

# Sir Thomas More

## Add.II.D

*John Lincoln (a broker), Doll, Betts, [Sherwin (a goldsmith),] and prentices armed; [Thomas More (sheriff of the City of London), the other sheriff, Sir Thomas Palmer, Sir Roger Cholmeley, and a serjeant-at-arms stand aloof ]*

**LINCOLN** *(to the prentices)* Peace, hear me! He that will not see a red herring at a Harry groat, butter at eleven pence a pound, meal at nine shillings a bushel, and beef at four nobles a stone, list to me.

**OTHER** It will come to that pass if strangers be suffered. 5  
Mark him.

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

**OTHER** By a halfpenny loaf a day, troy weight. 10

**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?

**OTHER** Trash, trash. They breed sore eyes, and 'tis enough to infect the city with the palsy. 15

**LINCOLN** Nay, it has infected it with the palsy, 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. 20

**OTHER** True, and pumpions together.

**SERJEANT** *[coming forward]*  
What say you to the mercy of the King?  
Do you refuse it?

**LINCOLN** You would have us upon th'hip, would you?  
No, marry, do we not. We accept of the King's mercy; 25  
but we will show no mercy upon the strangers.

**SERJEANT** You are the simplest things  
That ever stood in such a question.

**LINCOLN** How say you now? Prentices `simple'? *(To the prentices)* Down with him! 30

**ALL** Prentices simple! Prentices simple!

*Enter the Lord Mayor, the Earl of Surrey, and the  
Earl of Shrewsbury*

**[SHERIFF]** *(to the prentices)*

Hold in the King's name! Hold!

**SURREY** *(to the prentices)* Friends, masters, countrymen±±

**MAYOR** *(to the prentices)*

Peace ho, peace! I charge you, keep the peace!

**SHREWSBURY** *(to the prentices)* My masters, countrymen±±

**[SHERWIN]** The noble Earl of Shrewsbury, let's hear him. 35

**BETTS** We'll hear the Earl of Surrey.

**LINCOLN** The Earl of Shrewsbury.

**BETTS** We'll hear both.

**ALL** Both, both, both, both!

**LINCOLN** Peace, I say peace! Are you men of wisdom, or 40  
what are you?

**SURREY**

What you will have them, but not men of wisdom.

**[SOME]** We'll not hear my Lord of Surrey.

**[OTHERS]** No, no, no, no, no! Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury!

**MORE** *(to the nobles and officers)*

Whiles they are o'er the bank of their obedience, 45  
Thus will they bear down all things.

**LINCOLN** *(to the prentices)* Sheriff More speaks. Shall we  
hear Sheriff More speak?

**DOLL** Let's hear him. A keeps a plentiful shrievaltry, and  
a made my brother Arthur Watchins Sergeant Safe's 50  
yeoman. Let's hear Sheriff More.

**ALL** Sheriff More, More, More, Sheriff More!

**MORE**

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

**SOME** Surrey, Surrey!

55

**OTHERS** More, More!

**LINCOLN AND BETTS** 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 60  
peace. The devil cannot rule them.

**MORE**

Then what a rough and riotous charge have you,  
To lead those that the devil cannot rule.

*(To the prentices)* Good masters, hear me speak.

**DOLL** Ay, by th' mass, will we. More, thou'rt a good 65  
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, 70  
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. 75  
Alas, poor things, what is it you have got,  
Although we grant you get the thing you seek?

**BETTS** Marry, the removing of the strangers, which cannot  
choose but much advantage the poor handicrafts of the  
city. 80

**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, with their poor luggage  
Plodding to th' ports and coasts for transportation, 85  
And that you sit as kings in your desires,  
Authority quite silenced 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, 90  
How order should be quelled±±and by this pattern  
Not one of you should live an ageÁd man,  
For other ruffians as their fancies wrought  
With selfsame hand, self reasons, and self right  
Would shark on you, and men like ravenous fishes 95  
Would feed on one another.

**DOLL** Before God, that's as true as the gospel.

**BETTS** Nay, this' a sound fellow, I tell you. Let's mark

him.

**MORE**

Let me set up before your thoughts, good friends, 100  
One supposition, which if you will mark  
You shall perceive how horrible a shape  
Your innovation bears. First, 'tis a sin  
Which oft th'apostle did forewarn us of,  
Urging obedience to authority; 105  
And 'twere no error if I told you all  
You were in arms 'gainst God.

**ALL** Marry, God forbid that!

**MORE** Nay, certainly you are.

For to the King God hath his office lent 110  
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, 115  
Calls him a god on earth. What do you then,  
Rising 'gainst him that God himself installs,  
But rise 'gainst 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 120

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  
Is safer wars than ever you can make,  
Whose discipline is riot. 125  
In, in, to your obedience! Why, even your hurly  
Cannot proceed but by obedience.

What rebel captain,  
As mut'nies are incident, by his name  
Can still the rout? Who will obey a traitor? 130  
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 lyam 135  
To slip him like a hound±±alas, alas!

Say now the King,  
As he is clement if th'offender mourn,  
Should so much come too short of your great trespass  
As but to banish you: whither would you go? 140  
What country, by the nature of your error,  
Should give you harbour? Go you to France or  
Flanders,

To any German province, Spain or Portugal,  
Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England±±  
Why, you must needs be strangers. Would you be  
pleased 145

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 150  
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the elements  
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 mountainish inhumanity. 155

[ONE] *(to the others)* Faith, a says true. Let's do as we may  
be done by.

[ANOTHER] *(to More)* 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, 160  
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 it.