

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-64515-8 - Sir Thomas More: Utopia
J. Rawson Lumby
Excerpt
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**A frutefull
pleasaunt, and wittie worke,**

of the beste state of a publike
weale, and of the newe yle, called Uto-
pia: written in Latine, by the right wor-
thie and famous Syr Thomas More
knyght, and translated into Englishe by
Raphe Robynson, sometime fellowe
of Corpus Christi Colledge in Ox-
ford, and nowe by him at this se-
conde edition newlie peru-
sed and corrected, and
also with diuers no-
tes in the margent
augmented.

**Imprinted at London, by
Abraham Aele, dwellinge in
Pauls churchyarde, at the signe
of the Lambe.**

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To the right

honourable, and his verie singular good maister, maister William Cecylle esquire, one of the two principall secretaries to the kyng his moste excellente maiestie, Raphe Robynson wissheth continuance of health, with dayly increase of vertue, and honoure.

UPON a tyme, when tidynges came too the cite of Corinthe that kyng Philippe father to Alexander surnamed the Great, was comming thetherwarde with an armie royall to lay siege to the
 5 cite: The Corinthians being forth with stryken with greete feare, beganne busilie, and earnestly to looke aboute them, and to falle to worke of all handes. Some to skowre and trymme up harneis, some to carry stones, some to amende and buylde hygher the walles, some to rampiere and fortyfie
 10 the bulwarkes, and fortresses, some one thynge, and some another for the defendinge, and strengthenynge of the cite. The whiche busie labour, and toyle of theirs when Diogenes the phylosopher sawe, having no profitable busines whereupon to sette himself on worke (neither any man
 15 required his labour, and helpe as expedient for the commen wealth in that necessitie) immediatly girded about him his phylosophicall cloke, and began to rolle, and tumble up and downe hether and thether upon the hille syde, that lieth adjoyninge to the cite, his great barrel or tunne,

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wherein he dwelled: for other dwellynge place wold he
 have none. This seing one of his frendes, and not a litell
 musynge therat, came to hym: And I praye the Diogenes
 (quod he) whie doest thou thus, or what meanest thou
 hereby? Forsothe I am tumblyng my tubbe to (quod he) 5
 bycause it where no reason that I only should be ydell,
 where so many be working. In semblable maner, right
 honorable sir, though I be, as I am in dede, of muche lesse
 habilitie then Diogenes was to do any thinge, that shall or
 may be for the avauncement and commoditie of the publike 10
 wealth of my native cuntry: yet I seing every sort, and
 kynde of people in their vocation, and degree busilie occu-
 pied about the common wealthes affaires: and especially
 learned men dayly putting forth in writing newe inventions,
 and devises to the furtheraunce of the same: thought it my 15
 bounden duetie to God, and to my cuntry so to tumble
 my tubbe, I meane so to occupie, and exercise meself in
 bestowing such spare houres, as I beinge at the becke, and
 commaundement of others, cold conveniently winne to me
 self: that though no commoditie of that my labour, and 20
 travaile to the publike weale should arise, yet it myght by
 this appeare, that myne endevoire, and good wille hereunto
 was not lacking. To the accomplishment therefore, and
 fulfylling of this my mynde, and purpose: I toke upon me
 to tourne, and translate oute of Latine into oure Englishe 25
 tonge the frutefull, and profitable boke, which sir Thomas
 More knight compiled, and made of the new yle Utopia,
 conteyning and setting forth the best state, and fourme of a
 publike weale: A worke (as it appeareth) written almost
 fourtie yeres ago by the said sir Thomas More the authour 30
 therof. The whiche man, forasmuche as he was a man of
 late tyme, yea almost of thies our dayes: and for the
 excellent qualities, wherewith the great goodnes of God had

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plentyfully endowed him, and for the high place, and
 rowme, wherunto his prince had most graciously called him,
 notably wel knowen, not only among us his countremen,
 but also in forrein countreis and nations: therefore I have
 5 not much to speake of him. This only I saye: that it is
 much to be lamented of al, and not only of us English men,
 that a man of so incomparable witte, of so profounde know-
 lege, of so absolute learning, and of so fine eloquence was
 yet neverthelesse so much blinded, rather with obstinacie,
 10 then with ignoraunce that he could not or rather would not
 see the shining light of godes holy truthe in certein principal
 pointes of Christian religion: but did rather cheuse to
 persever, and continue in his wilfull and stubborne obsti-
 nacie even to the very death. This I say is a thing much
 15 to be lamented. But letting this matter passe, I retourne
 again to Utopia. Which (as I said befor) is a work not
 only for the matter that it containeth fruteful and profitable,
 but also for the writers eloquent Latine stiele pleasaunt and
 delectable. Which he that readeth in Latine, as the authour
 20 himself wrote it, perfectly understanding the same, doubtles
 he shal take great pleasure, and delite both in the sweete
 eloquence of the writer, and also in the wittie invencion,
 and fine conveiaunce, or disposition of the matter: but
 most of all in the good, and holsome lessons, which be
 25 there in great plenty, and aboundaunce. But nowe I feare
 greatly that in this my simple translation through my
 rudenes and ignoraunce in our English tonge all the grace
 and pleasure of the eloquence, wherwith the matter in Latine
 is finely set forth may seme to be utterly excluded, and lost:
 30 and therefore the frutefulnes of the matter it selfe muche
 peradventure diminished, and appayred. For who knoweth
 not whiche knoweth any thyng, that an eloquent styele
 setteth forth and highly commendeth a meane matter?

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Whereas on the other side rude, and unlearned speche defaceth and disgraceth a very good matter. According as I harde ones a wise man say: A good tale evel tolde were better untold, and an evell tale well tolde nedeth none other sollicitour. This thing I well pondering and wayinge 5 with me self, and also knowing, and knowledging the barbarous rudenes of my translation was fully determined never to have put it forth in printe, had it not bene for certain frendes of myne, and especially one, whom above al other I regarded, a man of sage, and discret witte and in wor[l]dly 10 matters by long use well experienced, whoes name is George Tadlowe: an honest citizein of London, and in the same citie well accepted, and of good reputation: at whoes request, and instaunce I first toke upon my weake and feble sholders the heavie and weightie bourdein of this great 15 enterprice. This man with divers other, but this man chiefly (for he was able to do more with me, then many other) after that I had ones rudely brought the worke to an ende, ceased not by al meanes possible continually to assault me, until he had at the laste, what by the force of 20 his pitthie argumentes and strong reasons, and what by hys authority so persuaded me, that he caused me to agree and consente to the impryntyng herof. He therefore, as the chiefe persuadour, must take upon him the daunger, whyche upon this bolde and rashe enterpryse shall ensue. I, as I 25 suppose, am herin clerely acquytte and discharged of all blame. Yet, honorable Syr, for the better avoyding of envyous and malycyous tonges, I (knowynge you to be a man, not onlye profoundly learned and well affected to-wardes all suche, as eyther canne or wyll take paynes in the 30 well bestowing of that poore talente, whyche GOD hath endued them wyth: but also for youre godlye dysposytyon and vertuous qualytyes not unworthelye nowe placed in

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aucthoritye and called to honoure) am the bolder humblye
 to offer and dedycate unto youre good maystershype thys
 my symple woорke. Partly that under the sauffe conducte
 of your protection it may the better be defended from the
 5 obloquie of them, which can say well by nothing that
 pleaseth not their fond and corrupt iudgementes, though it
 be els both frutefull and godly: and partlye that by the
 meanes of this homely present I may the better renewe and
 revive (which of late, as you know, I have already begonne
 10 to do) that old acquayntaunce, that was betwene you and
 me in the time of our childhode, being then scofellowes
 togethers. Not doubting that you for your native goodnes,
 and gentelnes will accept in good parte this poore gift, as an
 argument, or token, that mine old good wil and hartye
 15 affection towards you is not, by reason of long tract of time
 and separation of our bodies, any thinge at all quayed and
 diminished, but rather (I assuer you) much augmented and
 increased. This verely is the chieffe cause, that hath incou-
 raged me to be so bolde with youre maistershippe. Els
 20 truelye this my poore present is of such simple and meane
 sort, that it is neyther able to recompense the least portion
 of your great gentelnes to me, of my part undeserved, both
 in the time of our olde acquayntance, and also now lately
 again bountifully shewed: neither yet fitte and mete for the
 25 very basenes of it to be offered to one so worthy as you be.
 But Almighty God (who therfore ever be thanked) hath
 avauced you to such fortune and dignity, that you be of
 hability to accept thankfully as well a mans good will as his
 gift. The same god graunte you and all yours long,
 30 and joyfully to contynue in all godlynes
 and prosperytye.

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The translator to the gentle reader.



THOU shalte understande gentle reader that thoughe
 this worke of Utopia in English, come nowe the
 seconde tyme furth in print, yet was it never my
 minde nor intente, that it shoulde ever have bene
 imprinted at all, as who for no such purpose toke upon me 5
 at the firste the translation thereof, but did it onelye at the
 request of a frende, for his owne private use, upon hope that
 he wolde have kept it secrete to hym self alone. Whom
 though I knew to be a man in dede, both very wittie, and
 also skilful, yet was I certen, that in the knowledge of the 10
 Latin tonge, he was not so well sene, as to be hable to judge
 of the finenes or coursenes of my translation. Wherfore I
 wente the more sleightlye through with it, propoundyng to
 my selfe therein, rather to please my sayde frendes judge-
 mente then myne owne. To the meanesse of whose learn- 15
 inge I thoughte it my part to submit and attemper my stile.
 Lightlie therefore I over ran the whole woorke, and in
 short tyme, with more hast then good speede, I broughte it
 to an ende. But as the Latin proverbe sayeth: The hastye
 bitche bringeth furth blind whelpes. For when this my 20
 worke was finished, the rudenes therof shewed it to be done
 in poste haste. How be it, rude and base though it were,
 yet fortune so ruled the matter that to imprintinge it came,
 and that partly against my wyll. Howebeit not beinge hable
 in this behalfe to resist the pitthie persuasions of my frendes, 25
 and perceaving therfore none other remedy, but that furth it

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TO THE READER.

shoulde: I comforted myselfe for the tyme, only with this notable saying of Terence.

Ita vita est hominum, quasi quum ludas tesseris.

Si illud, quod est maxumè opus iactu non cadit:

5

Illud, quod cecidit forte, id arte ut corrigas.

In which verses the Poete likeneth or compareth the life of man to a diceplayng or a game at the tables: meanyng therein, if that chaunce rise not, whiche is most for the plaiers advauntage, that then the chaunce, which fortune
 10 hath sent, ought so connyngly to be played, as may be to the plaier least dammage. By the which worthy similitude surely the wittie Poete geveth us to understande, that though in any of our actes and doynge, (as it ofte chaunceth) we happen to faile and misse of our good pretensed purpose, so
 15 that the successe and our intente prove things farre odde: yet so we ought with wittie circumspection to handle the matter, that no evyll or incommoditie, as farre furth as may be, and as in us lieth, do therof ensue. According to the whiche counsell, though I am in dede in comparison of an
 20 experte gamester and a conning player, but a verye bungler, yet have I in this bychaunce, that on my side unwares hath fallen, so (I suppose) behaved myself, that, as doubtles it might have bene of me much more conningly handled, had I forethought so much, or doubted any such sequele at the
 25 beginninge of my plaie: so I am suer it had bene much worse then it is, if I had not in the ende loked somewhat earnestlye to my game. For though this worke came not from me so fine, so perfecte, and so exact at the first, as surely for my smale lerning it should have done, yf I had
 30 then ment the publishing therof in print: yet I trust I have now in this seconde edition taken about it such paines, that verye fewe great faultes and notable errours are in it to be founde. Now therefore, most gentle reader, the meanesse of

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this simple translation, and the faultes that be therin (as I
 feare muche there be some) I doubt not, but thou wilt,
 in just consideration of the premisses, gentlye and favour-
 ablye winke at them. So doynge
 thou shalt minister unto me 5
 good cause to thinke my
 labour and paynes
 herein not alto-
 gethers be-
 stowed in 10
 vaine.
VALE.

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Thomas More to Peter Giles, sendeth gretynge.

I AM almoste ashamed, righte welbeloved Peter
 Giles, to send unto you this boke of the Utopian
 commen wealth, welniegh after a yeres space,
 whiche I am sure you looked for within a
 5 moneth and a halfe. And no marveil. For you knewe
 well ynough that I was alreadye disbourdened of all the
 laboure and studye belongynge to the invention in this
 worke, and that I had no nede at al to trouble my braines
 about the disposition or conveiaunce of the matter: and
 10 therefore had herein nothing els to do, but only to rehearse
 those thinges, whiche you and I togethers hard maister
 Raphael tel and declare. Wherefore there was no cause
 why I shuld study to set forth the matter with eloquence:
 for as much as his talke could not be fine and eloquent,
 15 beyng firste not studied for, but suddein and unpmeditate,
 and then, as you know, of a man better sene in the
 Greke language, then in the Latin tonge. And my writynge,
 the niegher it should approche to his homely
 plaine, and simple speche, somuche the niegher
 20 shuld it go to the trueth: which is the onely
 marke, wherunto I do and ought to directe all my travail
 and study herin. I graunte and confesse, frende Peter, myselfe
 discharged of so muche laboure, havinge all these thinges
 ready done to my hande, that almooste there was nothinge left
 25 for me to do. Elles either the invention, or the disposition of
 this matter myghte have required of a witte neither base,

Trueth loveth
 simplicite and
 playnes.