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Thomae Mori Constantia

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THOMAE MORI CONSTANTIA

Hic ille Morus, quo melius nihil
Titan Britanno vidit ab aethere,
 Funesta cum Regem Bolena
 Illicito furiasset aestu;

Audax iniquas spernere nuptias
Amore veri, propositum minis
 Obvertit Henrici, tyranno
 Fortior, indocilisque flecti.

Non carcer illum, non Aloysia
Dimovit uxor, nec trepidus gener,
 Nec ante patrem Margarita
 Faemineo lacrimosa questu.

Fertur monentem mitia conjugem;
Sed non et isto digna viro, procul
 Abs se remotam, cum feroci,
 Ut fatuam, pepulisse risu.

Mox, qua fluentem se Thamesis rotat
Ad destinatum funeribus locum,
 Casto coronaturus triumpho,
 Per medios properavit Anglos.

Ductum secuta flente Britannia,
Non flevit unus; marmore durior,
 Et certa despectante vultu
 Fata tuens, hilarisque torvum.

Atqui sciebat quid sibi regius
Tortor parasset; non aliter tamen,
 Quam laureatos Sulla fasceis,
 Ipse suam petiit securim.

Plenus futuri quo tumulo stetit,
Postquam paventem carnificis manum
 Mercede firmasset, cruento
 Colla dedit ferienda ferro.

JAMES BALDE, S.J.
1604-1668

THE KNIGHT OF CONSTANCY

This is that famous More; no grander sight
The sun beheld in England's farflung reign,
When Boleyn, deadly in her guile, drove mad
The King, unhallowed through love's wild domain.

Strong in his love of truth, More boldly spurned
The sinful marriage, daring to meet the threat
Of Henry; stronger than the tyrant King,
Unswayed and resolute in his purpose set.

No prison keep, no wife could turn his mind;
No son-in-law, alarmed with timid fears,
Could make him swerve — no, not his daughter Meg
Before her father pleading with her tears.

His wife, Dame Alice, spoke of milder ways —
A course not worthy of the hero's race;
He brushed aside her senseless, fatuous plea,
A smile of sadness playing on his face.

Soon where the Thames its swirling waters poured
Along the station destined for his death,
In humble triumph to receive the crown
He hastened on through folk with bated breath.

They led him on and though kind England wept,
His eyes were dry; more firm than quarried stone
He stood and faced the fixed decree of fate,
Grimly he smiled his heart on God alone.

Though well he knew what tyranny devised
In way of torture; once Roman Sulla sought
The honored fasces — More with greater love
Longed for the ax which loyalty had brought.

On Tower Hill with eyes on heaven fixed,
He calmed the executioner's hand with gold,
He bowed his head to fall beneath the blow
Of bloody ax, in Knighthood's service old.

TRANSLATED BY JAMES J. MERTZ, S.J.