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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SIR THOMAS MORE ***

SIR THOMAS MORE

An anonymous play of the sixteen century ascribed in part to
William Shakespeare. First printed in 1844 and here
re-edited from the Harleian MS. 7368 in the British Museum.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Earl of SHREWSBURY.
Earl of SURREY.
Sir THOMAS PALMER.
Sir ROGER CHOMLEY.
Sir THOMAS MORE.
Lord Mayor.
Aldermen.

SURESBY, a Justice.
Other Justices.
Sheriffs.
Recorder.
Sergeant at Arms.
Clerk of the Council.
ERASMUS.
Bishop of Rochester.
ROPER, son-in-law to MORE.
JOHN LINCOLN, a broker.
GEORGE BETTS.
His brother (the ‘Clown’).
WILLIAMSON, a carpenter.
SHERWIN, a goldsmith.
FRANCIS DE BARDE, Lombard.
CAVELER, Lombard.
LIFTER, a cut-purse.
SMART, plaintiff against him.
HARRY, ROBIN, KIT, and others, Prentices.
MORRIS.
FAULKNER, his servant.
Players.
GOUGH.
CATESBY.
RANDALL.
Butler.
Brewer.
Porter.
Horsekeeper.
CROFTS.
DOWNES.
Lieutenant of the Tower.
Warders of the Tower.
Gentleman Porter of the Tower.
Hangman.

Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, Messengers, Guard, Attendants.

Lady MORE.
Lady Mayoress.
Mistress ROPER, daughter to MORE.
Another daughter to MORE.
DOLL, wife to WILLIAMSON.
A Poor Woman.
Ladies.

ACT I.

SCENE I. London. A Street.

[Enter, at one end, John Lincoln, with the two Bettses together; at the other end, enters Francis de Barde and Doll a lusty woman, he haling her by the arm.]

DOLL.
Whether wilt thou hale me?

BARDE.
Whether I please; thou art my prize, and I plead purchase of thee.

DOLL.
Purchase of me! away, ye rascal! I am an honest plain carpenters wife, and though I have no beauty to like a husband, yet whatsoever is mine scorns to stoop to a stranger: hand off, then, when I bid thee!

BARDE.
Go with me quietly, or I'll compel thee.

DOLL.
Compel me, ye dog's face! thou thinkst thou hast the goldsmith's wife in hand, whom thou enticedst from her husband with all his plate, and when thou turndst her home to him again, madst him, like an ass, pay for his wife's board.

BARDE.
So will I make thy husband too, if please me.

[Enter Caveler with a pair of doves; Williamson the carpenter, and Sherwin following him.]

DOLL.
Here he comes himself; tell him so, if thou darst.

CAVELER.
Follow me no further; I say thou shalt not have them.

WILLIAMSON.
I bought them in Cheapside, and paid my money for them.

SHERWIN.
He did, sir, indeed; and you offer him wrong, both to take them from him, and not restore him his money neither.

CAVELER.
If he paid for them, let it suffice that I possess them: beefs and brews may serve such hinds; are pigeons meat for a coarse carpenter?

LINCOLN.
It is hard when Englishmen’s patience must be thus jetted on by strangers, and they not dare to revenge their own wrongs.

GEORGE.
Lincoln, let’s beat them down, and bear no more of these abuses.

LINCOLN.
We may not, Betts: be patient, and hear more.

DOLL.
How now, husband! what, one stranger take they food from thee, and another thy wife! by our Lady, flesh and blood, I think, can hardly brook that.

LINCOLN.
Will this gear never be otherwise? must these wrongs be thus endured?

GEORGE.
Let us step in, and help to revenge their injury.

BARDE.
What art thou that talkest of revenge? my lord ambassador shall once more make your Major have a check, if he punish thee for this saucy presumption.

WILLIAMSON.
Indeed, my lord Mayor, on the ambassador’s complaint, sent me to Newgate one day, because (against my will) I took the wall of a stranger: you may do any thing; the goldsmith’s wife and mine now must be at your commandment.

GEORGE.
The more patient fools are ye both, to suffer it.

BARDE.
Suffer it! mend it thou or he, if ye can or dare. I tell thee, fellows, and she were the Mayor of London’s wife, had I her once in my possession, I would keep her in spite of him that durst say nay.

GEORGE.
I tell thee, Lombard, these words should cost thy best cape, were I

not curbed by duty and obedience: the Mayor of London’s wife!
Oh God, shall it be thus?

DOLL.
Why, Betts, am not I as dear t m husband as my lord Mayor’s wife to him? and wilt thou so neglectly suffer thine own shame?—Hands off, proud stranger! or, by him that bought me, if men’s milky hearts dare not strike a stranger, yet women beat them down, ere they bear these abuses.

BARDE.
Mistress, I say you shall along with me.

DOLL.
Touch not Doll Williamson, least she lay thee along on God’s dear earth.—And you, sir [To Caveler], that allow such coarse cates to carpenters, whilst pigeons, which they pay for, must serve your dainty appetite, deliver them back to my husband again, or I’ll call so many women to mine assistance as will not leave one inch untorn of thee: if our husbands must be bridled by law, and forced to bear your wrongs, their wives will be a little lawless, and soundly beat ye.

CAVELER.
Come away, De Barde, and let us go complain to my lord ambassador.

[Exeunt Ambo.]

DOLL.
Aye, go, and send him among us, and we’ll give him his welcome too.—I am ashamed that freeborn Englishmen, having beaten strangers within their own homes, should thus be braved and abused by them at home.

SHERWIN.
It is not our lack of courage in the cause, but the strict obedience that we are bound to. I am the goldsmith whose wrongs you talked of; but how to redress yours or mine own is a matter beyond our abilities.

LINCOLN.
Not so, not so, my good friends: I, though a mean man, a broker by profession, and named John Lincoln, have long time winked at these wild enormities with mighty impatience, and, as these two brethren here (Betts by name) can witness, with loss of mine own life would gladly remedy them.

GEORGE.
And he is in a good forwardness, I tell ye, if all hit right.

DOLL.
As how, I prithee? tell it to Doll Williamson.

LINCOLN.
You know the Spittle sermons begin the next week: I have drawn a bill of our wrongs and the strangers' insolences.

GEORGE.
Which he means the preachers shall there openly publish in the pulpit.

WILLIAMSON.
Oh, but that they would! yfaith, it would tickle our strangers thoroughly.

DOLL.
Aye, and if you men durst not undertake it, before God, we women would. Take an honest woman from her husband! why, it is intolerable.

SHERWIN.
But how find ye the preachers affected to our proceeding?

LINCOLN.
Master Doctor Standish hath answered that it becomes not him to move any such thing in his sermon, and tells us we must move the Mayor and aldermen to reform it, and doubts not but happy success will ensue on statement of our wrongs. You shall perceive there's no hurt in the bill: here's a couple of it; I pray ye, hear it.

ALL.
With all our hearts; for God's sake, read it.

LINCOLN.
[Reads.] To you all, the worshipful lords and masters of this city, that will take compassion over the poor people your neighbors, and also of the great importable hurts, losses, and hinderances, whereof proceedeth extreme poverty to all the king's subjects that inhabit within this city and suburbs of the same: for so it is that aliens and strangers eat the bread from the fatherless children, and take the living from all the artificers and the intercourse from all the merchants, whereby poverty is so much increased, that every man bewaileth the misery of other; for craftsmen be brought to beggary, and merchants to neediness: wherefore, the premises considered, the redress must be of the common knit and united to one part: and

as the hurt and damage grieveth all men, so must all men see to their willing power for remedy, and not suffer the said aliens in their wealth, and the natural born men of this region to come to confusion.

DOLL.
Before God, tis excellent; and I'll maintain the suit to be honest.

SHERWIN.
Well, say tis read, what is your further meaning in the matter?

GEORGE.
What! marry, list to me. No doubt but this will store us with friends enow, whose names we will closely keep in writing; and on May day next in the morning we'll go forth a Maying, but make it the worst May day for the strangers that ever they saw. How say ye? do ye subscribe, or are ye faint-hearted revolters?

DOLL.
Hold thee, George Betts, there's my hand and my heart: by the Lord, I'll make a captain among ye, and do somewhat to be talk of for ever after.

WILLIAMSON.
My masters, ere we part, let's friendly go and drink together, and swear true secrecy upon our lives.

GEORGE.
There spake an angel. Come, let us along, then.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. London. The Sessions House.

[An arras is drawn, and behind it as in sessions sit the Lord Mayor, Justice Suresby, and other Justices; Sheriff More and the other Sheriff sitting by. Smart is the plaintiff, Lifter the prisoner at the bar. Recorder, Officers.]

LORD MAYOR.
Having dispatched our weightier businesses,
We may give ear to petty felonies.
Master Sheriff More, what is this fellow?

MORE.
My lord, he stands indicted for a purse;

He hath been tried, the jury is together.

LORD MAYOR.
Who sent him in?

SURESBY.
That did I, my lord:
Had he had right, he had been hanged ere this;
The only captain of the cutpurse crew.

LORD MAYOR.
What is his name?

SURESBY.
As his profession is, Lifter, my lord,
One that can lift a purse right cunningly.

LORD MAYOR.
And is that he accuses him?

SURESBY.
The same, my lord, whom, by your honors leave,
I must say somewhat too, because I find
In some respects he is well worthy blame.

LORD MAYOR.
Good Master Justice Suresby, speak your mind;
We are well pleased to give you audience.

SURESBY.
Hear me, Smart; thou art a foolish fellow:
If Lifter be convicted by the law,
As I see not how the jury can acquit him,
I'll stand too 't thou art guilty of his death.

MORE.
My lord, that's worthy the hearing.

LORD MAYOR.
Listen, then, good Master More.

SURESBY.
I tell thee plain, it is a shame for thee,
With such a sum to tempt necessity;
No less than ten pounds, sir, will serve your turn,
To carry in your purse about with ye,
To crake and brag in taverns of your money:
I promise ye, a man that goes abroad

With an intent of truth, meeting such a booty,
May be provoked to that he never meant.
What makes so many pilferers and felons,
But such fond baits that foolish people lay
To tempt the needy miserable wretch?
Ten pounds, odd money; this is a pretty sum
To bear about, which were more safe at home.
Fore God, twere well to fine ye as much more

[Lord Mayor and More whisper.]

To the relief of the poor prisoners,
To teach ye be more careful of your own,
In sooth, I say ye were but rightly served,
If ye had lost as much as twice ten pounds.

MORE.
Good my lord, sooth a point or two for once,
Only to try conclusions in this case.

LORD MAYOR.
Content, good Master More: we'll rise awhile,
And, till the jury can return their verdict,
Walk in the garden.—How say ye, Justices?

ALL.
We like it well, my lord; we'll follow ye.

[Exeunt Lord Mayor and Justices.]

MORE.
Nay, plaintiff, go you too;—and officers,

[Exeunt Smart.]

Stand you aside, and leave the prisoner
To me awhile.—Lifter, come hither.

LIFTER.
What is your worship's pleasure?

MORE.
Sirrah, you know that you are known to me,
And I have often saved ye from this place,
Since first I came in office: thou seest beside,
That Justice Suresby is thy heavy friend,
By all the blame that he pretends to Smart,
For tempting thee with such a sum of money.

I tell thee what; devise me but a means
To pick or cut his purse, and, on my credit,
And as I am a Christian and a man,
I will procure they pardon for that jest.

LIFTER.
Good Master Shrieve, seek not my overthrow:
You know, sir, I have many heavy friends,
And more indictments like to come upon me.
You are too deep for me to deal withal;
You are known to be one of the wisest men
That is in England: I pray ye, Master Sheriff,
Go not about to undermine my life.

MORE.
Lifter, I am true subject to my king;
Thou much mistake me: and, for thou shall not think
I mean by this to hurt thy life at all,
I will maintain the act when thou hast done it.
Thou knowest there are such matters in my hands,
As if I pleased to give them to the jury,
I should not need this way to circumvent thee.
All that I aim at is a merry jest:
Perform it, Lifter, and expect my best.

LIFTER.
I thank your worship: God preserve your life!
But Master Justice Suresby is gone in;
I know not how to come near where he is.

MORE.
Let me alone for that; I'll be thy setter;
I'll send him hither to thee presently,
Under the colour of thine own request,
Of private matters to acquaint him with.

LIFTER.
If ye do so, sir, then let me alone;
Forty to one but then his purse is gone.

MORE.
Well said: but see that thou diminish not
One penny of the money, but give it me;
It is the cunning act that credits thee.

LIFTER.
I will, good Master Sheriff, I assure ye.

[Exeunt More.]

I see the purpose of this gentleman
Is but to check the folly of the Justice,
For blaming others in a desperate case,
Wherein himself may fall as soon as any.
To save my life, it is a good adventure:
Silence there, ho! now doth the Justice enter.

[Enter Justice Suresby.]

SURESBY.
Now, sirrah, now, what is your will with me?
Wilt thou discharge thy conscience like an honest man?
What sayest to me, sirrah? be brief, be brief.

LIFTER.
As brief, sir, as I can.—
[Aside.] If ye stand fair, I will be brief anon.

SURESBY.
Speak out, and mumble not; what sayest thou, sirrah?

LIFTER.
Sir, I am charged, as God shall be my comfort,
With more than’s true.

SURESBY.
Sir, sir, ye are indeed, with more than’s true,
For you are flatly charged with felony;
You’re charged with more than truth, and that is theft;
More than a true man should be charged withal;
Thou art a varlet, that’s no more than true.
Trifle not with me; do not, do not, sirrah;
Confess but what thou knowest, I ask no more.

LIFTER.
There be, sir, there be, if’t shall please your worship—

SURESBY.
There be, varlet! what be there? tell me what there be.
Come off or on: there be! what be there, knave?

LIFTER.
There be, sir, diverse very cunning fellows,
That, while you stand and look them in the face,
Will have your purse.

SURESBY.
Th’art an honest knave:
Tell me what are they? where they may be caught?
Aye, those are they I look for.

LIFTER.
You talk of me, sir;
Alas, I am a puny! there’s one indeed
Goes by my name, he puts down all for purses;
He’ll steal your worship’s purse under your nose.

SURESBY.
Ha, ha! Art thou so sure, varlet?
Well, well,
Be as familiar as thou wilt, my knave;
Tis this I long to know.

LIFTER.
And you shall have your longing ere ye go.—
This fellow, sir, perhaps will meet ye thus,
Or thus, or thus, and in kind complement
Pretend acquaintance, somewhat doubtfully;
And these embraces serve—

SURESBY.
Aye, marry, Lifter, wherefor serve they?

[Shrugging gladly.]

LIFTER.
Only to feel
Whether you go full under sail or no,
Or that your lading be aboard your bark.

SURESBY.
In plainer English, Lifter, if my purse
Be stored or no?

LIFTER.
Ye have it, sir.

SURESBY.
Excellent, excellent.

LIFTER.
Then, sir, you cannot but for manner’s sake
Walk on with him; for he will walk your way,
Alleging either you have much forgot him,

Or he mistakes you.

SURESBY.
But in this time has he my purse or no?

LIFTER.
Not yet, sir, fie!—
[Aside.} No, nor I have not yours.—

[Enter Lord Mayor, &c.]

But now we must forbear; my lords return.

SURESBY.
A murren on’t!—Lifter, we’ll more anon:
Aye, thou sayest true, there are shrewd knaves indeed:

[He sits down.]

But let them gull me, widgen me, rook me, fop me!
Yfaith, yfaith, they are too short for me.
Knaves and fools meet when purses go:
Wise men look to their purses well enough.

MORE.
[Aside.] Lifter, is it done?

LIFTER.
[Aside.] Done, Master Shreeve; and there it is.

MORE.
[Aside.] Then build upon my word. I’ll save thy life.

RECORDER.
Lifter, stand to the bar:
The jury have returned the guilty; thou must die,
According to the custom.—Look to it, Master Shreeve.

LORD MAYOR.
Then, gentlemen, as you are wont to do,
Because as yet we have no burial place,
What charity your meaning’s to bestow
Toward burial of the prisoners now condemned,
Let it be given. There is first for me.

RECORDER.
And there for me.

ANOTHER.
And me.

SURESBY.
Body of me, my purse is gone!

MORE.
Gone, sir! what, here! how can that be?

LORD MAYOR.
Against all reason, sitting on the bench.

SURESBY.
Lifter, I talked with you; you have not lifted me? ha!

LIFTER.
Suspect ye me, sir? Oh, what a world is this!

MORE.
But hear ye, master Suresby; are ye sure
Ye had a purse about ye?

SURESBY.
Sure, Master Shrieve! as sure as you are there,
And in it seven pounds, odd money, on my faith.

MORE.
Seven pounds, odd money! what, were you so mad,
Being a wise man and a magistrate,
To trust your purse with such a liberal sum?
Seven pounds, odd money! fore God, it is a shame,
With such a sum to tempt necessity:
I promise ye, a man that goes abroad
With an intent of truth, meeting such a booty,
May be wrought to that he never thought.
What makes so many pilferers and felons,
But these fond baits that foolish people lay
To tempt the needy miserable wretch?
Should he be taken now that has your purse,
I’d stand to’t, you are guilty of his death;
For, questionless, he would be cast by law.
Twere a good deed to fine ye as much more,
To the relief of the poor prisoners,
To teach ye lock your money up at home.

SURESBY.
Well, Master More, you are a merry man;
I find ye, sir, I find ye well enough.

MORE.
Nay, ye shall see, sir, trusting thus your money,
And Lifter here in trial for like case,
But that the poor man is a prisoner,
It would be now suspected that he had it.
Thus may ye see what mischief often comes
By the fond carriage of such needless sums.

LORD MAYOR.
Believe me, Master Suresby, this is strange,
You, being a man so settled in assurance,
Will fall in that which you condemned in other.

MORE.
Well, Master Suresby, there’s your purse again,
And all your money: fear nothing of More;
Wisdom still keeps the mean and locks the door.

SCENE III. London. A state apartment.

[Enter the Earls of Shrewsbury and Surrey, Sir Thomas Palmer,
and Sir Roger Cholmley.]

SHREWSBURY.
My lord of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Palmer
Might I with patience tempt your grave advise,
I tell ye true, that in these dangerous times
I do not like this frowning vulgar brow:
My searching eye did never entertain
A more distracted countenance of grief
Than I have late observed
In the displeased commons of the city.

SURREY.
Tis strange that from his princely clemency,
So well a tempered mercy and a grace,
To all the aliens in this fruitful land,
That this high-crested insolence should spring
From them that breathe from his majestic bounty,
That, fattened with the traffic of our country,
Already leaps into his subject’s face.

PALMER.
Yet Sherwin, hindered to commence his suit
Against De Barde by the ambassador,
By supplication made unto the king,

Who having first enticed away his wife,
And got his plate, near worth four hundred pound,
To grieve some wronged citizens that found
This vile disgrace oft cast into their teeth,
Of late sues Sherwin, and arrested him
For money for the boarding of his wife.

SURREY.
The more knave Barde, that, using Sherwin’s goods,
Doth ask him interest for the occupation.
I like not that, my lord of Shrewsbury:
He’s ill bested that lends a well paced horse
Unto a man that will not find him meet.

CHOLMLEY.
My lord of Surrey will be pleasant still.

PALMER.
Aye, being then employed by your honors
To stay the broil that fell about the same,
Where by persuasion I enforced the wrongs,
And urged the grief of the displeased city,
He answered me, and with a solemn oath,
That, if he had the Mayor of London’s wife,
He would keep her in despite of any English.

SURREY.
Tis good, Sir Thomas, then, for you and me;
Your wife is dead, and I a bachelor:
If no man can possess his wife alone,
I am glad, Sir Thomas Palmer, I have none.

CHOLMLEY.
If a take a wife, a shall find her meet.

SURREY.
And reason good, Sir Roger Cholmley, too.
If these hot Frenchmen needsly will have sport,
They should in kindness yet defray the charge:
Tis hard when men possess our wives in quiet,
And yet leave us in, to discharge their diet.

SHREWSBURY.
My lord, our catours shall not use the market
For our provision, but some stranger now
Will take the vittailes from him he hath bought:
A carpenter, as I was late informed,
Who having bought a pair of doves in Cheap,

Immediately a Frenchman took them from him,
And beat the poor man for resisting him;
And when the fellow did complain his wrongs,
He was severely punished for his labor.

SURREY.
But if the English blood be once but up,
As I perceive their hearts already full,
I fear me much, before their spleens be cold,
Some of these saucy aliens for their pride
Will pay for ’t soundly, wheresoere it lights:
This tide of rage that with the eddy strives,
I fear me much, will drown too many lives.

CHOLMLEY.
Now, afore God, your honors, pardon me:
Men of your place and greatness are to blame.
I tell ye true, my lords, in that his majesty
Is not informed of this base abuse
And daily wrongs are offered to his subjects;
For, if he were, I know his gracious wisdom
Would soon redress it.

[Enter a Messenger.]

SHREWSBURY.
Sirrah, what news?

CHOLMLEY.
None good, I fear.

MESSENGER.
My lord, ill news; and worse, I fear, will follow,
If speedily it be not looked unto:
The city is in an uproar, and the Mayor
Is threatened, if he come out of his house.
A number poor artificers are up
In arms and threaten to avenge their wrongs.

CHOLMLEY.
We feared what this would come unto:
This follows on the doctors publishing
The bill of wrongs in public at the Spittle.

SHREWSBURY.
That Doctor Beale may chance beshrew himself
For reading of the bill.

PALMER.
Let us go gather forces to the Mayor,
For quick suppressing this rebellious route.

SURREY.
Now I bethink myself of Master More,
One of the sheriffs, a wise and learned gentleman,
And in especial favour with the people:
He, backed with other grave and sober men,
May by his gentle and persuasive speech
Perhaps prevail more than we can with power.

SHREWSBURY.
Believe me, but your honor well advises:
Let us make haste; for I do greatly fear
Some of their graves this morning’s work will bear.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II.

SCENE I. Cheapside.

[Enter three or four Apprentices of trades, with a pair of cudgels.]

HARRY.
Come, lay down the cudgels. Ho, Robin, you met us well at Bunhill, to have you with us a Maying this morning.

ROBIN.
Faith, Harry, the head drawer at the Miter by the great Conduit called me up, and we went to breakfast into St. Anne lane. But come, who begins? in good faith, I am clean out of practise. When wast at Garrets school, Harry?

HARRY.
Not this great while, never since I brake his ushers head, when he played his scholars prize at the Star in Bread-street. I use all to George Philpots at Dowgate; he’s the best backswordman in England.

KIT.
Bate me an ace of that, quoth Bolton.

HARRY.
I’ll not bate ye a pin on ’t, sir; for, by this cudgel, tis true.

KIT.
I will cudgel that opinion out of ye: did you break an ushers head, sir?

HARRY.
Aye, marry, did I, sir.

KIT.
I am very glad on ’t: you shall break mine too, and ye can.

HARRY.
Sirrah, I prithee, what art thou?

KIT.
Why, I am a prentice as thou art; seest thou now? I’ll play with thee at blunt here in Cheapside, and when thou hast done, if thou beest angry, I’ll fight with thee at sharp in Moore fields. I have a sword to serve my turn in a favor. . . . come Julie, to serve . . . .

SCENE II. Saint Martins-le-Grand.

[Enter Lincoln, two Bettses, Williamson, Sherwin, and other, armed; Doll in a shirt of mail, a headpiece, sword, and buckler; a crew attending.]

CLOWN.
Come, come; we’ll tickle their turnips, we’ll butter their boxes. Shall strangers rule the roost? yes; but we’ll baste the roost. Come, come; a flaunt, a flaunt!

GEORGE.
Brother, give place, and hear John Lincoln speak.

CLOWN.
Aye, Lincoln my leader,
And Doll my true breeder,
With the rest of our crew,
Shall ran tan tarra ran;
Do all they what they can.
Shall we be bobbed, braved? no:
Shall we be held under? no;
We are freeborne,
And do take scorn
To be used so.

DOLL.

Peace there, I say! hear Captain Lincoln speak; keep silence, till we know his mind at large.

CLOWN.
Then largely deliver; speak, bully: and he that presumes to interrupt thee in thy oration, this for him.

LINCOLN.
Then, gallant bloods, you whose free souls do scorn
To bear the inforced wrongs of aliens,
Add rage to resolution, fire the houses
Of these audacious strangers. This is St. Martins,
And yonder dwells Mutas, a wealthy Piccardy,
At the Green Gate,
De Barde, Peter Van Hollocke, Adrian Martine,
With many more outlandish fugitives.
Shall these enjoy more privilege than we
In our own country? let’s, then, become their slaves.
Since justice keeps not them in greater awe,
We be ourselves rough ministers at law.

CLOWN.
Use no more swords, nor no more words, but fire the houses; brave captain courageous, fire me their houses.

DOLL.
Aye, for we may as well make bonfires on May day as at midsummer: we’ll alter the day in the calendar, and set it down in flaming letters.

SHERWIN.
Stay!
No, that would much endanger the whole city,
Whereto I would not the least prejudice.

DOLL.
No, nor I neither; so may mine own house be burned for company. I’ll tell ye what: we’ll drag the strangers into More fields, and there bombast them till they stink again.

CLOWN.
And that’s soon done; for they smell for fear already.

GEORGE.
Let some of us enter the strangers’ houses,
And, if we find them there, then bring them forth.

DOLL.

But if ye bring them forth ere ye find them, I’ll ne’er allow of that.

CLOWN.
Now, Mars, for thy honor,
Dutch or French,
So it be a wench,
I’ll upon her.

[Exeunt some and Sherwin.]

WILLIAMSON.
Now, lads, sure shall we labor in our safety.
I hear the Mayor hath gathered men in arms,
And that Shreeve More an hour ago rised
Some of the Privy Counsel in at Ludgate:
Force now must make our peace, or else we fall;
’Twill soon be known we are the principal.

DOLL.
And what of that? if thou beest afraid, husband, go home again, and hide they head; for, by the Lord, I’ll have a little sport, now we are at it.

GEORGE.
Let’s stand upon our swords, and, if they come,
Receive them as they were our enemies.

[Enter Sherwin and the rest.]

CLOWN.
A purchase, a purchase! we have found, we ha found—

DOLL.
What?

CLOWN.
Nothing; not a French Fleming nor a Fleming French to be found; but all fled, in plain English.

LINCOLN.
How now! have you found any?

SHERWIN.
No, not one; they’re all fled.

LINCOLN.
Then fire the houses, that, the Mayor being busy
About the quenching of them, we may escape;

Burn down their kennels: let us straight away,
Least this day prove to us an ill May day.

CLOWN.
Fire, fire! I'll be the first:
If hanging come, tis welcome; that's the worst.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. The Guildhall.

[Enter at one door Sir Thomas More and Lord Mayor; at another door Sir John Munday hurt.]

LORD MAYOR.
What, Sir John Munday, are you hurt?

SIR JOHN.
A little knock, my lord. There was even now
A sort of prentices playing at cudgels;
I did command them to their masters' houses;
But now, I fear me, they are gone to join
With Lincoln, Sherwin, and their dangerous train.

MORE.
The captains of this insurrection
Have taken themselves to arms, and came but now
To both the Counters, where they have released
Sundry indebted prisoners, and from thence
I hear that they are gone into St. Martins,
Where they intend to offer violence
To the amazed Lombards: therefore, my lord,
If we expect the safety of the city,
Tis time that force or parley do encounter
With these displeased men.

[Enter a Messenger.]

LORD MAYOR.
How now! what news?

MESSENGER.
My lord, the rebels have broke open Newgate,
From whence they have delivered many prisoners,
Both felons and notorious murderers,
That desperately cleave to their lawless train.

LORD MAYOR.
Up with the drawbridge, gather some forces
To Cornhill and Cheapside:—and, gentlemen,
If diligence be weighed on every side,
A quiet ebb will follow this rough tide.

[Enter Shrewsbury, Surrey, Palmer, and Cholmley.]

SHREWSBURY.
Lord Mayor, his majesty, receiving notice
Of this most dangerous insurrection,
Hath sent my lord of Surrey and myself,
Sir Thomas Palmer and our followers,
To add unto your forces our best means
For pacifying of this mutiny.
In God’s name, then, set on with happy speed!
The king laments, if one true subject bleed.

SURREY.
I hear they mean to fire the Lombards’ houses:
Oh power, what art thou in a madman’s eyes!
Thou makest the plodding idiot bloody-wise.

MORE.
My lords, I doubt not but we shall appease
With a calm breath this flux of discontent:
To call them to a parley, questionless—

PALMER.
May fall out good: tis well said, Master More.

MORE.
Let’s to these simple men; for many sweat
Under this act, that knows not the law’s debt
Which hangs upon their lives; for silly men
Plod on they know not how, like a fool’s pen,
That, ending, shows not any sentence writ,
Linked but to common reason or slightest wit:
These follow for no harm; but yet incur
Self penalty with those that raised this stir.
A God’s name, on, to calm our private foes
With breath of gravity, not dangerous blows!

SCENE IV. St. Martin’s Gate.

[Enter Lincoln, Doll, Clown, George Betts, Williamson, others;

and a Sergeant at Arms.]

LINCOLN.
Peace, hear me: he that will not see a red herring at a Harry groat, butter at elevenpence a pound, meal at nine shillings a bushel, and beef at four nobles a stone, list to me.

GEORGE.
It will come to that pass, if strangers be suffered. Mark him.

LINCOLN.
Our country is a great eating country; ergo, they eat more in our country than they do in their own.

CLOWN.
By a halfpenny loaf, a day, troy weight.

LINCOLN.
They bring in strange roots, which is merely to the undoing of poor prentices; for what’s a sorry parsnip to a good heart?

WILLIAMSON.
Trash, trash; they breed sore eyes, and tis enough to infect the city with the palsey.

LINCOLN.
Nay, it has infected it with the palsey; for these bastards of dung, as you know they grow in dung, have infected us, and it is our infection will make the city shake, which partly comes through the eating of parsnips.

CLOWN.
True; and pumpkins together.

SERGEANT.
What say ye to the mercy of the king?
Do ye refuse it?

LINCOLN.
You would have us upon this, would you? no, marry, do we not; we accept of the king’s mercy, but we will show no mercy upon the strangers.

SERGEANT.
You are the simplest things that ever stood
In such a question.

LINCOLN.

How say ye now, prentices? prentices simple! down with him!

ALL.
Prentices simple! prentices simple!

[Enter the Lord Mayor, Surrey, Shrewsbury, More.]

LORD MAYOR.
Hold! in the king’s name, hold!

SURREY.
Friends, masters, countrymen—

LORD MAYOR.
Peace, how, peace! I charge you, keep the peace!

SHREWSBURY.
My masters, countrymen—

WILLIAMSON.
The noble earl of Shrewsbury, let’s hear him.

GEORGE.
We’ll hear the earl of Surrey.

LINCOLN.
The earl of Shrewsbury.

GEORGE.
We’ll hear both.

ALL.
Both, both, both, both!

LINCOLN.
Peace, I say, peace! are you men of wisdom, or what are you?

SURREY.
What you will have them; but not men of wisdom.

ALL.
We’ll not hear my lord of Surrey; no, no, no, no, no! Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury!

MORE.
Whiles they are o’er the bank of their obedience,
Thus will they bear down all things.

LINCOLN.
Sheriff More speaks; shall we hear Sheriff More speak?

DOLL.
Let’s hear him: a keeps a plentyful shrievaltry, and a made my brother Arthur Watchins Seriant Safes yeoman: let’s hear Shrieve More.

ALL.
Shrieve More, More, More, Shrieve More!

MORE.
Even by the rule you have among yourselves,
Command still audience.

ALL.
Surrey, Surrey! More, More!

LINCOLN:
Peace, peace, silence, peace.

GEORGE.
Peace, peace, silence, peace.

MORE.
You that have voice and credit with the number
Command them to a stillness.

LINCOLN.
A plague on them, they will not hold their peace; the dual cannot rule them.

MORE.
Then what a rough and riotous charge have you,
To lead those that the dual cannot rule?—
Good masters, hear me speak.

DOLL.
Aye, by th’ mass, will we, More: th’ art a good housekeeper, and I thank thy good worship for my brother Arthur Watchins.

ALL.
Peace, peace.

MORE.
Look, what you do offend you cry upon,
That is, the peace: not one of you here present,
Had there such fellows lived when you were babes,

That could have topped the peace, as now you would,
The peace wherein you have till now grown up
Had been ta’en from you, and the bloody times
Could not have brought you to the state of men.
Alas, poor things, what is it you have got,
Although we grant you get the thing you seek?

GEORGE.
Marry, the removing of the strangers, which cannot choose but much advantage the poor handicrafts of the city.

MORE.
Grant them removed, and grant that this your noise
Hath chid down all the majesty of England;
Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,
Their babies at their backs and their poor luggage,
Plodding to th’ ports and costs for transportation,
And that you sit as kings in your desires,
Authority quite silent by your brawl,
And you in ruff of your opinions clothed;
What had you got? I’ll tell you: you had taught
How insolence and strong hand should prevail,
How order should be quelled; and by this pattern
Not one of you should live an aged man,
For other ruffians, as their fancies wrought,
With self same hand, self reasons, and self right,
Would shark on you, and men like ravenous fishes
Would feed on one another.

DOLL.
Before God, that’s as true as the Gospel.

LINCOLN.
Nay, this is a sound fellow, I tell you: let’s mark him.

MORE.
Let me set up before your thoughts, good friends,
On supposition; which if you will mark,
You shall perceive how horrible a shape
Your innovation bears: first, tis a sin
Which oft the apostle did forewarn us of,
Urging obedience to authority;
And twere no error, if I told you all,
You were in arms against your God himself.

ALL.
Marry, God forbid that!

MORE.
Nay, certainly you are;
For to the king God hath his office lent
Of dread, of justice, power and command,
Hath bid him rule, and willed you to obey;
And, to add ampler majesty to this,
He hath not only lent the king his figure,
His throne and sword, but given him his own name,
Calls him a god on earth. What do you, then,
Rising gainst him that God himself installs,
But rise against God? what do you to your souls
In doing this? O, desperate as you are,
Wash your foul minds with tears, and those same hands,
That you like rebels lift against the peace,
Lift up for peace, and your unreverent knees,
Make them your feet to kneel to be forgiven!
Tell me but this: what rebel captain,
As mutinies are incident, by his name
Can still the rout? who will obey a traitor?
Or how can well that proclamation sound,
When there is no addition but a rebel
To qualify a rebel? You'll put down strangers,
Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses,
And lead the majesty of law in line,
To slip him like a hound. Say now the king
(As he is clement, if th' offender mourn)
Should so much come to short of your great trespass
As but to banish you, whether would you go?
What country, by the nature of your error,
Should give you harbor? go you to France or Flanders,
To any German province, to Spain or Portugal,
Nay, any where that not adheres to England,—
Why, you must needs be strangers: would you be pleased
To find a nation of such barbarous temper,
That, breaking out in hideous violence,
Would not afford you an abode on earth,
Whet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the claimants
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
But chartered unto them, what would you think
To be thus used? this is the strangers case;
And this your mountanish inhumanity.

ALL.
Faith, a says true: let's do as we may be done to.

LINCOLN.

We’ll be ruled by you, Master More, if you’ll stand our friend to procure our pardon.

MORE.
Submit you to these noble gentlemen,
Entreat their mediation to the king,
Give up yourself to form, obey the magistrate,
And there’s no doubt but mercy may be found,
If you so seek.
To persist in it is present death: but, if you
Yield yourselves, no doubt what punishment
You in simplicity have incurred, his highness
In mercy will most graciously pardon.

ALL.
We yield, and desire his highness’ mercy.

[They lay by their weapons.]

MORE.
No doubt his majesty will grant it you:
But you must yield to go to several prisons,
Till that his highness’ will be further known.

ALL.
Most willingly; whether you will have us.

SHREWSBURY.
Lord Mayor, let them be sent to several prisons,
And there, in any case, be well intreated.—
My lord of Surrey, please you to take horse,
And ride to Cheapside, where the aldermen
Are with their several companies in arms;
Will them to go unto their several wards,
Both for the stay of furth mutiny,
And for the apprehending of such persons
As shall contend.

SURREY.
I go, my noble lord.

[Exit Surrey.]

SHREWSBURY.
We’ll straight go tell his highness these good news;
Withal, Shrieve More, I’ll tell him how your breath
Hath ransomed many a subject from sad death.

[Exit Shrewsbury and Cholmley.]

LORD MAYOR.
Lincoln and Sherwin, you shall both to Newgate;
The rest unto the Counters.

PALMER.
Go guard them hence: a little breath well spent
Cheats expectation in his fairest event.

DOLL.
Well, Sheriff More, thou hast done more with thy good words than all they could with their weapons: give me thy hand, keep thy promise now for the king’s pardon, or, by the Lord, I’ll call thee a plain coney-catcher.

LINCOLN.
Farewell, Shrieve More; and as we yield by thee,
So make our peace; then thou dealst honestly.

CLOWN.
Aye, and save us from the gallows, else a devil’s double honestly!

[They are led away.]

LORD MAYOR.
Master Shrieve More, you have preserved the city
From a most dangerous fierce commotion;
For, if this limb of riot here in St. Martins
Had joined with other branches of the city
That did begin to kindle, twould have bred
Great rage; that rage much murder would have fed.
Not steel, but eloquence hath wrought this good:
You have redeemed us from much threatened blood.

MORE.
My lord and brethren, what I here have spoke,
My country’s love, and next the city’s care,
Enjoined me to; which since it thus prevails,
Think, God hath made weak More his instrument
To thwart sedition’s violent intent.
I think twere best, my lord, some two hours hence
We meet at the Guildhall, and there determine
That thorough every ward the watch be clad
In armor, but especially proud
That at the city gates selected men,
Substantial citizens, do ward tonight,

For fear of further mischief.

LORD MAYOR.
It shall be so:
But yond me thinks my lord of Shrewsbury.

[Enter Shrewsbury.]

SHREWSBURY.
My lord, his majesty sends loving thanks
To you, your brethren, and his faithful subjects,
Your careful citizens.—But, Master More, to you
A rougher, yet as kind, a salutation:
A knights creation is this knightly steel.
Rise up, Sir Thomas More.

MORE.
I thank his highness for thus honoring me.

SHREWSBURY.
This is but first taste of his princely favor:
For it hath pleased his high majesty
(Noting your wisdom and deserving merit)
To put this staff of honor in your hand,
For he hath chose you of his Privy Council.

MORE.
My lord, for to deny my sovereign’s bounty
Were to drop precious stones into the heaps
Whence they first came;
To urge my imperfections in excuse,
Were all as stale as custom: no, my lord,
My service is my kings; good reason why,—
Since life or death hangs on our sovereign’s eye.

LORD MAYOR.
His majesty hath honored much the city
In this his princely choice.

MORE.
My lord and brethren,
Though I depart for court my love shall rest
With you, as heretofore, a faithful guest.
I now must sleep in court, sound sleeps forbear;
The chamberlain to state is public care:
Yet, in this rising of my private blood,
My studious thoughts shall tend the city’s good.

[Enter Crofts.]

SHREWSBURY.
How now, Crofts! what news?

CROFTS.
My lord, his highness sends express command
That a record be entered of this riot,
And that the chief and capital offenders
Be thereon straight arraigned, for himself intends
To sit in person on the rest tomorrow
At Westminster.

SHREWSBURY.
Lord Mayor, you hear your charge.—
Come, good Sir Thomas More, to court let’s hie;
You are th’ appeaser of this mutiny.

MORE.
My lord, farewell: new days begets new tides;
Life whirls bout fate, then to a grave it slides.

[Exeunt severally.]

ACT III.

SCENE I. Cheapside.

[Enter Master Sheriff, and meet a Messenger.]

SHERIFF.
Messenger, what news?

MESSENGER.
Is execution yet performed?

SHERIFF.
Not yet; the carts stand ready at the stairs,
And they shall presently away to Tibourne.

MESSENGER.
Stay, Master Shrieve; it is the council’s pleasure,
For more example in so bad a case,
A gibbet be erected in Cheapside,
Hard by the Standard; whether you must bring
Lincoln and those that were the chief with him,

[Enter Officers.]

To suffer death, and that immediately.

SHERIFF.
It shall be done, sir.

[Exit Messenger.]

—Officers, be speedy;
Call for a gibbet, see it be erected;
Others make haste to Newgate, bid them bring
The prisoners hither, for they here must die:
Away, I say, and see no time be slacked.

OFFICERS.
We go, sir.

[Exit some severally; others set up the gibbet.]

SHERIFF.
That’s well said, fellow; now you do your duty.—
God for his pity help these troublous times!
The streets stopped up with gazing multitudes:
Command our armed officers with halberds
Make way for entrance of the prisoners;
Let proclamation once again be made.
That every householder, on pain of death,
Keep in his prentices, and every man
Stand with a weapon ready at his door,
As he will answer to the contrary.

OFFICER.
I’ll see it done, sir.

[Exit.]

[Enter another Officer.]

SHERIFF.
Bring them away to execution:
The writ is come above two hours since:
The city will be fined for this neglect.

OFFICER.
There’s such a press and multitude at Newgate,
They cannot bring the carts onto the stairs,

To take the prisoners in.

SHERIFF.
Then let them come on foot;
We may not dally time with great command.

OFFICER.
Some of the bench, sir, think it very fit
That stay be made, and give it out abroad
The execution is deferred till morning,
And, when the streets shall be a little cleared,
To chain them up, and suddenly dispatch it.

SHERIFF.
Stay; in mean time me thinks they come along:
See, they are coming. So, tis very well:

[The prisoners are brought in, well guarded.]

Bring Lincoln there the first unto the tree.

CLOWN.
I, for I cry lug, sir.

LINCOLN.
I knew the first, sir, did belong to me:
This the old proverb now complete doth make,
That Lincoln should be hanged for London’s sake.

[He goes up.]

A God’s name, let us to work. Fellow, dispatch:
I was the foremost man in this rebellion,
And I the foremost that must die for it.

DOLL.
Bravely, John Lincoln, let thy death express,
That, as thou liv’dst a man, thou diest no less.

LINCOLN.
Doll Williamson, thine eyes shall witness it.—
Then to all you that come to view mine end
I must confess, I had no ill intent,
But against such as wronged us over much:
And now I can perceive it was not fit
That private men should carve out their redress,
Which way they list; no, learn it now by me,—
Obedience is the best in each degree:

And asking mercy meekly of my king,
I patiently submit me to the law;
But God forgive them that were cause of it!
And, as a Christian, truly from my heart
I likewise crave they would forgive me too
(As freely as I do forgive their wrong)
That others by example of the same
Henceforth be warned to attempt the like
Gainst any alien that repaireth hither.
Fare ye well, all: the next time that we meet,
I trust in heaven we shall each other greet.

[He leaps off.]

DOLL.
Farewell, John Lincoln: say all what they can,
Thou liv’dst a good fellow, and diedst an honest man.

CLOWN.
Would I wear so fair on my journey! the first stretch is the worst, me thinks.

SHERIFF.
Bring Williamson there forward.

DOLL.
Good Master Shrieve, I have an earnest suit,
And, as you are a man, deny’t me not.

SHERIFF.
Woman, what is it? be it in my power,
Thou shalt obtain it.

DOLL.
Let me die next, sir; that is all I crave:
You know not what a comfort you shall bring
To my poor heart, to die before my husband.

SHERIFF.
Bring her to death; she shall have her desire.

CLOWN.
Sir, and I have a suit for you too.

SHERIFF.
What is it?

CLOWN.

That, as you have hanged Lincoln first, and will hang her next, so
you will not hang me at all.

SHERIFF.
Nay, you set ope’ the Counter gates, and you must hang for the
folly.

CLOWN.
Well, then, so much for it!

DOLL.
Sir, your free bounty much contents my mind.
Commend me to that good shrieve Master More,
And tell him, had’t not been for his persuasion,
John Lincoln had not hung here as he does:
We would first have locked us up in Leadenhall,
And there been burnt to ashes with the roof.

SHERIFF.
Woman, what Master More did was a subject’s duty,
And hath so pleased our gracious lord the king,
That he is hence removed to higher place,
And made of council to his majesty.

DOLL.
Well is he worthy of it, by my troth,
An honest, wise, well spoken gentleman;
Yet would I praise his honesty much more,
If he had kept his word, and saved our lives:
But let that pass; men are but men, and so
Words are but words, and pays not what men owe.—
You, husband, since perhaps the world may say
That through my means thou comest thus to thy end,
Here I begin this cup of death to thee,
Because thou shalt be sure to taste no worse
Than I have taken that must go before thee.
What though I be a woman? that’s no matter;
I do owe God a death, and I must pay him.
Husband, give me thy hand; be not dismayed;
This chair being chaired, then all our debt is paid.
Only two little babes we leave behind us,
And all I can bequeath them at this time
Is but the love of some good honest friend,
To bring them up in charitable sort:
What, masters! he goes upright that never halts,
And they may live to mend their parents’ faults.

WILLIAMSON.

Why, well said, wife; yfaith, thou cheerest my heart:
Give me thy hand; let’s kiss, and so let’s part.

[He kisses her on the ladder.]

DOLL.
The next kiss, Williamson, shall be in heaven.—
Now cheerily, lads! George Betts, a hand with thee;
And thine too, Rafe, and thine, good honest Sherwin.
Now let me tell the women of this town,
No stranger yet brought Doll to lying down:
So long as I an Englishman can see,
Nor French nor Dutch shall get a kiss of me;
And when that I am dead, for me yet say,
I died in scorn to be a stranger’s prey.

[A great shout and noise, cry within ’Pardon, pardon, pardon, pardon! Room for the Earl of Surrey, room there, room!’.]

[Enter Surrey.]

SURREY.
Save the man’s life, if it be possible.

SHERIFF.
It is too late, my lord; he’s dead already.

SURREY.
I tell ye, Master Sheriff, you are too forward,
To make such haste with men unto their death;
I think your pains will merit little thanks,
Since that his highness is so merciful
As not to spill the blood of any subject.

SHERIFF.
My noble lord, would we so much had known!
The Councils’ warrant hastened our dispatch;
It had not else been done so suddenly.

SURREY.
Sir Thomas More humbly upon his knee
Did beg the lives of all, since on his word
They did so gently yield: the king hath granted it,
And made him Lord High Chancellor of England.
According as he worthily deserves.
Since Lincoln’s life cannot be had again,
Then for the rest, from my dread sovereign’s lips,
I here pronounce free pardon for them all.

ALL.
God save the king, God save the king!
My good Lord Chancellor, and the Earl of Surrey!

[Flinging up caps.]

DOLL.
And Doll desires it from her very heart,
More’s name may live for this right noble part;
And whensoere we talk of ill May day,
Praise More....

SURREY.
In hope his highness’ clemency and mercy,
Which in the arms of mild and meek compassion
Would rather clip you, as the loving nurse
Oft doth the wayward infant, then to leave you
To the sharp rod of justice, so to draw you
To shun such lewd assemblies as beget
Unlawful riots and such traitorous acts,
That, striking with the hand of private hate,
Maim your dear country with a public wound:—
Oh God, that Mercy, whose majestic brow
Should be unwrinkled, and that awful Justice,
Which looketh through a vail of sufferance
Upon the frailty of the multitude,
Should with the clamours of outrageous wrongs
Be stirred and wakened thus to punishment!—
But your deserved death he doth forgive:
Who gives you life, pray all he long may live.

ALL.
God save the king, God save the king!
My good Lord Chancellor, and the Earl of Surrey!

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Chelsea. A Room in More’s House.

[A table being covered with a green carpet, a state cushion on it,
and the Purse and Mace lying thereon, enter Sir Thomas More.]

MORE.
it is in heaven that I am thus and thus;
And that which we profanely term our fortunes
Is the provision of the power above,

Fitted and shaped just to that strength of nature
Which we are borne withal. Good God, good Go,
That I from such an humble bench of birth
Should step as twere up to my country’s head,
And give the law out there! I, in my father’s life,
To take prerogative and tithe of knees
From elder kinsmen, and him bind by my place
To give the smooth and dexter way to me
That owe it him by nature! Sure, these things,
Not physicked by respect, might turn our blood
To much corruption: but, More, the more thou hast,
Either of honor, office, wealth, and calling,
Which might excite thee to embrace and hub them,
The more doe thou in serpents’ natures think them;
Fear their gay skins with thought of their sharp state;
And let this be thy maxim, to be great
Is when the thread of hayday is once ’spon,
A bottom great wound up great undone.—
Come on, sir: are you ready?

[Enter Randall, attired like Sir Thomas More.]

RANDALL.
Yes, my lord, I stand but on a few points; I shall have done presently. Before God, I have practised your lordship’s shift so well, that I think I shall grow proud, my lord.

MORE.
Tis fit thou shouldst wax proud, or else thou’lt ne’er
Be near allied to greatness. Observe me, sirrah.
The learned clark Erasmus is arrived
Within our English court: last night I hear
He feasted with our honored English poet,
The Earl of Surrey; and I learned today
The famous clark of Rotterdam will visit
Sir Thomas More. Therefore, sir, take my seat;
you are Lord Chancellor: dress your behavior
According to my carriage; but beware
You talk not over much, for twill betray thee:
Who prates not much seems wise; his wit few scan;
While the tongue blabs tales of the imperfect man.
I’ll see if great Erasmus can distinguish
Merit and outward ceremony.

RANDALL.
If I do not serve a share for playing of your lordship well, let me be yeoman usher to your sumpter, and be banished from wearing of a gold chain forever.

MORE.
Well, sir, I’ll hide our motion: act my part
With a firm boldness, and thou winst my heart.

[Enter the Shrieve, with Faulkner a ruffian, and Officers.]

How now! what’s the matter?

FAULKNER.
Tug me not, I’m no bear. ’Sblood, if all the dogs in Paris Garden hung at my tail, I’d shake ’em off with this, that I’ll appear before no king christened but my good Lord Chancellor.

SHRIEVE.
We’ll christen you, sirrah.—Bring him forward.

MORE.
How now! what tumults make you?

FAULKNER.
The azured heavens protect my noble Lord Chancellor!

MORE.
What fellow’s this?

SHRIEVE.
A ruffian, my lord, that hath set half the city in an uproar.

FAULKNER.
My lord—

SHRIEVE.
There was a fray in Paternoster-row, and because they would not be parted, the street was choked up with carts.

FAULKNER.
My noble lord, Paniar Allies throat was open.

MORE.
Sirrah, hold your peace.

FAULKNER.
I’ll prove the street was not choked, but is as well as ever it was since it was a street.

SHRIEVE.
This fellow was a principal broacher of the broil.

FAULKNER.
’Sblood, I broached none; it was broached and half run out, before I had a lick at it.

SHRIEVE.
And would be brought before no justice but your honor.

FAULKNER.
I am hailed, my noble lord.

MORE.
No ear to choose for every trivial noise
but mine, and in so full a time? Away!
You wrong me, Master Shrieve: dispose of him
At your own pleasure; send the knave to Newgate.

FAULKNER.
To Newgate! ’sblood, Sir Thomas More, I appeal, I appeal from Newgate to any of the two worshipful Counters.

MORE.
Fellow, whose man are you, that are thus lusty?

FAULKNER.
My name’s Jack Faulkner; I serve, next under God and my prince, Master Morris, secretary to my Lord of Winchester.

MORE.
A fellow of your hair is very fit
To be a secretary’s follower!

FAULKNER.
I hope so, my lord. The fray was between the Bishops’ men of Ely and Winchester; and I could not in honor but part them. I thought it stood not with my reputation and degree to come to my questions and answers before a city justice: I knew I should to the pot.

MORE.
Thou hast been there, it seems, too late already.

FAULKNER.
I know your honor is wise and so forth; and I desire to be only cathecized or examined by you, my noble Lord Chancellor.

MORE.
Sirrah, sirrah, you are a busy dangerous ruffian.

FAULKNER.
Ruffian!

MORE.
How long have you worn this hair?

FAULKNER.
I have worn this hair ever since I was born.

MORE.
You know that’s not my question, but how long
Hath this shag fleece hung dangling on they head?

FAULKNER.
How long, my lord? why, sometimes thus long, sometimes lower, as the Fates and humors please.

MORE.
So quick, sir, with me, ha? I see, good fellow,
Thou lovest plain dealing. Sirrah, tell me now,
When were you last at barbers? how long time
Have you upon your head worn this shag hair?

FAULKNER.
My lord, Jack Faulkner tells no Aesops fables: troth, I was not at barbers this three years; I have not been cut not will not be cut, upon a foolish vow, which, as the Destinies shall direct, I am sworn to keep.

MORE.
When comes that vow out?

FAULKNER.
Why, when the humors are purged, not this three years.

MORE.
Vows are recorded in the court of Heaven,
For they are holy acts. Young man, I charge thee
And do advise thee, start not from that vow:
And, for I will be sure thou shalt not shrieve,
Besides, because it is an odious sight
To see a man thus hairy, thou shalt lie
In Newgate till thy vow and thy three years
Be full expired.—Away with him!

FAULKNER.
My lord—

MORE.
Cut off this fleece, and lie there but a month.

FAULKNER.
I’ll not lose a hair to be Lord Chancellor of Europe.

MORE.
To Newgate, then. Sirrah, great sins are bred
In all that body where there’s a foul head.
Away with him.

[Exeunt all except Randall.]

[Enter Surrey, Erasmus, and Attendants.]

SURREY.
Now, great Erasmus, you approach the presence
Of a most worthy learned gentleman:
This little isle holds not a truer friend
Unto the arts; nor doth his greatness add
A feigned flourish to his worthy parts;
He’s great in study; that’s the statist’s grace,
That gains more reverence than the outward place.

ERASMUS.
Report, my lord, hath crossed the narrow seas,
And to the several parts of Christendom,
Hath borne the fame of your Lord Chancellor:
I long to see him, whom with loving thoughts
I in my study oft have visited.
Is that Sir Thomas More?

SURREY.
It is, Erasmus:
Now shall you view the honorablest scholar,
The most religious politician,
The worthiest counsellor that tends our state.
That study is the general watch of England;
In it the prince’s safety, and the peace
That shines upon our commonwealth, are forged
By loyal industry.

ERASMUS.
I doubt him not
To be as near the life of excellence
As you proclaim him, when his meanest servants
Are of some weight: you saw, my lord, his porter
Give entertainment to us at the gate

In Latin good phrase; what’s the master, then,
When such good parts shine in his meanest men?

SURREY.
His Lordship hath some weighty business;
For, see, yet he takes no notice of us.

ERASMUS.
I think twere best I did my duty to him
In a short Latin speech.—
Qui in celiberima patria natus est ett gloriosa, plus habet negotii ut in lucem veniat quam qui—

RANDALL.
I prithee, good Erasmus, be covered. I have forsworn speaking of Latin, else, as I am true counsellor, I’d tickle you with a speech. Nay, sit, Erasmus;—sit, good my Lord of Surrey. I’ll make my lady come to you anon, if she will, and give you entertainment.

ERASMUS.
Is this Sir Thomas More?

SURREY.
Oh good Erasmus, you must conceive his vain:
He’s ever furnished with these conceits.

RANDALL.
Yes, faith, my learned poet doth not lie for that matter: I am neither more nor less than merry Sir Thomas always. Wilt sup with me? by God, I love a parlous wise fellow that smells of a politician better than a long progress.

[Enter Sir Thomas More.]

SURREY.
We are deluded; this is not his lordship.

RANDALL.
I pray you, Erasmus, how long will the Holland cheese in your country keep without maggots?

MORE.
Fool, painted barbarism, retire thyself
Into thy first creation!

[Exit Randall.]

Thus you see,

My loving learned friends, how far respect
Waits often on the ceremonious train
Of base illiterate wealth, whilst men of schools,
Shrouded in poverty, are counted fools.
Pardon, thou reverent German, I have mixed
So slight a jest to the fair entertainment
Of thy most worthy self; for know, Erasmus,
Mirth wrinkles up my face, and I still crave,
When that forsakes me I may hug my grave.

ERASMUS.
Your honor’s merry humor is best physic
Unto your able body; for we learn
Where melancholy chokes the passages
Of blood and breath, the erected spirit still
Lengthens our days with sportful exercise:
Study should be the saddest time of life.
The rest a sport exempt from thought of strife.

MORE.
Erasmus preacheth gospel against physic,
My noble poet.

SURREY.
Oh, my Lord, you tax me
In that word poet of much idleness:
It is a study that makes poor our fate;
Poets were ever thought unfit for state.

MORE.
O, give not up fair poesy, sweet lord,
To such contempt! That I may speak my heart,
It is the sweetest heraldry of art,
That sets a difference ’tween the tough sharp holly
And tender bay tree.

SURREY.
Yet, my lord,
It is become the very logic number
To all mechanic sciences.

MORE.
Why, I’ll show the reason:
This is no age for poets; they should sing
To the loud canon heroica facta;
Qui faciunt reges heroica carmina laudant:
And, as great subjects of their pen decay,
Even so unphysicked they do melt away.

[Enter Master Morris.]

Come, will your lordship in?—My dear Erasmus—
I’ll hear you, Master Morris, presently.—
My lord, I make you master of my house:
We’ll banquet here with fresh and staid delights,
The Muses music here shall cheer our sprites;
The cates must be but mean where scholars sit,
For they’re made all with courses of neat wit.

[Exeunt Surrey, Erasmus, and Attendants.]

How now, Master Morris?

MORRIS.
I am a suitor to your lordship in behalf of a servant of mine.

MORE.
The fellow with long hair? good Master Morris,
Come to me three years hence, and then I’ll hear you.

MORRIS.
I understand your honor: but the foolish knave has submitted himself to the mercy of a barber, and is without, ready to make a new vow before your lordship, hereafter to leave cavil.

MORE.
Nay, then, let’s talk with him; pray, call him in.

[Enter Faulkner and Officers.]

FAULKNER.
Bless your honor! a new man, my lord

MORE.
Why, sure, this is not he.

FAULKNER.
And your lordship will, the barber shall give you a sample of my head: I am he in faith, my lord; I am ipse.

MORE.
Why, now thy face is like an honest man’s:
Thou hast played well at this new cut, and won.

FAULKNER.
No, my lord; lost all that ever God sent me.

MORE.
God sent thee into the world as thou art now,
With a short hair. How quickly are three years
Run out of Newgate!

FAULKNER.
I think so, my lord; for there was but a hair’s length between my going thither and so long time.

MORE.
Because I see some grace in thee, go free.—
Discharge him, fellows.—Farewell, Master Morris.—
Thy head is for thy shoulders now more fit;
Thou hast less hair upon it, but more wit.

[Exit.]

MORRIS.
Did not I tell thee always of these locks?

FAULKNER.
And the locks were on again, all the goldsmiths in Cheapside should not pick them open. ’Sheart, if my hair stand not on end when I look for my face in a glass, I am a polecat. Here’s a lousy jest! but, if I notch not that rogue Tom barber, that makes me look thus like a Brownist, hang me! I’ll be worse to the nitticall knave than ten tooth drawings. Here’s a head, with a pox!

MORRIS.
What ails thou? art thou mad now?

FAULKNER.
Mad now! nails, if loss of hair cannot mad a man, what can? I am deposed, my crown is taken from me. More had been better a scoured Moreditch than a notched me thus: does he begin sheepshearing with Jack Faulkner?

MORRIS.
Nay, and you feed this vein, sir, fare you well.

FAULKNER.
Why, farewell, frost. I’ll go hang myself out for the Poll Head. Make a Saracen of Jack?

MORRIS.
Thou desperate knave! for that I see the devil
Wholly gets hold of thee—

FAULKNER.
The devil’s a damned rascal.

MORRIS.
I charge thee, wait on me no more; no more
Call me thy master.

FAULKNER.
Why, then, a word, Master Morris.

MORRIS.
I’ll hear no words, sir; fare you well.

FAULKNER.
’Sblood, farewell.

MORRIS.
Why dost thou follow me?

FAULKNER.
Because I’m an ass. Do you set your shavers upon me, and then cast me off? must I condole? have the Fates played the fools? am I their cut? now the poor sconce is taken, must Jack march with bag and baggage?

[Weeps.]

MORRIS.
You coxcomb!

FAULKNER.
Nay, you ha’ poached me; you ha’ given me a hair; it’s here, hear.

MORRIS.
Away, you kind ass! come, sir, dry your eyes:
Keep you old place, and mend these fooleries.

FAULKNER.
I care not to be turned off, and ’twere a ladder, so it be in my humor, or the Fates beckon to me. Nay, pray, sir, if the Destinies spin me a fine thread, Faulkner flies another pitch; and to avoid the headache hereafter, before I’ll be a hairmonger, I’ll be a whoremonger.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Chelsea. Ante-chamber in More’s House.

[Enter a Messenger to More.]

MESSENGER.
My honorable lord, the Mayor of London,
Accompanied with his lady and her train,
Are coming hither, and are hard at hand,
To feast with you: a servant’s come before,
To tell your lordship of there near approach.

MORE.
Why, this is cheerful news: friends go and come:
Reverend Erasmus, who delicious words
Express the very soul and life of wit,
Newly took sad leave of me, and with tears
Troubled the silver channel of the Thames,
Which, glad of such a burden, proudly swelled
And on her bosom bore him toward the sea:
He’s gone to Rotterdam; peace go with him!
He left me heavy when he went from hence;
But this recomforts me; the kind Lord Mayor,
His brethren aldermen, with their fair wives,
Will feast this night with us: why, so it should be;
More’s merry heart lives by good company.—
Good gentlemen, be careful; give great charge
Our diet be made dainty for the taste;
For, of all people that the earth affords,
The Londoners fare richest at their boards.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. Chelsea. A Room in More’s House.

[Enter Sir Thomas More, Master Roper, and Servingmen setting stools.]

MORE.
Come, my good fellows, stir, be diligent;
Sloth is an idle fellow, leave him now;
The time requires your expeditious service.
Place me here stools, to set the ladies on.—
Son Roper, you have given order for the banquet?

ROPER.

I have, my lord, and every thing is ready.

[Enter his Lady.]

MORE.
Oh, welcome, wife! give you direction
How women should be placed; you know it best.
For my Lord Mayor, his brethren, and the rest,
Let me alone; men best can order men.

LADY.
I warrant ye, my lord, all shall be well.
There’s one without that stays to speak with ye,
And bade me tell ye that he is a player.

MORE.
A player, wife!—One of ye bid him come in.

[Exit one.]

Nay, stir there, fellows; fie, ye are too slow!
See that your lights be in a readiness:
The banquet shall be here.—Gods me, madame,
Leave my Lady Mayoress! both of us from the board!
And my son Roper too! what may our guests think?

LADY.
My lord, they are risen, and sitting by the fire.

MORE.
Why, yet go you and keep them company;
It is not meet we should be absent both.

[Exit Lady.]

[Enter Player.]

Welcome, good friend; what is you will with me?

PLAYER.
My lord, my fellows and myself
Are come to tender ye our willing service,
So please you to command us.

MORE.
What, for a play, you mean?
Whom do ye serve?

PLAYER.
My Lord Cardinal’s grace.

MORE.
My Lord Cardinal’s players! now, trust me, welcome;
You happen hither in a lucky time,
To pleasure me, and benefit yourselves.
The Mayor of London and some aldermen,
His lady and their wives, are my kind guests
This night at supper: now, to have a play
Before the banquet, will be excellent.—
How think you, son Roper?

ROPER.
’Twill do well, my lord,
And be right pleasing pastime to your guests.

MORE.
I prithee, tell me, what plays have ye?

PLAYER.
Diverse, my lord: The Cradle of Security,
His nail o’ the head, Impatient Poverty,
The play of Four Peas, Dives and Lazarus,
Lusty Juventus, and The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom.

MORE.
The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom! that, my lads;
I’ll none but that; the theme is very good,
And may maintain a liberal argument:
To marry wit to wisdom, asks some cunning;
Many have wit, that may come short of wisdom.
We’ll see how Master poet plays his part,
And whether wit or wisdom grace his art.—
Go, make him drink, and all his fellows too.—
How many are ye?

PLAYER.
Four men and a boy, sir.

MORE.
But one boy? then I see,
There’s but few women in the play.

PLAYER.
Three, my lord; Dame Science, Lady Vanity,
And Wisdom she herself.

MORE.
And one boy play them all? by our Lady, he’s laden.
Well, my good fellow, get ye straight together,
And make ye ready with what haste ye may.—
Proud their supper gainst the play be done,
Else shall we stay our guests here over long.—
Make haste, I pray ye.

PLAYER.
We will, my lord.

[Exit Servant and Player.]

MORE.
Where are the waits? go, big them play,
To spend the time a while.

[Enter Lady.]

How now, madame?

LADY.
My lord, th’ are coming hither.

MORE.
Th’ are welcome. Wife, I’ll tell ye one thing;
One sport is somewhat mended; we shall have
A play tonight, The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom,
And acted by my good Lord Cardinal’s players;
How like ye that, wife?

LADY.
My lord, I like it well.
See, they are coming.

[The waits plays; enter Lord Mayor, so many Aldermen as may, the Lady Mayoress in scarlet, with other Ladies and Sir Thomas More’s Daughters; Servants carrying lighted torches by them.]

MORE.
Once again, welcome, welcome, my good Lord Mayor,
And brethren all, for once I was your brother,
And so I am still in heart: it is not state
That can our love from London separate.
True, upstart fools, by sudden fortune tried,
Regard their former mates with naught but pride.
But they that cast an eye still whence they came,
Know how they rose, and how to use the same.

LORD MAYOR.
My lord, you set a gloss on London’s fame,
And make it happy ever by your name.
Needs must we say, when we remember More,
’Twas he that drove rebellion from our door
With grave discretions mild and gentle breath,
Oh, how our city is by you renowned,
And with your virtues our endeavors crowned!

MORE.
No more, my good Lord Mayor: but thanks to all,
That on so short a summons you would come
To visit him that holds your kindness dear.—
Madame, you are not merry with my Lady Mayoress
And these fair ladies; pray ye, seat them all:—
And here, my lord, let me appoint your place;—
The rest to seat themselves:—nay, I’ll weary ye;
You will not long in haste to visit me.

LADY.
Good madame, sit; in sooth, you shall sit here.

LADY MAYORESS.
Good madame, pardon me; it may not be.

LADY.
In troth, I’ll have it so: I’ll sit here by ye.—
Good ladies, sit.—More stools here, ho!

LADY MAYORESS.
It is your favour, madame, makes me thus
Presume above my merit.

LADY.
When we come to you,
Then shall you rule us as we rule you here.
Now must I tell ye, madame, we have a play,
To welcome ye withal; how good so ere,
That know not I; my lord will have it so.

MORE.
Wife, hope the best; I am sure they’ll do their best:
They that would better, comes not at their feast.
My good Lord Cardinal’s players, I thank them for it,
Play us a play, to lengthen out your welcome:
They say it is The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom,
A theme of some import, how ere it prove;

But, if art fail, we’ll inch it out with love.—

[Enter a Servant.]

What, are they ready?

SERVANT.
My lord, one of the players craves to speak with you.

MORE.
With me! where is he?

[Enter Inclination, the Vice, ready.]

INCLINATION.
Here, my lord.

MORE.
How now! what’s the matter?

INCLINATION.
We would desire your honor but to stay a little; one of my fellows is but run to Oagles for a long beard for young Wit, and he’ll be here presently.

MORE.
A long beard for young Wit! why, man, he may be without a beard till he come to marriage, for wit goes not all by the hair. When comes Wit in?

INCLINATION.
In the second scene, next to the Prologue, my lord.

MORE.
Why, play on till that scene come, and by that time Wit’s beard will be grown, or else the fellow returned with it. And what part playest thou?

INCLINATION.
Inclination the Vice, my lord.

MORE.
Gramercies, now I may take the vice if I list: and wherefore hast thou that bridle in thy hand?

INCLINATION.
I must be bridled anon, my lord.

MORE.
And thou beest not saddled too, it makes no matter, for then Wit’s inclination may gallop so fast, that he will outstrip Wisdom, and fall to folly.

INCLINATION.
Indeed, so he does to Lady Vanity; but we have no folly in our play.

MORE.
Then there’s no wit in ’t, I’ll be sworn: folly waits on wit, as the shadow on the body, and where wit is ripest there folly still is readiest. But begin, I prithee: we’ll rather allow a beardless Wit than Wit all beard to have no brain.

INCLINATION.
Nay, he has his apparel on too, my lord, and therefore he is the readier to enter.

MORE.
Then, good Inclination, begin at a venter.—

[Exit Inclination.]

My Lord Mayor,
Wit lacks a beard, or else they would begin:
I’d lend him mine, but that it is too thin.
Silence, they come.

[The trumpet sounds; enter the Prologue.]

PROLOGUE.
Now, for as much as in these latter days,
Throughout the whole world in every land,
Vice doth increase, and virtue decays,
Iniquity having the upper hand;
We therefore intend, good gentle audience,
A pretty short interlude to play at this present,
Desiring your leave and quiet silence,
To show the same, as is meet and expedient,
It is called The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom,
A matter right pithy and pleasing to hear,
Whereof in brief we will show the whole sum;
But I must be gone, for Wit doth appear.

[Exit. Enter Wit ruffling, and Inclination the Vice.]

WIT.

In an arbor green, asleep whereas I lay,
The birds sang sweetly in the midst of the day,
I dreamed fast of mirth and play,—
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure,
Methought I walked still to and fro,
And from her company I could not go;
But when I waked, it was not so,—
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.
Therefore my heart is surely plight,
Of her alone to have a sight,
Which is my joy and heart’s delight,—
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

MORE.
Mark ye, my lord, this is Wit without a beard: what will he be by
that time he comes to the commodity of a beard?

INCLINATION.
Oh, sir, the ground is the better on which she doth go;
For she will make better cheer with a little she can get,
Than many a one can with a great banquet of meat.

WIT.
And is her name Wisdom?

INCLINATION.
I, sir, a wife most fit
For you, my good master, my dainty sweet Wit.

WIT.
To be in her company my heart it is set:
Therefore I prithee to let us begone;
For unto Wisdom Wit hath inclination.

INCLINATION.
Oh, sir, she will come her self even anon;
For I told her before where we would stand.
And then she said she would beck us with her hand.—
Back with these boys and saucy great knaves!

[Flourishing a dagger.]

What, stand ye here so big in your braves?
My dagger about your coxcombs shall walk,
If I may but so much as hear ye chat or talk.

WIT.
But will she take pains to come for us hither?

INCLINATION.
I warrant ye; therefore you must be familiar with her;
When she commeth in place,
You must her embrace
Somewhat handsomely,
Least she think it danger,
Because you are a stranger,
To come in your company.

WIT.
I warrant thee, Inclination, I will be busy:
Oh, how Wit longs to be in Wisdom’s company!

[Enter Lady Vanity singing, and beckoning with her hand.]

VANITY.
Come hither, come hither, come hither, come:
Such cheer as I have, thou shalt have some.

MORE.
This is Lady Vanity, I’ll hold my life:—
Beware, good Wit, you take not her to wife.

INCLINATION.
What, unknown honesty? a word in your ear.

[She offers to depart.]

You shall not be gone as yet, I swear:
Here’s none but friends, you need not to fray;
This young gentleman loves ye, therefore you must stay.

WIT.
I trust in me she will think no danger,
For I love well the company of fair women;
And though to you I am a stranger,
Yet Wit may pleasure you now and then.

VANITY.
Who, you? nay, you are such a holy man,
That to touch on you dare not be bold;
I think you would not kiss a young woman,
If one would give ye twenty pound in gold.

WIT.
Yes, in good sadness, lady, that I would:

I could find in my heart to kiss you in your smock.

VANITY.
My back is broad enough to bear that mock;
For it hath been told me many a time
That you would be seen in no such company as mine.

WIT.
Not Wit in the company of Lady Wisdom?
Oh Jove, for what do I hither come?

INCLINATION.
Sir, she did this nothing else but to prove
Whether a little thing would you move
To be angry and fret:
What, and if one said so?
Let such trifling matters go
And with a kind kiss come out of her debt.—

Is Luggins come yet with the beard?

[Enter another Player.]

PLAYER.
No, faith, he is not come: alas, what shall we do?

INCLINATION.
Forsooth, we can go no further till our fellow Luggins come; for he plays Good Council, and now he should enter, to admonish Wit that this is Lady Vanity, and not Lady Wisdom.

MORE.
Nay, and it be no more but so, ye shall not tarry at a stand for that; we'll not have our play marred for lack of a little good council: till your fellow come, I'll give him the best council that I can.—Pardon me, my Lord Mayor; I love to be merry.—

Oh…Wit, thou art now on the bow hand,
And blindly in thine own opinion dost stand.
I tell thee, this naughty lewd Inclination
Does lead thee amiss in a very strange fashion:
This is not Wisdom, but Lady Vanity;
Therefore list to Good Council, and be ruled by me.

INCLINATION.
In troth, my lord, it is as right to Lugginses part as can be.—Speak, Wit.

MORE.
Nay, we will not have our audience disappointed, if I can help it.

WIT.
Art thou Good Council, and will tell me so?
Wouldst thou have Wit from Lady Wisdom to go?
Thou art some deceiver, I tell thee verily,
In saying that this is Lady Vanity.

MORE.
Wit, judge not things by the outward show;
The eye oft mistakes, right well you do know:
Good Council assures thee upon his honesty,
That this is not Wisdom, but Lady Vanity.

[Enter Luggins with the beard.]

INCLINATION.
Oh, my lord, he is come; now we shall go forward.

MORE.
Art thou come? well, fellow, I have hoped to save thine honesty a little. Now, if thou canst give Wit any better council than I have done, spare not: there I leave him to they mercy.
But by this time, I am sure, our banquet’s ready:
My lord and ladies, we will taste that first,
And then they shall begin the play again,
Which through the fellow’s absence, and by me,
Instead of helping, hath been hindered.—
Prepare against we come.—Lights there, I say!—
Thus fools oft times do help to mar the play.

[Exeunt all but players.]

WIT.
Fie, fellow Luggins, you serve us handsomely; do ye not, think ye?

LUGGINS.
Why, Oagle was not within, and his wife would not let me have the beard; and, by my troth, I ran so fast that I sweat again.

INCLINATION.
Do ye hear, fellows? would not my lord make a rare player? oh, he would uphold a company beyond all hope, better than Mason among the king’s players! Did ye mark how extemprically he fell to the matter, and spake Lugginses part almost as it is in the very book set down?

WIT.
Peace; do ye know what ye say? my lord a player! let us not meddle with any such matters: yet I may be a little proud that my lord hath answered me in my part. But come, let us go, and be ready to begin the play again.

LUGGINS.
I, that’s the best, for now we lack nothing.

[Enter a Servingman.]

MAN.
Where be these players?

ALL.
Here, sir.

MAN.
My lord is sent for to the court,
And all the guests do after supper part;
And, for he will not trouble you again,
By me for your reward a sends 8 angels,
With many thanks. But sup before you go:
It is his will you should be fairly entreated:
Follow, I pray ye.

WIT.
This, Luggins, is your negligence;
Wanting Wit’s beard brought things into dislike;
For otherwise the play had been all seen,
Where now some curious citizen disgraced it,
And discommending it, all is dismissed.

VICE.
Fore God, a says true. But hear ye, sirs: 8 angels, ha! my lord would never give 8 angels more or less for 12d; other it should be 3l, 5l, or ten li.; there’s 20s wanting, sure.

WIT.
Twenty to one, tis so. I have a trick: my lord comes; stand aside.

[Enter More, with Attendants with Purse and Mace.]

MORE.
In haste to counsel! what’s the business now,
That all so late his highness sends for me?—
What seekst thou, fellow?

WIT.
Nay, nothing: your lordship sent 8 angels by your man, and I have lost two of them in the rishes.

MORE.
Wit, look to that:—8 angels! I did send them ten.—Who gave it them?

MAN.
I, my lord; I had no more about me;
But by and by they shall rescue the rest.

MORE.
Well, Wit, twas wisely done; thou playest Wit well indeed,
Not to be thus deceived of thy right.—
Am I a man, by office truly ordained
Equally to decide true right his own,
And shall I have deceivers in my house?
Then what avails my bounty, when such servants
Deceive the poor of what the Master gives?
Go on, and pull his coat over his ears:
There are too many such.—Give them their right.—
Wit, let thy fellows thank thee: twas well done;
Thou now deservest to match with Lady Wisdom.

[Exit More with Attendants.]

VICE.
God a mercy, Wit!—Sir, you had a master Sir Thomas More more; but now we shall have more.

LUGGINS.
God bless him! I would there were more of his mind! a loves our quality; and yet he’s a learned man, and knows what the world is.

CLOWN.
Well, a kind man, and more loving than many other: but I think we ha’ met with the first....

LUGGINS.
First served his man that had our angels; and he may chance dine with Duke Humphrey tomorrow, being turned away today. Come, let’s go.

CLOWN.
And many such rewards would make us all ride, and horse us with the best nags in Smithfield.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Whitehall. The Council chamber.

[Enter the Earls of Shrewsbury, Surrey, Bishop of Rochester, and other Lords; severally, doing courtesy to each other; Clerk of the Council waiting bareheaded.]

SURREY.
Good morrow to my Lord of Shrewsbury.

SHREWSBURY.
The like unto the honoured Earl of Surrey.
Yond comes my Lord of Rochester.

ROCHESTER.
Good morrow, my good lords.

SURREY.
Clerk of the Council, what time is’t of day?

CLERK.
Past eight of clock, my lord.

SHREWSBURY.
I wonder that my good Lord Chancellor
Doth stay so long, considering there’s matters
Of high importance to be scanned upon.

SURREY.
Clerk of the Council, certify his lordship
The lords expect him here.

ROCHESTER.
It shall not need;
Yond comes his lordship.

[Enter Sir Thomas More, with Purse and Mace borne before him.]

MORE.
Good morrow to this fair assembly.
Come, my good lords, let’s sit. Oh serious square!

[They sit.]

Upon this little board is daily scanned
The health and preservation of the land;

We the physicians that effect this good,
Now by choice diet, anon by letting blood;
Our toil and careful watching brings the king
In league with slumbers, to which peace doth sing.—
Avoid the room there!—
What business, lords, today?

SHREWSBURY.
This, my good lord;
About the entertainment of the emperor
Gainst the perfidious French into our pay.

SURREY.
My lords, as tis the custom in this place
The youngest should speak first, so, if I chance
In this case to speak youngly, pardon me.
I will agree, France now hath her full strength,
As having new recovered the pale blood
Which war sluiced forth; and I consent to this,
That the conjunction of our English forces
With arms of Germany may soon bring
This prize of conquest in. But, then, my lords,
As in the moral hunting twixt the lion
And other beasts, force joined with greed
Frighted the weaker sharers from their parts;
So, if the empire’s sovereign chance to put
His plea of partnership into war’s court,
Swords should decide the difference, and our blood
In private tears lament his entertainment.

SHREWSBURY.
To doubt the worst is still the wise man’s shield,
That arms him safely: but the world knows this,
The emperor is a man of royal faith;
His love unto our sovereign brings him down
From his imperial seat, to march in pay
Under our English flag, and wear the cross,
Like some high order, on his manly breast;
Thus serving, he’s not master of himself,
But, like a colonel commanding other,
Is by the general over-awed himself.

ROCHESTER.
Yet, my good lord—

SHREWSBURY.
Let me conclude my speech.
As subjects share no portion in the conquest

Of their true sovereign, other than the merit
That from the sovereign guerdons the true subject;
So the good emperor, in a friendly league
Of amity with England, will not soil
His honor with the theft of English spoil.

MORE.
There is no question but this entertainment
Will be most honorable, most commodious.
I have oft heard good captains wish to have
Rich soldiers to attend them, such as would fight
Both for their lives and livings; such a one
Is the good emperor: I would to God,
We had ten thousand of such able men!
Hah, then there would appear no court, no city,
But, where the wars were, they would pay themselves.
Then, to prevent in French wars England’s loss,
Let German flags wave with our English cross.

[Enter Sir Thomas Palmer.]

PALMER.
My lords, his majesty hath sent by me
These articles enclosed, first to be viewed,
And then to be subscribed to: I tender them
In that due reverence which befits this place.

[With great reverence.]

MORE.
Subscribe these articles! stay, let us pause;
Our conscience first shall parley with our laws.—
My Lord of Rochester, view you the paper.

ROCHESTER.
Subscribe to these! now, good Sir Thomas Palmer,
Beseech the king that he will pardon me:
My heart will check my hand whilst I do write;
Subscribing so, I were an hypocrite.

PALMER.
Do you refuse it, then, my lord?

ROCHESTER.
I do, Sir Thomas.

PALMER.
Then here I summon you forthwith t’ appear

Before his majesty, to answer there
This capital contempt.

ROCHESTER.
I rise and part,
In lieu of this to tender him my heart.

[He riseth.]

PALMER.
Wilt please your honor to subscribe, my lord?

MORE.
Sir, tell his highness, I entreat
Some time for to bethink me of this task:
In the meanwhile I do resign mine office
Into my sovereign’s hands.

PALMER.
Then, my lord,
Hear the prepared order from the king:
On your refusal, you shall straight depart
Unto your house at Chelsea, till you know
Our sovereign’s further pleasure.

MORE.
Most willingly I go.—
My lords, if you will visit me at Chelsea,
We’ll go a fishing, and with a cunning net,
Not like weak film, we’ll catch none but the great:
Farewell, my noble lords. Why, this is right:
Good morrow to the sun, to state good night!

[Exit More.]

PALMER.
Will you subscribe, my lords?

SURREY.
Instantly, good Sir Thomas,
We’ll bring the writing unto our sovereign.

[They write.]

PALMER.
My Lord of Rochester,
You must with me, to answer this contempt.

ROCHESTER.
This is the worst,
Who’s freed from life is from all care exempt.

[Exit Rochester and Palmer.]

SURREY.
Now let us hasten to our sovereign.
Tis strange that my Lord Chancellor should refuse
The duty that the law of God bequeaths
Unto the king.

SHREWSBURY.
Come, let us in. No doubt
His mind will alter, and the bishop’s too:
Error in learned heads hath much to do.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Chelsea.

[Enter the Lady More, her two Daughters, and Master Roper, as walking.]

ROPER.
Madame, what ails ye for to look so sad?

LADY MORE.
Troth, son, I know not what; I am not sick,
And yet I am not well. I would be merry;
But somewhat lies so heavy on heart,
I cannot choose but sigh. You are a scholar;
I pray ye, tell me, may one credit dreams?

ROPER.
Why ask you that, dear madame?

LADY MORE.
Because tonight I had the strangest dream
That ere my sleep was troubled with. Me thought twas night,
And that the king and queen went on the Thames
In barges to hear music: my lord and I
Were in a little boat me thought,—Lord, Lord,
What strange things live in slumbers!—and, being near,
We grappled to the barge that bare the king.
But after many pleasing voices spent
In that still moving music house, me though

The violence of the stream did sever us
Quite from the golden fleet, and hurried us
Unto the bridge, which with unused horror
We entered at full tide: thence some slight shoot
Being carried by the waves, our boat stood still
Just opposite the Tower, and there it turned
And turned about, as when a whirl-pool sucks
The circled waters: me thought that we both cried,
Till that we sunk: where arm in arm we died.

ROPER.
Give no respect, dear madame, to fond dreams:
They are but slight illusions of the blood.

LADY MORE.
Tell me not all are so; for often dreams
Are true diviners, either of good or ill:
I cannot be in quiet till I hear
How my lord fares.

ROPER.
[aside.] No it.—Come hither, wife:
I will not fright thy mother, to interpret
The nature of a dream; but trust me, sweet,
This night I have been troubled with thy father
Beyond all thought.

ROPER’S WIFE.
Truly, and so have I:
Methought I saw him here in Chelsea Church,
Standing upon the roodloft, now defac’d;
And whilst he kneeled and prayed before the image,
It fell with him into the upper-choir,
Where my poor father lay all stained in blood.

ROPER.
Our dreams all meet in one conclusion,
Fatal, I fear.

LADY MORE.
What’s that you talk? I pray ye, let me know it.

ROPER’S WIFE.
Nothing, good mother.

LADY MORE.
This is your fashion still; I must know nothing.
Call Master Catesby; he shall straight to court,

And see how my lord does: I shall not rest,
Until my heart leave panting on his breast.

[Enter Sir Thomas More merrily, Servants attending.]

DAUGHTER.
See where my father comes, joyful and merry.

MORE.
As seamen, having passed a troubled storm,
Dance on the pleasant shore; so I—oh, I could speak
Now like a poet! now, afore God, I am passing light!—
Wife, give me kind welcome: thou wast wont to blame
My kissing when my beard was in the stubble;
But I have been trimmed of late; I have had
A smooth court shaving, in good faith, I have.—

[Daughters kneel.]

God bless ye!—Son Roper, give me your hand.

ROPER.
Your honor’s welcome home.

MORE.
Honor! ha ha!—And how dost, wife?

ROPER.
He bears himself most strangely.

LADY MORE.
Will your lordship in?

MORE.
Lordship! no, wife, that’s gone:
The ground was slight that we did lean upon.

LADY MORE.
Lord, that your honor ne’er will leave these jests!
In faith, it ill becomes ye.

MORE.
Oh, good wife,
Honor and jests are both together fled;
The merriest councillor of England’s dead.

LADY MORE.
Who’s that, my lord?

MORE.
Still lord! the Lord Chancellor, wife.

LADY MORE.
That’s you.

MORE.
Certain; but I have changed my life.
Am I not leaner than I was before?
The fat is gone; my title’s only More.
Contented with one style, I’ll live at rest:
They that have many names are not still best.
I have resigned mine office: count’st me not wise?

LADY MORE.
Oh God!

MORE.
Come, breed not female children in your eyes:
The king will have it so.

LADY MORE.
What’s the offense?

MORE.
Tush, let that pass; we’ll talk of that anon.
The king seems a physician to my fate;
His princely mind would train me back to state.

ROPER.
Then be his patient, my most honored father.

MORE.
Oh, son Roper,
Ubi turpis est medicine, sanari piget!—
No, wife, be merry;—and be merry, all:
You smiled at rising, weep not at my fall.
Let’s in, and hear joy like to private friends,
Since days of pleasure have repentant ends:
The light of greatness is with triumph born;
It sets at midday oft with public scorn.

SCENE IV. The Tower.

[Enter the Bishop of Rochester, Surrey, Shrewsbury, Lieutenant of the Tower, and Warders with weapons.]

ROCHESTER.
Your kind persuasions, honorable lords,
I can but thank ye for; but in this breast
There lives a soul that aims at higher things
Than temporary pleasing earthly kings.
God bless his highness even with all my heart!—
We shall meet one day, though that now we part.

SURREY.
We not misdoubt, your wisdom can discern
What best befits it; yet in love and zeal
We could entreat, it might be otherwise.

SHREWSBURY.
No doubt, your fatherhood will by yourself
Consider better of the present case,
And grow as great in favor as before.

ROCHESTER.
For that, as pleaseth God. In my restraint
From wordly causes, I shall better see
Into myself than at proud liberty:
The Tower and I will privately confer
Of things, wherein at freedom I may err.
But I am troublesome unto your honors,
And hold ye longer than becomes my duty.—
Master Lieutenant, I am now your charge;
And though you keep my body, yet my love
Waits on my king and you, while Fisher lives.

SURREY.
Farewell, my Lord of Rochester; we’ll pray
For your release, and labour’t as we may.

SHREWSBURY.
Thereof assure yourself; so do we leave ye,
And to your happy private thoughts bequeath ye.

[Exeunt Lords.]

ROCHESTER.
Now, Master Lieutenant, on; a God’s name, go!
And with as glad a mind go I with you
As ever truant bade the school adieu.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V. Chelsea. A Room in More’s House.

[Enter Sir Thomas More, his Lady, Daughters, Master Roper, Gentlemen, and Servants, as in his house at Chelsea.]

MORE.
Good morrow, good son Roper.—
Sit, good madame,

[Low stools.]

Upon an humble seat; the time so craves;
Rest your good heart on earth, the roof of graves:
You see the floor of greatness is uneven;
The cricket and high throne alike near heaven.—
Now, daughters, you that like to branches spread,
And give best shadow to a private house,
Be comforted, my girls; your hopes stand fair:
Virtue breeds gentry, she makes the best heir.

BOTH DAUGHTERS.
Good morrow to your honor.

MORE.
Nay, good night rather;
Your honor’s crest-fain with your happy father.

ROPER.
Oh, what formality, what square observance,
Lives in a little room! here public care
Gags not the eyes of slumber; here fierce riot
Ruffles not proudly in a coat of trust,
Whilst, like a pawn at chess, he keeps in rank
With kings and mighty fellows; yet indeed
Those men that stand on tiptoe smile to see
Him pawn his fortunes.

MORE.
True, son,....
Nor does the wanton tongue here screw itself
Into the ear, that like a vise drinks up
The iron instrument.

LADY MORE.
We are here at peace.

MORE.

Then peace, good wife.

LADY MORE.
For, keeping still in compass, a strange point
In times new navigation we have sailed
Beyond our course.

MORE.
Have done.

LADY MORE.
We are exiled the court.

MORE.
Still thou harpest on that:
Tis sin for to deserve that banishment;
But he that ne’er knew court, courts sweet content.

LADY MORE.
Oh, but, dear husband—

MORE.
I will not hear thee, wife;
The winding labyrinth of thy strange discourse
Will ne’er have end. Sit still; and, my good wife,
Entreat thy tongue be still; or, credit me,
Thou shalt not understand a word we speak;
We’ll talk in Latin.
Humida vallis raros patitur fulminis ictus,
More rest enjoys the subject meanly bred
Than he that bears the kingdom in his head.
Great men are still musicians, else the world lies;
They learn low strains after the notes that rise.

ROPER.
Good sir, be still yourself, and but remember
How in this general court of short-lived pleasure,
The world, creation is the ample food
That is digested in the maw of time:
If man himself be subject to such ruin,
How shall his garment, then, or the loose points
That tie respect unto his awful place,
Avoid destruction? Most honored father-in-law,
The blood you have bequeathed these several hearts
To nourish your posterity, stands firm;
And, as with joy you led us first to rise,
So with like hearts we’ll lock preferment’s eyes.

MORE.
Close them not, then, with tears: for that ostent
Gives a wet signal of your discontent.
If you will share my fortunes, comfort then;
An hundred smiles for one sigh: what! we are men:
Resign wet passion to these weaker eyes,
Which proves their sex, but grants it ne’er more wise.
Let’s now survey our state. Here sits my wife,
And dear esteemed issue; yonder stand
My loving servants: now the difference
Twixt those and these. Now you shall hear my speak
Like More in melancholy. I conceive that nature
Hath sundry metals, out of which she frames
Us mortals, each in valuation
Outprizing other: of the finest stuff
The finest features come: the rest of earth,
Receive base fortune even before their birth;
Hence slaves have their creation; and I think
Nature provides content for the base mind;
Under the whip, the burden, and the toil,
Their low-wrought bodies drudge in patience;
As for the prince in all his sweet-gorged maw,
And his rank flesh, that sinfully renews
The noon’s excess in the night’s dangerous surfeits.
What means or misery from our birth doth flow
Nature entitles to us; that we owe:
But we, being subject to the rack of hate,
Falling from happy life to bondage state,
Having seen better days, now know the lack
Of glory that once reared each high-fed back.
But you, that in your age did ne’er view better,
Challenged not fortune for your thriftless debter.

CATESBY.
Sir, we have seen far better days than these.

MORE.
I was the patron of those days, and know
Those were but painted days, only for show.
Then grieve not you to fall with him that gave them:
Generosis servis gloriosum mori.
Dear Gough, thou art my learned secretary;
You, Master Catesby, steward of my house;
The rest like you have had fair time to grow
In sun-shine of my fortunes. But I must tell ye,
Corruption is fled hence with each man’s office;
Bribes, that make open traffic twixt the soul
And netherland of hell, deliver up

Their guilty homage to the second lords.
Then, living thus untainted, you are well:
Truth is no pilot for the land of hell.

[Enter a Servant.]

SERVANT.
My lord, there are new lighted at the gate
The Earls of Surrey and of Shrewsbury,
And they expect you in the inner court.

MORE.
Entreat their lordships come into the hall.

[Exit Servant.]

LADY MORE.
Oh, God, what news with them?

MORE.
Why, how now, wife!
They are but come to visit their old friend.

LADY MORE.
Oh, God, I fear, I fear!

MORE.
What shouldst thou fear, fond woman?
Justum, si fractus illabatur orbis, inpavidum ferient ruinae.
Here let me live estranged from great men’s looks;
They are like golden flies on leaden hooks.

[Enter the Earls, Downs with his mace, and Attendants.]

SHREWSBURY.
Good morrow, good Sir Thomas.

[Kind salutations.]

SURREY.
Good day, good madame.

MORE.
Welcome, my good lords.
What ails your lordships look so melancholy?
Oh, I know; you live in court, and the court diet
Is only friend to physic.

SURREY.
Oh, Sir Thomas,
Our words are now the kings, and our sad looks
The interest of your love! We are sent to you
From our mild sovereign, once more to demand
If you'll subscribe unto those articles
He sent ye th' other day: be well advised;
For, on mine honor, lord, grave Doctor Fisher
Bishop of Rochester, at the self same instant
Attached with you, is sent unto the Tower
For the like obstinacy: his majesty
Hath only sent you prisoner to your house;
But, if you now refuse for to subscribe,
A stricter course will follow.

LADY MORE.
Oh, dear husband!

[Kneeling and weeping.]

BOTH DAUGHTERS.
Dear father!

MORE.
See, my lords,
This partner and these subjects to my flesh
Prove rebels to my conscience! But, my good lords,
If I refuse, must I unto the Tower?

SHREWSBURY.
You must, my lord; here is an officer
Ready for to arrest you of high treason.

LADY MORE AND DAUGHTERS.
Oh, God, oh, God!

ROPER.
Be patient, good madam.

MORE.
Aye, Downs, ist thou? I once did save thy life,
When else by cruel riotous assault
Thou hadst been torn in pieces: thou art reserved
To be my summoner to yond spiritual court.
Give me thy hand; good fellow, smooth thy face:
The diet that thou drinkst is spic'd with mace,
And I could ne'er abide it; 'twill not disgest,
Twill lie too heavily, man, on my weak breast.

SHREWSBURY.
Be brief, my lord, for we are limited
Unto an hour.

MORE.
Unto an hour! tis well:
The bell soon shall toll my knell.

LADY MORE.
Dear loving husband, if you respect not me,
Yet think upon your daughters.

[Kneeling.]

MORE.
Wife, stand up; I have bethought me,
And I’ll now satisfy the king’s good pleasure.

[Pointing to himself.]

BOTH DAUGHTERS.
Oh, happy alteration!

SHREWSBURY.
Come, then, subscribe, my lord.

SURREY.
I am right glad of this your fair conversion.

MORE.
Oh, pardon me!
I will subscribe to go unto the Tower
With all submissive willingness, and thereto add
My bones to strengthen the foundation
Of Julius Caesar’s palace. Now, my lord,
I’ll satisfy the king, even with my blood;
Now will I wrong your patience.—Friend, do thine office.

DOWNES.
Sir thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England, I arrest you in the king’s name of high treason.

MORE.
Gramercies, friend.
To a great prison, to discharge the strife
Commenc’d twixt conscience and my frailer life,
More now must march. Chelsea, adieu, adieu!

Strange farewell! thou shalt ne’er more see More true,
For I shall ne’er see thee more.—Servants, farewell.—
Wife, mar not thine indifferent face; be wise:
More’s widow’s husband, he must make thee rise.—
Daughters....: —what’s here, what’s here?
Mine eye had almost parted with a tear.—
Dear son, possess my virtue, that I ne’er gave.—
Grave More thus lightly walks to a quick grave.

ROPER.
Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.

MORE.
You that way in; mind you my course in prayer:
By water I to prison, to heaven through air.

[Exeunt.]

ACT V.

SCENE I. The Tower Gate.

[Enter the Warders of the Tower, with halbards.]

FIRST WARDER.
Ho, make a guard there!

SECOND WARDER.
Master Lieutenant gives a straight command,
The people be avoided from the bridge.

THIRD WARDER.
From whence is he committed, who can tell?

FIRST WARDER.
From Durham House, I hear.

SECOND WARDER.
The guard were waiting there are hour ago.

THIRD WARDER.
If he stay long, he’ll not get near the wharf,
There’s such a crowd of boats upon the Thames.

SECOND WARDER.
Well, be it spoken without offence to any,
A wiser or more virtuous gentleman

Was never bred in England.

THIRD WARDER.
I think, the poor will bury him in tears:
I never heard a man, since I was born,
So generally bewailed of every one.

[Enter a Poor Woman.]

What means this woman?—Whether doost thou press?

FIRST WARDER.
This woman will be trod to death anon.

SECOND WARDER.
What makest thou here?

WOMAN.
To speak with that good man, Sir Thomas More.

SECOND WARDER.
To speak with him! he’s not Lord Chancellor.

WOMAN.
The more’s the pity, sir, if it pleased God.

SECOND WARDER.
Therefore, if thou hast a petition to deliver,
Thou mayst keep it now, for any thing I know.

WOMAN.
I am a poor woman, and have had (God knows)
A suit this two year in the Chancery;
And he hath all the evidence I have
Which should I lose, I am utterly undone.

SECOND WARDER.
Faith, and I fear thoult hardly come by am now;
I am sorry for thee, even with all my heart.

[Enter the Lords with Sir Thomas More, and Attendants, and enter
Lieutenant and Gentleman Porter.]

Woman, stand back, you must avoid this place;
The lords must pass this way into the Tower.

MORE.
I thank your lordships for your pains thus far

To my strong house.

WOMAN.
Now, good Sir Thomas More, for Christ’s dear sake,
Deliver me my writings back again
That do concern my title.

MORE.
What, my old client, are thou got hither too?
Poor silly wretch, I must confess indeed,
I had such writings as concern thee near;
But the king has ta’en the matter into his own hand;
He has all I had: then, woman, sue to him;
I cannot help thee; thou must bear with me.

WOMAN.
Ah, gentle heart, my soul for thee is sad!
Farewell the best friend that the poor e’er had.

[Exit Woman.]

GENTLEMAN PORTER.
Before you enter through the Towergate,
Your upper garment, sir, belongs to me.

MORE.
Sir, you shall have it; there it is.

[He gives him his cap.]

GENTLEMAN PORTER.
The upmost on your back, sir; you mistake me.

MORE.
Sir, now I understand ye very well:
But that you name my back,
Sure else my cap had been the uppermost.

SHREWSBURY.
Farewell, kind lord; God send us merry meeting!

MORE.
Amen, my lord.

SURREY.
Farewell, dear friend; I hope your safe return.

MORE.

My lord, and my dear fellow in the Muses,
Farewell; farewell, most noble poet.

LIEUTENANT.
Adieu, most honored lords.

[Exeunt Lords.]

MORE.
Fair prison, welcome; yet, methinks,
For thy fair building tis too foul a name.
Many a guilty soul, and many an innocent,
Have breathed their farewell to thy hollow rooms.
I oft have entered into thee this way;
Yet, I thank God, ne’er with a clear conscience
Than at this hour:
This is my comfort yet, how hard sore
My lodging prove, the cry of the poor suitor,
Fatherless orphan, or distressed widow,
Shall not disturb me in my quiet sleep.
On, then, a God’s name, to our close abode!
God is as strong here as he is abroad.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. More’s House.

[Enter Butler, Porter, and Horsekeeper several ways.]

BUTLER.
Robin brewer, how now, man! what cheer, what cheer?

BREWER.
Faith, Ned butler, sick of thy disease; and these our other fellows here, Rafe horsekeeper and Giles porter, sad, sad; they say my lord goes to his trial today.

HORSEKEEPER.
To it, man! why, he is now at it, God send him well to speed!

PORTER.
Amen; even as i wish to mine own soul, so speed it with my honorable lord and master, Sir Thomas More.

BUTLER.
I cannot tell, I have nothing to do with matters above my capacity; but, as God judge me, if I might speak my mind, I think there lives

not a more harmless gentleman in the universal world.

BREWER.
Nor a wiser, nor a merrier, nor an honester; go to, I’ll put that in upon mine own knowledge.

PORTER.
Nay, and ye bait him his due of his housekeeping, hang ye all! ye have many Lord Chancellor’s comes in debt at the year’s end, and for very housekeeping.

HORSEKEEPER.
Well, he was too good a lord for us, and therefore, I fear, God himself will take him: but I’ll be hanged, if ever I have such an other service.

BREWER.
Soft, man, we are not discharged yet: my lord may come home again, and all will be well.

BUTLER.
I much mistrust it; when they go to raining once, there’s ever foul weather for a great while after. But soft; here comes Master Gough and Master Catesby: now we shall hear more.

[Enter Gough and Catesby with a paper.]

HORSEKEEPER.
Before God, they are very sad; I doubt my lord is condemned.

PORTER.
God bless his soul! and a fig then for all wordly condemnation.

GOUGH.
Well said, Giles porter, I commend thee for it;
Twas spoken like a well affected servant
Of him that was a kind lord to us all.

CATESBY.
Which now no more he shall be; for, dear fellows,
Now we are masterless, though he may live
So long as please the king: but law hath made him
A dead man to the world, and given the axe his head,
But his sweet soul to live among the saints.

GOUGH.
Let us entreat ye to go call together
The rest of your sad fellows (by the rule

Y’are just seven score), and tell them what we hear
A virtuous honorable lord hath done
Even for the meanest follower that he had.
This writing found my lady in his study,
This instant morning, wherein is set down
Each servant’s name, according to his place
And office in the house: on every man
He frankly hath bestown twenty nobles,
The best and worst together, all alike,
Which Master Catesby here forth will pay ye.

CATESBY.
Take it as it is meant, a kind remembrance
Of a fair kinder lord, with whose sad fall
He gives up house and farewell to us all:
Thus the fair spreading oak falls not alone,
But all the neighbor plants and under-trees
Are crushed down with his weight. No more of this:
Come, and receive your due, and after go
Fellow-like hence, copartners of one woe.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. The Tower.

[Enter Sir Thomas More, the Lieutenant, and a Servant attending,
as in his chamber in the Tower.]

MORE.
Master Lieutenant, is the warrant come?
If it be so, a God’s name, let us know it.

LIEUTENANT.
My lord, it is.

MORE.
Tis welcome, sir, to me with all my heart;
His blessed will be done!

LIEUTENANT.
Your wisdom, sir, hath been so well approved,
And your fair patience in imprisonment
Hath ever shewn such constancy of mind
And Christian resolution in all troubles,
As warrant us you are not unprepared.

MORE.

No, Master Lieutenant;
I thank my God, I have peace of conscience,
Though the world and I are at a little odds:
But we'll be even now, I hope, ere long.
When is the execution of your warrant?

LIEUTENANT.
Tomorrow morning.

MORE.
So, sir, I thank ye;
I have not lived so ill, I fear to die.
Master Lieutenant, I have had a sore fit of the stone tonight; but the king hath sent me such a rare receipt, I thank him, as I shall not need to fear it much.

LIEUTENANT.
In life and death still merry Sir Thomas More.

MORE.
Sirrah fellow, reach me the urinal:

[He gives it him.]

Ha! let me see (there's) gravel in the water;
(And yet I see no grave danger in that)
The man were likely to live long enough,
So pleased the king.—Here, fellow, take it.

SERVANT.
Shall I go with it to the doctor, sir?

MORE.
No, save thy labour; we'll cossen him of a fee:
Thou shalt see me take a dram tomorrow morning,
Shall cure the stone, I warrant; doubt it not.—
Master Lieutenant, what news of my Lord of Rochester?

LIEUTENANT.
Yesterday morning was he put to death.

MORE.
The peace of soul sleep with him!
He was a learned and a reverend prelate,
And a rich man, believe me.

LIEUTENANT.
If he were rich, what is Sir Thomas More,

That all this while hath been Lord Chancellor?

MORE.
Say ye so, Master Lieutenant? what do ye think
A man, that with my time had held my place,
Might purchase?

LIEUTENANT.
Perhaps, my lord, two thousand pound a year.

MORE.
Master Lieutenant, I protest to you,
I never had the means in all my life
To purchase one poor hundred pound a year:
I think I am the poorest Chancellor
That ever was in England, though I could wish,
For credit of the place, that my estate were better.

LIEUTENANT.
It’s very strange.

MORE.
It will be found as true.
I think, sir, that with most part of my coin
I have purchased as strange commodities
As ever you heard tell of in your life.

LIEUTENANT.
Commodities, my lord!
Might I (without offence) enquire of them?

MORE.
Croutches, Master Lieutenant, and bare cloaks;
For halting soldiers and poor needy scholars
Have had my gettings in the Chancery:
To think but what a cheat the crown shall have
By my attainder! I prithee, if thou beest a gentleman,
Get but a copy of my inventory.
That part of poet that was given me
Made me a very unthrift;
For this is the disease attends us all,
Poets were never thrifty, never shall.

[Enter Lady More mourning, Daughters, Master Roper.]

LIEUTENANT.
Oh, noble More!—
My lord, your wife, your son-in-law, and daughters.

MORE.
Son Roper, welcome;—welcome, wife, and girls.
Why do you weep? because I live at ease?
Did you not see, when I was Chancellor,
I was so clogged with suitors every hour,
I could not sleep, nor dine, nor sup in quiet?
Here’s none of this; here I can sit and talk
With my honest keeper half a day together,
Laugh and be merry: why, then, should you weep?

ROPER.
These tears, my lord, for this your long restraint
Hope had dried up, with comfort that we yet,
Although imprisoned, might have had your life.

MORE.
To live in prison, what a life were that!
The king (I thank him) loves me more then so.
Tomorrow I shall be at liberty
To go even whether I can,
After I have dispatched my business.

LADY MORE.
Ah, husband, husband, yet submit yourself!
Have care of your poor wife and children.

MORE.
Wife, so I have; and I do leave you all
To his protection hath the power to keep you
Safer than I can,—
The father of the widow and the orphans.

ROPER.
The world, my lord, hath ever held you wise;
And ’t shall be no distaste unto your wisdom,
To yield to the opinion of the state.

MORE.
I have deceived myself, I must acknowledge;
And, as you say, son Roper, to confess the same,
It will be no disparagement at all.

LADY MORE.
His highness shall be certified thereof
Immediately.

[Offering to depart.]

MORE.
Nay, hear me, wife; first let me tell ye how:
I thought to have had a barber for my beard;
Now, I remember, that were labour lost,
The headsman now shall cut off head and all.

ROPER’S WIFE.
Father, his majesty, upon your meek submission,
Will yet (they say) receive you to his grace
In as great credit as you were before.

MORE.
.....
Has appointed me to do a little business.
If that were past, my girl, thou then shouldst see
What I would say to him about that matter;
But I shall be so busy until then,
I shall not tend it.

DAUGHTER.
Ah, my dear father!

LADY MORE.
Dear lord and husband!

MORE.
Be comforted, good wife, to live and love my children;
For with thee leave I all my care of them.—
Son Roper, for my sake that have loved thee well,
And for her virtue’s sake, cherish my child.—
Girl, be not proud, but of thy husband’s love;
Ever retain thy virtuous modesty;
That modesty is such a comely garment
As it is never out of fashion, sits as fair
upon the meaner woman as the empress;
No stuff that gold can buy is half so rich,
Nor ornament that so becomes a woman.
Live all and love together, and thereby
You give your father a rich obsequy.

BOTH DAUGHTERS.
Your blessing, dear father.

MORE.
I must be gone—God bless you!—
To talk with God, who now doth call.

LADY MORE.
Aye, my dear husband!

MORE.
Sweet wife, good night, good night:
God send us all his everlasting light!

ROPER.
I think, before this hour,
More heavy hearts ne’er parted in the Tower.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. Tower Hill.

[Enter the Sheriffs of London and their Officers at one door, the Warders with their halbards at another.]

SECOND SHERIFF.
Officers, what time of day ist?

OFFICER.
Almost eight o’clock.

SECOND SHERIFF.
We must make haste then, least we stay too long.

SECOND WARDER.
Good morrow, Master Shrieves of London; Master Lieutenant
Wills ye repair to the limits of the Tower,
There to receive your prisoner.

FIRST SHERIFF.
Go back, and tell his worship we are ready.

SECOND SHERIFF.
Go bid the officers make clear the way,
There may be passage for the prisoner.

[Enter Lieutenant and his Guard, with More.]

MORE.
Yet, God be thanked, here’s a fair day toward,
To take our journey in. Master Lieutenant,
It were fair walking on the Tower leads.

LIEUTENANT.
And so it might have liked my sovereign lord,

I would to God you might have walked there still!

[He weeps.]

MORE.
Sir, we are walking to a better place.
Oh, sir, your kind and loving tears
Are like sweet odors to embalm your friend!
Thank your good lady; since I was your guest,
She has made me a very wanton, in good sooth.

LIEUTENANT.
Oh, I had hoped we should not yet have parted!

MORE.
But I must leave ye for a little while;
Within an hour or two you may look for me;
But there will be so many come to see me,
That I shall be so proud, I will not speak;
And, sure, my memory is grown so ill,
I fear I shall forget my head behind me.

LIEUTENANT.
God and his blessed angels be about ye!—
Here, Master Shrieves, receive your prisoner.

MORE.
Good morrow, Master Shrieves of London, to ye both:
I thank ye that ye will vouchsafe to meet me;
I see by this you have not quite forgot
That I was in times past, as you are now,
A sheriff of London.

SECOND SHERIFF.
Sir, then you know our duty doth require it.

MORE.
I know it well, sir, else I would have been glad
You might have saved a labour at this time.
Ah, Master Sheriff, you and I have been of old acquaintance! you were a patient auditor of mine, when I read the divinity lecture at St. Lawrence’s.

SECOND SHERIFF.
Sir Thomas More, I have heard you oft,
As many other did, to our great comfort.

MORE.

Pray God, you may so now, with all my heart!
And, as I call to mind,
When I studied the law in Lincoln’s Inn,
I was of council with ye in a cause.

SECOND SHERIFF.
I was about to say so, good Sir Thomas.....

MORE.
Oh, is this the place?
I promise ye, it is a goodly scaffold:
In sooth, I am come about a headless errand,
For I have not much to say, now I am here.
Well, let’s ascend, a God’s name:
In troth, methinks, your stair is somewhat weak;
I prithee, honest friend, lend me thy hand
To help me up; as for my coming down,
Let me alone, I’ll look to that myself.

[As he is going up the stairs, enters the Earls of Surrey and Shrewsbury.]

My Lords of Surrey and Shrewsbury, give me your hands. Yet before we....ye see, though it pleaseth the king to raise me thus high, yet I am not proud, for the higher I mount, the better I can see my friends about me. I am now on a far voyage, and this strange wooden horse must bear me thither; yet I perceive by your looks you like my bargain so ill, that there’s not one of ye all dare enter with me. Truly, here’s a most sweet gallery; [Walking.] I like the air of it better than my garden at Chelsea. By your patience, good people, that have pressed thus into my bedchamber, if you’ll not trouble me, I’ll take a sound sleep here.

SHREWSBURY.
My lord, twere good you’ld publish to the world
Your great offence unto his majesty.

MORE.
My lord, I’ll bequeath this legacy to the hangman, [Gives him his gown.] and do it instantly. I confess, his majesty hath been ever good to me; and my offence to his highness makes me of a state pleader a stage player (though I am old, and have a bad voice), to act this last scene of my tragedy. I’ll send him (for my trespass) a reverend head, somewhat bald; for it is not requisite any head should stand covered to so high majesty: if that content him not, because I think my body will then do me small pleasure, let him but bury it, and take it.

SURREY.
My lord, my lord, hold conference with your soul;
You see, my lord, the time of life is short.

MORE.
I see it, my good lord; I dispatched that business the last night. I come hither only to be let blood; my doctor here tells me it is good for the headache.

HANGMAN.
I beseech thee, my lord, forgive me!

MORE.
Forgive thee, honest fellow! why?

HANGMAN.
For your death, my lord.

MORE.
O, my death? I had rather it were in thy power to forgive me, for thou hast the sharpest action against me; the law, my honest friend, lies in thy hands now: here’s thy fee [His purse.]; and, my good fellow, let my suit be dispatched presently; for tis all one pain, to die a lingering death, and to live in the continual mill of a lawsuit. But I can tell thee, my neck is so short, that, if thou shouldst behead an hundred noblemen like myself, thou wouldst ne’er get credit by it; therefore (look ye, sir), do it handsomely, or, of my word, thou shalt never deal with me hereafter.

HANGMAN.
I’ll take an order for that, my lord.

MORE.
One thing more; take heed thou cutst not off my beard: oh, I forgot; execution passed upon that last night, and the body of it lies buried in the Tower.—Stay; ist not possible to make a scape from all this strong guard? it is.
There is a thing within me, that will raise
And elevate my better part bove sight
Of these same weaker eyes; and, Master Shrieves,
For all this troop of steel that tends my death,
I shall break from you, and fly up to heaven.
Let’s seek the means for this.

HANGMAN.
My lord, I pray ye, put off your doublet.

MORE.

Speak not so coldly to me; I am hoarse already;
I would be loathe, good fellow, to take more.
Point me the block; I ne’er was here before.

HANGMAN.
To the east side, my lord.

MORE.
Then to the east
We go to sigh; that o’er, to sleep in rest.
Here More forsakes all mirth; good reason why;
The fool of flesh must with her frail life die.
No eye salute my trunk with a sad tear:
Our birth to heaven should be thus, void of fear.

[Exit with Hangman, etc.]

SURREY.
A very learned worthy gentleman
Seals error with his blood. Come, we’ll to court.
Let’s sadly hence to perfect unknown fates,
Whilst he tends prograce to the state of states.

FINIS

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SIR THOMAS MORE ***

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