

books and his writings, though he carefully observed the progress of events; and, reflecting on his own course, he was preparing for the worst. When Cranmer pronounced the divorce, Sir Thomas said to his son-in-law: "God grant, son, that the matters within a while be not confirmed with oaths." Even before this Anne Boleyn had been secretly married to Henry, and afterward publicly acknowledged as queen. From her coronation, June 1, 1533, it was apparently supposed that More dare not absent himself. This, however, he did, notwithstanding the pressing invitation and the present of twenty pounds to buy him a gown; and thenceforward he was pursued with the implacable hatred of both Henry and Anne.

Strenuous efforts were made to implicate him in the treason of the Holy Maid of Kent, but they completely failed. More triumphantly vindicated himself before the Council named by the King: Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury; Audley, the Lord Chancellor; the Duke of Norfolk and Thomas Cromwell; proving his innocence on every point. His ruin was to be accomplished by the course of public events in which he could have no part.

A Bill, known as the Act of Succession, limiting the succession, making it high treason to oppose it, and misprision of treason to speak against it, was passed in Parliament, and received the royal assent on March 30, 1534. All were commanded to take an oath to maintain the whole contents of the Act, though Parliament had prescribed no formula. More could take an oath to this effect in good conscience; but the formula prescribed by the Commissioners was wider than the Act, and included an affirmation of the truth of its preamble declaring the invalidity of Henry's first marriage and the validity of the second. As the final decision of Clement VII had been given just a week before in favour of the marriage with Catherine of Aragon, the formula implied a rejection of the Pontiff's authority. Here Sir Thomas More halted; he could take the oath of Succession; but not in the formula of the Commissioners:—this was the cause of his imprisonment, and led finally to his martyrdom; for this he lay seven months in the Tower, before the Act of Supremacy was passed at all. In a letter, very happily for history still preserved, to his