he fell in talk of any worldly matters he used customably to say with her) among other communication said unto her, "I believe, Meg, that they that
 5 have put me here thought to have done me a high displeasure." And then showed her as I have somewhat showed you before, that if it had not been for his wife, for her and his other children, whom he accounted the chief part of his charge, he would not
 10 have failed long ere that time to have closed himself up in as strait a room, and straiter too. "But since I am come hither without my own desert, I trust," quoth he, "that God of his goodness will discharge me of my care and with his gracious help supply
 15 my lack among you." And added, "I find no cause, I thank God, Meg, to reckon myself in worse case here than in mine own house, for me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me upon his lap and dandleth me."

Neither did he at any time after his imprisonment once pray to God to bring him out of the same, or to deliver him from death, but referred all things wholly unto his only pleasure, as to him that saw better what was best for him than himself did. Yea,
 25 he would say that the King, in taking from him his liberty, did him so great good by the spiritual profit that he took thereby, that among all the great benefits heaped upon him so thick, he received his imprisonment even the very chief. And thus by his
 30 gracious demeanor in tribulation, it well appeared that all the troubles that ever chanced to him, by his patient suffering thereof, were to him no painful punishments, but of patience profitable exercises.

And as he was well content, and not only patiently
 35 but rejoicingly also, to bear the loss of his liberty and his close imprisonment; so his heart, being lightened and strengthened by God, and by the uprightness of his conscience, and the goodness of the cause for which he was troubled, was in heart content to lose
 40 goods, land and life too (as he afterward did) rather than to do anything against his conscience. And would say that what laws soever they made, he was right assured that his conscience might stand with his salvation, and that they could do him no hurt by
 45 their law in the sight of God, howsoever it should seem in the sight of men, but if they did him wrong; and that his case was like to a riddle, so that he might lose his head and have no harm.

And thus being well and quietly settled in conscience, the security and uprightness of the same so
 50 eased and diminished all the griefs and pains of his imprisonment and all his other adversity, that no token or signification of lamenting or sorrow appeared in him, but that in his communication with
 55 his daughter, with the Lieutenant and other, he held on his old merry, pleasant talk whensoever occasion served.

The which Lieutenant, on a certain time coming to his chamber to visit him, rehearsed the benefits and friendship that he had many ways received at
 60 his hands, and how much bounden he was therefore friendly to entertain him and make him good cheer. Which, since the case standing as it did he could not do without the King's indignation, he trusted, he
 65 said, he would accept his good will and such poor cheer as he had. "Master Lieutenant," quoth he again, "I verily believe, as you may, you are my good friend indeed, and would, as you say, with your best
 70 cheer entertain me, for which I most heartily thank you. And assure yourself, Master Lieutenant, I do not mislike my cheer, but whensoever I so do, then you may thrust me out of your doors."

After that now Sir Thomas More had been a good while in the Tower, and not so restrained but that
 75 both his wife and daughter might with license repair to see him, he was, as we have said before, suddenly shut up; where were it by this restraint the sooner to draw him and cause him to incline to the King's pleasure, or for such very plain words that he used to the
 80 commissioners, or that they intended to deal with him and others more sharply and to make sharper¹ laws as they did indeed the Parliament next following, and as it was said indeed of some that his obstinate manner, as they called it, in still refusing the
 85 oath should peradventure² force and drive the King to make a further and harder law for him. Which thing, when he heard, albeit he thought that God of his goodness would not suffer such an unlawful law to pass, yet was he pressed³ and ready to abide all extremities rather than to do anything contrary to his
 90 conscience, not slightly and hoverly, but after long and deep consideration and study, informed, and would himself ever say that if he died by such a law, he should die in that point innocent before God.

New Laws: Supremacy, Treason

In the next Parliament was the aforesaid sharp law made that was before feared and talked of, wherein the King was recognized as the supreme head, under God, of the Church of England. And it was ordained that whosoever should speak against the said supremacy, he should be taken as a traitor.

After the making of which statute, the world began to wax more strait and rough toward Sir Thomas More and such other as stood against the King's new supremacy. And as besides his old disease of his breast, he was now grieved in the reins⁴ by reason of gravel and stone,⁵ and with the cramp that diverse nights gripped his legs, so daily more and more there grew towards him many other causes of grief and sorrows, which all he did moderate and temper with patient and spiritual consolation and comfort to heavenward.

First then, after the making of the said statute, Sir Thomas Cromwell, then Secretary, resorted to him with the King's Solicitor and certain others, and demanded of him what his opinion and mind was touching the said act, and would very fain have wrung out somewhat at his hands, to say precisely the one way or the other, but they could wring nothing from him.

Not long after came to him the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Suffolk, the Earl of Wiltshire and the Secretary, and began afresh to press and urge him to some one certain, plain determinate and peremptory answer touching his opinion of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the said statute. They charged him with obstinacy and malignity against the King, because he would not directly answer the question. And the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary said that the King might by his laws compel him to make a plain answer thereto either the one way or the other. Whereunto Sir Thomas More answered that he would not dispute the King's authority, what his Highness might do in such a case. But he said that verily, under correction, it seemed to him somewhat hard: "For if it so were that my conscience," saith he, "gave me against the statute (wherein how my conscience giveth me I make no declaration) then I, nothing doing nor nothing saying against the statute, it were a very hard thing to compel me to say either precisely with it against my conscience to the

loss of my soul, or precisely against it to the destruction of my body."

To this Master Secretary said that Sir Thomas More had ere this, when he was Chancellor, examined heretics and thieves and other malefactors, and gave him a great praise in that behalf. And he said that Sir Thomas More, as he thought, and at the leastwise bishops, did use to examine heretics whether they believed the Pope to be head of the Church, and used to compel them to make a precise answer thereto. And why should not then the King, since it is a law made here that his Grace is head of the Church here, compel men to answer precisely to the law here, as they did then concerning the Pope?

Sir Thomas More answered and said that he protested that he intended not to defend his part, or stand in contention; but he said there was a difference between those cases, because that at that time as well here as elsewhere through the corps of Christendom the Pope's power was recognized for an undoubted thing, which seemeth not like a thing agreed in this realm and the contrary taken for truth in other realms. Whereunto Master Secretary answered, that they were as well burned for the denying of that as they be beheaded for the denying of this, and therefore as good reason to compel them to make precise answer to the one as to the other. Whereunto Sir Thomas More answered, that since in this case a man is not by the law of one realm so bound in his conscience where there is a law of the whole corps of Christendom to the contrary in matter touching belief, as he is by the law of the whole corps, though there hap to be made in some place a law local to the contrary, the reasonableness or the unreasonableness in binding a man to precise answer standeth not in the respect or difference between heading and burning, but, because of the difference in charge of conscience, the difference standeth between heading and hell.

Among other things it was said to him that if he had as lief⁶ be out of the world as be in it, as he had said, why did he not then speak even plain out against the statute? "It appeareth well," said they, "ye are not content to die, though ye say so." Whereunto Sir Thomas More answered that he had not been any man of such holy living as he might be bold to offer himself to death, lest God for his presumption might suffer him to fall. Howbeit, if God drew him

⁴kidneys ⁵gravel and stone: gallstones ⁶rather

to it himself, then trusted he in his great mercy that he should not fail to give him grace and strength.

Thus like a marvelous good and profound wise man Sir Thomas More hitherto demeaned himself, occurring⁷ as much as might be to the sly, crafty drifts of his adversaries going about to snare and entrap him, and to the malignity of the perverse time, that as by no rightful law (nor perchance by their own law neither) they could not justify his imprisonment at that time as he was sent to the Tower, so notwithstanding their new law, worse than the former, yet was there no matter, I will not say by right and justice, but not so much as by their own unlawful and unjust law, to be found in him, that his adversaries might with any outward honest appearance have that they sought for, that was his life and blood; for he had neither spoken nor done anything to bring himself within the least compass and danger of the said law.

The Carthusians and Fisher Executed

For the withstanding of the which, about a two months before Sir Thomas More suffered, the Prior of the Charterhouse of London, the Priors of the Charterhouses of Beauvale and Axholme, and Master Reynolds, a singular learned divine, well seen⁸ in the Latin, Greek and Hebrew tongue, a virtuous and religious father of Syon, and one Master John Hall, vicar of Isleworth, were the 29th of April condemned of treason, and executed the fourth day of May. Afterward, the 19th of June were there three others of the said Charterhouse of London hanged and quartered, and eight or nine of the said house died by reason of the closeness and filthiness of the prison in Newgate. The 22nd of the said month the good learned Bishop of Rochester, Doctor John Fisher, was beheaded for the same cause at the Tower Hill.

The foresaid Master Reynolds and the three persons of the Charterhouse, Sir Thomas More, looking out of his window, chanced to see going toward their execution; and longing in that journey to have accompanied them, said to his daughter Margaret, then standing there beside him: "Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their death as bridegrooms to their marriage? Wherefore hereby mayest thou see, mine

own good daughter, what a great difference there is between such as have in effect spent all their days in a strait, hard, penitential and painful life religiously, and such as have in the world, like worldly wretches (as thy poor father hath done) consumed all their time in pleasure and ease licentiously. For God, considering their long-continuing unpleasant life in most sore and grievous penance, will no longer suffer them to remain here in this vale of misery and iniquity, but speedily hence taketh them to the fruition of his everlasting deity; whereas thy silly father, Meg, that like a most wicked caitiff⁹ hath passed forth the whole course of his miserable life most sinfully, God, thinking not worthy so soon to come to that eternal felicity, leaveth him here yet still in the world, further to be plunged and turmoiled with misery."

Within a while after, Master Secretary, coming to him into the Tower from the King, pretended much friendship towards him, and for his comfort told him that the King's Highness was his good and gracious Lord, and minded not with any matter wherein he should have any cause of scruple from thenceforth to trouble his conscience.

As soon as Master Secretary was gone, to express what comfort he conceived of his words, he wrote with a coal (for ink then had he none) these verses following:

Eye-flattering fortune, look thou never so fair,
Nor never so pleasantly begin to smile,
As though thou wouldst my ruin all repair,
During my life thou shalt not me beguile.
Trust shall I, God, to enter, in a while,
His haven of heaven, sure and uniform;
Ever after this calm look I for a storm.

Yea, three years before this, he showed in certain Latin verses that he elegantly made, but not yet printed, in which he properly and wittily alludeth to his name, that he had little hope of long continuance in this transitory life, and how he prepared himself to the other eternal and everlasting life:

*Moraris si sit spes hic tibi longa morandi,
Hoc te vel Morus, More, monere potest.
Desine morari, et caelo meditare morari,
Hoc te vel Morus, More, monere potest.*¹⁰

⁷ opposing ⁸ versed ⁹ villain ¹⁰ This is More's Epigram 278, translated: "You are a moron if you have any hope of long

lingering here, / Even a moron can tell you that, More; / So stop being a moron and think on lingering in heaven: / Even a

moron can tell you that, More."

Richard Rich Visits

Now albeit, as we have said, Sir Thomas More had neither in speaking nor doing transgressed their new law of the supremacy (suppressing the open utterance of his judgment for such causes as we have shown), whether it were a set matter purposely and for the nonce devised by one means or other to get and extort from him a direct and precise answer, or whether the party of his own head, to better his state and advance his estimation with the Prince, willfully sought the destruction of this worthy man, I cannot certainly tell; but so it chanced that afterward it was laid against him that he had directly spoken words to the derogation of the King's supremacy, and that upon this pretense. Shortly after that the said Lord Chancellor and others had been with him in the Tower, as we have declared, one Master Rich, afterward Lord Rich, then newly made the King's Solicitor, Sir Richard Southwell, and Master Palmer, servant to the Secretary, were sent to Sir Thomas More into the Tower, to fetch away his books from him.

And while Sir Richard Southwell and Master Palmer were busy in the trussing up of his books, Master Rich, pretending friendly talk with him, among other things of a set course, as it seemed, said thus to him:

"Forasmuch as it is well known, Master More, that you are a man both wise and well learned, as well in the laws of this realm as otherwise, I pray you therefore, sir, let me be so bold as of good will to put unto you this case. Admit there were, sir," quoth he, "an act of Parliament that all the realm should take me for king, would not you now, Master More," quoth he, "take me for king?"

"Yes, sir," quoth Sir Thomas More, "that would I." "I put case further," quoth Master Rich, "that there were an act of Parliament that all the realm should take me for Pope; would you not then, Master More, take me for Pope?"

"For answer, sir," quoth Sir Thomas More, "to your first case, the Parliament may well, Master Rich, meddle with the state of temporal princes; but to make answer to your other case, I will put you this case. Suppose the Parliament would make a law that God should not be God; would you then, Master Rich, say that God were not God?"

"No, sir," quoth he, "that I would not, since no Parliament may make any such law."

"No more," said Sir Thomas More (as Master Rich reported of him), "could the Parliament make the king supreme head of the Church."

Upon whose only report was Sir Thomas More indicted of treason upon the statute whereby it was made treason to deny the king to be supreme head of the Church. Into which indictment were put these heinous words, "maliciously, traitorously and diabolically." Many other things were contained in the said indictment, as ye shall hereafter hear.

More's Trial at Westminster [1 July 1535]

Sir Thomas More being brought to Westminster Hall to his arraignment at the King's Bench before fifteen commissioners appointed for that purpose, after that his indictment was read, as well the Lord Chancellor as the Duke of Norfolk said to him, "Sir Thomas More, ye see that ye have heinously offended the King's Majesty; howbeit, we are in very good hope (such is his great bounty, benignity and clemency) that if you will forethink and repent yourself, if you will revoke and reform your wilful, obstinate opinion that you have so wrongfully maintained and so long dwelt in, that ye shall taste of his gracious pardon."

"My lords," quoth Sir Thomas More. "I do most humbly thank your honors of your great good will towards me. Howbeit, I make this my boon and petition unto God as heartily as I may, that he will vouchsafe this my good, honest and upright mind to nourish, maintain and uphold in me even to the last hour and extreme¹¹ moment that ever I shall live. Concerning now the matters you charge and challenge me withal, the articles are so prolix¹² and long that I fear, what for my long imprisonment, what for my long lingering disease, what for my present weakness and debility, that neither my wit, nor my memory, nor yet my voice, will serve to make so full, so effectual and sufficient answer as the weight and importance of these matters doth crave."

When he had thus spoken, sustaining his weak and feeble body with a staff he had in his hand, commandment was given to bring him a chair, wherein, being set, he commenced his answer much after this sort and fashion:

"Touching the first article, wherein is purposed that I, to utter and show my malice against the King and his late marriage, have ever repined¹³ and resisted

the same, I can say nothing but this: that of malice I never spoke anything against it, and that whatsoever I have spoken in that matter, I have none otherwise spoken but according to my very mind, opinion and conscience. In the which if I had not, for discharging of my conscience to God and my duty to my prince, done as I have done, I might well account myself a naughty, unfaithful and disloyal subject. And for this mine error (if I may call it an error, or if I have been deceived therein) I have not gone scot free and untouched, my goods and chattels being confiscate, and myself to perpetual prison adjudged, where I have now been shut up about a fifteen months.

“Whereas now further in this article is contained that I have incurred the danger and penalty of the last act of Parliament made since I was imprisoned, touching the King’s supremacy, and that I have as a rebel and traitor gone about to rob and spoil the King of his due title and honor; and namely for that I am challenged for that I would not answer Master Secretary and others of the King’s Privy Council, nor utter my mind unto them, being demanded what I thought upon the said statute, either in liking or disliking, but this only, that I was a man dead and mortified toward the world, and to the thinking upon any other matters than upon the Passion of Christ and passing out of the world; touching, I say, this challenge and accusation, I answer that, for this my taciturnity and silence, neither your law nor any law in the world is able justly and rightly to punish me, unless you may besides lay to my charge either some word or some fact in deed.”

To this the King’s attorney occurring: “Mary,”¹⁴ quoth he, “this very silence is a sure token and demonstration of a corrupt and perverse nature, maligning and repining against the statute; yea, there is no true and faithful subject that being required of his mind and opinion touching the said statute that is not deeply and utterly bound, without any dissimulation, to confess the statute to be good, just and lawful.”

“Truly,” quoth Sir Thomas More, “if the rule and maxim of the civil law be good, allowable and sufficient, that *Qui tacet, consentire videtur* (“he that holdeth his peace seemeth to consent”), this my silence implieth and importeth rather a ratification and confirmation than any condemnation of your statute. For as for that you said, that every good subject

is obliged to answer and confess, ye must understand that, in things touching conscience, every true and good subject is more bound to have respect to his said conscience and to his soul than to any other thing in all the world besides; namely, when his conscience is in such sort as mine is, that is to say, where the person giveth no occasion of slander, of tumult and sedition against his prince, as it is with me; for I assure you that I have not hitherto to this hour disclosed and opened my conscience and mind to any person living in all the world.”

The second article did enforce also the foresaid accusation of transgressing the foresaid last statute touching the King’s supremacy; for that Sir Thomas More (as it was pretended) wrote diverse letters to the Bishop of Rochester, willing him in no wise to agree and condescend to the said statute. “Would God,” quoth Sir Thomas More, “that these letters were now produced and openly read; but forasmuch as the said bishop, as ye say, hath burned them, I will not stick truly to utter myself, as shortly as I may, the very tenors of the same. In one of them there was nothing in the world contained but certain familiar talk and recommendations, such as was seemly and agreeable to our long and old acquaintance. In the other was contained my answer that I made to the said bishop, demanding of me what thing I answered at my first examination in the Tower upon the said statute. Whereunto I answered nothing else but that I had informed and settled my conscience, and that he should inform and settle his. And other answer, upon the charge of my soul, made I none. These are the tenors of my letters, upon which ye can take no hold or handfast by your law to condemn me to death.”

After this answered he to the third article, wherein was laid to his charge that, at such time as he was examined in the Tower, he should answer that the Statute was like a two-edged sword, the which if any man would keep and observe, he should thereby lose his soul, and in case any man did not observe it, he should lose his corporal life. “The very same answer,” said they, “the Bishop made, whereby it doth evidently appear that it was a purposed and a set matter between you, by mutual conference and agreement.”

To this Sir Thomas More answered that he did not precisely, but conditionally, answer, that in case the statute were like to be a double-edged sword, he

¹⁴ Indeed (from “by Mary”)

could not tell in the world how a man should demean and order himself but that he should fall into one of the dangers. “Neither do I know what kind of answer the Bishop of Rochester made; whose answer, if it were agreeable and correspondent to mine, that hap happened by reason of the correspondence and conformity of our wits, learning and study, not that any such thing was purposely concluded upon and accorded betwixt us. Neither hath there at any time any word or deed maliciously escaped or proceeded from me against your statute, albeit it may well be that my words might be wrongfully and maliciously reported to the King’s Majesty.”

And thus did Sir Thomas More easily cut and shake off such and like criminations; and among other things said that he would upon the indictment have abided in law, but that thereby he should have been driven to confess of himself the matter indeed, that was the denial of the King’s supremacy, which he protested was untrue. Wherefore he thereto pleaded not guilty, and so reserved to himself advantage to be taken of the body of the matter after verdict to avoid the indictment. And moreover added, that if these only odious terms, “maliciously, traitorously and diabolically,” were put out of the indictment, he saw therein nothing justly to charge him.

Wherefore, for the last cast and refuge, to prove that Sir Thomas More was guilty of this treason, Master Rich was called for to give evidence to the jury upon his oath as he did. Against whom thus sworn, Sir Thomas More began in this wise to say: “If I were a man, my lords, that did not regard an oath, I needed not, as it is well known, in this place, at this time, nor in this case, to stand here as an accused person. And if this oath of yours, Master Rich, be true, then pray I that I never see God in the face, which I would not say, were it otherwise, to win the whole world.” Then recited he to the court the discourse of all their communication in the Tower, according to the truth, and said, “In good faith, Master Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than for mine own peril. And you shall understand that neither I, nor any man else to my knowledge, ever took you to be a man of such credit as in any matter of importance I, or any other, would at any time vouchsafe to communicate with you. And I, as you know, of no small while have been acquainted with you and your conversation, who have known you from your youth

hitherto; for we long dwelled both in one parish together, where, as yourself can well tell (I am sorry you compel me so to say) you were esteemed very light of your tongue, a common liar, a great dicer, and of no commendable fame. And so in your house at the Temple, where hath been your chief bringing up, were you likewise accounted.

“Can it therefore seem likely to your honorable lordships that I would, in so weighty a case, so unadvisedly overshoot myself as to trust Master Rich (a man of me always reputed for one of so little trust, as your lordships have heard) so far above my sovereign lord the King or any of his noble councilors, that I would unto him utter the secrets of my conscience touching the King’s supremacy, the special point and only mark at my hands so long sought for, a thing which I never did, nor never would, after the statute thereof made, reveal either to the King’s Highness himself or to any of his honorable councilors, as it is not unknown to your honors, at sundry several times sent from his Grace’s own person unto the Tower to me for none other purpose? Can this in your judgments, my lords, seem likely to be true? And yet if I had so done indeed, my lords, as Master Rich hath sworn, seeing it was spoken but in familiar secret talk, nothing affirming, and only in putting of cases, without other displeasants circumstances, it cannot justly be taken to be spoken maliciously; for where there is no malice, there can be no malicious offense. And never think, my lords, that so many worthy bishops, so many honorable personages, and so many other worshipful, virtuous, wise and well learned men as at the making of that law were in the Parliament assembled, ever meant to have any man punished by death in whom there could be found no malice, taking *malitia* for *malevolentia*; for if *malitia* be generally taken for sin, no man is there then that thereof can excuse himself: *Quia si dixerimus quod peccatum non habemus, nosmet ipsos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est.*¹⁵ And only this word ‘maliciously’ is in this statute material, as this term ‘forcibly’ is in the statute of forcible entry. By which statute, if a man enter peaceably and put not his adversary out forcibly, it is no offense; but if he put him out forcibly, then by that Statute it is an offense, and so shall he be punished by this term ‘forcibly.’

“Besides this, the manifold goodness of the King’s Highness himself, that hath been so many ways my

15 2 Jn 1:8: “If we say that we are without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

singular good lord and gracious sovereign, who hath so dearly loved and trusted me (even at my very first coming unto his noble service with the dignity of his honorable Privy Council vouchsafing to admit me) and to offices of great credit and worship most liberally advanced me, and finally with that weighty room of his Grace's high chancellor (the like whereof he never did to temporal man before) next to his own royal person the highest officer of this noble realm, so far above my merits or qualities able and meet therefore, of his incomparable benignity honored and exalted me, by the space of twenty years and more showing his continual favor towards me, and (until at mine own poor humble suit it pleased his Highness, giving me license with his Majesty's favor to bestow the residue of my life for the provision of my soul in the service of God, of his special goodness thereof to discharge and disburden me) most benignly heaping honors continually more and more upon me – all this his Highness's goodness, I say, so long thus bountifully extended towards me, were in my mind, my lords, matter sufficient to convince this slanderous surmise by this man so wrongfully imagined against me."

Master Rich, seeing himself so disproved, and his credit so foully defaced, caused Sir Richard Southwell and Master Palmer, that at the time of their communication were in the chamber with them, to be sworn, what words had passed betwixt them. Whereupon Master Palmer, upon his deposition, said that he was so busy about the trussing up of Sir Thomas More's books in a sack, that he took no heed to their talk. Sir Richard Southwell likewise, upon his deposition, said that because he was appointed only to look to the conveyance of his books, he gave no ear unto them.

After this there were many other reasons, not now in my remembrance, by Sir Thomas More in his own defense alleged, to the discredit of Master Rich's foresaid evidence, and proof of the clearness of his own conscience. All which notwithstanding, the jury found him guilty. And incontinent upon their verdict the Lord Chancellor, for that matter chief commissioner, beginning to proceed in judgment against him, Sir Thomas More said unto him, "My lord, when I was toward the law, the manner in such case was to ask the prisoner, before judgment, why

judgment should not be given against him." Whereupon the Lord Chancellor, staying his judgment, wherein he had partly proceeded, demanded of him what he was able to say to the contrary; who in this sort most humbly made answer:

"Seeing that I see ye are determined to condemn me (God knoweth how) I will now in discharge of my conscience speak my mind plainly and freely touching my indictment and your statute, withal.

"And forasmuch as this indictment is grounded upon an act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and his holy Church, the supreme government of which, or of any part whereof, may no temporal prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the See of Rome, a spiritual pre-eminence by the mouth of our Savior himself, personally present upon earth, only to Saint Peter and his successors, bishops of the same See, by special prerogative granted; it is therefore in law, amongst Christian men, insufficient to charge any Christian man." And for proof thereof, like as among diverse other reasons and authorities he declared that this realm, being but one member and small part of the Church, might not make a particular law disagreeable with the general law of Christ's universal Catholic Church, no more than the city of London, being but one poor member in respect of the whole realm, might make a law against an act of Parliament to bind the whole realm; so further showed he that it was contrary both to the laws and statutes of our own land yet unrepealed, as they might evidently perceive in Magna Carta (*Quod ecclesia Anglicana libera sit, et habeat omnia iura sua integra, et libertates suas illaesas*);¹⁶ and also contrary to the sacred oath which the King's Highness himself, and every other Christian prince always with great solemnity received at their coronations; alleging, moreover, that no more might this realm of England refuse obedience to the See of Rome than might the child refuse obedience to his own natural father. For, as Saint Paul said of the Corinthians, "I have regenerated you, my children in Christ,"¹⁷ so might Saint Gregory, Pope of Rome, of whom, by Saint Augustine his messenger, we first received the Christian faith, of us Englishmen truly say: "You are my children, because I have given to you everlasting salvation, a far higher and better inheritance

16 "That the English Church may be free, and that it may exist with all its laws

uncorrupted and its liberties unviolated."
17 1 Cor 4:15

than any carnal father can leave to his children, and by regeneration made you my spiritual children in Christ."

Then was it by the Lord Chancellor thereunto answered, that seeing all the bishops, universities and best learned men of the realm had to this act agreed, it was much marvel that he alone against them all would so stiffly stick thereat, and so vehemently argue there against. The which reason in effect the Bishop of Westminster also made against him, when he appeared before the commissioners at Lambeth.

To this Sir Thomas More replied, saying that these seven years seriously and earnestly he had beset his studies and cogitations upon this point chiefly, among others, of the Pope's authority. "Neither as yet," said he, "have I chanced upon any ancient writer or doctor that so advanceth, as your statute doth, the supremacy of any secular and temporal prince. If there were no more but myself upon my side, and the whole Parliament upon the other, I would be sore afraid to lean to mine own mind only against so many. But if the number of bishops and universities be so material as your lordships seemeth to take it, then see I little cause, my lord, why that thing in my conscience should make any change. For I nothing doubt but that, though not in this realm, yet in Christendom about, of these well learned bishops and virtuous men that are yet alive, they be not the fewer part that are of my mind therein. But if I should speak of those that are already dead, of whom many be now holy saints in heaven, I am very sure it is the far greater part of them that, all the while they lived, thought in this case that way that I think now; and therefore am I not bounden, my lord, to conform my conscience to the council of one realm against the General Council of Christendom. For of the aforesaid holy bishops I have, for every bishop of yours, above one hundred; and for one council or parliament of yours (God knoweth what manner of one), I have all the councils made these thousand years. And for this one kingdom, I have all other Christian realms."

Then answered the Duke of Norfolk: "We now plainly perceive that ye are maliciously bent."

"Nay, nay," quoth Sir Thomas More, "very and pure necessity, for the discharge of my conscience, enforceth me to speak so much. Wherein I call and appeal to God, whose only sight pierceth into the very depth of man's heart, to be my witness. Howbeit, it is not for this supremacy so much that ye seek

my blood, as for that I would not condescend to the marriage."

When now Sir Thomas More, for the avoiding of his indictment, had taken as many exceptions as he thought meet, and many more reasons than I can now remember alleged, the Lord Chancellor, loath to have the burden of that judgment wholly to depend upon himself, there openly asked the advice of the Lord FitzJames, then Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and joined in commission with him, whether this indictment were sufficient or not. Who, like a wise man, answered, "My lords all, by Saint Julian (that was ever his oath) I must needs confess that, if the act of Parliament be lawful, then the indictment is good enough." Whereupon the Lord Chancellor said to the rest of the lords: "Lo, my lords, you hear what my Lord Chief Justice saith;" and so immediately gave he judgment against him.

After which ended, the commissioners yet further courteously offered him, if he had anything else to allege for his defense, to grant him favorable audience. Who answered, "More have I not to say, my lords, but that like as the blessed apostle Saint Paul as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, was present and consented to the death of Saint Stephen, and kept their clothes that stoned him to death, and yet be they now both twain holy saints in heaven, and shall continue there friends together forever, so I verily trust, and shall therefore right heartily pray, that though your lordships have now here in earth been judges to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter in heaven merrily all meet together, to our everlasting salvation. And thus I desire almighty God to preserve and defend the King's Majesty and to send him good counsel."

Return to the Tower; Constable Kingston Weeps

Thus much now concerning his arraignment. After the which he departed from the bar to the Tower again, led by Sir William Kingston, a tall, strong and comely knight, Constable of the Tower, and his very dear friend. Who, when he had brought him from Westminster to the Old Swan toward the Tower, there with a heavy heart, the tears running down by his cheeks, bade him farewell. Sir Thomas More, seeing him so sorry, comforted him with as good words as he could, saying, "Good Master Kingston, trouble not yourself, but be of good cheer, for I will pray for you and my good lady your wife, that we may meet in heaven together, where we shall be merry forever."

Last Meeting with Margaret

When Sir Thomas More came from Westminster to the Tower ward¹⁸ again, his daughter, Master William Roper's wife, desirous to see her father, whom she thought she should never see in this world after, and also to have his final blessing, gave attendance about the Tower wharf, where she knew he should pass by, before he should enter into the Tower, there tarrying for his coming. Whom as soon as she saw, after his blessing upon her knees reverently received, she hastening towards him, and without consideration or care of herself pressing in among the midst of the throng and company of the guard that with halberds and bills¹⁹ went round about him, hastily ran to him and there openly in the sight of them all embraced him, took him about the neck, and kissed him most lovingly. Who well liking her most natural and dear daughterly affection toward him, gave her his fatherly blessing and many godly words of comfort besides, telling her that whatsoever he suffered, though he suffered as an innocent, yet did he not suffer it without God's holy will and pleasure. "Ye know," quoth he, "the very bottom and secrets of my heart; and ye have rather cause to congratulate and to rejoice for me that God hath advanced me to this high honor, and vouchsafed to make me worthy to spend my life for the defense and upholding of virtue, justice and religion, than to be dismayed or to be discomforted."

O noble and worthy voice of our noble, new, Christian Socrates! The old Socrates, the excellent virtuous philosopher, was also unjustly put to death; whom, when his wife, at that time following, outrageously cried, "Shall such a good man be put to death?" "Peace, good wife," quoth he, "and content thyself; it is far better for me to die a good and a true man than as a wretched malefactor to live."

Well, to come to her again. This good, loving and tender daughter, the jewel of the English matrons of our time, being at length departed from her father, was not for all this satisfied with the former sight of him; and like one that had forgotten herself, being all ravished with entire love of her dear father, having respect neither to herself nor to the press of the people and multitude that were there about him, suddenly turned back again, ran to him as before,

took him about the neck, and diverse times together most lovingly kissed him; and at last, with a full heavy heart, was fain²⁰ to depart from him. The beholding whereof was to many of them that were present thereat so lamentable that it made them for very sorrow thereof to mourn and weep.

Yet for all this Sir Thomas More, as one quite mortified to the world and all worldly and natural affections also, and wholly affixed to heavenward, albeit he were a most loving, tender, natural father to his children, and most dearly and tenderly affectionated above all other to this his daughter, having now most mightily subdued and conquered even nature itself for God's sake, with whom he looked and longed every hour to be and eternally to dwell with, neither fell to weeping, nor showed any token of grief or sorrow, nor once changed his countenance.

Soon after this Sir William Kingston, talking with Master William Roper of Sir Thomas More, said: "In good faith, Master Roper, I was ashamed of myself that at my departing from your father, I found my heart so feeble and his so strong, that he was fain to comfort me, who should rather have comforted him."

So remained Sir Thomas More in the Tower more than a seven-night after his judgment, from whence, the day before he suffered, he sent his shirt of hair (not willing to have it seen) to Master William Roper's wife, his dearly beloved daughter, and a letter written with a coal, plainly expressing the fervent desire he had to suffer on the morrow, in these words following:

"I cumber²¹ you, good Margaret, much, but I would be sorry if it should be any longer than tomorrow; for tomorrow is Saint Thomas's Even,²² and the Utas²³ of Saint Peter, and therefore tomorrow long I to go to God; it were a day very meet and convenient for me. I never liked your manner toward me better than when you kissed me last; for I like when daughterly love and dear charity have no leisure to look to worldly courtesies,"²⁴ etc.

The Execution [6 July 1535]

And so upon the next morrow, being Tuesday, Saint Thomas's Even, and the Utas of Saint Peter, in the year of our Lord 1535 (according as he in

18 prison 19 *halberds and bills*: spiked battle-axes and broadswords 20 obliged 21 trouble 22 *St. Thomas's Even*: vigil of the feast of St. Thomas Becket (ca. 1118-

1170) observed on July 7. This particular feast commemorated the translation or transfer of his relics on 7 July 1220 from the crypt to the main part of Canterbury

Cathedral – a favorite place of pilgrimage as see, for example, in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. 23 octave; St. Peter's feast is June 29. 24 manners

his letter the day before had wished), early in the morning came to him Sir Thomas Pope, his singular friend, on message from the King and his Council, that he should before nine of the clock the same morning suffer death, and that therefore forthwith he should prepare himself thereto.

“Master Pope,” quoth he, “for your good tidings I most heartily thank you. I have been always much bounden to the King’s Highness for the benefits and honors that he hath still from time to time most bountifully heaped upon me; and yet more bounden am I to his Grace for putting me unto this place, where I have had convenient time and space to have remembrance of mine end. And so help me God, most of all, Master Pope, am I bounden to his Highness that it pleaseth him so shortly to rid me out of the miseries of this wretched world, and therefore will I not fail earnestly to pray for his Grace, both here, and also in another world.”

“The King’s pleasure is further,” quoth Master Pope, “that at your execution you shall not use many words.”

“Master Pope,” quoth he, “you do well to give me warning of his Grace’s pleasure, for otherwise I had purposed at that time somewhat to have spoken, but of no matter wherewith his Grace, or any other, should have had cause to be offended. Nevertheless, whatsoever I intended, I am ready obediently to conform myself to his Grace’s commandment. And I beseech you, good Master Pope, to be a mean unto his Highness that my daughter Margaret may be at my burial.”

“The King is content already,” quoth Master Pope, “that your wife, children and other your friends shall have liberty to be present thereat.”

“Oh, how much beholden then,” said Sir Thomas More, “am I to his Grace, that unto my poor burial vouchsafeth to have such gracious consideration.”

Wherewithal Master Pope, taking his leave of him, could not refrain from weeping. Which Sir Thomas More perceiving, comforted him in this wise: “Quiet yourself, good Master Pope, and be not discomfited; for I trust that we shall, once in heaven, see each other full merrily, where we shall be sure to live and love together, in joyful bliss eternally.”

Upon whose departure, Sir Thomas More, as one that had been invited to some solemn feast, changed himself into his best apparel. Which Master

Lieutenant spying, advised him to put it off, saying that he that should have it was but a javel.²⁵ “What, Master Lieutenant,” quoth he, “should I account him a javel that shall do me this day so singular a benefit? Nay, I assure you, were it cloth of gold, I would account it well bestowed on him, as Saint Cyprian did, who gave to his executioner thirty pieces of gold.” And albeit at length, through Master Lieutenant’s importunate persuasion, he altered his apparel, yet after the example of that holy martyr Saint Cyprian, did he, of that little money that was left him, send one angel of gold to his executioner; and so was he by Master Lieutenant brought out of the Tower, and from thence led toward the place of execution.

When he was thus passing to his death, a certain woman called to him at the Tower gate, beseeching him to notify and declare that he had certain evidences of hers that were delivered to him when he was in office, saying that after he was once apprehended, she could not come by them, and that he would entreat that she might recover her said evidences again, the loss of which would import her utter undoing. “Good woman,” sayeth he, “content thyself, and take patience a little while, for the King is so good and gracious to me, that even within this half-hour he will disburden me of all worldly business, and help thee himself.”

When he was going up to the scaffold, which was so weak that it was ready to fall, he said merrily to Master Lieutenant, “I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself.”

Then desired he all the people thereabouts to pray for him, and to bear witness with him that he should now there suffer death in and for the faith of the holy Catholic Church. Which done, he kneeled down, and after his prayers said, turned to the executioner, and with a cheerful countenance spoke thus unto him: “Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office; my neck is very short; take heed therefore thou strike not awry, for saving of thine honesty.”²⁶

So passed Sir Thomas More out of this world to God, upon the very same day in which himself had most desired.

6. Reputation after Death

Ye now perchance, gentle reader, look that I should satisfy and perform my promise, made you at the beginning of this treatise, of the incomparable worthiness of this man, and show some reasonable cause, as I promised, why that Sir Thomas More did not pursue the life contemplative at the Charterhouse, or elsewhere, that he had for certain years so graciously commenced. Forsooth, this is now done already if ye have given a good and vigilant eye and mind to all the premises, which yet, if they will not fully satisfy your expectation in the generality, but that ye expect some more and plainer particularities, we will now add somewhat more for a surplusage.

Who is it then but this worthy man, for whose worthiness the late noble and new Charlemagne, I mean Charles the Fifth, gave out such a singular and exquisite testimony and praise? For when intelligence came to him of Sir Thomas More's death he sent for Sir Thomas Elyot, our English ambassador, and said to him, "My lord ambassador, we understand that the King, your master, hath put his faithful servant and grave, wise counselor, Sir Thomas More, to death."

Whereunto Sir Thomas Elyot answered that he heard nothing thereof.

"Well," said the Emperor, "it is too true. And this will we say, that if we had been master of such a servant, of whose doings ourself have had these many years no small experience, we would rather have lost the best city of our dominions than have lost such a worthy counselor."

Who is it now but this worthy man, that was so exquisitely learned as never any layman before since England was England? Who is it but this worthy man, that, of all laymen that ever were in this realm, hath with his noble, learned books, and shall by God's grace, do so much good as never hitherto did any layman in England before? I intend to blemish and impair no man's worthy credit, nor other men's beneficial acts to the commonwealth; I know full well that comparisons be odious; but yet I trust I may, without any diminishing of any man's well deserved praise, say that albeit there have been many noble and valiant subjects of this realm and renowned captains for their chivalry, yet they drag all behind this our worthy captain. But if ye will now marvel at this, and think that I do immoderately exceed and pass my bounds, for that it is not known

that ever he was in any warlike expedition, and that, if it were so, that such notable and singular exploits and feats as are pretended, it is most certain ye will say, he never did, yet must I not for all this give over my censure;²⁷ since it is very true that there was never man in England that so courageously and manly hath discomfited and triumphed upon the most grievous enemies that ever this realm had. Which my saying cannot seem to tend either to any untruth or to the defacing of any noble captain's doings, if we grant, as we must of fine force grant it, that the soul is incomparably above the price and estimation of the body, and that to debell²⁸ many soul enemies is a greater and more glorious conquest than to debell many corporal enemies; and if we grant, as we must, that it is a greater benefit to preserve and recover many souls that either were perished and brought already in slavery, or like wretchedly to have perished and to have been brought into the devil's thralldom, than to preserve many men's bodies from peril, danger, and captivity, or to recover them from the same. This, if we confess, and withal that there be no greater enemies in the world to a commonwealth than wretched and desperate heretics (as we must confess it by the main force of truth) then I trust no man can deny but that of a layman Sir Thomas More was the most notable and valiant captain against these pestilent and poisoned heretics (and most royally in his noble books conquered them) that ever hitherto England bred, and that the doings of the notable and worthy captains in martial exploits must yield and give place to his worthiness.

Who is it then but this worthy man, of whom England hath had for virtue, learning and integrity of life such a councilor, such a lord chancellor, as of a layman it had never before? Who was it of whose wit John Colet, Dean of Paul's, a man of very sharp, deep judgment, was wont to his familiar friends to say that all England had but one wit, but of this worthy Sir Thomas More's wit? Who was it now further but this worthy man, that had such a wit as England never had, nor never shall have? Which things not only his books and the testimony of many learned and deep wise men seem to confirm, but it is also expressly and plainly so written by the great excellent clerk, Erasmus Roterodamus, of fine and excellent wits a meet and convenient²⁹ judge, as one that of all other, I suppose, of our time, after this our worthy

man, had himself a most singular pregnant wit. The said Erasmus's words in Latin are these: '*Cui pectus erat omni nive candidius; ingenium quale Anglia nec habuit unquam, nec habitura est; alioqui nequaquam infelicium ingeniorum parens.*'³⁰

Ye will perchance now somewhat incline and bend (as there is good cause) to my judgment. But yet if all this will not serve for a sufficient proof of my censure and asseveration³¹ of his peerless worthiness, we shall add yet one other thing, but one such as shall countervail not only any one thing, which we have spoken of his worthiness, but rather counterpoise, yea, and outweigh all that ever we have spoken thereof. And that is, that he was the first of any whatsoever layman in England that died a martyr for the defense and preservation of the unity of the Catholic Church. And that is his special peerless prerogative.

England and Christendom

And here, I pray thee, good reader, let us, being Englishmen, consider this inestimable benefit of God effused and poured upon us and this realm, not slightly and hoverly, but attentively and deeply, as the greatness and worthiness thereof doth require of us. And let us not be retchless, unmindful and unthankful persons to God. What country then was it of all the provinces of the Roman Empire that first publicly and openly, with their people and their King, received and embraced the Christian Faith? Was it not the people of this our Britain with our blessed King Lucius? And by whom was he christened but by Damianus and Fugatius, sent from Pope Eleutherius purposely, at the suit of the said Lucius, to christen him and his people?

Well, what country was it that first forsook the unity and faith of that See, and took the episcopal miter and the ecclesiastical supremacy from Saint Peter's own head, and put it upon the head of King Henry the Eighth? Was it not the people of England? When this foul act was so passed, and that by authority of a pretended Parliament, God of his tender mercy did not so give us over, but signified his disliking and high displeasure for this outrageousness by his meet and apt legates and ambassadors, not of one only sort, but of all degrees of the clergy, to add the greater weight to this ambassade.³² And

lo, these ambassadors were the Carthusians and the others we spoke of. The Carthusians, I say, men of so singular integrity and virtue, men of so hard and so penitential and of so spiritual and so contemplative life, that they might seem rather angels appearing in men's bodies than very men. These persons, though they were all learned, especially the said Master Reynolds, who was a profound, a deep and exquisite divine, yet in case there should enter into any man a fond and foolish imagination of defect of learning in them, or that they were persons of too base and low degree for such an ambassade, lo, God provided for all such imaginative defect, and sent with them such a colleague and bishop as a man may doubt whether all Europe had for all respects any one other bishop to match him; I mean the blessed John Fisher, the good bishop of Rochester, whose singular virtue all England well knew, and whose singular deep knowledge in divinity all the world knew, as well the Protestants (who never durst answer to any of his books made either against the Lutherans or against the Zwinglians) as the King himself best of all other, as the person that had before openly confessed that the said bishop was one of the best divines in all Christendom.

And now because this unity is to be believed and confessed, not of the clergy only, but of all the laity besides, and lest, if perchance any fond and peevish conceit shall creep into the head of some light brain that the said persons might seem either partial in the matter, as being all of the clergy, or that they might, if not for lack of learning, yet by some simplicity of wit, be in this matter craftily deceived and circumvented, behold the notable supplement made by God of this our worthy layman also; such a one that neither England, as I have said, nor, as I suppose, all Christendom, had the like, even such as I have showed you already, such that was as meet to be ambassador for the laity as was the good bishop of Rochester for the clergy; such, I say, for learning, that there was thereto nothing appertaining that he could not reach to; such for the excellency and pregnancy of wit that no crafty, subtle dealing could entrap and snare him unawares, but that he could soon espy and foresee the danger; such for his virtue besides and devotion toward God, and of such integrity of life and in all his doings, that God would

30 "Whose soul was brighter than any snow; a talent such as England never had

before nor will ever have again – and England is the mother of no mean talents."

31 *censure and asseveration*: formal judgment and solemn affirmation 32 *embassy*

not lightly of his great mercy suffer him, in so great a point as this, to be deceived and miscarried out of the right Catholic faith.

5 So then, as we were the first people that received the faith and the Pope's supremacy with common and public agreement, so we were the first that with common consent and public law forsook the unity of the Catholic Church, and gave the Pope's spiritual supremacy to a temporal king. For albeit the Grecians long ago abandoned the See of Rome, and of late the Germans, yet were they never so bad or mad as to attribute the said supremacy to any lay prince, which both the Calvinists and the Lutherans impugn. So God provided that even in this realm also should be those that should first of all people in the world confirm and seal the unity of the said Church with their innocent blood. Among whom of all laymen (for afterward many other as well of the clergy as the laity, especially one excellent learned man, 10 Master Germaine Gardiner, Secretary to my Lord Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and should have been also for his gravity, wisdom and learning Secretary to the King himself after the Lord Wriothesley, died for the said unity) the very first was our worthy Sir Thomas More. Which notable part to play, and to be therein his messenger for the laity, it seemeth that God did purposely choose and reserve him, though for the time he were propense and inclined to some liking toward a solitary and religious life.

30 This man is therefore our blessed protomartyr of all the laity for the preservation of the unity of Christ's Church, as he was before a blessed and true confessor, in suffering imprisonment and the loss of all his goods and yearly revenues, for withstanding the King's new marriage; for the which matter, if he had suffered death, he had died, no doubt, a holy martyr. But yet, because the Protestants think it great folly for him that he stood in the matter, and that Scripture could not bear him therein, and many of the Catholics doubt, for lack of knowledge of the whole matter, and being somewhat abused with English books made for the defense of the new marriage, have not so good and worthy estimation of his doings therein as they have for his doings touching the Pope's supremacy, wherein they are riper and more fully instructed, I thought to have made in this treatise some special discourse for the justification of Sir Thomas More's doings concerning the

said marriage. But forasmuch as this treatise of itself waxeth long enough, I will spare and forbear that 50 discourse here, and add it afterward in a special and peculiar³³ treatise all alone by itself.

"happy martyr"

To return therefore again to Sir Thomas More's death, let no man be so wicked to think this to be no martyrdom in him, or so unwise to make it more 55 base than the martyrdom of those that suffered because they would not deny and refuse the holy faith of Christ. For this kind of martyrdom seemeth to be of no less value, but rather of more, than the other, as the noble learned bishop and worthy confessor of God, Dionysius, the Bishop of Alexandria, writeth: "That martyrdom," said he, "that a man suffereth to preserve the unity of the Church, that it be not broken and rent, is worthy in my judgment no less commendation but rather more, than that 60 martyrdom that a man suffereth because he will not do sacrifice to idols. For in this case a man dieth to save his own soul. In the other he dieth for the whole Church."

He is therefore a blessed and happy martyr, and, 70 craving leave of the blessed martyrs Saint Thomas of Dover and Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and speaking it without diminution or derogation of their glorious death, a martyr in a cause that nearer toucheth religion and the whole faith than doth the death of 75 the other twain.

The first was slain of the Frenchmen landing at Dover, in his monastery, all his fellows being fled, which thing he could not be persuaded to do. The cause was by reason he would not disclose to them 80 where the jewels and treasure of the monastery was; for whom after his death God showed many miracles.

The second is, and was ever, taken of the Church for a worthy martyr, and even of King Henry the Second also, for whose displeasure (though perchance not by his commandment) he was slain; albeit we have of late (God illuminate our beetle blind hearts to see and repent our folly and impiety) unshrined him and burned his holy bones; and not only unshrined and unsancted him, but have made him also, 90 after so many hundred years, a traitor to the King that honored him, as we have said, as a blessed martyr. As did also his children and all other kings that

afterward succeeded him, even as they have taken up and burned the bones of blessed Saint Augustine, our apostle, who brought the faith of Jesus Christ first into this realm.

5 Yet, as I said, there is great odds in the cause of their martyrdom. For though the King, for displeasure he bore to the Pope for maintaining and defending Saint Thomas, did for a little while abrogate the Pope’s authority, and went about before to cut off and
10 abridge some appeals wont to be made to the See of Rome (wherein and for other things Saint Thomas refused to condescend and agree to his proceedings) yet neither did the King take upon him the supremacy, nor did not in heart, but only for displeasure,
15 mislike the Pope’s supremacy, and shortly restored the Pope to his former authority, and revoked all his other misdoings. There is therefore in Sir Thomas More a deeper cause of martyrdom than in the other twain. Howbeit, as Saint Thomas of Canterbury
20 and he were of one and the selfsame Christian name, and as there was great conformity in their birthplace at London, and that they both were Chancellors of the realm; and in that Saint Thomas of Canterbury, when his troubles began, coming to the King, carried his cross himself, not suffering his chaplain or
25 any of the bishops that offered themselves to carry it; and in that Sir Thomas More, when his great troubles first grew on him, carried the cross in procession himself at Chelsea, the clerk being out of the way;
30 and that both ever after carried, though not the material cross, yet the very true cross of Christ, by tribulation, to the time, and of all at the time, of their glorious passion; and that there was a conformity in that Sir Thomas More died according to his desire
35 on the eve of Saint Thomas of Canterbury; so was there great conformity in the cause of their martyrdom. But some diversity otherwise, as well in that we have showed, as that Saint Thomas of Canterbury, defending the dignity and privilege of the Church,
40 suffered without any condemnation or judgment, in

his own cathedral church, his holy consecrate head being there cloven in pieces. Sir Thomas More was condemned in Westminster Hall where he and his father before him ministered justice most uprightly
45 to all manner of suitors, and where a few years before there was such a praise, even by the King’s commandment (as we have shown) given him, as lightly hath not been given before to any other.

He was executed at the Tower, and his head (for defending the right head of the Church) by the
50 King’s commandment (who renting the unity of the Church, and taking away Saint Peter’s prerogative and of his successors, had, as I may say, cut off Saint Peter’s head, and put it, an ugly sight to behold,
55 upon his own shoulders) pitifully cut off; and the said head set upon London Bridge, in the said city where he was born and brought up, upon a high pole, among the heads of traitors: a rueful and a pitiful spectacle for all good citizens and other good
60 Christians, and much more lamentable to see their Christian English Cicero’s head in such sort, than it was to the Romans to see the head of Marcus Tullius Cicero set up in the same city and place where he
65 had, by his great eloquent orations, preserved many an innocent from imminent anger and peril, and had preserved the whole city by his great industry, from the mischievous conspiracy of Catiline and his seditious accomplices.

But yet Sir Thomas More’s head had not so high a place upon the pole as had his blessed soul among
70 the celestial holy martyrs in heaven. By whose hearty and devout intercession and his foresaid co-martyrs, and of our protomartyr Saint Alban, and other blessed martyrs and saints of the realm, I doubt not but God of late had the sooner cast his pitiful eye to
75 reduce us again by his blessed minister and Queen, Lady Mary, and by the noble, virtuous, excellent prelate, Cardinal Pole, to the unity of the Church that we had before abandoned. In the which God of his great mercy long preserve the realm. Amen. 80