

**THE WISDOM AND WIT OF
BLESSED THOMAS MORE: BEING
EXTRACTS FROM SUCH OF HIS
WORKS AS WERE WRITTEN IN
ENGLISH**

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The Wisdom and Wit of Blessed Thomas More: Being Extracts from Such of His Works as
Were Written in English by T. E. Bridgett

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WISDOM AND WIT.

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THE WISDOM AND WIT
OF 421-47
BLESSED THOMAS MORE

BEING EXTRACTS FROM SUCH OF HIS WORKS AS
WERE WRITTEN IN ENGLISH

COLLECTED AND EDITED

BY

REV. T. E. BRIDGETT, C.S.S.R.

AUTHOR OF "LIFE OF BLESSED THOMAS MORE," ETC.

Well furnished of one speciall thinge, without which all learninge is halfe lame,
What is that? quod he. Mary, quod E, a good mother myt.—Sir T. More,
Dialogue, p. 153

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1892

PREFACE.

IN 1891 I published the *Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More*. In that volume I gave a short account of his various books and pamphlets both in Latin and English, together with numerous extracts and translations. Several of my reviewers expressed a hope that a complete Library Edition of the Works of More might soon be undertaken. Perhaps the present collection may serve as a sample both of his matter and manner, and hasten the desired reprint. As such a publication, however, would be very costly, and must of course retain the old spelling, it would not bring the wisdom or the wit of the great writer much nearer to the general public, and the selection I have made would still be useful. I had announced a reprint, somewhat abridged, of the holy martyr's *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, written by him in the Tower; but I am glad to find there is a remainder of Dolman's reprint still on sale by Mr. Baker, of 1 Soho Square. I have, therefore, merely added extracts from it to selections from his other writings. I have thought it better not to reproduce here any of the passages of More's various writings that I have interwoven into his life. Thus the two

books supplement each other. While I have modernised the spelling I have not ventured to make any change in words or structure. A very few verbal explanations in the notes will remove any difficulty that could be experienced from archaic language. More's style is easy compared with that of many later writers.

A volume of Extracts from Sir Thomas More's writings was printed at Baltimore in 1841 by the Rev. Joseph Walter, an American Catholic priest, author of a *Life of More*.¹ I have made my own collection independently.

The compilers of our great philological dictionaries are at length giving to Sir Thomas More's writings the attention they deserve. They would well repay a careful search by students of our language. To facilitate such search I have given careful references to the page of the folio edition, and where attention is specially drawn to phraseology, as in Part V., even to the marginal letter of each page. Copies of the original editions of More's writings are excessively rare. Even the British Museum has only a very few. I have used throughout the great collection of his English works, made by his nephew William Rastell, and printed by John Cawood, John Waly, and Richard Tottell in 1557. It is printed in the old black-letter type, and contains 1458 pages in double

¹ Both works were reprinted in England by Dolman, and are long out of print.

columns. The Antwerp reprint of the *Dialogue of Comfort*, made by John Fowler in 1573, professes to be corrected by collation "of sundry copies" in MS. But I have found that, wherever it differs from Rastell's edition, the latter has intrinsic evidence of giving the correct reading. The fact that it was thrice printed on the Continent—in 1573, 1574, and 1578—is a great proof that this treatise was indeed a "comfort against tribulation" to the persecuted Catholics of England or their countrymen in exile. The modern reader will find that it has lost nothing of its charm or of its utility.

I have ventured to prefix to my selection a short essay on the wisdom and wit of Blessed More.

T. E. BRIDGETT, C.S.S.R.