The Life of Sir Thomas More

by

William Roper

Sir Thomas More, c. 1527
by Hans Holbein the Younger

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FORASMUCH as Sir Thomas More, Knight, sometime Lord Chancellor of England, a man of singular virtue and of a clear unspotted conscience (as witnesseth Erasmus), more pure and white than the whitest snow, and of such an angelical wit, as England, he saith, never had the like before, nor ever shall again: universally, as well in the laws of the realm (a study in effect able to occupy the whole life of a man) as in all other sciences, right well studied, was in his days accounted a man worthy perpetual famous memory—I, William Roper (though most unworthy), his son-in-law by marriage of his eldest daughter, knowing no one man that of him and of his doings understood so much as myself—for that I was continually resident in his house by the space of sixteen years and more—thought it therefore my part to set forth such matters touching his life as I could at this present call to remembrance, among which things very many notable, not meet to have been forgotten, through negligence and long continuance of time are slipped out of my mind. Yet to the intent that the same should not all utterly perish, I have—at the desire of divers worshipful friends of mine, though very far from the grace and worthiness of him, nevertheless, as far forth as my mean wit, memory and knowledge would serve me—declared so much thereof as in my poor judgment seemed worthy to be remembered.

THIS Sir Thomas More after he had been brought up in the Latin tongue at St. Anthony's in London, was by his father's procurement received into the house of the right reverend, wise and learned prelate Cardinal Morton, where though he was young of years, yet would he at Christmastide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter make a part of his own there presently among them, which made the lookers on more sport than all the players beside. In whose wit and towardness the Cardinal much delighting, would often say of him unto the nobles that divers times dined with him, "This child here waiting at the table, whosoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man." Whereupon for his better furtherance in learning he placed him at Oxford, where when he was both in the Greek and Latin tongues sufficiently instructed, he was then, for the study of the law of the Realm, put to an Inn of Chancery, called New Inn: where for his time he very well prospered, and from thence was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, with very small allowance, continuing there his study until he was made and accounted a worthy utter barrister. After this, to his great commendations, he read for a good space a public lecture of St. Augustine *De Civitate Dei* in the church of St. Lawrence in the Old Jewry, whereunto there resorted Doctor Grocyn, an excellent cunning man, and all the chief learned of the city of London. Then was he made reader of Furnival's Inn, so remaining by the space of three years and more. After which time he gave himself to devotion and prayer in the Charterhouse of London, religiously living there without vow about four years, until he resorted to the house of one Master Colte, a gentleman of Essex, that had oft invited him thither, having three daughters whose honest conversation and virtuous education provoked him there specially to set his affection. And albeit his mind most served him to the second daughter, for that he thought her the fairest and best favoured, yet when he considered that it would be both great grief and some shame also to the eldest to see her younger sister preferred before her in marriage, he then, of a certain pity, framed his fancy toward 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 he was called to the Bench, and had read there twice, which is as often as any Judge of the law doth ordinarily read. Before which time he had placed himself and his wife at Bucklersbury in London, where he had by her three daughters and one son, in virtue and learning brought up from their youth, whom he would often exhort to take virtue and learning for their meat, and play for their sauce. Who, ere ever he had been reader in Court, was in the latter time of King Henry the Seventh made a Burgess of the Parliament, wherein was demanded by the king (as I have heard reported) about three fifteenths for the marriage of his eldest daughter, that then should be the Scottish Queen. At the last debating where of he made such arguments and

reasons there against, that the king's demands were thereby clean overthrown; so that one of the king's privy chamber, named Master Tyler, being present thereat, brought word to the king out of the Parliament house, that a beardless boy had disappointed all his purpose. Whereupon the king, conceiving great indignation towards him, could not be satisfied until he had some way revenged it. And forasmuch as he nothing having, nothing could lose, his grace devised a causeless quarrel against his father, keeping him in the Tower till he he had made him pay to him a hundred pounds fine. Shortly hereupon it fortuned that this Sir Thomas More coming in a suit to Doctor Fox, Bishop of Winchester, one of the king's privy council, the bishop called him aside, and pretending great favour towards him, promised that if he would be ruled by him, he would not fail into the king's favour again to restore him, meaning, as it was afterwards conjectured, to cause him thereby to confess his offence against the king, whereby his highness might with the better colour have occasion to revenge his displeasure against him. But when he came from the bishop, he fell in communication with one Master Whitforde, his familiar friend, then chaplain to that bishop, and afterward a father of Sion, and showed him what the bishop had said to him, desiring to have his advice therein; who, for the passion of God, prayed him in no wise to follow his counsel, for "my lord, my master,"quoth he, "to serve the king's turn will not stick to agree to his own father's death." So Sir Thomas More returned to the bishop no more, and had not the king soon after died, he was determined to have gone over sea, thinking that being in the king's indignation he could not live in England without great danger. After this he was made one of the under-sheriffs of London, by which office and his learning together (as I have heard him say) he gained without grief not so little as four hundred pounds by the year: sith there was at that time in none of the prince's courts of the laws of this realm any matter of importance in controversy wherein he was not with the one party of counsel. Of whom, for his learning, wisdom, knowledge and experience, men had such estimation, that before he came into the service of King Henry the Eighth, at the suit and instance of the English merchants, he was, by the king's consent, made twice ambassador in certain great causes between them and the merchants of the Stilliard. Whose wise and discreet dealing therein, to his high commendation, coming to the king's understanding, provoked his highness to cause Cardinal Wolsey, then Lord Chancellor, to procure him to his service. And albeit the cardinal, according to the king's request, earnestly travailed with him therefore, among many other his persuasions alleging unto him, how dear his service must needs be unto his majesty, which could not with his honour with less than he should yearly lose thereby, seem to recompense him. Yet he, loath to change his estate, made such means unto the king, by the cardinal, to the contrary, that his grace for that time was well satisfied.

Now happened there, after this, a great ship of his, that was then Pope, to arrive at Southampton, which the king claiming for a forfeiture, the Pope's ambassador, by suit unto his grace, obtained that he might for his master the Pope have counsel learned in the laws of this realm; and the matter in his own presence (being himself a singular civilian[1]), in some public place to be openly heard and discussed. At which time there could none of our law be found so meet to be of counsel with this ambassador as Sir Thomas More, who could report to the ambassador in Latin all the reasons and arguments by the learned counsel on both sides alleged. Upon this the counsellors on either part, in presence of the Lord Chancellor and other the judges in the Star Chamber had audience accordingly. Where Sir Thomas More not only declared to the ambassador the whole effect of all their opinions, but also in defence on the Pope's side argued so learnedly himself, that both was the aforesaid forfeiture restored to the Pope, and himself, among all the hearers, for his upright and commendable demeanour therein, so greatly renowned, that for no entreaty would the king from henceforth be induced any longer to forbear his service. At whose first entry thereunto he made him Master of the Requests, having then no better room void, and, within a month after, Knight, and one of his privy council. And so from time to time was he by the king advanced, continuing in his singular favour and trusty service twenty years and above. A good part thereof used the king upon holy days when he had done his own devotions, to send for him into his traverse, and there—sometimes in matters of astronomy, geometry, divinity, and such other faculties, and sometimes of his worldly affairs—to sit and confer with him. And otherwhiles, in the night would he have him up into the leads, there to consider with him the diversities, courses, motions, and operations of the stars and planets. And because he was of a pleasant disposition, it pleased the king and queen, after the council had supped, at the time of their supper, for their pleasure commonly to call for him to be merry with them. When he perceived them so much in his talk to delight, that he could not once in a month get leave to go home to his wife and his 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, by little and little, from his former mirth to disuse himself, that he was of them from henceforth at such seasons no more so ordinarily sent for. Then died one Master Weston treasurer of the Exchequer, whose office, after his death, the king of his own offer, without any asking, freely gave unto Sir Thomas More. In the fourteenth year of his grace's reign there was a parliament holden, whereof Sir Thomas More was chosen speaker. Who, being very loth to take this room upon him, made an oration, not now extant, to the king's highness, for his discharge thereof.

Whereunto when the king would not consent, he spoke unto his grace in form following:—

"SITH, I perceive, most redoubted sovereign, that it standeth not with your 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 highness' 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 you should seem to impute unto your Commons, that they had unmeetly chosen: I am therefor, and always shall be ready, obediently to conform myself to the accomplishment of your highness' pleasure and commandment, in most humble wise beseeching your most noble Majesty, that I may, with your grace's favour, 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 assembly of your Commons' House. For myself, most 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 lack of good utterance, by my mis-rehearsal, to pervert or impair their prudent instructions, that it may then like your most noble majesty, of your abundant grace, with the eye of your wonted pity to pardon my simpleness, giving me leave to repair again unto the Commons' House, and there to confer with them, and to take their substantial advice what things 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 so happen, as it were well likely to mishap in me, if your grace's 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 aforesaid remembered, is (most gracious sovereign) my first lowly suit and humble petition unto your noble grace. Mine other humble request, most excellent prince, is this. Forasmuch as there be of your Commons, here by your high commandment assembled for your parliament, a great number, which are after the accustomed manner appointed, in the Commons' House to treat and advise of the common affairs among themselves apart: and albeit, most dear liege lord, that according to your prudent advice, by your honourable writs everywhere declared, there hath been as due diligence used in sending up to your highness' Court of Parliament the most discreet persons out of every quarter that men could esteem meet thereto. Whereby it is not to be doubted but that there is a very substantial assembly of right wise meet and politique persons. Yet, most victorious prince, sith, among so many wise men, neither is every man wise alike, nor, among so many men alike well witted, every

man alike well spoken, and it often happeth that likewise as much folly is uttered with painted polished speech, so, many, boisterous and rude in language, see deep indeed, and give right substantial counsel; and sith also in matters of great importance the mind is so often occupied in the matter, that a man rather studieth what to say, than how; by reason whereof the wisest man and best spoken in a whole country fortuneth 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 he when he spake it, than he hath when he would so gladly change it. Therefore, most gracious sovereign, considering that, in all your high Court of Parliament, is nothing treated but matter of weight and importance concerning your realm and your own royal estate, it could not fail 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 one of your Commons were utterly discharged of all doubt and fear how any thing, that it should happen them to speak, should happen of your highness to be taken. And in this point, though your well known and proved benignity putteth every man in good hope, yet such is the weight of the matter, such is the reverend dread that the timorous heart of your natural subjects conceive towards your highness, 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 every thing incident among us, to declare his advice; and, whatsoever happeneth 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 uncunningly soever they be couched, to proceed yet of good zeal towards the profit of your realm and honour of your royal person, the prosperous estate and [preservation] whereof, most excellent sovereign, is the thing which we all, your humble loving subjects, according to the most bounden duty of our natural allegiance, most highly desire and pray for."

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 alehouse. It fortuned at that Parliament a very great subsidy to be demanded, which the Cardinal fearing would not pass the Commons' House determined for the furtherance thereof to be there present himself. Before whose coming, after long debating

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 amongst them: "Masters," quoth Sir Thomas More, "forasmuch as my Lord Cardinal lately, ye wot well, laid to our charge the lightness of our tongues for things uttered out of this house, it shall not in my mind be amiss to receive him with all his pomp, with his maces, his pillars, his poleaxes, his crosses, his hat and the great seal too; to the intent that if he find the like fault with us hereafter, we may be the bolder from ourselves to lay the blame on those that his grace bringeth hither with him." Whereunto the house wholly agreeing, he was received accordingly. Where after he had in a solemn oration by many reasons proved how necessary it was the demand there moved to be granted, and further 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 expectations showing in themselves towards his request no towardness of inclination, said unto them, "Masters, you have many wise and learned men amongst you, and sith 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 you give me some reasonable answer." Whereat every man holding his peace, then began he to speak to one Master Marney, afterward Lord Marney, "How say you," quoth he, "Master Marney?" who making him no answer neither, he severally asked the same question of divers others accounted the wisest of the company: to whom, when none of them all would give so much as one word, being agreed before, as the custom was, to answer by their Speaker, "Masters," quoth the Cardinal, "unless it be the manner of your house, as of likelihood it is, by the mouth of your Speaker, whom you have chosen for trusty and wise (as indeed he is), in such cases to utter your minds, here is without doubt a marvellous obstinate silence," and thereupon he required answer of Master Speaker. Who first reverently on 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 the realm, and after by many probable arguments proving that for them to make answer was 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 several wits, he alone in so weighty a matter was unmeet to make his grace answer. Whereupon the cardinal, displeased 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 gallery at Whitehall in Westminster, he uttered unto him all 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 Sir Thomas More. And to wind such quarrels out of the

cardinal's head, he began to talk of the gallery, saying, "I like this gallery of yours, my lord, much better than your gallery at Hampton Court." Wherewith so wisely broke he off the cardinal's displeasant talk, that the cardinal at that present, as it seemed, wist not what more say to him; but, for the revengement of his displeasure, counselled the king to send him ambassador to Spain, commending to 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 grace how unfit a journey it was for him, the nature of the country, the disposition of his complexion so disagreeing together, that he should never be able to do his grace acceptable service there, knowing right well that if his grace sent him thither he should send him to his grave; but showing himself nevertheless ready according to his duty, or 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 pleasure, Master More, to do you hurt, but to do you good we would be glad: we therefore for this purpose will devise upon some other, and employ your service otherwise." And such entire favour did the king bear him, that he made him Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster upon the death of Sir Richard Wingfield who had that office before. And for the pleasure he took in his company would his grace suddenly sometimes come home to his house at Chelsea to be merry with him, whither, on a time, unlooked for, he came to dinner, and after dinner, in a fair garden of his, walked with him by the space of an hour, holding his arm about his neck. As soon as his grace was gone, I rejoicing thereat, said to Sir Thomas More, how happy he was whom the king had so familiarly entertained, as I never had seen him do to any before, except Cardinal Wolsey, whom I saw his grace walk once with arm in arm. "I thank our Lord, son," quoth he, "I find his grace my very good lord indeed, and I believe he doth as singularly favour me, as any subject within this realm: howbeit, son Roper, I may tell thee, I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France (for then there was war between us), it should not fail to go."

THIS Sir Thomas More, among all other his virtues, was of such meekness, that if it had fortuned him with any learned men resorting to him from Oxford, Cambridge, or elsewhere (as there did divers, some for desire of his acquaintance, some for the famous report of his wisdom and learning, some for suits of the Universities), to have entered into argument (wherein few were comparable to him) and so far to have 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 one that sought not his own glory, but rather would seem conquered than to discourage students in their studies, ever showing 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 king such an opinion, that at such time 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 most prompt and ready therein) extempore to make answer thereunto. Whose 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. Who being chancellor of the duchy was made ambassador twice, joined in commission with Cardinal Wolsey; once to the Emperor Charles into Flanders, the other time to the French king into France. Not long after this, the Water-bailiff of London, sometime his servant, hearing, where he had been at dinner, certain merchants liberally to rail against his old master, waxed so discontented therewith that he hastily came to him and told him what he had heard, "and were I, Sir," quoth he, "in such favour and authority with my prince as you are, such men surely should 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 them by whom I receive more benefit than by all you that be my friends? Let them a God's name speak as lewdly 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; howbeit I trust by God's help there shall none of them all once be able to touch me. I have more cause, I assure thee, Master Water-bailiff, to pity them than to be angry with them." Such fruitful communication had he ofttimes with his familiar friends. So on a time walking with me along the Thames' side at Chelsea, in talking of other things he said unto me, "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." "What great things be those, Sir," quoth I, "that should move you so to wish?" "Wouldst thou know, son Roper, what they be," quoth he? "Yea marry with a good will, Sir, if it please you," quoth I. "In faith, son, they be these," said he, "the first is, that whereas the most part of Christian princes be at mortal war, they were all at universal peace. The second, that where the church of Chrst is at this present sore afflicted with many errors and heresies, it were well settled in perfect uniformity of religion. The third, that where the matter of the king's marriage is now come in question, it were to the glory of God and quietness of all parties brought to a good conclusion." Whereby as I could gather, he judged that otherwise it would be a disturbance to a great part of Christendom. Thus did it, by his doings throughout the whole course of his life, appear, that all his travail and pains, without respect of earthly commodities, either to himself, or any of his, were only upon the service of God, the prince, and the realm, wholly bestowed and employed; whom I heard in his latter time to say that he never asked of the king for himself the value of one penny.

AS Sir Thomas More's custom was daily (if he were at home), besides his private prayers with his children, to say the Seven Psalms, the Litany, and the 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 on his knees ordinarily to say certain psalms and collects with them. And because he was desirous for godly purposes, sometimes to be solitary and sequester himself from worldly company, a good distance from his mansion-house, builded he a place called the New Building, wherein there was a chapel, a library, and a gallery, in which, as his use was on other days to occupy himself in prayer and study there together, so on the Fridays used he continually to be there from morning till evening, spending his time only in devout prayers and spiritual exercises. And to provoke his wife and children to the desire of heavenly things, he would sometimes use these words unto them. "It is now no mastery for you children to go to heaven, for every body giveth you good counsel, every body 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 live in the time that no man will give you good counsel, 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 life, though you be but half good, God will allow you for whole good." 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 featherbeds; it is not the way, for our Lord Himself went thither with great pain, and by many tribulations, which was the path wherein He walked thither, and 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 like sort teach them to withstand the devil and his temptations valiantly, saying, "whosoever will mark the devil and his temptations shall find him therein much like to an ape, who, not well looked to, will be busy and bold to do shrewd turns, and contrariwise being spied will suddenly leap back and adventure no farther. So the devil finding a man idle, slothful, and without resistance, 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 diligerce 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." Thus delighted he evermore not only in virtuous exercises to be occupied by himself, but also to exhort his wife, children, and household to embrace the same and follow it. To whom for his notable virtue and

godliness God showed as it seemed a manifest miraculous token of His special favour towards him. At such time as my wife (as many other that year were) was sick of the sweating sickness; who lying in so great extremity of that disease as by no invention or devices that physicians in such cases commonly use (of whom she had divers both expert, wise, and well learned, then continually attendant about her) could she be kept from sleep, so that both the physicians and all other there present 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 on 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 incontinent came into his mind that a glister should be the only way to help her. Which when he told the physicians, they by and by confessed that if there were any hope of health that that was the very best help indeed; much marvelling of themselves that they had not before remembered it. Then was it immediately administered to her sleeping, which she could by no means have been brought unto waking. And albeit, after she was thereby thoroughly awaked, 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 most fervent prayers 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 he would never have meddled with worldly matters more.

NOW while Sir Thomas More was chancellor of the duchy, the see of Rome chanced to be void, which was cause of much trouble. For Cardinal Wolsey, a man very ambitious, and desirous (as good hope and likelihood he had) to aspire to that dignity, perceiving himself of his expectation disappointed, by means of the Emperor Charles so highly commending one Cardinal Adrian, sometime his schoolmaster, to the cardinals of Rome in the time of their election for his virtue and worthiness, that thereupon he was chosen pope; who from Spain, where he was then resident, coming on foot to Rome before his entry into the city did put off his hose and shoes, and barefooted and barelegged passed through the streets towards his palace with such humbleness that all the people had him in great reverence; Cardinal Wolsey, I say, waxed so wood therewith, that he studied to invent all ways of revengement of his grief against the emperor which as it was the beginning of a lamentable tragedy, so some part thereof, as not impertinent to my present purpose, I reckoned requisite here to put in remembrance. This cardinal therefore, not ignorant of the king's inconstant and mutable disposition, soon inclined to withdraw his devotion from his most noble, virtuous, and lawful wife Queen Katherine, aunt to the emperor, upon every light occasion; and upon other, to her in nobility, wisdom, virtue, favour, 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 (then already contrary to his mind nothing less looking for than falling in love with the Lady Anne Bullen) to cast fantasy unto one of the French king's sisters. Which thing (because of the enmity and war that was at that time between the French king and the emperor, whom, for the cause before remembered, he mortally maligned) he was very desirous to procure. And for the better achieving thereof requested Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, being 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. Which the king not sorry to hear of, opened it first to Sir Thomas More, whose counsel he required therein, showing him certain places of Scripture that seemed somewhat to serve his appetite. Which when he had perused, and thereupon, as one that never had professed the study of divinity, himself excused to be unmeet many ways to meddle with such matters, the king, not satisfied with his answer, so sore, still pressed upon him therefore, that in conclusion he condescended to his grace's motion. And farther, 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 Tunstal and Clarke, Bishops of Bath and Durham, with other learned of his privy council, should also be dealers therein. So Sir Thomas More departing conferred those places of Scripture with the exposition of

divers of the old holy doctors. And at his coming to the court in talking with his grace of the foresaid 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 honourable prelates, nor myself with the rest of your council, being all your grace's own servants, for your manifold benefits daily bestowed on us so much bounden unto you, be in my judgment meet counsellors for your grace herein. But if your grace mind to understand the truth, such counsellors may 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 St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and divers other old holy doctors both Greeks and Latins: and moreover showed him what authorities he had gathered out of them. Which although the king (as disagreeable to 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 had always most discreetly behaved himself) so wisely tempered, that he both presently took them in good part, and oftentimes had thereof conference with him again. After this were there certain questions among his council proponed, Whether the king needed 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 them were of the opinion that there was good cause of scruple, and that for the discharging of it, suit were meet to be made to the see of Rome, where the king hoped by liberality to obtain his purpose; wherein, as it after appeared, he was far deceived. Then was there, for the examination and trial of this matrimony, procured from Rome a commission in which Cardinal Campegius, and Cardinal Wolsey were joined commissioners, who for the determination thereof sat at the Black Friars in London, where a libel was put in for the annulling of the said matrimony, alleging the marriage between the king and queen to be unlawful. And for proof of the marriage to be lawful was there brought in a dispensation, in which after divers disputations thereupon holden, there appeared an imperfection; which, by an instrument or brief, found upon search in the treasury of Spain and sent to the commissioners in England, was supplied. And so should judgment 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 cardinals upon that matter sat no longer. It fortuned, before the matter of the said matrimony brought in question, when I in talk with Sir Thomas More (of a certain joy) commended unto him the happy estate 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 went far beyond me in commending all degrees and estates of

the same), “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 league and composition with them to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be contented to let us have ours quietly to ourselves.” After that I had told him many considerations why he had no cause to say so; “Well,” said he, “I pray God, son Roper, some of us live not till that day”: showing me no reason why I should put any doubt therein. To whom I said, “By my troth, sir, it is very desperately spoken.” That vile term, I cry God mercy, did I give him: who, by these words perceiving me in a fume, said merrily unto me, “Well, well, son Roper, it shall not be so, it shall not be so.” Whom in sixteen years and more, being in his house conversant with him, I could never perceive as much as once in a fume.

BUT now to return again where I left. After the supplying of the imperfection of the dispensation, sent, as is before rehearsed, to the commissioners into England, the king, taking the matter for ended, and then meaning no farther to proceed in that matter, appointed the Bishop of Durham and Sir Thomas More to go ambassadors to Cambray, a place neither Imperial nor French, to treat a peace between the Emperor, the French king, and him. In the concluding whereof Sir Thomas More so worthily handled himself, procuring in our league far more benefits unto this realm, than at that time by the king or 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, as you shall hear hereafter more at large, how much all England was bounden unto him. Now upon the coming home of the Bishop of Durham and Sir Thomas More from Cambray the king was as earnest of persuading Sir Thomas More to agree to the matter of his marriage as before, by many and divers ways provoking him thereunto, for which, as it was thought, he the rather soon after made him Lord Chancellor, and farther declaring unto him that though at his going over sea to Cambray he was in utter despair thereof, yet he had conceived since some good hope to compass it. For albeit his marriage, being against the positive laws of the church, and against the written law of God, was holpen by the dispensation, yet was there another thing found out of late, he said, whereby his marriage appeared to be so directly against the law of nature that it could in no wise by the church be dispensable, as Doctor Stokesley, whom he had then [newly] preferred to be Bishop 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 favourable, that he said he found him in his grace's cause very toward, and desirous to find some good 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 awarded to the Fleet, not brooking this contumelious usage, and thinking 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' favour, he had now a good occasion offered him to revenge his quarrel; farther to increase the king's displeasure towards him, busily travailed to invent some colourable device for the king's furtherance in that behalf; which, as before is remembered, 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. Who between the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk being brought through Westminster Hall to his place in the Chancery, the Duke of Norfolk, in audience of all the people there assembled, showed, that he was from the king himself straightly charged by special commission, there openly in presence of them all, to make declaration how much all England was beholden 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, amongst 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' singular favour towards him, that he had, far above his deserts, so highly commended him, to whom therefore 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 farther disabled himself to be unmeet for that room, wherein, considering how wise and honourable a prelate had lately before taken so great a fall, he said he had no cause thereof to rejoice. And as they had charged him, on the king's behalf, uprightly to administer indifferent justice to the people, without corruption or affection, so did he likewise charge them again that if they saw him at any time in any thing digress from any part of his duty in that honourable 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.

WHILE he was Lord Chancellor, being at leisure (as seldom he was), one of his sons-in-law on a time said merrily unto him: "When Cardinal Wolsey was Lord Chancellor, not only divers of his privy chamber, but such also as were his doorkeepers, gat great gain"; (and since he had married one of his daughters, and gave still attendance upon him, he thought he might of reason look for some); where he indeed, because he was ready himself to hear every man, poor and rich, and keep no doors shut from them, could find none; which was to him a great discouragement. And whereas some for friendship, some for kindred, and some for profit would gladly have his furtherance in bringing them to his presence, if he should now take any thing 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 in Sir Thomas More very commendable, yet to him, he said, 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 you good, and pleasure 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 move the parties to fall to some reasonable end by arbitrement. Howbeit this one thing, son, I assure thee 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, so much favour as he could with reason require. And that he would for no respect digress from justice, well appeared by a plain example of another of his sons-in-law called Master Heron. For when he, having a matter before him in the Chancery, and presuming too much of his favour, would by him in no wise be persuaded to agree to any indifferent order, then made he in conclusion a fiat decree against him. This Lord Chancellor used commonly every afternoon to sit in his open hall, to the intent that if any person had any suit unto him, they might the more boldly come to his presence, and there open their complaints before him. Whose manner was also to read every bill himself) ere he would award any *subpœna,* which bearing matter worthy a *subpœna* would he set his hand unto, or else cancel it. 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 seated or he came, he would go into the same court, and there reverently kneeling down, in the sight of them all, duly ask his father's blessing. And if it fortuned that his father and he at readings in Lincoln's Inn met together, (as they sometimes did) notwithstanding his high office he would offer in argument the pre-

eminence to his father, though he, for his office sake, would refuse to take it. And for the better declaration of his natural affection towards his father, he not only, while he lay in his death bed, according to his duty, oft-times with comfortable words most kindly came to visit him, but also at his departure out of the 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. 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 I understanding declared the same unto Sir Thomas More. Who answered me that they should have little cause to find fault with him therefore, and thereupon caused he one Master Crooke, chief of 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 before him. Which done he invited all the Judges to dine with 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 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 them: that if the justices of every court unto whom the reformation of the rigour 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 bound, mitigate and reform the rigour of the law themselves, there should from thenceforth by him 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 blame me." After that he said secretly to me: "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 them, which they account their chief defence; and therefore am I compelled to abide the adventure of all such reports." And, as little leisure as he had to be occupied in the study of the Holy Scripture, and controversies about religion, and such other virtuous exercises, being in a manner continually busied about the affairs of the king and the realm, yet such watch and pain in setting forth of divers profitable works in the defence of the true Christian religion, against heresies secretly sown abroad in the realm, assuredly sustained he, that the bishops (to whose pastoral care the reformation thereof most principally appertained) thinking themselves by his travail (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 favour, he was no rich man, nor

in yearly revenues advanced as his worthiness deserved; therefore, at a convocation among themselves and others 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 clergv were after the rate of their abilities liberal contributors, hoping that this portion should be to his content-ation. Whereupon Tunstal, Bishop of Durham, Clarke, Bishop of Bath, and as far as I can call to mind, [Vesey], 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 desert, so worthily as they gladly would, requite him therefore, but must refer 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 unto 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 thank thereof chiefly to be ascribed; so gave he most humble thanks unto their honours all for their so bountiful and friendly consideration. When they, for all their importunate pressing upon him (that few would have weened he could have refused) could by no means make him to take it, then besought they him to be content yet that they might bestow it on his wife and children. "Not so, my lords," quoth he, "I had liever see it cast into the Thames, than either I or any of mine should have thereof the worth of a penny. For though your offer, my lords, be indeed very friendly and honourable, yet set I so much by my pleasure, and so little by my profit, that I would not, in good fa'th, have lost the rest of so many a night's sleep as was spent upon the same, for much more than your liberal offer. And yet wish would I for all that, upon condition that all heresies were suppressed, that all my books were burned, and my labour utterly lost." Thus departing were they fain to restore unto every man his own again.

THIS Lord Chancellor, albeit he was to God
and the world well known to be of notable
virtue, though not so of every man considered, yet, for the avoiding of singularity, would he appear no otherwise than other men in his apparel and other behaviour. And albeit he appeared outwardly honourable like one of his calling, yet inwardly he, no such vanities esteeming, secretly next his body wore a shirt of hair. Which my sister More, a young gentlewoman, in the summer as he sat at supper singly in his doublet and hose, wearing thereupon a plain shirt without either ruff or collar, chancing to espy, began to laugh at it. My wife, not ignorant of his manner, perceiving the same, privily told him of it, and he being sorry that she saw it, presently amended it. He also sometimes used to punish his body with whips, the cords knotted, which was known only to my wife, his eldest daughter, whom, for her secrecy, above all other he specially trusted, causing her, as need required, to wash the same shirt of hair. Now shortly upon his entry into the high office of the chancellorship, the king eftsoons again moved him to weigh and consider his great matter. Who falling down on his knees, humbly besought his highness to stand his gracious sovereign, as ever since his entry into his gracious service he had found him, saying, there was 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 serve his grace to his contentation, as he that always bare in mind the most godly words that his highness spake 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 favour towards him, and never with that matter molest his conscience afterward. But Thomas More in process of time seeing the king fully determined to proceed forth in the marriage of Queen Anne: and when he with the bishops and nobles of the higher house of parliament were, for the furtherance of that marriage, commanded by the king to go down unto the Commons' 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 after should follow, which, contrary to his conscience, by reason of his office, he was likely to be put unto, he made suit unto the Duke of Norfolk, his

singular dear friend, to be a mean to the king that he might, with his grace's favour, be discharged of that chargeable room of the chancellorship, wherein, for certain infirmities of his body, he pretended himself unable any longer to serve. This duke, coming on a time to Chelsea to dine with him, fortuned to find him at the church, in the quire, with a surplice on his back, singing. To whom, after service, as they went homeward together arm in arm, the duke said, "God's body, God's body, my Lord Chancellor, a parish clerk, a parish clerk ! You dishonour the king, and his office." "Nay," quoth Sir Thomas More, smiling on the duke, "your grace may not think that the king, your master and mine, will with me for serving of God his master, he offended, or thereby account his office dishonoured." When the duke, being thereunto often solicited, by importunate suit had at length of the king obtained for Sir Thomas More a clear discharge of his office, then, at a time convenient, by his highness' appointment, repaired he to his grace to yield up to him the great seal. Which, as his grace with thanks and praise for his worthy service in that office, courteously at his hands received, so pleased it his highness to say more unto him; that for the good service which he before had done him, in any suit which he should after have unto him, that should either concern his honour—for that word it pleased his highness to use unto him—or that should appertain unto his profit, he should find his highness good and gracious lord unto him. After he had thus given over the chancellorship, and placed all his gentlemen and yeomen with noblemen and bishops, and his eight watermen with the Lord Audley that in the same office succeeded him, to whom also he gave his great barge: then calling us all that were his children unto him, and asking our advice how we 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 wished we should; when he saw us silent, and in that case not ready to show our 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 the 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 we must hereafter, if we like to live together, be contented to become contributaries 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 we will 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 ability stretch not to maintain neither; then may we yet, with bags and wallets, go a-begging together, and hoping that for pity some good folk will give us their charity, at every man's door to sing *Salve Regina,* and so still keep company 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, travail, and trouble, as well beyond the seas as within the realm, in effect, the whole substance of his life, yet with all the gain he got thereby, being never wasteful spender thereof, he was not able, after the resignation of his office of 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. All the land that ever he purchased—which also he purchased before he was Lord Chancellor—was not, I am well assured, above the value of twenty marks by the year: and after his debts paid, he had not, I know, his chain excepted, in gold and silver left him the worth of one hundred pounds. And whereas upon the holy-days, during his high chancellorship, one of his gentlemen, when service at the church was done, ordinarily used to come to my lady his wife's pew-door, and say unto her, "Madam, my lord is gone," the next holyday after the surrender of his office and departure of his gentlemen, he came unto my lady his wife's pew himself, and making a low courtesy, said unto her, "Madam, my lord is gone." But she, thinking this at first to be but one of his jests, was little moved, till he told her sadly he had given up the great seal. Whereupon she speaking some passionate words, he called his daughters then present to see if they could not spy some fault about their mother's dressing, but they, after searth, saying they could find none, he replied, "do you not perceive that your mother's nose standeth somewhat awry?" Of which jeer the provoked lady was so sensible that she went from him in a rage. In the time somewhat before his trouble he would talk unto his wife and children of the joys of heaven and pains of hell, of the lives of holy martyrs, of their grievous martyrdoms, of their marvellous patience, and 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 the loss of goods, imprisonment, loss of lands, and life also. He would farther say unto 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 unto him: wherewith and the like virtuous talk he had so long before his trouble encouraged them, that when he after fell into trouble indeed, his trouble was to them a great deal the less. *Quia spicula prævisa minus lædunt.* Now upon this

resignment of his office, came Sir Thomas Cromwell, then in the king's high favour, to Chelsea to him with a message from the king. Wherein when they had thoroughly communed together, "Master Cromwell," quoth 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 true faithful servant, and a right wise and worthy counsellor. For if a lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him." Shortly thereupon was there a commission directed to Cranmer, then Archbishop of Canterbury, to determine the matter of the matrimony between the king and Queen Katharine, at St. Alban's, where, according to the king's mind, it was thoroughly determined. Who pretending because he had no justice at the Pope's hands, from thenceforth sequestered himself from the see of Rome, and so married the Lady Anne Bullen. Which Sir Thomas More understanding, said unto me, "God give grace, son, that these matters within a while be not confirmed with oaths." I, at that time, seeing no likelihood thereof, yet fearing lest for his fore-speaking it would the sooner come to pass, waxed therefore for his so saying much offended with him.

IT fortuned not long before the coming of Queen Anne through the streets of London from the Tower to Westminster to her coronation, that he received a letter from the Bishops of Durham, Bath and Winchester, requesting him both to keep them company from the Tower to the coronation, and also to take twenty pounds, that by the bearer thereof they had sent him, to buy a gown withal; which he thankfully receiving, and at home still tarrying, at their next meeting said merrily unto them; "My lords, in the letters which you lately sent me you required two things of me: the one, sith 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 fulfil, so the other did put me in remembrance of an emperor who ordained a law that whosoever had committed a certain heinous offence (which I now remember not), except it were a virgin, should suffer the pains of death—such a reverence had he to virginity. Now so it happened that the first committer of that offence was indeed a virgin, whereof the emperor hearing was in no small perplexity, as he that by some example would fain have had that law put in execution. Whereupon when his council had sat long, solemnly debating this cause, suddenly rose there up one of his council, a good plain man, amongst them, and said, 'Why make you 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 there be that by procuring your lordships first at the coronation to be present, and next to preach for the setting forth of it, and finally to write books to all the world in defence 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 so provide that they shall never deflower me."

IN continuance: when the king saw that he could by no manner of benefit win him to his side, then lo, went he about by terror and threats to drive him thereunto. The beginning of which trouble grew by occasion of a certain nun dwelling in Canterbury, for her virtue and holiness of life among the people not a little esteemed: unto whom, for that cause, many religious persons, doctors of divinity, and divers 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, to be a man of notable virtuous living and learning, repaired to Rochester, and there disclosed unto him all her revelations, desiring his advice and council 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 know and understand the whole circumstance thereof. Whereupon she went to the king and told him all her revelations, and so returned home again. And in short space after, making a journey to the nuns of Sion, by means of one Master Raynolds, a father of the same house, she there fortuned, 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 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 discreetly demeaned himself) that he deserved not to be blamed, but contrariwise to be commended and praised. And had he not been one that in all his great offices and doings for the king and the realm, so many years together, had from all corruption and wrong-doing or bribes-taking kept himself so clear, that no man was able therewith once to blame or blemish him, or make any just quarrel against him, it would without doubt in this troublous time of the king's indignation towards him have been deeply laid to his charge, and of the king's highness most favourably accepted. As in the case of one Parnell it most manifestly appeared; against whom, because Sir Thomas More while he was Lord Chancellor, at the suit of one Vaughan his adversary, had made a decree, this Parnell to his highness most grievously complained that he, for making the decree, had of the said Vaughan, unable to travel abroad himself for the gout, by the hands of his wife taken a fair great gilt cup for a bribe. Who thereupon, by the king's appointment being called before the whole council where the matter was heinously laid to his charge, forthwith confessed that forasmuch as that cup was, long after the foresaid decree, brought him for a New Year's gift, he, upon her importunate pressing upon

him thereof, of courtesy refused not to receive it. Then the Lord of Wiltshire, for hatred of his religion preferrer of this suit, with much rejoicing said unto the lords: "Lo, my lords, did I not tell you, my lords, that you should find this matter true?" Whereupon Sir Thomas More desired their lordships that as they had heard him courteously tell the one part of his tale, so that they would vouchsafe of their honours indifferently to hear the other. After which obtained, he farther declared unto them, that albeit he had indeed with much work received that cup, yet immediately thereupon caused he 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 again to her to give unto her husband for his New Year's gift: which, at his instant request, though much against her will, at length yet she was fain to receive, as herself and certain others there present before them deposed. Thus was the great mountain turned scant to a little molehill. So I remember that at another time, upon a New Year's day, there came unto him one Mistress Croker, a rich widow, for whom with no small pains he had made a decree in the Chancery against the Lord of Arundel, to present him with a pair of gloves and forty pounds in 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 money I utterly refuse." So, much against her mind, enforced he her to take her gold again. And one Master Gresham likewise at the same time, having a cause depending in the Chancery before him, sent him for New Year's gift a fair gilt 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 out of his chamber, which he willed the messenger, in recompense to deliver unto his master, and under other conditions would he in no wise receive it. Many things more of like effect, for the declaration of his innocency 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.

AT the parliament following was there put into the Lords' house a bill to attaint the nun, and divers 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 defence 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 I, thinking that I had a good and fit opportunity, earnestly advised him to labour to those lords for the help of his discharge out of the parliament bill. Who answered me 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 favour towards him; how fain he would have had him 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 honour nor profit at his highness' hands that were likely to be denied him; hoping, by the declaration of the king's kindness and affection towards him, to provoke him to recompense his grace with the like again, and unto those things which the parliament, the bishops, and the Universities had already passed, to add his consent. To this Sir Thomas More mildly made answer, saying, "No man is living 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 benefits and bountiful goodness, most benignly beotowed upon me. Howbeit, I verily hoped 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 ever seemed to me, 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 persuasions 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 dishonour throughout all Christendom, to put a sword in the Pope's hand to fight against himself. 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 burthen me, I believe the king's highness of his honour will lay that to my charge, or none is there that can in that point say in my excuse more than his highness himself, who right well knoweth that I was never procurer nor counsellor of his majesty thereunto, but after it was finished, by his grace's appointment and consent of the makers of the same, I was only a sorter out and placer of the 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 here after 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.' "Nay,' quoth his grace, 'that it shall not: we are so much bounden unto the see of Rome that we cannot do too much honour unto it.' Then did I farther put him in remembrance of the Statute of Praemunire, whereby a good part of the Pope's pastoral care here was pared away. 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 I never heard of before till his grace told it me with his own mouth. So that I trust when his grace shall be 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 therein thoroughly himself." And thus displeasantly departed they. Then took Sir Thomas More his boat towards his house at Chelsea, wherein by the way he was very merry, and for that I was nothing sorry, hoping that he had gotten himself discharged out of the parliament bill. When he was landed and come home, then walked we twain alone in his garden together: where I, desirous to know how he had sped, said: "I trust, Sir, that all is well because that you be so merry." "It is so indeed, son Roper, I thank God," quoth he. "Are you then put out of the parliament bill?" quoth I. "By my troth, son Roper," quoth he, "I never [remembered] it!" "Never remembered it!" said I, "a case that toucheth yourself so near, and us all for your sake! I am sorry to hear it, for I verily trusted, when I saw you so merry, that all had been well." Then said he: "Wilt thou know, son Roper, why I was so merry?"" "That would I gladly, Sir," quoth I. "In good faith I rejoiced, son," said 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." At which words waxed I very sad; for though himself liked it well, yet liked it me but a little. Now upon the report made by the Lord Chancellor and the other lords to the king of all their whole discourse had with Sir Thomas More, the king was so highly offended with him, he plainly told them he was fully determined that the foresaid 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 defence, 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, needs would the king have his own will therein, or else, he said that at the passing thereof he would be personally present himself. 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 in his own presence receive an overthrow, it would not only encourage his subjects ever after to contemn him, but also through all Christendom redound to his dishonour for ever: adding thereunto that they mistrusted not in time against him to find some meeter matter to serve his grace's 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; and on the morrow, after Master Cromwell meeting me in the parliament house, willed me to tell my father that he was put out of the parliament bill. But because I had appointed to dine that day in London, I sent the message by my servant to my wife to Chelsea. Whereof when she informed her father: "In faith, Megg," quoth he, "Q*uod 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: "By the mass, Master More, it is perilous striving with princes, therefore I would wish you somewhat to incline to the king's pleasure. For by God's body, Master More, *Indignatio principis mors est.*" "Is that all, my lord?" quoth he. "Then in good faith the difference between your grace and me is but this, that *I shall die to-day and you to-morrow.*" So fell it out, within a mouth or thereabout, after the making of the Statute for the Oath of the Supremacy and Matrimony, that all the priests of London and Westminster, and no temporal men 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 was always ere he entered into any matter of importance—as when he was first chosen of the king's privy council, when he was sent ambassador, appointed Speakcr of the Parliament, made Lord Chancellor, or when he took any like weighty

matter upon him—to go to church and be confessed, to hear mass, and be houseled, so did he likewise in the morning early the selfsame day that he was summoned to appear before the lords at Lambeth. And whereas 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, and bid them all 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, and with a heavy heart, as by his countenance it appeared, with me and our four servants there took boat towards Lambeth. Wherein sitting still sadly a while, at the last he rounded me in the ear and said: "Son Roper, I thank our Lord the field is won." What he meant thereby I wist not, yet loath to seem ignorant, I answered: "Sir, I am thereof very glad." But, as I conjectured afterwards, it was for that the love he had to God wrought in him so effectually, that it conquered all his carnal affections utterly. Now at his coming to Lambeth, how wisely he behaved himself before the commissioners at the ministration of the oath unto him may be found in certain Letters of his sent to my wife remaining in a great book of his works. Where by the space of four days he was betaken to the custody of the Abbot of Westminster, during which 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 acknown, whether he had to the supremacy been sworn, or what he thought thereof, he should be discharged; yet did Queen Anne by her importunate clamour 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. Who albeit he made a discreet qualified answer, nevertheless was committed to the Tower. Who 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 him to send home his chain to his wife or to some of his children. "Nay, Sir," quoth he, "that I will not: for if I were taken in the field by my enemies I would they should somewhat fare the better for me." At whose landing Master Lieutenant was ready at the Tower gate to receive him, where the porter demanded of him his upper garment. "Master porter," quoth he, "here it is," and took off his cap and delivered it to saying, "I am very sorry it is no better for thee." "No, Sir," quoth the porter, "I must have your gown." And so was he by Master Lieutenant conveyed to his lodging, where he called unto him one John a Wood, his own servant there appointed to attend him, who could neither write nor read, and sware him before the lieutenant, that if he should hear or see him at any time speak or write any matter against the king, the council, or the state of the realm, he should open it to the lieutenant, that the lieutenant might incontinent reveal it to the council.

NOW when he had remained in the Tower little more than a month, my wife, longing to see her father, by her earnest suit at length got leave to go unto 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 accustomedly to say with her—among other communication he said unto her: "I believe, Megg, that they that have put me here ween that they have done me a high displeasure: but I assure thee on my faith, mine own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and ye that be my children (whom I account the chief part of my charge) I would not have failed long ere this to have closed myself in as straight a room, and straighter too. But since I am come hither without mine own desert, I trust that God of His goodness will discharge me of my care, and with His gracious help supply my lack among you. I find no cause, I thank God, Megg, to reckon myself in worse case here than in mine own house, for me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on his lap and dandleth me." Thus, by his gracious demeanour in tribulation, appeared it that all the trouble that ever chanced unto him, by his patient sufferance thereof, were to him no painful punishments, but of his patience profitable exercises. And at another time, when he had first questioned with my wife a while 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, Megg!" quoth he, "alas! Megg, alas! it pitieth me to remember into what misery, poor soul, she shall shortly come." After this Master Lieutenant coming into his chamber to visit him, rehearsed the benefits and friendship that he had many ways received at his hands, and how much bounden he was therefore friendly to entertain him, and to make him good cheer; which since, the case standing as it did, he could do not without the king's indignation, he trusted he said, he would accept his good will, and such poor cheer as he had. "Master Lieutenant," quoth he again, "I verily believe as you say, so are you my good friend indeed, and would, as you say, with your best cheer entertain me, for the which I most heartily thank you: and assure yourself, Master Lieutenant, I do not mislike my cheer, but whensoever I so do, then thrust me out of your doors." Whereas the oath confirming the Supremacy and Matrimony was by the first statute in few words comprised, the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Secretary did of their own heads add more words unto it, to make it appear to the king's ears more pleasant and plausible, and that oath, so amplified, caused they to be ministered to Sir Thomas More, and to all other throughout the realm. Which Sir Thomas More perceiving, said unto my wife: "I may tell thee, Megg, they that have committed me hither for the refusing of this oath, not agreeable with the statute, are not by their own law able to justify mine imprisonment: and surely, daughter, it is great pity that any Christian

prince should by a flexible council ready to follow his affections, and by a weak clergy lacking grace constantly to stand to their learning, with flattery be so shamefully abused." But, at length, the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Secretary, espying their oversight in that behalf, were fain afterward to find the means that another statute should be made for the confirmation of the oath so amplified with their additions.

AFTER Sir Thomas More had given over his office, and all worldly doings therewith, to the intent he might from thenceforth settle himself the more quietly 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 thereof to his wife, some to his son's wife for a jointure in consideration that she was an inheretrix in possession of more than a hundred pounds land by the year, and some to me and my wife in recompense of our marriage money, with divers remainders over. All which conveyance and assurance was perfectly finished long before the matter whereupon he was attainted was made an offence, 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 law, taken from them and brought into the king's hands, saving that portion which he had appointed to my wife and me. Which although he had in the foresaid conveyance reserved as he did the rest for term of life to himself, nevertheless upon consideration two days after by another conveyance he gave the same immediately to my wife and me 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 second conveyance, whereby it was given to my wife and me, being dated two days after, was without the compass of the statute, and so was our portion by that means clearly reserved to us. As Sir Thomas More, in the Tower, chanced on a time, looking out of his window, to behold one Master Reynolds, a religious, learned and virtuous father of Sion, and three monks of the Charterhouse, for the matter of the Supremacy and Matrimony, going out of the Tower to execution, he, as one longing in that journey to have accompanied them, said unto my wife, then standing there beside him: "Lo, doest thou not see, Megg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage? Wherefore thereby 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 straight, 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 continued 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, Megg, that like a most wicked caitiff hath passed forth the whole course of his miserable life most sinfully, God, thinking him not worthy so soon to come to that eternal felicity, leaveth him here yet still in the world further to be plagued 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 mindeth not with any matter wherein he should have any cause of scruple henceforth to trouble his conscience. As soon as Master Secretary was gone, to express what comfort he received of his words, he wrote with a coal, for ink then he had none, these verses:

Eye-flattering fortune, look thou ne'er so fair,
Or ne'er so pleasantly begin to smile,
As though thou wouldst my ruin all repair,
During my life thou shall not me beguile:
Trust shall I, God, to enter in a while,
Thy haven of heaven sure and uniform,
E'er after thy calm look I for a storm.

WHEN Sir Thomas More had continued a good while in the Tower, my lady, his wife, obtained license to see him. Who, at her first coming, like a simple ignorant woman, and somewhat worldly too, with this manner of salutation bluntly saluted him: "What the good-yere, 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, and with the favour 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 gallery, your garden, your orchard, and all other necessaries, 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." 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. "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: "Tylle valle, Tylle valle!" "How say you, Mistress Alice, 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 in my gay house, or in any thing thereunto belonging, when if I should but seven years lie buried under the ground and then arise and come thither again, I should not fail to find some therein that would bid me get 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. Not long after came to him the Lord Chancellor, the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, with Master Secretary, and certain other of the privy council, at two several times by all policies possible procuring him either precisely to confess the Supremacy, or precisely to deny it, whereunto, as appeareth by his examinations in the said great book, they could never bring him. Shortly thereupon Master Rich, afterward Lord Rich, then newly made the King's Solicitor, Sir Richard Southwell, and one 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 Mr. Palmer were busy in the trussing up of his books, Mr. Rich, pretending friendly talk with him, among other things of a set course, as it seemed, said thus unto 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 the 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 the realm should take me for king, would not you, Mr. More, take me for king?" "Yes, Sir,"

quoth Sir Thomas More," that would I." "I put the case further," quoth Mr. 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 parliaament 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 would I not, sith no parliament may make any such law." "No more," said Sir Thomas More (as Master Rich reported him), "could the parliament make the king supreme head of the church." Upon whose only report was Sir Thomas More indicted of high treason on the Statute to deny the king to be Supreme Head of the Church, into which indictment were put these heinous words, *maliciously, traitorously* and *diabolically.*

WHEN Sir Thomas More was brought from the Tower to Westminster Hall to answer to the indictment, and at the King's Bench bar there before the judges arraigned, he openly told them that he would upon that indictment have abiden in law, but that he thereby 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 thereunto pleaded not guilty, and so reserved unto himself advantage to be taken of the body of the matter after verdict to avoid that indictment: and moreover added, that if those only odious terms, *maliciously, traitorously,* and *diabolically,* were put out of the indictment, he saw therein nothing justly to charge him. And for proof to the jury that Sir Thomas More was guilty of this treason Master Rich was called forth to give evidence unto them 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, and 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 I pray 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 no 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 together in one parish. Whereas yourself can tell—I am sorry you compel me to say—you were esteemed very light of your tongue, 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 unto your honourable lordships that I would in so weighty a cause so unadvisedly overshoot myself as to trust Master Rich, a man of me always reputed of so little truth, as your lordships have heard, so far above my sovereign lord the king, or any of his noble counsellors, 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 unto the king's highness himself or to any of his honourable counsellors, as it is not unknown unto your honours at sundry and several times sent from his grace's own person to the Tower unto me for none other purpose. Can this in your judgment, my lords, seem likely to be true? And 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 displeasant circumstances, it cannot justly be taken to be spoken *maliciously*: and where there is no malice, there can be no offence. And over this I can never think, my lords, that so many worthy bishops, so many honourable personages, and 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 can excuse himself. *Quia si dixerimus quod peccatum non habemus, nosmet ipsos seducemus, et veritas in nobis non est.* And only this word maliciously is in the statute material, as this term *forcibly* is in the statute of *forcible entries*, by which statute if a man enter peaceably, and put not his adversary out *forcibly*, it is no offence, but if he put him out *forcibly*, then by that statute it is an offence, 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 singular good lord and gracious sovereign, and that hath so dearly loved and trusted me, even at my very first coming into his noble service, with the dignity of his honourable 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 in this whole realm, so far above my qualities or merits able and meet therefore of his own incomparable benignity honoured and exalted me; by the space of twenty years and more, showing his continual favour toward me, and (until at mine own poor suit it pleased his highness giving me license with his majesty's favour to bestow the residue of my life, for the provision of my soul, in the service of God, and of his special goodness thereof to discharge and unburthen me) most benignly heaped honours continually more and more upon me: all this his highness' 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, who at the time of their communication were in the chamber, to be sworn what words had passed betwixt them. Whereupon Master Palmer upon his depositions said, that "he was so busy about trussing up Sir Thomas More's books into a sack that he took no heed to their talk." Sir Richard Southwell likewise said upon his deposition, that "because he was appointed only to look to the conveyance of those books he gave no ear to them." After this were there many other reasons, not now in my remembrance, by Sir Thomas More in his own defence 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 incontinnt 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 what he could say, 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 then in this sort most humbly made answer:

"FORASMUCH, my Lord," quoth he, "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 any part thereof, 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 Saviour himself, personally present upon the 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 amongst divers other reasons and authorities, he declared that this realm, being but a 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 both contrary to the laws and statutes of this our land yet unrepealed, as they might evidently perceive in MAGNA CHARTA, *quod* Ecclesia Anglicana *libera sit, et habeat omnia jura sua integra, et libertates suas illæsas*, and also contrary to that 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 natural father. For, as St. Paul said to the Corinthians, *I have regenerated you, my children in Christ*, so might St. Gregory, Pope of Rome (of whom, by St. Augustine his messenger, we first received the Christian faith) of us Englishmen truly say, "You are my children, because I have under Christ given to you everlasting salvation (a far higher and better inheritance than any carnal father can leave to his child), and by regeneration have made you 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 marvelled that he alone against them all would so stiffly stick thereat, and so vehemently argue there-against." To that Sir Thomas More replied, saying: "If the number of bishops and universities be so material as your

lordship 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 be of my mind therein. But if I should speak of those that already be dead, of whom many be now holy saints in heaven, I am very sure it is the far, far greater part of them that all the while they lived thought in this case that way that I now think; and therefore am I not bound, my lord, to conform my conscience to the counci1 of one realm, against the general council of Christendom."

NOW when Sir Thomas More for the avoiding of the indictment had taken as many exceptions as he thought meet, and many more reasons than I can now remember alleged, the Lord Chancellor, loth to have the burden of the 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 St. Julian" (that was ever his oath) "I must needs confess that if the act of parliament be not unlawful, then is the indictment in my conscience not insufficient." Whereupon the Lord Chancellor said to the rest of the Lords: "Lo, my Lords, lo! you hear what my Lord Chief Justice saith," and so immediately gave judgment against him. After which ended, the commissioners yet further courteously offered him, if he had anything else to allege for his defence, to grant him favourable audience. Who answered: "More have I not to say, my Lords, but that like as the blessed apostle St. Paul, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, was present and consented to the death of St. 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 for ever, 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 everlasting salvation." Thus much touching Sir Thomas More's arraignment, being not there present myself, have I by the credible report of the Right Worshipful Sir Anthony Saintleger, and partly of Richard Haywood, and John Webb, gentlemen, with others of good credit at the hearing thereof present themselves, as far forth as my poor wit and memory would serve me, here truly rehearsed unto you. Now, after his arraignment, departed he 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 towards the Tower, there with a heavy heart, the tears running down his cheeks, bade him farewell. Sir Thomas More, seeing him so sorrowful, 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 for ever and ever." Soon after Sir William Kingston, talking with me of Sir Thomas More, said: "In good faith, Mr. 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 that should rather have comforted him." When Sir Thomas More came from Westminster to the Tower-ward again, his daughter, my wife, desirous to see her father, whom she thought she would 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 could enter into the Tower. There tarrying his coming, as soon as she saw him, after his blessing upon her knees reverently received, she hasting towards him, without consideration or care of herself, pressing in amongst the midst of the throng and company of the guard, that with halberds and bills went round about him, hastily ran to him, and there openly in sight of them all, embraced him, and took him about the neck and kissed him. Who well liking her most natural and dear daughterly affection towards him, gave her his fatherly blessing, and many godly words of comfort besides. From whom after she was departed, she not satisfied with the former sight of her dear father, and like one that had forgotten herself, being all ravished with the entire love of her dear father, having respect neither to herself, nor to the press of people and multitude that were there about him, suddenly turned back again, ran to him as before, took him about the neck, and divers times kissed him most lovingly; and at last, with a full and heavy heart, was fain 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 weep and mourn.

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 my wife, his dearly beloved daughter, and a letter written with a coal (contained in the foresaid book of his works), plainly expressing the fervent desire he had to suffer on the morrow, in these words following: "I cumber you, good Margret, much, but would be sorry if it should be any longer than to-morrow. For to-morrow is St. Thomas even, and the Utas of St. Peter, and therefore to-morrow I long to go to God: it were a day very meet and convenient for me. Dear Megg, I never liked your manner better towards me than when you kissed me last. For I like when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy." And so upon the next morrow, being Tuesday, Saint Thomas his eve, and the Utas of Saint Peter, in the year of our Lord 1535, according as he in his letter the day before had wished, early in the morning came to him Sir Thomas Pope, his singular good friend, on message from the ting and his council, that he should before nine of the clock of the same morning suffer death; and that, therefore, he should forthwith prepare himself thereto. "Master Pope," quoth Sir Thomas More, "for your good tidings I heartily thank you. I have been always much bounden to the king's highness for the benefits and honours that he had still from time to time most bountifully heaped upon me; and yet more bounden am I to his grace for putting me into this place, where I have had convenient time and space to have remembrance of my 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 the world to come." "The king's pleasure is farther," 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, at that time, had I purposed 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 to 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 friends shall have liberty to be present thereat." "Oh, how much beholden then," said Sir Thomas More, "am I unto his grace, that unto my poor burial vouchsafeth to have so 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 discomforted, 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 espying, advised him to put it off, saying, that he that should have it was but a javill. "What, Master Lieutenant?" quoth he, "shall I account him a javill that will do me this day so singular a benefit? Nay, I assure you, were it cloth of gold. I should think it well bestowed on him, as Saint Cyprian did, who gave 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 the holy Martyr St. Cyprian, did he, of that little money that was left him send an angel of gold to his executioner. And so was he by Master Lieutenant brought out of the Tower, and from thence led towards the place of execution. Where, going up the scaffold, which was so weak that it was ready to fall, he said merrily to the 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 thereabout 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 with a cheerful countenance, and said 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." So passed Sir Thomas More out of this world to God, upon the very same day which he most desired. Soon after his death came intelligence thereof to the Emperor Charles. Whereupon he sent for Sir Thomas Eliott, 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 councillor, Sir Thomas More, to death." Whereupon Sir Thomas Eliott answered that "he understood nothing thereof." "Well," said the Emperor, "it is too true: and this will we say, that had we been master of such a servant, of whose doings ourselves 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 councillor." Which matter was, by the same Sir Thomas Eliott to myself, to my wife, to Master Clement and his wife, to Master John Heywood and his wife, and unto divers others his friends accordingly reported.

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[1] A canon lawyer.