

THE UPRIGHT CHANCELLOR.

A few months after his retirement, More was again invited to court, to attend the public celebration of the King's marriage with Anne Boleyn.

Had More accepted the invitation, he would again have been high in the favour of his prince, but this conscientious man knew that by going he should be giving his sanction to a marriage of which he did not, and never could, approve.

Now this was not obstinacy on the part of More; nor was it ingratitude to Henry. He was grieved that he could not accede to his royal master's wishes, but kind as he had been to him, he could not do so at the expense of truth.

This refusal greatly irritated Henry. The more he admired and esteemed the virtue and integrity of his late minister and favourite, the more indignant he felt that he could not bring him to countenance his measures.

"As that all my lord?" replied More; "then there is only this difference between your grace and me, that I shall die to-day, and you to-morrow. It is surely better to offend an earthly king than the King of Heaven; and temporal death ought to be far less the object of our dread, than the indignation of the Almighty."

In the next session of Parliament, an Act was passed declaring the King's marriage with Catherine unlawful, and ratifying his union with Anne; it was also enacted that whoever would not take an oath that it was so, would be guilty of treason.

More was soon summoned to the council at Lambeth, to take this oath; he went there, but though entreated by his friends to yield, and though quite affected by their earnest solicitations and kindness, as they used argument after argument to persuade him, he still, in a gentle but firm manner, persisted in his refusal.

Henry, enraged at his resistance, ordered him, with Fisher Bishop of Rochester, who also refused to take the oath, to be sent to the Tower.

What a trial was this to his family; but especially to his beloved Margaret! After many earnest entreaties, she was at length permitted to visit him, and a sad meeting it was! A few days before, he had received a note from her with these words:

"What do you think, my most dear father, doth comfort us at Chelsea in your absence? Surely the remembrance of your manner of life passed amongst us, your holy conversation, your wholesome counsels, your examples of virtue."

And now, in a gloomy room of the Tower, the father and daughter, so dear to each other, met, perhaps, for the last time. After some minutes passed in devotion, More endeavoured, by indifferent and cheerful conversation, to calm that agitation which Margaret in vain strove to repress.

"When I find fault with the entertainment you provide for me, do you turn me out of doors." "Some time afterwards he was permitted to speak his wife. Now this lady, long as she had enjoyed the benefit of her husband's conversation and example, could not, by any means, enter into his sentiments with regard to the vanity of riches, the folly of worldly splendour, or an inflexible adherence to principle; nor could she conceive that the approbation of one's own mind might not be sufficiently reconciled with small deviations from absolute integrity.

When he quitted the Chancellery, she had reproached him with the unaccountable whim which had led him to reduce his family to beggary and disgrace. She now visited him to retrace with him on what seemed to her a still more incomprehensible act of folly.

"I cannot understand, my dear," said she, "how you, who have always been reputed a wise man, should now so play the fool, as to be contentedly shut up in a close filthy prison, with rats and mice, when you might enjoy your liberty, and the King's favour, if you would only do as all the bishops and other learned men have done. You have a good house to live in, a library, a gallery, a garden, and all things handsome about you, and I cannot conceive what you mean by wilfully remaining in this imprisonment, when merely saying a few words would set you free."

"Sir Thomas More heard his wife patiently to the end, and then with a smile, said, 'Is not this house, my dear, as near to heaven as my own?' But seeing she was very indignant at this indifferent way of treating her reasonings, he said, in a very serious tone, 'My dear wife, I see no great cause of joy in these things which you have mentioned, in a house which will so soon forget its master. If I were under-ground, but seven years, and then returned to visit it, I should find it possessed by those who would bid me begone, and tell me it was none of mine. And how uncertain," continued he, "would be my tenure of these enjoyments! Surely that man would be imprudent, indeed, who should endanger the loss of a happy eternity for a thousand years of pleasure; yet how much more foolish to risk eternity for what is not secure during one day!"

With such sentiments, with calmness, and with cheerful resignation, this excellent man awaited the result of his imprisonment. Fresh trials for his fortitude soon approached. Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, also a prisoner for the same cause, refusing to take the oath of supremacy, was beheaded. It is supposed that the King, still desirous to gain More over, hoped the fate of the bishop might prove a warning to him. But even this could not shake his constancy. With the same unyielding firmness, he declined taking an oath to which he could not agree.

His refusal increased Henry's anger, and the rigor of his confinement. He was not allowed to see his family or friends; and even pen, ink, paper, and books, were taken from him. But when, by any means, he could contrive to procure a little paper he managed to write with a piece of coal to his loved daughter, Margaret, telling her he was tranquil, and quietly waiting for his death.

After an imprisonment of more than twelve months in the Tower, Sir Thomas More was brought to trial. He was much weakened by his long confinement, and looked pale; but his countenance was firm, composed, and animated, and when lighted up with conscious integrity, he exposed the falsehood of the accusations brought against him, and with force and eloquence made a vigorous defence, the audience felt, indeed, that his lip was a lip of truth, and his conduct that of uprightness and honesty. But whatever his judges thought, they stood too much in fear of the King's wrath to acquit him; so with scarcely any de-

liberation, he was declared guilty of high-treason, and condemned to die the death of a traitor.

More heard the sentence without surprise or indignation, and turning to the noblemen and judges who composed the court, shortly addressed them, adding, in conclusion, in his usual calm and sincere manner: "My Lords, I have nothing further to say, but as the blessed Apostle Paul was present, and consented to the death of Stephen, and yet both are now holy saints in heaven, where they shall continue in friendship for ever: so I earnestly trust and pray, that though your lordships have now been judges on earth to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter all meet together in everlasting love and happiness."

On his return from Westminster Hall to the Tower, his fortitude had to undergo a very severe trial. Margaret, his favourite and beloved daughter, had stationed herself at the Tower wall, where she might catch a sight of her father, who, dear as he had always been to her, now seemed dearer and more precious than ever. But when he appeared with the terrible axe, the sign of condemnation, borne before him, poor Margaret's feelings could no longer be controlled. Regardless of the spectators, she burst through the crowd, and through the guards who surrounded him, and clinging round his neck, hung upon him in an agony of despair, while the tears streamed from her eyes, and the only words she could utter were, "My father! Oh my father!" More, while he pressed his broken-hearted child to him, endeavoured to calm her agitation, and reminded her that she should try to be resigned to the will of God, without whose permission none of these events could take place.

At length, with a strong effort, Margaret recovered a little from the violence of her emotion, and faintly bidding her beloved parent adieu, suffered her attendants to lead her away. She had, however, proceeded but a few paces, when the thought rushed into her mind, that she had seen him for the last time. With a faint cry of unutterable anguish, she again burst through the crowd, and again hung upon his neck in bitter overwhelming grief.

A tear stole down the cheek of More, as he beheld her distress: "Farewell, my dearly loved child!" he said, kissing her for the last time, "may God bless you my greatest earthly blessing!" The spectators, deeply moved, beheld the affecting scene in silence, and even the guards could not refrain from tears as they gently forced Margaret from her father's arms.

Poor Margaret Roper! The hardest heart would have pitied her, as pale and sorrow-stricken she returned to her home! She thought once of appealing to King Henry himself, but remembering his cruel and vindictive temper, she again sunk into despair. As she thought of the virtues of her excellent father, and of all she owed him; of his great love for her, and of the dreadful death he was about to suffer, her feelings overpowered her, and she clasped her hands in agony. Her husband and children deeply sympathizing in her woe, endeavoured to comfort her in vain! Still a letter was brought to her from More, after reading which, the extreme violence of her grief, in some measure, abated. He said in it all he could think of to assuage her sorrow; expressed the comfort and delight he had experienced in her affection and conduct; and the gratification he had derived from the last touching instance of her filial love.

He then turned her thoughts to a better world; and endeavoured to convince her of the happiness he felt at his approaching deliverance from earthly sorrows. Margaret pressed the precious letter to her heart, and thought to the day of her death she might mourn for her father, she remembered the lessons he had early taught her, and did not, under the weight of so heavy a calamity, neglect her duties as a wife and a mother.

On the 6th of June, 1535, Sir Thomas More was led to the scaffold and executed. He met his death with unshaken firmness, and cheerful resignation. Laying his head on the block, he calmly put aside his beard, saying, "That had committed no treason," and commending himself to God, the executioner struck the fatal blow.

Thus perished this upright and excellent man. A man, whose inflexible integrity and love of truth has been handed down to us as an example for more than three hundred years. Little children do not forget Sir Thomas More! He preferred dying on the scaffold to doing what he thought was wrong; he would not tell a lie, when telling a lie would have saved his life!

King Henry himself was touched with compunction at the cruel act he had committed. When informed of the death of More, of him who had once been his favourite minister, and a friend in whose company he delighted, now come to a violent end by his own orders, for no offence but that of upright honesty, he was struck with remorse. Hastily rising from the game of chess at which he was playing with Anne Boleyn, to ease his own feelings, he sternly reproached her as the cause of More's death. It is true, Anne never liked him, as he refused to give his consent to her marriage to the King; and Henry knowing he had been guilty of a most cruel deed, was glad to throw the blame on any one he could.

Within less than a year afterwards Anne Boleyn herself was beheaded on Tower Hill.

Such was the capricious and tyrannical temper of this monarch; and such the reluctance to be placed on his friendship and affection!

The sad execution of Sir Thomas More had caused Henry but momentary remorse. Many and earnest were the entreaties of Margaret, before she obtained his permission to remove the body of her beloved father from the Tower to the family vault at Chelsea; and even then, in such straitened circumstances were his family left, that they were unable to purchase a winding sheet for the honoured remains! They were indebted for it to the liberality of a friend! The fortune, which More had acquired by private industry, was all confiscated to the Crown.

But poor Margaret could not rest till she had also conveyed away her father's head, which, as is usual in regard to traitors, had been fixed on London Bridge. It was running no small risk and danger to remove it, but her filial love prevailed, and she accomplished her purpose. For this offence, this noble act in a delicate, timid woman, she had to undergo a short imprisonment.

And now they were all driven from Chelsea, and their once loved and happy home passed into the hands of a court favourite. But the lessons they had learned were not forgotten. They endeavoured to imitate the example of their beloved father, and cherished the remembrance of his many virtues with fond regard. And he was worthy of their love and esteem! Throughout his whole life Sir Thomas More had never deviated, or been suspected to deviate, from the strictest integrity. Yet he rose to the greatest eminence as a lawyer, and the highest rank as a statesman. As a pleader his exertions were never unappreciated; as a statesman his decisions were never controverted; as a statesman his counsels were never suspected. Without flattery, without court intrigue, without any undue compliance, he enjoyed for years the confidence of an arbitrary monarch. The severity and mistaken zeal in the cause of his religion, was the only stain on his high character. From the time he was a boy, his chief aim appeared to be to do what he considered his duty, and to pass his time profitably. He was very industrious; and quite an example of filial obedience.

It is said that when he was Chancellor, he never passed through Westminster Hall to his seat in Chancery, without going into the Court of King's Bench, when his father sat there as a judge, and receiving his blessing on his knees. The venerable old man lived to an advanced age, and in the exalted honours and reputation of his son, endeared to him, as they were, by the most unremitting filial attentions, enjoyed the highest satisfaction which can wait on the declining years of a parent.

Neither Sir Thomas More, nor his high-minded and affectionate daughter Margaret, could ever apply to themselves such lines as these:—

"Midway in life we pause;—compare with shame Our present progress with early our aims; Look back on years, with purpose high begun, And see the task intended was not done, In which we stand a declining sun; Fair opportunities for ever fled; The vigorous purpose dying if not dead; And we, in knowledge, habit, temper, state, Nothing superior to the common rate."

SUSPICION. (By Lord Bacon.) Suspicion amongst thoughts are like bats amongst birds, they even fly by twilight. Certainly they are to be repressed, or at least well guarded, for they cloud the mind, they lose friends, and they check with business whereby business cannot go on currently and constantly. They dispose kings to tyranny, husbands to jealousy, wisdom to irresolution and melancholy. They are defects, not in the heart, but in the brain, for they take place in the stoutest natures, as in example of Henry the Seventh of England. There was not a more suspicious man, nor a more stout. And in such a composition they do small hurt. For commonly they are not admitted but with examination, whether they be likely or no? but in fearful natures they gain ground too fast. There is nothing makes a man suspect much more than to know little, and therefore men should remedy suspicion, by procuring to know more, and not to check their suspicions in smother. What would men have? Do they think those they employ and deal with are saints? Do they think they will have their own ends, and be truer to themselves than to them? Therefore there is no better way to moderate suspicions, than to account upon such suspicions, as true, and yet to bridle them as false; for so far a man ought to make use of suspicions, as to provide, as if that should be true that he suspects, yet he may do him no hurt. Suspicions, that the mind of itself gathers, are but buzzes; but suspicions that are artificially nourished and put into men's heads by the tales and whisperings of others, have stings. Certainly the best means to clear the way in this same wood of suspicions, is frankly to communicate them with the party that he suspects, for thereby he shall be sure to know more of the truth of them than he did before, and will shall make that party more circumspect, not to give further cause of suspicion. But this would not be done to men of base natures; for they, if they find themselves once suspected will never be true. The Italian says, *Suspensa licentia fides*, as if suspicion did give a passport to faith; but it ought rather to kindle it, to discharge itself.

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MR. DANIEL BROOKE, N.B.—No extra charge on Coffins delivered within 10 miles of the City. March, 1849.

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W. THOMAS, ARCHITECT, OAKHAM HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, TORONTO.

HUGH PAYNE SAVIGNY, Provincial Land Surveyor and Draughtsman, YONGE STREET. ADDRESS, TORONTO POST OFFICE. June, 1848.

DR. DERRY, Has Removed to 101, Bishop's Buildings, ADELAIDE STREET. Toronto, May, 1848.

DR. HALLOWELL, HOUSE AND SURGERY, 38, QUEEN-STREET EAST, 2 DOORS FROM CHURCH-STREET. Toronto, 17th March, 1849.

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MR. ROBERT COOPER, BARRISTER AND SOLICITOR, Wellington Street, opposite the Commercial Bank, TORONTO. Toronto, Jan. 24, 1849.

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