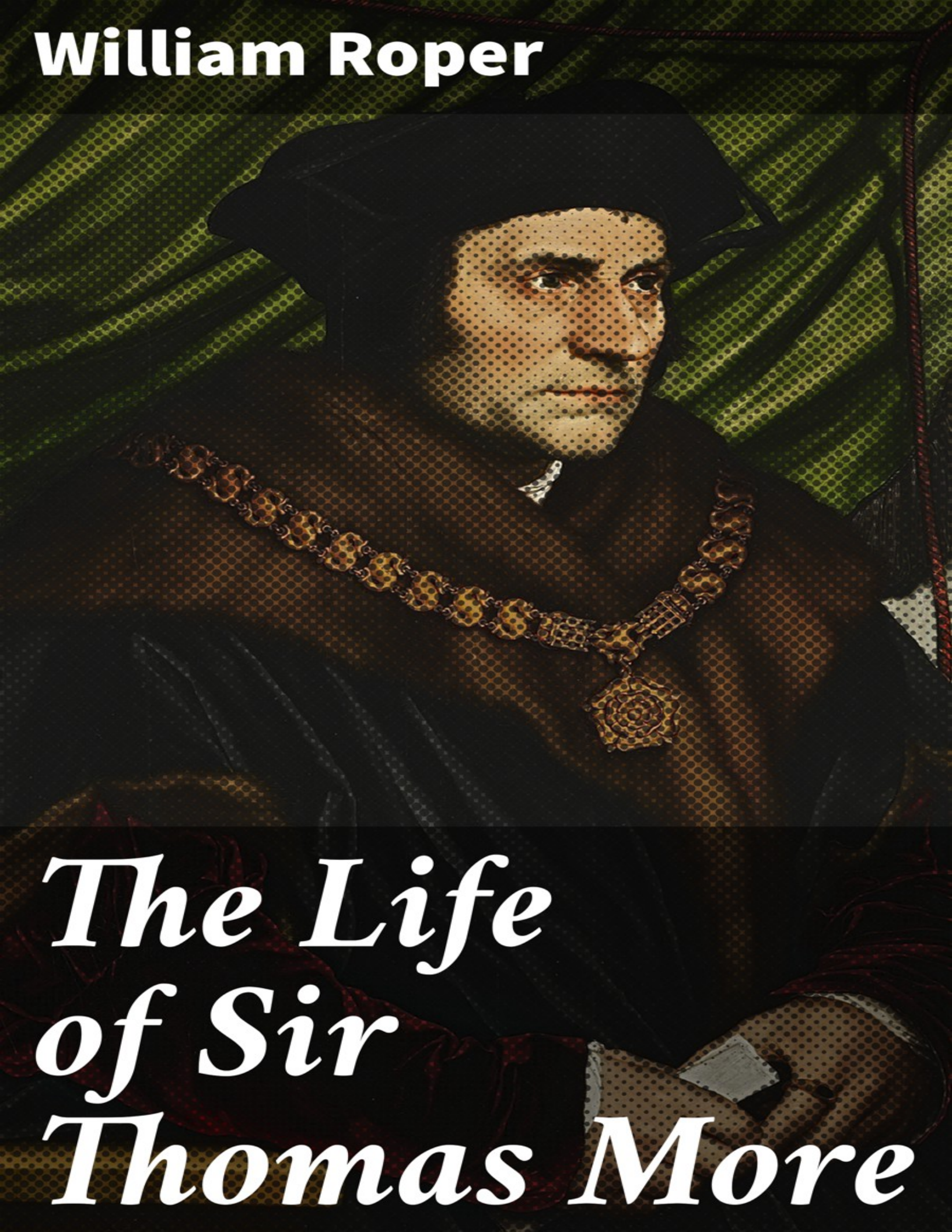


William Roper



*The Life
of Sir
Thomas More*

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Published by Good Press, 2020

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066428860

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In hoc signo vinces.

Forasmuch as Sir Thomas More, Knight sometime Lord Chancellor of England, a man of singular virtue and of a clear unspotted conscience, (as witnesseth Erasmus), more pure and white than the whitest snow, and of such an angelical wit, as England, he saith, never had the like before, nor never shall again, universally, as well in the laws of our Realm (a study in effect able to occupy the whole life of a man) as in all other sciences, right well studied, was in his days accounted a man worthy famous memory; I William Roper (though most unworthy) his son-in-law by marriage of his eldest daughter, knowing no one man that of him and of his doings understood so much as myself for that I was continually resident in his house by the space of sixteen years and more, thought it therefore my part to set forth such matters touching his life as I could at this present call to remembrance. Among which very many notable things not meet to have been forgotten, through negligence and long continuance of time, are slipped out of my mind. Yet to the intent the same shall not all utterly perish, I have at the desire of divers worshipful friends of mine, though very far from the grace and worthiness of them, nevertheless as far forth as my mean wit, memory and learning would serve me, declared so much thereof as in my poor judgment seemed worthy to be remembered.

This Sir Thomas More after he had been brought up in the Latin tongue at St. Anthony's in London, he was, by his father's procurement received into the house of the right

reverend, wise and learned prelate Cardinal Morton, where (though he was young of years, yet) would he at Christmastide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter, make a part of his own there presently among them, which made the lookers-on more sport than all the players beside. In whose wit and towardness the Cardinal much delighting, would often say of him unto the nobles that divers times dined with him, "This child here waiting at the table, whosoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man."

Whereupon for his learning he placed him at Oxford, where when he was both in the Greek and Latin tongue sufficiently instructed, he was then for the study of the law of the Realm put to an Inn of the Chancery, called New Inn, where for his time, he very well prospered. And from thence was committed to Lincoln's Inn, with very small allowance, continuing there his study until he was made and accounted a worthy utter barrister. After this, to his great commendation, he read for a good space a public lecture of St. Augustine de Civitate Dei in the church of St. Laurence in the Old Jewry, whereunto there resorted Doctor Grocyn, an excellent cunning man, and all the chief learned of the city of London. Then was he made Reader of Furnival's Inn, so remaining by the space of three years and more. After which time he gave himself to devotion and prayer in the Charterhouse of London, religiously living there without vow about four years, until he resorted to the house of one Mr. Colt, a gentleman of Essex that had oft invited him thither, having three daughters whose honest conversation and virtuous education provoked him there

especially to set his affection. And albeit his mind most served him to the second daughter, for that he thought her the fairest and best favoured, yet when he considered that it would be both great grief and some shame also to the eldest to see her younger sister in marriage preferred before her, he then of a certain pity framed his fancy towards her, and soon after married her, nevertheless not discontinuing his study of the law at Lincoln's Inn, but applying still the same until he was called to the Bench, and had read twice, which is as often as any judge of the law doth read.

Before which time he had placed himself and his wife at Bucklesbury in London, where he had by her three daughters in virtue and learning brought up from their youth, whom he would often exhort to take virtue and learning for their meat, and play but for their sauce.

Who ere ever he had been reader in Court was in the latter time of King Henry the Seventh made a Burgess in the Parliament, wherein there were by the King demanded (as I have heard it reported) about three-fifteenths for the marriage of his eldest daughter, that then should be the Scottish Queen. At the last debating whereof he made such arguments and reasons there against, that the King's demands were thereby overthrown. So that one of the King's privy chamber, named Mr. Tyler, being present thereat, brought word to the King out of the Parliament house, that a beardless boy had disappointed all his purposes. Whereupon the King conceiving great indignation towards him could not be satisfied until he had some way revenged it. And forasmuch as he nothing