



GUILLAUME BUDÉ TO
HIS ENGLISH FRIEND
THOMAS LUPSET, GREETINGS

I OWE YOU many thanks, my learned young friend Lupset, for having sent me Thomas More's *Utopia*, and so drawn my attention to what is very pleasant, and likely to be very profitable, reading.

It is not long ago since you prevailed upon me (your entreaties seconding my own strong inclination) to read the six books of Galen *On the Preservation of the Health*, to which that master of the Greek and Latin tongues, Dr. Thomas Linacre, has lately rendered the service—or rather, paid the compliment—of translating them from the extant originals into Latin.* So well has the task been performed, that if all that author's works (which I consider worth all other medical lore put together) be in time

This epistle was published in the 1517 and 1518 editions of Utopia. Thomas Lupset (1495–1530) was an English priest, Humanist scholar, and friend to both More and Erasmus. Lupset oversaw the printing of the second edition of Utopia in 1517.

* Galen, or Claudius Galenus, was a Roman physician and philosopher (of Greek ethnicity) whose medical theories were still influential in the Renaissance. Thomas Linacre, one of Galen's Latin translators, was the founder of the Royal College of Physicians, as well as King Henry VIII's doctor.

translated, the want of a knowledge of Greek is not likely to be seriously felt by our schools of medicine.

I have hastily skimmed over that work, as it stands in Linacre's papers (for the courteous loan of which, for so long a time, I am very greatly indebted to you) with the result that I deem myself much benefited by the perusal. But I promise myself still greater profit when the book itself, on the publication of which at the presses of this city you are now busily engaged, shall have appeared in print.

While I thought myself already under a sufficient obligation to you on this account, here you have presented to me More's *Utopia*, as an appendix or supplement to your former kindness. He is a man of the keenest discernment, of a pleasant disposition, well versed in knowledge of the world. I have had the book by me in the country, where my time was taken up with running about and giving directions to work-people (for you know something, and have heard more, of my having been occupied for more than a twelvemonth on business connected with my country house); and was so impressed by reading it, as I learnt and studied the manners and customs of the Utopians, that I well nigh forgot, nay, even abandoned, the management of my family affairs. For I perceived that all the theory and practice of domestic economy, all care whatever for increasing one's income, was mere waste of time.

And yet, as all see and are aware, the whole race of mankind is goaded on by this very thing, as if some gadfly were bred within them to sting them. The result is that we must needs confess the object of nearly all legal and civil qualification and training to be this: that with jealous and watchful cunning, as each one has a neighbor with whom he is connected by ties of citizenship, or even at times of relationship, he should be ever conveying or abstracting something from him; should pare away, repudiate, squeeze, chouse, chisel, cozen, extort, pillage, purloin, thieve, filch, rob,* and—partly with the connivance, partly with the sanction of the laws—be ever plundering and appropriating.

This goes on all the more in countries where the civil and canon law, as they are called, have greater authority in the two courts. For it is evident that their customs and institutions are pervaded by the principle, that those are to be deemed the high-priests of Law and Equity, who are skilled in *caveats*—or *capiats*, rather; men who hawk at their unwary fellow-citizens; artists in formulas, that is, in gudgeon-traps; adepts in concocted law; getters up of cases; jurisconsults of a controverted, perverted, inverted *jus*.† These are the only fit persons to give opinions as to what is fair and good; nay, what

* A note here from the translator (Lupton) reads: “If it is impossible to impart elegance to such a string of expletives, I must plead that they are only a close reproduction of the Latin.”

† That is: those skilled at legalities—*caveats* and *capiats*—make a mockery of justice: *jus*.

is far more, to settle with plenary power what each one is to be allowed to have, and what not to have, and the extent and limit of his tenure. How deluded must public opinion be to have determined matters thus!

The truth is that most of us, blind with the thick rheum of ignorance in our eyes, suppose that each one's cause, as a rule, is *just*, in proportion to its accordance with the requirements of the law, or to the way in which he has based his claim on the law. Whereas, were we agreed to demand our rights in accordance with the rule of truth, and what the simple Gospel prescribes, the dullest would understand, and the most senseless admit, if we put it to them, that, in the decrees of the canonists, the divine law differs as much from the human; and, in our civil laws and royal enactments, true equity differs as much from law; as the principles laid down by Christ, the founder of human society, and the usages of His disciples, differ from the decrees and enactments of those who think the *summum bonum* and perfection of happiness to lie in the money-bags of a Croesus or a Midas.* So that, if you chose to define Justice now-a-days, in the way that early writers liked to do, as the power who assigns to each his due, you would either find her non-existent in public, or, if I may use such a comparison, you would have to admit that she was a kind of kitchen stewardess: and this, alike

* *Summum bonum* means the supreme good. Croesus and Midas were both kings, the former historical and the latter mythical, renowned for their wealth.

whether you regard the character of our present rulers, or the disposition of fellow-citizens and fellow-countrymen one towards another.

Perhaps indeed it may be argued, that the law I speak of has been derived from that inherent, world-old justice called *natural* law; which teaches that the stronger a man is, the more he should possess; and, the more he possesses, the more eminent among his countrymen he ought to be: with the result that now we see it an accepted principle in the Law of Nations, that persons who are unable to help their fellows by any art or practice worth mentioning, if only they are adepts in those complicated knots and stringent bonds, by which men's properties are tied up (things accounted a mixture of Gordian knots and charlatanry, with nothing very wonderful about them, by the ignorant multitude, and by scholars living, for the sake of recreation or of investigating the truth, at a distance from the Courts)—that these persons, I say, should have an income equal to that of a thousand of their countrymen, nay, even of a whole state, and sometimes more than that; and that they should then be greeted with the honorable titles of wealthy men, thrifty men, makers of splendid fortunes. Such in truth is the age in which we live; such our manners and customs; such our national character. These have pronounced it lawful for a man's credit and influence to be high, in proportion to the way in which he has been the architect of his own fortunes and of

those of his heirs: an influence, in fact, which goes on increasing, according as their descendants in turn, to the remotest generation, vie in heaping up with fine additions the property gained by their ancestors; which amounts to saying, according as they have ousted more and more extensively their connections, kindred, and even their blood relations.

But the founder and regulator of all property, Jesus Christ, left among His followers a Pythagorean communion and love; and ratified it by a plain example, when Ananias was condemned to death for breaking this law of communion.* By laying down this principle, Christ seems to me to have abolished, at any rate among his followers, all the voluminous quibbles of the civil law, and still more of the later canon law; which latter we see at the present day holding the highest position in jurisprudence, and controlling our destiny.

As for the island of Utopia, which I hear is also called *Udepotia*,† it is said (if we are to believe the story), by what must be owned a singular good fortune, to have adopted Christian usages both in public and in private; to have imbibed the wisdom thereto belonging; and to

* Pythagoras, the Greek mathematician and philosopher, also preached communalism to his followers, as, of course, did Jesus. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, two early Christians described in *Acts* 5, were struck dead by God for withholding money from their community and lying about their covetousness.

† “Udepotia,” being a derivative of the Greek word for “never,” is a never land.

have kept it undefiled to this very day. The reason is, that it holds with firm grip to three divine institutions: namely, the absolute equality, or, if you prefer to call it so, the civil communication, of all things good and bad among fellow citizens; a settled and unwavering love of peace and quietness; and a contempt for gold and silver. Three things these, which overturn, one may say, all fraud, all imposture, cheating, roguery, and unprincipled deception. Would that Providence, on its own behalf, would cause these three principles of Utopian law to be fixed in the minds of all men by the rivets of a strong and settled conviction. We should soon see pride, covetousness, insane competition, and almost all other deadly weapons of our adversary the Devil, fall powerless; we should see the interminable array of law books, the work of so many excellent and solid understandings, that occupy men till the very day of their death, consigned to bookworms, as mere hollow and empty things, or else given up to make wrapping paper for shops.

Good heavens! what holiness of the Utopians has had the power of earning such a blessing from above, that greed and covetousness have for so many ages failed to enter, either by force or stealth, into that island alone? that they have failed to drive out from it, by wanton effrontery, justice and honor?

Would that great Heaven in its goodness had dealt so kindly with the countries which keep, and would

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not part with, the appellation they bear, derived from His most holy name! Of a truth, greed, which perverts and sinks down so many minds, otherwise noble and elevated, would be gone from hence once for all, and the golden age of Saturn would return. In Utopia one might verily suppose that there is a risk of Aratus and the early poets having been mistaken in their opinion, when they made Justice depart from earth, and placed her in the Zodiac. For, if we are to believe Hythloday, she must needs have stayed behind in that island, and not yet made her way to heaven.*

But in truth I have ascertained by full inquiry, that Utopia lies outside the bounds of the known world. It is in fact one of the Fortunate Isles, perhaps very close to the Elysian Fields;† for More himself testifies that Hythloday has not yet stated its position definitely. It is itself divided into a number of cities, but all uniting or confederating into one state, named Hagnopolis;‡ a state contented with its own customs, its own goods, blessed with innocence, leading a kind of heavenly life, on a lower level indeed than heaven, but above the defilements of this world we

* According to the Ancient Greeks, Saturn ruled over the Golden Age: the first and best of the four mythological ages of man. Aratus, a Greek didactic poet, taught that the Goddess of Justice, Astraea, was disgusted by humanity and departed Earth at the end of the Iron Age for the constellation Virgo.

† In Greek myth the Elysian Fields were the final resting place for the virtuous and mortal, while the “Fortunate Isles”—like Utopia, said to be far to the west—were the heavens reserved for Greek heroes.

‡ “Hagnopolis,” from the Greek for “pure or holy,” thus: Holy City.

know, which amid the endless pursuits of mankind, as empty and vain as they are keen and eager, is being hurried in a swollen and eddying tide to the cataract.

It is to Thomas More, then, that we owe our knowledge of this island. It is he who, in our generation, has made public this model of a happy life and rule for leading it, the discovery, as he tells us, of Hythloday: for he ascribes all to him. For while Hythloday has built the Utopians their state, and established for them their rites and customs; while, in so doing, he has borrowed from them and brought home for us the representation of a happy life; it is beyond question More, who has set off by his literary style the subject of that island and its customs. He it is who has perfected, as by rule and square, the City of the Hagnopolitans itself, adding all those touches by which grace and beauty and weight accrue to the noble work; even though in executing that work he has claimed for himself only a common mason's share. We see that it has been a matter of conscientious scruple with him, not to assume too important a part in the work, lest Hythloday should have just cause for complaint, on the ground of More having plucked the first flowers of that fame, which would have been left for him, if he had himself ever decided to give an account of his adventures to the world. *He was afraid, of course, that Hythloday, who was residing of his own choice in the island of Udepotia, might some day come in person upon the scene, and be vexed and aggrieved at*

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*this unkindness on his part, in leaving him the glory of this discovery with the best flowers plucked off. To be of this persuasion is the part of good men and wise.**

Now while More is one who of himself carries weight, and has great authority to rest upon, I am led to place unreserved confidence in him by the testimony of Peter Giles of Antwerp. Though I have never made his acquaintance in person—apart from recommendations of his learning and character that have reached me—I love him on account of his being the intimate friend of the illustrious Erasmus, who has deserved so well of letters of every kind, whether sacred or profane; with whom personally I have long corresponded and formed ties of friendship.

Farewell, my dear Lupset. Greet for me, at the first opportunity, either by word of mouth or by letter, Linacre, that pillar of the British name in all that concerns good learning; one who is now, as I hope, not more yours than ours. He is one of the few whose good opinion I should be very glad, if possible, to gain. When he was himself known to be staying here, he gained in the highest degree the good opinion of me and of Jehan Ruelle,† my friend and the sharer in my studies. And his singular

* These two sentences were written in Greek. The passage is most decidedly ironical: it is doubtful that Hythloday, residing in “never land,” will return to complain.

† Jehan Ruelle, like Linacre (though French rather than British), was a king’s physician who translated classic medical works from Greek to Latin.

learning and careful industry I should be the first to look up to and strive to copy.

Greet More also once and again for me, either by message, as I said before, or by word of mouth. As I think and often repeat, Minerva has long entered his name on her selectest album; and I love and revere him in the highest degree for what he has written about this isle of the New World, Utopia.

In his history our age and those which succeed it will have a nursery, so to speak, of polite and useful institutions; from which men may borrow customs, and introduce and adapt them each to his own state. Farewell.

From Paris, the 31st of July [1517]