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SCENES FROM
THE LIFE OF
THOMAS MORE

Arranged by

SISTER MARY BERCHMANS

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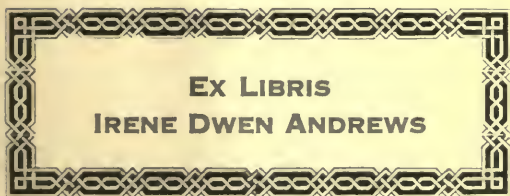


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The Talbot Press Limited
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SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF
SIR THOMAS MORE

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CHARACTERS :

1. SIR THOMAS MORE.
 2. MARGARET ROPER (*his Daughter*).
 3. BESS (*aged 13 or 14*).
 4. BEATRICE ALLINGTON (*his Step-daughter*).
 5. MARY SAVILLE (*her Cousin*).
 6. ERASMUS (*his Friend*).
 7. WILL ROPER (*More's Son-in-law*).
 8. PATTESON (*Sir T. More's Fool*).
 9. A MAID.
-

COSTUMES OF THE TIME OF HENRY VIII.

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF SIR THOMAS MORE.

Scene I.

At Chelsea—the home of SIR THOMAS MORE.

(MARGARET ROPER *alone, glancing at a large folio. Looking up she says to herself*)—"On asking Mr. Gunnel to what use I should put this fair volume, he did suggest my making it a kind of family register, wherein to note the more important of our domestic passages, whether joy or grief, 'You are ready at the pen, Mistress M., he was pleased to say, but 'twill be well to write in English, which it is expedient for you not altogether to neglect, even for the more honourable Latin.' (*Smiling.*) It is well to make trial of Gonnellus—albeit our daily course is so methodical that 'twill afford scant subject for the pen."

(*Voices are heard outside, and MARGARET goes to the lattice and bends out.*)

MARGARET. There's Erasmus, I hear his pleasant voice, and the dear little man is coming up from the riverside with my father, and who can the tall stripling be to whom he has given his coat? Could it be Will Roper? (*Turns round, arranges her hair, and blushing, says*): How glad I am he has returned from my father's errand overseas; he has grown hugely and looks mannish; I hope my kerchief is straight, I wish I had time to put on my new grogram gown, that I might look my prettiest when he sees me. (*Arranges her dress.*) I shall rub my cheeks, lest I be pale from joy. (*Rubs them. She sits demurely at her desk, but rises as her father, E. and R. enter. MARGARET kisses the hands of M. and E. and gets their blessing.*)

MORE. My loved child, are you content to see us after our absence?

MARGARET. Who knows better than you, my dearest father, what joy it gives me to see you again (*she strokes his hand and he returns the caress*), and our good friend Erasmus.

MORE. Here is Will Roper. Have you quite forgotten him?

MARGARET (*shyly.*) Welcome to Chelsea (*curtseys*), Will—have you had a pleasant journey?

ROPER. The pleasantest part of it has been the end, when I meet my dear friends once more. (*He looks at her and smiles.*)

MORE. Not badly put for a raw youth, Erasmus—but let us sit down and rest. Megg, child, tell Mercy Giggs we shall want a better dinner than our wont; say we are hungry, so let all the kitchen wenches start at once to get the meal ready.

MARGARET. Yes, my dear father, I, too, shall help to make the sweet marchpane, such as you dearly love. (*Goes out. WILL smiles at her and looks after her. She curtseys.*)

MORE. The child is growing daily more womanly and sweet, Erasmus. She is dearer to me than the apple of mine eye. Let you, Will, make your bow to Dame Alice (*slyly smiling.*) You know she likes a little consideration as the lady of the house. (*WILL goes out.*) But, friend, take this softer chair and rest. What new doings have you to relate to me? (*Turns to ERASMUS.*)

ERASMUS. My dear More, there is little new to tell of. Wolsey's ambition is daily increasing and his state now almost rivals that of the King himself. They do say indeed that Henry does not look with favour on his great parade of wealth, and some go so far as to foresee a downfall to his monstrous pride. But I am a man for a quiet life, and love not the bustle and gossip of a palace, like that in which Wolsey dwells.

MORE (*seriously.*) Stranger things have happened than the disgrace of the ruling favourite.

Between ourselves, Erasmus, His Grace, the King, oft reminds me of the king of beasts. I would not like to raise his anger for fear of being rent to pieces in his fury——

ERASMUS. Tush, man, no fear of you ever falling from his favour. He thinks so highly of you that I marvel you have never entered his service in some public capacity, wherein your learning and knowledge of both men and things would not only serve your own interest, but that of your friends and the people.

MORE. I am happier and better as I am. As to my friends, I already do for them what I can. (*Changes his voice.*) The Cardinal did indeed offer me a pension a little while back as retaining fee to the King, but I told him I did not care to be a mathematical point—to have position without magnitude.

ERASMUS (*laughs.*) I would not have you the slave of any King, howbeit you might assist him.

MORE. The change of the word does not alter the matter. I should *be* a slave as completely as if I had a collar round my neck. (*Here MARGARET and BESS, her younger sister, enter. MARGARET sits at MORE'S feet; he puts his hand on her head. BESS sits on a little stool near ERASMUS.*)

MORE. No—I'll change my lot with no courtier—(*laughs.*) But what nonsense learned men (*points at ERASMUS*) sometimes talk—(*both*

girls smile.) *I* wanted at court, quotha! Fancy a dozen starving men with one roasted pig between them. Do you think they would be really glad to see a thirteenth come up with an eye to a small piece of the crackling? (*All laugh.*)

ERASMUS. By the Mass, I swear to you they would look on him with scant favour.

MORE. Well, believe me, there is none that courtiers are more sincerely respectful to than the man who avows he hath no intention of attempting to go shares, and e'en *him* they care mighty little about, for they love none with true tenderness save themselves.

ERASMUS. We shall see you at Court yet.

MORE. Then I will tell you in what guise. With a fool's cap and bells. (*Enter a MAID.*)

MAID (*to MORE.*) There is a strangely comic fellow outside who says you will see him, sir.

MORE. Then let him come in, for I never deny my presence to any, who set value on a thing so mean. Stay, ERASMUS (*who has got up to go*). we may get a laugh together, and that is always good for the mind. (*A loud voice is heard talking very fast—a shabby poor fellow, rather wild-looking, enters and nods to MORE, saying*):

FOOL. Master, Sir Knight, may it please your Judgeship, my name is Patteson.

MORE. Very likely, and my name is More, but what is that to the purpose?

FOOL. And that is *more* to the purpose, you might have said.

MORE. Why, so I might, but how should I have proved it?

FOOL. You, who are a lawyer, should know best about that; 'tis too hard for poor Patteson.

MORE. Well, but who are you and what do you want of me?

FOOL. Don't you mind me (*looks at MORE.*) I played in last Xmas revel five years, and they called me a smart chap, but last Martinmas I fell from a church steeple, and shook my brain-pan, I think, for its contents have seemed addled ever since, so what I want now is to be made a fool. (*All laugh.*)

ERASMUS. At any rate you don't ask much—

MORE. Then you are not one already?

FOOL. If I were, I should not have come to *you*.

MORE (*laughing.*) Why, "like cleaves to like," you know, they say.

FOOL. Aye, but I've reason and feeling enow too to know *you* are no fool, tho' I thought you might want one. You are like to be Lord Chancellor, I know (*all start back*), and great people like fools at their tables, tho' I for sure can't guess why, for it makes me sad to see fools laughed at—ne'ertheless as I get laughed at already, I may as well get paid for the job if I can. (*Laughs.*)

ERASMUS (*aside.*) Cute fellow !

FOOL. Being unable now to do a stroke of work in hot weather, and I'm the only son of my mother, and she is a widow woman. But perhaps I'm not bad enough. (*Sadly.*)

MORE (*kindly.*) I know not that, poor knave, and for those who laugh at fools, my opinion, Pattleson, is that *they* are the greater fools who laugh. To tell you the truth, I had had no mind to take a fool into my establishment, having always had a fancy to be *prime fool* in it myself.

FOOL. And a good fool you'd make, I've no doubt. (*All laugh.*)

MORE. However, you incline me to change my purpose, so I'll tell you what we will do—divide the business and go halves—I continuing the fooling, and *you* receiving the salary, that is, if I find on inquiry thou art given to no vice, including that of cursing.

FOOL. May it please your Goodness, I've been the subject oft of cursing and affect it too little to offend that way myself. I ever keep a curb tongue in my head, especially among young ladies. (*He looks at the girls.*)

MORE. That minds me of a butler, who said he always was sober, especially when he only had water to drink. Can you read and write ?

FOOL. Well, and what if I cannot ? There was but one, I ever heard of, that knew letters, never having learnt, and well He might, *for He*

made them. that made them. (All look astonished.)

MORE. Megg, there is sense in this poor fellow; take him to the buttery, and be kind to him. *(The FOOL goes out with MEGG.)*

ERASMUS. How marvellous to hear such talk from one whose mind is touched—truly God's Ways are strange! *(Rising.)* Well, good friend, I must leave you. Dr. Linacre and Bishop Latimer await my coming before the ringing of the Ave Maria. *(Changing his tone.)* Again I say we shall see you at Court yet——

MORE *(rising.)* Yes *(smiling)*, when Plato's year comes round. *(They shake hands.)*

ERASMUS *(stoops to pat BESS on the head.)* Farewell, Sweet Bess, love your books a little more. The Dutch schoolmasters thought me dull and heavy, so there's hope for you yet. *(He goes out.)*

MORE. Come, Bess, let us go to your mother. *(Exeunt both.)*

CURTAIN.

Scene II.

At SIR T. MORE'S home in Chelsea. MARGARET works at a piece of tapestry and BESS does a sampler. MORE has been appointed Lord Chancellor. BEATRICE ALLINGTON, MORE'S step-daughter and MARY SAVILLE, her cousin, are spending a few days with the MORES.

BEATRICE. Sister Margaret, when you come to Court, you will see many strange things.

MARGARET. Forsooth, Beatrice, if ever I do become a Court butterfly, I am sure I shall. But dost thou think that such a dull body as I am could ever adorn a Court? No, Beatrice, home is my Court. *There* let me reign as Queen.

MARY SAVILLE. But, Megg, *do* put aside that tapestry for a while, and come, we shall teach you to dance a pavane. The Lady Anne loves to see all her maidens trip it gaily. Come—(*she tries to make MARGARET get up.*)

MARGARET (*pushing her aside.*) Mary, I have no turn for the dance, though I have been well taught.

BESS. I should dearly love to see the pavane. Megg, do coax Beatrice and Mary to dance it for us.

MARGARET. If you are diligent at your sewing, I may. (*BESS takes up her work to sew diligently.*)

MARY (*turns to BEATRICE.*) Come, Beatrice, let us show Margaret what Lady Anne has taught us.

(The girls put aside their work and MARY and BEATRICE dance the pavane.)

BEATRICE. This home of yours is so quiet and calm after the bustle of the palace, but I for one would not care for it always. I love the excitement of the Court.

MARGARET. Do you like the Lady Anne, and is she handsome as they say she is? She is often in my thoughts.

BEATRICE. I cannot say that I *love* her, if that was your meaning. Yet she can be kind. But prosperity has made her haughty—however she is generous. See this ring (*shows it to them.*) She gave me that from her finger when I saved a little pet dog of hers from being trampled upon by a horse.

BESS. And is she beautiful?

BEATRICE. Yes, she is—but I shall describe her, and you, Mary, can put me in mind if I overlook any point. (*MARGARET and BESS stop to listen.*) In stature, she is tall and slender, with an oval face, black hair and a complexion

inclining to sallow. Her eyes are wonderful, deep pools of silence when in repose, but when lit up, radiantly lovely. Her feet and hands are tiny and well shaped.

MARY. Her mouth is large and her lips are like ripe cherries : her teeth are white, though one of the upper ones projects somewhat. She has an extra finger on her left hand, and always wears long sleeves to conceal it. On her throat there is an unusually large mole, but *this* she carefully covers with a pearl collar-band, and that is why we Maids of Honour blindly imitate our Supreme Lady. (*Laughs.*)

MARGARET (*aside.*) I hope not on every point. The tales we hear of her accomplishments seem overdrawn.

BEATRICE. As to that, I can answer you at once, and say *No*. She really excels all others. Her voice is exquisitely sweet both in speaking and singing. Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Court Poet, says she would make bears and wolves attentive. She plays the flute and rebec sweetly and has a talent for poetry. Her dancing is a wonder, and she has learned all that the French could teach her. You must know she was Maid of Honour to four Royal ladies, and hence her manners have a distinction that is very charming.

MARY. And add—a lightness peculiar to herself. (*To* MARGARET.) But Megg, you should

see her in her Court costume. (*They listen.*) At a Masque at Greenwich given by the King, she wore blue velvet, trimmed with miniver and hung all round with little bells of gold and a surcoat of white watered silk with hanging sleeves.

BEATRICE. Yes, she was indeed beautiful.

MARY. On her little feet she had blue velvet brodequins, and her insteps were adorned each with a diamond star. On her head she wore a golden-coloured aureole of plaited gauze, and her hair fell in ringlets.

BESS. I envy you, Mary, to see such a lovely lady.

MARGARET. Silly child, mind your sewing.

MARY. Think you, Beatrice, that the prophecy will come true?

MARGARET. Of what prophecy do you speak?

BEATRICE. Hush, Mary. (*She lowers her voice.*) Walls have ears. It is not safe to speak of *such* things; heads have been lost for less. I, myself, do not pay any heed to such things, but it would seem there is an old book at the Court, and one day the Lady Anne found it in her chamber. She turned over the leaves and saw her own name interwoven with that of the King, and beneath, a warning that her head would be cut off if she married him.

MARGARET. When was that?

BEATRICE. Shortly before the marriage. She

called Rosamund Dudley (you remember her) from her tapestry, and laughing, showed her the page, saying: "See, here is a book of prophecies—this is the *King*, this the *Queen* wringing her hands, and this is *myself*, with my head cut off." Rosamund answered: "If I thought it true, I would not have him myself were he an Emperor." "Tut, child," replied she, "I think the book a bauble, and am *resolved* to have him, *whatever* may betide."

MARY. It makes me shudder. She and I were in the ballroom at her home in Hever Castle, and suddenly she bent down and lifted up a board and told me to look, for below was a darksome dungeon. She only smiled, and said, "One step from a gay dance to death! How many have to pass that way"? Already there are rumours that His Grace hath grown less fond of her. It was whispered that at a banquet given after Xmas, while the Lady Anne waited for the waiter to offer her the first dish, with the King's wonted compliment: "Much good may it do you," that he passed her in silence, and handed the dish to one of the Court beauties, the Lady Jane Seymour. All present saw the Lady Anne grow deadly pale, but she said nothing, and the meal went on.

BEATRICE. Her enmity to Wolsey hath harmed her.

MARY. And some say, Margaret, that her

harshness towards your noble father is due to his refusal to approve of the King's marriage.

MARGARET. As to that, my father's conscience would not let him waver. He knows Queen Katherine is the *true* wife of His Grace (*sighs*), and may God grant he may never have to suffer for his loyalty.

MARY. Do not speak of such a thing; it will never come to pass. His Grace hath many fancies, and a new face attracts him, if it happens to be a pretty one. But we are getting as solemn as owls. Bess, you call in Patteson; he will cheer us somewhat. (*BESS goes out.*)

MARGARET. Bess hath a taste for gewgaws and frivolity that I like not in one so young.

MARY. Margaret, *you* are too staid. Let poor Bess have a little frivolity—it will not harm her.

(*Voices are heard outside—the girls all listen.*)

MORE (*behind the scene, in the distance.*) Let me go on, Patteson, time presses. I must needs be at the riverside within the hour.

PATTESON (*also behind.*) Give place, brother. *You* are but Jester to King Harry and I'm Jester to Sir Thomas More. I'll leave you to decide which is the greater man of the two.

MORE (*still behind and farther away.*) Why, gossip, His Grace would make two of me——

BESS (*behind, loudly calling.*) Patteson. Patteson, do come—take your long strides—I want you.

PATTESON (*behind, panting.*) Coming, little Mistress.

BESS (*and he come on stage.*) Here is Patteson, Mary. (*Sits down near MARY.*) (PATTESON *stands twirling peacock feathers and making faces.*)

MARGARET. I heard you speak to my father. Patteson. Did you mark if he were cheerful?

PATTESON. Why, Mistress Megg, *I* never saw him sad; 'tis *he* has the merry heart. (*He turns to BESS, twirling the feathers.*) Can you tell me, Mistress Bess, why peacocks have so many eyes in their tails, and only see with two in their heads?

BESS. Because those two make them vain enough already.

PATTESON. And the less we see or hear of what goes on behind our backs, the better for us, say I. (*They smile at this.*) (*Seeing MARY wearing a gold cross, he says to her:*) "Tell me, mistress fair, why *you* wear two crosses"?

MARY. Nay, Fool, I wear but one (*holding it up.*)

PATTESON. Oh, but I say you wear two—one on your chain and the one nobody sees. (*MARY starts back.*) We all wear the unseen one, you know. Some of theirs of gold, all carven and

shaped, so you hardly tell it for a cross, like My Lord Cromwell, but it is one for all that. For *me*, I'm content with one of wood, like that our dear Lord bore. Do you take me, Mistress? (*To BESS.*)

BESS. I take you for what you are, a poor Fool.

PATTESON. Perhaps I am—but I can see as far into a millstone as other people. For example. When a *certain man* (*shakes his head in a knowing way*) is o'erta'en with qualms of conscience (*ahem!*) for having married his brother's widow when she is no longer so young and fair as she was a score of years ago, I know what that is a sign of—do you?

MARY. Patteson, hold your silly tongue, such talk is treasonable these times.

(Loud voices are heard outside and Sir Thomas More's name is heard distinctly. A MAID rushes in wildy.)

MAID. Mistress Margaret, there is a pursuivant outside, saying he has a warrant from the King to arrest our good Master. (*General consternation.*)

MARGARET (*with agony.*) My God! My God! The blow he dreaded has fallen. Where is the man? (*Goes out—all leave the stage.*)

CURTAIN.

Scene III.

In the Prison of the Tower. MORE seated on a low seat, his meditation book in his hand, lost in thought. MARGARET rushes in and throws herself into his arms—they both burst into tears and she strokes his face affectionately.

MORE (*half-laughing and crying, looking at her face.*) Why, Megg, you are getting freckled. (*She smiles up at him.*) You should get some freckle water from the Lady Anne that sent me here. Depend on it, she hath face washes and tinctures in plenty; and after all, Megg, she'll come to the same end at last, and be as the lady, all bone and skin, whose ghastly legend used to scare you so as a child.

MARGARET. How well do I mind me of it, father. (*Sighs.*)

MORE. Don't tell that story to thy children, 'twill hamper 'em with unsavoury images of death. (*Brightly.*) Tell them of Heavenly Hosts awaiting to carry off good men's souls in fire—bright chariots with horses of the sun, to a land where they shall never more be weary.

MARGARET (*passionately.*) Oh, father, would that you and I were there together!

MORE. Sure Megg, you are right, my child. Who would live that could die? One might as well be an angel shut up in a nut-shell, as bide here. Fancy how gladsome the sweet spirit would be to have the shell cracked! no matter by whom, the King or the King's favourite. Let her dainty foot but set him free, he'd say "For this release, much thanks." (*Changes his voice.*) But, Megg, you ask me nought of my trial—would you not like to hear what passed?

MARGARET. Will told us somewhat of it; do you tell me more.

MORE. The indictment was as follows:—1st, my opinion on the King's marriage; 2nd, my writing sundry letters to the Bishop of Rochester; 3rd, refusing by oath to acknowledge the King's supremacy. When this was read to me, the Lord Chancellor saith: "Ye see how grievously you have offended the King, His Grace, and yet he is so merciful as that if ye will lay aside your obstinacy, and change your opinion, we hope you may yet obtain pardon."

MARGARET. And what answer did you make to that?

MORE. I said: "Most noble Lords, I have great cause to thank your honours for this your courtesy, but I pray Almighty God I may con-

tinue in the mind I'm in thro' His Grace until death."

MARGARET. But, father, *could* you not take the oath? Others have done so!

MORE (*reproachfully.*) Megg, Megg, if I thought you meant *that*, it would cut me to the heart. None of the terrible things that may befall me touch me so nearly as that *you*, my dearly beloved child, whose opinion I so much value, should desire me to overrule my conscience.

MARGARET (*imploringly.*) Forgive me, I am distraught with sorrow—but when I heard that many learned and good men have taken the oath—(*she stops hesitatingly*)—I thought——

MORE (*hotly.*) But tho' they did, daughter, it matters not to me, *even should I see Bishop Fisher* swear the oath before me. Verily, child, I never intend by God's help to pin my soul to another man's back, not even the best man living, for I know not whither he may chance to carry it. There is no living man of whom, while he lives, one can make sure, therefore though other men can take the Oath of Supremacy, I dare not do it, my conscience standeth against me. (*He sighs and looks sadly at her.*)

MARGARET. You make me wish I had not so good a father!

MORE (*smiles sadly.*) Little you know me, and the struggles I endure lest I forswear myself

—my only hope, daughter mine, is that if I weaken at the end and fall, Our Lord will cast a loving glance on me as He did on St. Peter, and make me stand again and abide the shame of my fall. And once for all Megg, this know I for certain (*firmly*) that without I so will, *He* will not let me foreswear myself. Therefore I pray, I beg, my own good daughter, to pray with me that it may please God that hath given me this mind, to give me the grace to keep it.

MARGARET (*aside*.) Oh, God! what a terrible prayer for a child to have to say! Father, did the Council give you *no* hope?

MORE (*firmly*.) No hope, child; one of the judges said to me when I firmly refused the Oath. “Have you anything more to say?” and I replied: “More I have not to say, my Lords, but that, like as the blessed Apostle, St. Paul was present, and consented to the death of St. Stephen, keeping their clothes that stoned him to death, and yet they be now two holy saints in Heaven, and *there* shall be friends together for ever, so I verily trust that though your Lordships have been here on earth my judges, yet we may hereafter meet merrily to our everlasting joy.”

MARGARET. I marvel at you, father, to be able to say that when they had condemned you.

MORE. Let us speak no more of it (*trying to be bright*.) And how goes the Court, Megg?

MARGARET. In faith, father, never better. There is nothing else there, I hear, but dancing and disporting, since the Lady Anne is ruling.

MORE. Never better, child, sayest thou? Alas! Megg, it pitieth me to consider what misery, poor soul, she will shortly come to. These dances of hers will prove such dances that she will spurn our heads off like footballs. (MARGARET *sighs deeply*.) But 'twill not be long ere her own head will dance the like dance.

MARGARET. Oh, father! But the King loves her so.

MORE. Mark you, Megg, a man that restraineth not his passions hath always something cruel in his nature, and if there be a woman toward, she is sure to suffer heaviest for it, first or last. You'll find it, as I say—seek Scripture precedent for it—"Strong as death, cruel as the grave."

MARGARET. Yes, father, I am sure you are right.

MORE. Those Pharisees, that were to a man convicted of sin, yet brought an erring woman before the Lord, and would fain have seen the dogs lick up her blood. When they lick up mine, dear Megg (*she shudders and covers her eyes*), let not your heart be troubled, even tho' they hale thee to London Bridge to see my head stuck on a pole.

MARGARET. Father, father, do not say such dreadful things. (*She weeps.*)

MORE. Think, most dearest, *I* shall then have more reason to weep for thee than *thou* for me. But there's no weeping in Heaven, and bear in mind distinctly, Megg, that if they send me thither, 'twill be for obeying the law of *God*, rather than of *man*.

MARGARET. The very thought of it breaks my heart.

MORE. Do not be so downcast. After all, we live not in the barbarous old times of crucifying and flaying; one stroke, and the affair is done. A clumsy chirurgeon would be longer extracting a tooth.

MARGARET. Father, do not speak any more of such things. (*She draws a parcel from under her cloak.*) Here is the hair-cloth and the discipline and your New Testament, and Plato, and look (*she tries to smile*), I have brought you some sweet marchpane that I made for you, and some suckers and barley sugar that you like so well. (*He smiles too, almost gaily.*)

MORE. Thanks, my sweetest child, I shall hide them away—'twould not tell well before the Council that on searching the prison cell of Sir T. More, there was found mysteriously laid up a piece of barley sugar. (*They both smile.*)

MARGARET. Tell me, is there aught that I can bring to ease your discomfort?

MORE. I want for nothing here, and I assure you, mine own good daughter, that if it had not been for my wife and *you* and my dear children, I would fain have been closed up long ere this in as straight a room as this, and straighter too.

MARGARET. Oh, but, father, we miss you *sorely*. Tell me, have you no clue to some secret passage whereby we could both steal away together—how I *wish* I could set you free——

MORE. “Wishes never filled a sack”—I make it my business, Megg, to wish as little as possible, except that I were better and wiser. You fancy these four walls lonesome—how oft do you suppose I *here* receive some holy saint and martyr? My jailers can no more keep them out than they can exclude the sunbeams.

MARGARET. But don't you think of us at all at Chelsea? (*sadly*.)

MORE. Why, I am with you constantly in spirit—in the chapel, in the hall, the garden—in the hayfield with my head on your lap, on the river, with Will at the oar. In place of thinking of me in thy night-watches as beating my wings against my cage-bars, trust, daughter, that God comes to look in upon me without knocking or bell-ringing.

MARGARET. Oh, but, father, if they take you, how shall I live without you?

MORE (*greatly touched—kisses her*.) Hush, my child, do not let me break down, for oh, I love

you dearly, as God knows. (*He stops, unable to speak.*) I shall be with you still if they take my life—you will not see me about your path, you won't see my disembodied spirit beside you hereafter, but it may be close upon you once and again for all that. Maybe at times when you have prayed with most passion, or suffered with most patience, or performed my hests with most exactness, or remembered my care of you with most affection.

MARGARET (*weeping.*) Father, father!
(*Throws her arms around his neck.*)

MORE. And now, God-speed, good Megg. I hear the key turn in the door. (*Sound of key—kisses her.*) *This* kiss for thy mother, *this* for Bess, *this* Cecy, *this* for them all, and one for thyself, my *best-loved* child. Keep dry eyes and a hopeful heart, and reflect that nought but unpardoned sin should make us weep for ever. (*They cling together till the curtain comes down.*)

CURTAIN.

Scene IV.

At Chelsea—ERASMUS comes to enquire about the last moments of SIR T. MORE.

MARGARET (*sitting, looking very sad.*) Dear friend, how often I wished you had been here during these past days.

ERASMUS. Only the extreme pressure of business prevented me. I arrived from Holland this morning and then heard the sad news on landing. Would it pain you to tell me something of the end?

MARGARET. I will, but my thoughts are so confused. (*She pauses and then speaks sadly.*) They brought him back from Westminster by water, and Will, by a specially signed paper, got leave for me to bide at the Tower Wharf till father passed. Someone laid a cold hand on mine arm. 'Twas poor Patteson—but so changed. I scarce knew him.

ERASMUS. I mind well the day your father took him.

MARGARET. He had a rosary of gooseberries that he kept running thro' his fingers. He saith—"Bide your time, Mistress Megg; when he

comes past, I'll make a passage for you." Then he wrung his hands piteously, and said—"Oh, brother, brother, what ailed thee to refuse the oath? *I've taken it.*" (*They smile sadly.*)

ERASMUS (*shakes his head.*) Aye, indeed, what ailed thee?

MARGARET. In a moment he saith—"Now, Mistress Megg, now." Flinging his arms right and left, he made a breach thro' which I darted fearless of the bills and halberds, and did cast mine arms about father's neck. He cried "My Megg," and hugged me as tho' our souls should grow together. He saith—"Bless thee, bless thee; enough, enough, my child. What mean ye to weep and break mine heart? Remember, tho' I die innocent, 'tis not without the will of God. Kiss them all for me," and gave me back into Will's arms.

ERASMUS. Poor father. What a parting!

MARGARET. But I could not lose sight of him, and made a second rush and clave to father again. This time there were large drops standing on his brow and big tears in his eyes. He whispered: "Megg, for Christ's sake (*she sobs*), don't unman me! Thou'lt not refuse my last request?" I said "No," and at once loosened mine arms. "God's blessing be on you," he said, with a last kiss.

ERASMUS (*passes his hand over his eyes several times.*) My poor, poor friend!

MARGARET. I could not help crying "My father." Then he vehemently whispered, pointing upwards with so passionate a glance, "The Chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," that I looked up, almost expecting a beatific vision, and when I turned around, he was gone. (*Sobs helplessly—takes a paper from her reticule.*) But he sent this written with a coal in his cell, and oh! I value it as *most precious!*

ERASMUS (*taking the paper, reads.*) "I never liked your manner better than when you kissed me last. Ah! Ah!" (*Sobs.*)

ERASMUS (*puts his hand on her arm caressingly.*) He loved you as the apple of his eye. You were as dear to him as his own soul.

MARGARET. And I loved him as fondly as ever father was loved by a child. (*She stops and sighs.*) At times, I taste to the fullest the bitterness of the years I must live apart from him.

ERASMUS. Were it not for our Faith, Mistress Margaret, we might well despair.

MARGARET. Yea, truly, my friend. It is only the thought of Heaven that keeps my reason secure, and when my agony of mind is most severe, I open your copy of the New Testament (*draws it from her pocket.*) See, I always keep it with me, and I ever find fresh strength in that matchless verse of the Apocalypse. (*She opens the book, and reads slowly and with great feeling.*) "And God shall wipe away all tears from

their eyes : and death shall be no more, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away.”

(They both stand. She turns to ERASMUS with almost rapture.) - “ Friend, think of it ! to be happy with father for *all Eternity* and to see God face to face.”

(She looks up—so does ERASMUS, and they remain so till the Curtain falls.)

CURTAIN.

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