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[3 June 1535]

More's Eng. Works, 1452.

**815. SIR THOS. MORE TO MARGARET ROPER.**

Writes, as it is likely she has heard that he was before the Council this day. Perceives little difference between this time and the last. As far as he can see, the whole purpose is to drive him to say precisely one way or the other. My lord of Canterbury, my Lord Chancellor, lords Suffolk and Wiltshire, and Mr. Secretary, were here. Mr. Secretary said he had told the King about More's answer, and he was not content, but thought More had been the occasion of much grudge in the realm, and had an obstinate mind and an evil towards him, and he had sent them to command him to make a determinate answer whether he thought the statute lawful or no, and that he should either confess it lawful that the King should be Supreme Head of the Church of England, or else utter plainly his malignity. Answered that he had no malignity, and therefore could none utter, and could make no answer but what he had made before. Is sorry that the King had such an opinion of him, but comforts himself, knowing that the time shall come when God shall declare his truth towards the King. His case is such that he can have no harm, though he may have pain, "for a man may in such a case lose his head, and have no harm." Has always truly used himself, looking first upon God and next upon the King, according to the lesson his Highness taught him at first coming to his service. Can go no further and make no other answer. **To this the Lord Chancellor and Secretary said that the King might by his laws compel him to give an answer.** Said this seemed hard, if his conscience were against it, to compel him to speak either to the loss of his soul or the destruction of his body. Mr. Secretary referred to More's having compelled heretics to answer whether they believed the Pope to be Head of the Church or not, and asked why the King should not similarly compel him? Replied that there was a difference between what was taken for an undoubted thing throughout Christendom, and a thing that was merely agreed in this realm, and the contrary taken for truth elsewhere. Mr. Secretary answered that they were as well burned for denying that, as they were beheaded for denying this, and therefore as good reason to compel men to answer one as the other. Answered that a man is not so bound in conscience by a law of one realm [310] as by a law of Christendom; the reasonableness or unreasonableness of binding a man to answer stands not in the difference between heading and burning, but in the difference between heading and hell. In conclusion they offered him an oath to answer truly what was asked him on the King's behalf concerning his person. Said he never purposed to swear any book oath while he lived. They said he was very obstinate to refuse that, for every man does it in the Star Chamber and elsewhere. Replied that he could well conjecture what would be part of his interrogatories, and it was as well to refuse them at first as afterward. The interrogatories were then shown him, and they were two;—whether he had seen the statute, and whether he thought it a lawful made statute or not. Refused the oath, and said he had already confessed the first and would not answer the second. Was thereupon sent away. In the communication before, it was said that it was marvel that the stuck so much in his conscience while he was not sure therein. Said he was sure that his own conscience might very well stand with his own salvation. It was also said to him that if he had as soon be out of the world as in it, why did he not speak plain out against the statute; it was clear that he was not content to die, though he said so. Answered that he has not been a man of such holy living that he might be bold to offer himself for death, lest God, for his presumption, might suffer him to fall. In conclusion, Mr. Secretary said he liked him worse than the last time, for them he pitied him, but now he thought he meant not well. God knows he means well. Wishes his friends to be of good cheer and pray for him.

Headed: Another letter written and sent by Sir Thos. More to his daughter Mistress Rooper, written A.D. 1535, 27 Hen. VIII.