

lly, but I'll tell it anyhow, for it's not a bad story and it bears on our subject. There was a hanger-on standing around, who was so good at playing the fool that you could hardly tell him from the real thing. He was constantly making jokes, but so awkwardly that we laughed more at him than at them; yet sometimes a rather clever thing came out, confirming the old proverb that a man who throws the dice often will sooner or later make a lucky cast. One of the company happened to say, 'Well, Raphael has taken care of the thieves, and the Cardinal has taken care of the vagabonds, so now all we have to do is take care of the poor whom sickness or old age has kept from earning a living.'

"Leave that to me," said the fool, "and I'll set it right at once. These are people I'm eager to get out of my sight, having been so often vexed with them and their woeful complaints. No matter how pitifully they beg for money, they've never whined a single penny out of my pocket. Either I don't want to give them anything, or I haven't anything to give them—it's one of the two. Now they're getting wise; they know me so well, they don't waste their breath, but let me pass without a word or a hope—no more, by heaven, than if I were a priest. But I would make a law sending all these beggars to Benedictine monasteries, where the men could become lay brothers, as they're called,¹ and the women could be nuns.'

"The Cardinal smiled and passed it off as a joke; the rest took it seriously. But a certain friar, a theologian, took such pleasure in this jest at the expense of priests and monks that he too began to make merry, though generally he was grave to the point of sourness. 'You will not get rid of the beggars,' he began, 'unless you take care of us friars² too.'

"You have been taken care of already," retorted the fool. "The Cardinal provided for you splendidly when he said vagabonds should be arrested and put to work, for you friars are the greatest vagabonds of all."

"When the company, watching the Cardinal closely, saw that he admitted this jest like the other, they all took it up with vigor—except for the friar. He, as you can easily imagine, was stung by the vinegar,³ and flew into such a rage that he could not keep from abusing the fool. He called him a knave, a slanderer, a ribald, and a 'son of perdition,'⁴ quoting the meanwhile terrible denunciations from Holy Writ. Now the joker began to jest in earnest, for he was clearly on his own ground.

"Don't get angry, good friar," he said, "for it is written, 'In your patience possess ye your souls.'"⁵

"In reply, the friar said, and I quote his very words: 'I am not angry, you gallows-bird, or at least I do not sin, for the psalmist says, "Be ye angry, and sin not."'⁶

"At this point the Cardinal gently cautioned the friar to calm down, but he answered: 'No, my lord, I speak only from great zeal, as I ought to. For holy men have had great zeal. That is why Scripture says, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,"⁷ and we sing in church, "those who mocked Elisha for being bald, as he went up to the house of God, felt the effects of his zeal."⁸ So this mocker, this rascal, this ribald fellow may very well feel it.'

1. "Lay brothers" lived and worked in monasteries (mostly performing menial tasks) but were not admitted to clerical orders.

2. A friar is a member of a mendicant (begging) order, as opposed to a monk who lives, and labors, in a cloister.

3. Alluding to a phrase in Horace's *Satires* 1.7.32: *italo perfusus aceto*, "soaked in Italian vinegar."

4. John 17.12; 2 Thessalonians 2.3.

5. Luke 21.19.

6. Psalms 4.4. The Vulgate Bible translates as *incimini* ("Be angry") the Hebrew word that is rendered as "Stand in awe" in the King James Version.

7. Psalms 69.9.

8. Some children mocked Elisha, son of Elijah the prophet, for his baldness; but he called two boys

"Perhaps you mean well," said the Cardinal, "but you would act in a more holy, and certainly in a wiser way, if you didn't set your wit against a fool's wit and try to spar with a professional jester."

"No, my lord," he replied, "I would not act more wisely. For Solomon himself, the wisest of men, said, "Answer a fool according to his folly,"⁹ and that's what I'm doing now. I am showing him the pit into which he will fall if he does not take care. For if the many mockers of Elisha, who was only one bald man, felt the effects of his zeal, how much more effect shall be felt by a single mocker of many friars, who include a great many bald-heads! And besides, we have a papal bull,¹ by which all who mock us are excommunicated."

"When the Cardinal saw there was no end to the matter, he nodded to the fool to leave, and turned the conversation to another related subject. Soon after, he rose from table, and, going to hear petitioners, dismissed us.

"Look, my dear More, what a long story I have inflicted on you. I would be quite ashamed, if you had not yourself asked for it, and seemed to listen as if you did not want to miss any of it. Though I might have shortened my account somewhat, I have told it in full, so you might see how those who rejected what I said at first approved of it immediately afterward, when they saw the Cardinal did not disapprove. In fact they went so far in their flattery that they applauded in good earnest ideas that he tolerated only as the jesting of a fool. From this episode you can see how little courtiers would value me or my advice."

To this I answered, "You have given me great pleasure, my dear Raphael, for everything you've said has been both wise and witty. As you spoke, I seemed to be a child and in my own native land once more, through the pleasant recollection of that Cardinal in whose court I was brought up as a lad. Dear as you are to me on other accounts, you cannot imagine how much dearer you are because you honor his memory so highly. Still, I don't give up my former opinion: I think if you could overcome your aversion to court life, your advice to a prince would be of the greatest advantage to mankind. This, after all, is the chief duty of every good man, including you. Your friend Plato thinks that commonwealths will become happy only when philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers.² No wonder we are so far from happiness when philosophers do not condescend even to assist kings with their counsels."

"They are not so ungracious," Raphael replied, "but that they would gladly do it; in fact, they have already done it in a great many published books, if the rulers would only read their good advice. But doubtless Plato was right in foreseeing that unless kings became philosophical themselves, they would never take the advice of real philosophers, drenched as they are and infected with false values from boyhood on. Plato certainly had this experience with Dionysius of Syracuse.³ If I proposed wise laws to some king, and tried to root out of his soul the seeds of evil and corruption, don't you suppose I would be either banished forthwith, or treated with scorn?"

"Imagine, if you will, that I am at the court of the king of France.⁴ Suppose

out of the woods, and they tore the bad children in pieces. 2 Kings 23-24.

9. Proverbs 26.5. But compare the previous verse: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."

1. A formal papal document, named after the seal (Latin *bulle*) that authenticated it.

2. Plato, *Republic* 5.473.

3. Plato is reported to have made three visits to Syracuse (in Sicily), where his attempts to reform the tyrant Dionysius the Elder, and later his son Dionysius the Younger, were notoriously unsuccessful.

4. At the time of writing, Francis I was king of France. At the time of Hythloday's supposed visit to England, the French king was either Charles

I were sitting in his royal council, meeting in secret session, with the king himself presiding, and all the cleverest councillors were hard at work devising a set of crafty machinations by which the king might keep hold of Milan, recover Naples, which has proved so slippery;⁵ then overthrow the Venetians and subdue all Italy; next add Flanders, Brabant, and the whole of Burgundy to his realm, besides some other nations he had in mind to invade. One man urges him to make an alliance with the Venetians for just as long as the king finds it convenient—perhaps to develop a common strategy with them, and even allow them some of the loot, which can be recovered later when things work out according to plan. While one recommends hiring German mercenaries, his neighbor proposes paying the Swiss to stay neutral.⁶ A fourth voice suggests soothing the Emperor's wounded pride with a lavish and agreeable lotion of gold.⁷ Still another, who is of a different mind, thinks a settlement should be made with the king of Aragon, and that, to cement the peace, he should be allowed to take Navarre from its proper ruler.⁸ Meanwhile, someone suggests snaring the prince of Castille into a marriage alliance—a first step would be to buy up some nobles of his court with secret pensions.⁹

"The hardest problem of all is what to do about England. They all agree that the alliance, which is weak at best, should be strengthened as much as possible; but while the English are being treated as friends, they should also be suspected as enemies. And so the Scots must be kept in constant readiness, poised to attack the English in case they stir ever so little! Also a banished nobleman with some pretensions to the English throne must be secretly encouraged (there are treaties against doing it openly), and in this way pressure can be brought to bear on the English king, and a ruler kept in check who can't really be trusted.²

"Now in a meeting like this one, where so much is at stake, where so many brilliant men are competing to think up intricate strategies of war, what if an insignificant fellow like me were to get up and advise going on another tack entirely? Suppose I said the king should leave Italy alone and stay at home, because the single kingdom of France all by itself is almost too much for one man to govern, and the king should not dream of adding others to it? Then imagine I told about the decrees of the Achorians,³ who live off the island of Utopia toward the southeast. Long ago, these people went to war to gain another realm for their king, who had inherited an ancient claim to it through marriage. When they had conquered it, they soon saw that keeping it was going to be as hard as getting it had been. Their new subjects were continually rebelling or being attacked by foreign invaders, the Achorians had to be constantly at war for them or against them, and they saw no hope of ever being

VIII (d. 1498) or Louis XII (d. 1515). All three were would-be imperialists with hereditary claims to Milan and Naples, and all three bogged down in the intricacies of Italian political intrigue.

5. France gained Milan in 1499, lost it in 1512, and regained it at the battle of Marignano in September 1515. Naples was won in 1495, lost in 1496, won again in 1501, and lost again in 1504.

6. As foot soldiers, the German mercenaries were second in Europe only to the Swiss.

7. Maximilian of Austria, Holy Roman Emperor, had grandiose schemes (he even dreamed of being pope) but little money. He was always accessible to a bribe.

8. Navarre was a small independent enclave astride the Pyrenees, long disputed between Spain

and France.

9. The future emperor Charles V was a great matrimonial and diplomatic catch. (Before he was twenty, he had been engaged ten different times.)

The question of a French marriage that would unite the two greatest Continental and Catholic powers was continually in the air.

1. The Scots, as traditional enemies of England, were traditional allies of France.

2. The French had in fact supported various pretenders to the English throne—most recently Richard de la Pole, the inheritor of the Yorkist claim.

3. The name arises from the Greek *a* ("without") and *chora* ("place"): "the People without a Country."

able to disband their army. In the meantime, they were being heavily taxed, money flowed out of their kingdom, their blood was being shed for the advantage of others, and peace was no closer than it had ever been. The war corrupted their own citizens by encouraging lust for robbery and murder; and the laws fell into contempt because their king, distracted with the cares of two kingdoms, could give neither one his proper attention.

"When they saw that the list of these evils was endless, the Achorians took counsel together and very courteously offered their king his choice of keeping whichever of the two kingdoms he preferred, because he couldn't rule them both. They were too numerous a people, they said, to be ruled by half a king; and they added that a man would not even hire a muledriver, if he had to divide his services with somebody else. The worthy king was thus obliged to be content with his own realm and give his new one to a friend, who before long was driven out.

"Finally, suppose I told the French king's council that all this war-mongering, by which so many different nations were kept in turmoil as a result of one man's connivings, would certainly exhaust his treasury and demoralize his people, and yet in the end come to nothing, through some mishap or other.⁴ And therefore he should look after his ancestral kingdom, improve it as much as he could, cultivate it in every conceivable way. He should love his people and be loved by them; he should live among them, govern them kindly, and let other kingdoms alone, since his own is big enough, if not too big, for him. How do you think, my dear More, the other councillors would take this speech of mine?"

"Not very well, I'm sure," said I.

"Well, let's go on," he said. "Suppose the councillors of some other king are discussing various schemes for raising money to fill his treasury. One man recommends increasing the value of money when the king pays his debts and devaluing it when he collects his revenues.⁵ Thus he can discharge a huge debt with a small payment, and collect a large sum when only a small one is due him. Another suggests a make-believe war, so that money can be raised under pretext of carrying it on; then, when the money is in, he can conclude a ceremonious peace treaty—which the deluded common people will attribute to the piety of their prince and his careful compassion for the lives of his subjects.⁶ Another councillor calls to mind some old motheaten laws, antiquated by long disuse, which no one remembers being made and consequently everyone has transgressed. By imposing fines for breaking these laws, the king will get great sums of money, as well as credit for upholding law and order, since the whole procedure can be made to look like justice.⁷ Another recommendation is that he forbid under particularly heavy fines a lot of practices that are contrary to the public interest; afterward, he can dispense with his own rules for large sums of money. Thus he pleases the people and makes a double profit, one from the heavy fines imposed on lawbreakers, and the other from selling dispensations. Meanwhile he seems careful of his people's wel-

4. Francis I lost Milan in 1520 and, in a catastrophic effort to regain it in 1522, was defeated and taken prisoner by Charles V.

5. Both Henry VII and (after *Utopia* was written) Henry VIII fiddled with the English currency in ways like those suggested here.

6. Something like this happened in 1492, when King Henry VII not only pretended war with

France on behalf of Brittany and levied taxes for the war (which was hardly fought), but collected a bribe from Charles VIII for not fighting it.

7. This had been common practice under Henry VII, whose ministers Empson and Dudley scratched up many forgotten laws for strictly mercenary purposes.

fare, since it is plain he will not allow private citizens to do anything contrary to the public interest, except for a huge price.

"Another councillor proposes that he work on the judges so that they will decide every case in favor of the king. They should be summoned to court often, and invited to debate his affairs in the royal presence. However unjust his claims, one or another of the judges, whether from love of contradiction, or desire to seem original, or simply to serve his own interest, will be bound to find some way of twisting the law in the king's favor. If the judges can be brought to differ, then the clearest matter in the world will be obscured, and the truth itself brought into question. The king is given leverage to interpret the law as he will, and everyone else will acquiesce from shame or fear. The judges will have no hesitations about supporting the royal interest, for there are always plenty of pretexts for giving judgment in favor of the king. Either equity is on his side, or the letter of the law happens to make for him, or the words of the law can be twisted into obscurity—or, if all else fails, he can appeal above the law to the royal prerogative, which is a never-failing argument with judges who know their 'duty.'

"Then all the councillors agree with the famous maxim of Crassus: a king can never have too much gold, because he must maintain an army.⁸ Further, that a king, even if he wants to, can do no wrong, for all property belongs to the king, and so do his subjects themselves; a man owns nothing but what the king, in his goodness, sees fit to leave him. The king should in fact leave his subjects as little as possible, because his own safety depends on keeping them from growing insolent with wealth and freedom. For riches and liberty make people less patient to endure harsh and unjust commands, whereas meager poverty blunts their spirits, makes them docile, and grinds out of the oppressed the lofty spirit of rebellion.

"Now at this point, suppose I were to get up again and declare that all these counsels are both dishonorable and ruinous to the king? Suppose I said his honor and his safety alike rest on the people's resources, rather than his own? Suppose I said that people choose a king for their own sake, not for his, so that by his efforts and troubles they may live in comfort and safety? This is why, I would say, it is the king's duty to take more care of his people's welfare than of his own, just as it is the duty of a shepherd who cares about his job to feed his sheep rather than himself.⁹

"They are absolutely wrong when they say that the people's poverty safeguards public peace—experience shows the contrary. Where will you find more squabbling than among beggars? Who is more eager for revolution than the man who is most discontented with his present position? Who is more reckless about creating disorder than the man who knows he has nothing to lose and thinks he may have something to gain? If a king is so hated or despised by his subjects that he can rule them only by mistreatment, plundering, confiscation, and pauperization of his people, then he'd do much better to abdicate his throne—for under these circumstances, though he keeps the name of authority, he loses all the majesty of a king. A king has no dignity when he exercises authority over beggars, only when he rules over prosperous and

happy subjects. This was certainly what that noble and lofty spirit Fabricius meant when he said he would rather be a ruler of rich men than be rich himself.'

"A solitary ruler who enjoys a life of pleasure and self-indulgence while all about him are grieving and groaning is acting like a jailer, not a king. Just as an incompetent doctor can cure his patient of one disease only by throwing him into another, so it's an incompetent king who can rule his people only by depriving them of all life's pleasures. Such a king openly confesses that he does not know how to rule free men.

"A king of this stamp should correct his own sloth or arrogance, because these are the vices that cause people to hate or despise him. Let him live on his own income without wronging others, and limit his spending to his income. Let him curb crime, and by wise training of his subjects, keep them from misbehavior, instead of letting it breed and then punishing it. Let him not suddenly revive antiquated laws, especially if they have been long forgotten and never missed. And let him never take money as a fine when a judge would regard an ordinary subject as a low fraud for claiming it.

"Suppose I should then describe for them the law of the Macarians,² a people who also live not far from Utopia? On the day that their king first assumes office, he must take an oath confirmed by solemn ceremonies that he will never have in his treasury at any one time more than a thousand pounds of gold, or its equivalent in silver. They say this law was made by an excellent king, who cared more for his country's prosperity than for his own wealth; he established it as a barrier against any king heaping up so much money as to impoverish his people.³ He thought this sum would enable the king to put down rebellions or repel hostile invasions, but would not tempt him into aggressive adventures. His law was aimed chiefly at keeping the king in check, but he also wanted to ensure an ample supply of money for the daily business transactions of the citizens. Besides, a king who has to distribute all his excess money to the people will not be much disposed to oppress them. Such a king will be both a terror to evil-doers and beloved by the good.—Now, don't you suppose if I set ideas like these before men strongly inclined to the contrary, they would turn deaf ears to me?"

"Stone deaf, indeed, there's no doubt about it," I said, "and no wonder! To tell you the truth, I don't think you should offer advice or thrust on people ideas of this sort that you know will not be listened to. What good will it do? When your listeners are already prepossessed against you and firmly convinced of opposite opinions; how can you win over their minds with such out-of-the-way speeches? This academic philosophy is quite agreeable in the private conversation of close friends, but in the councils of kings, where grave matters are being authoritatively decided, there is no place for it."

"That is just what I was saying," Raphael replied. "There is no place for philosophy in the councils of kings."

"Yes, there is," I said, "but not for this school philosophy which supposes that every topic is suitable for every occasion. There is another philosophy that

8. Adapted from Cicero, *On Moral Obligation* 1.8.25. Crassus was a rich Roman who joined with Pompey and Caesar to form the First Triumvirate (60 B.C.E.). A vindictive Parthian is said to have disproved his maxim by pouring molten gold down

his throat.

9. This metaphor is one of the great commonplaces. Ezekiel 34.2 reads: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"

1. Gaius Fabricius Luscinus, who took part in the wars against Pyrrhus, king of Epirus (280–275 B.C.E.); the saying attributed to him here was actually coined by his colleague Manius Curius Dentatus, but it is quite in his spirit.

2. From the Greek *makarios*, "blessed," "happy."

3. Once again More glances at the previous monarch, Henry VII, who died the richest prince in Christendom and probably the most hated. He combined unscrupulous greed with skinflint stinginess.

is better suited for political action, that takes its cue, adapts itself to the drama in hand, and acts its part neatly and well. This is the philosophy for you to use. When a comedy of Plautus is being played, and the household slaves are cracking trivial jokes together, you propose to come on stage in the garb of a philosopher and repeat Seneca's speech to Nero from the *Octavia*.⁴ Wouldn't it be better to take a silent role than to say something wholly inappropriate, and thus turn the play into a tragicomedy? You pervert and ruin a play when you add irrelevant speeches, even if they are better than the original. So go through with the drama in hand as best you can, and don't spoil it all simply because you happen to think another one would be better.

"That's how things go in the commonwealth, and in the councils of princes. If you cannot pluck up bad ideas by the root, if you cannot cure long-standing evils as completely as you would like, you must not therefore abandon the commonwealth. Don't give up the ship in a storm because you cannot direct the winds. And don't arrogantly force strange ideas on people who you know have set their minds on a different course from yours. You must strive to influence policy indirectly, handle the situation tactfully, and thus what you cannot turn to good, you may at least make as little bad as possible. For it is impossible to make everything good unless you make all men good; and that I don't expect to see for a long time to come."

"The only result of this," he answered, "will be that while I try to cure others of madness, I'll be raving along with them myself. If I am to speak the truth, I will simply have to talk in the way I have described. For all I know, it may be the business of a philosopher to tell lies, but it isn't mine. Though my advice may be repugnant and irksome to the king's councillors, I don't see why they should consider it eccentric to the point of folly. What if I told them the kind of thing that Plato advocates in his republic, or that the Utopians actually practice in theirs? However superior those institutions might be (and as a matter of fact they are), yet here they would seem inappropriate because private property is the rule here, and there all things are held in common.

"People who have made up their minds to rush headlong down the opposite road are never pleased with the man who calls them back and tells them they are on the wrong course. But, apart from that, what did I say that could not and should not be said anywhere and everywhere? If we dismiss as out of the question and absurd everything which the perverse customs of men have made to seem unusual, we shall have to set aside most of the commandments of Christ even in a community of Christians. Yet he forbade us to dissemble them, and even ordered that what he had whispered to his disciples should be preached openly from the housetops.⁵ Most of his teachings differ more radically from the common customs of mankind than my discourse did. But preachers, like the crafty fellows they are, have found that people would rather not change their lives to conform to Christ's rule, and so, just as you suggest, they have accommodated his teaching to the way people live, as if it were a leaden yardstick.⁶ At least in that way they can get the two things to correspond

4. Most of the plays of the Roman comic dramatist Plautus (ca. 250–184 B.C.E.) involve low intrigue: needy young men, expensive prostitutes, senile moneybags, and clever slaves, in predictable combinations. The tragedy *Octavia*, involving Seneca as a character and long supposed to have been written by him, is full of high seriousness. In the speech More refers to (lines 440–592), Seneca lec-

tures Nero on the abuses of power.

5. Matthew 10.27; Luke 12.3.

6. A flexible measuring rod of lead was particularly useful in the sort of ancient building style known as the "Lesbian" mode, because of the great number of curved moldings. Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.10.7 uses it as a metaphor for adaptable moral standards.

on one level or another. The only real thing they accomplish that I can see is to make people feel more secure about doing evil.

"And this is all that I could accomplish in a prince's court. For either I would have different ideas from the others, and that would come to the same thing as having no ideas at all, or else I would agree with them, and that, as Mitio says in Terence, would merely confirm them in their madness.⁷ When you say I should 'influence policy indirectly,' I simply don't know what you mean; remember, you said I should try hard to handle the situation tactfully, and what can't be made good I should try to make as little bad as possible. In a council, there is no way to dissemble, no way to shut your eyes to things. You must openly approve the worst proposals, and consent to the most vicious decisions. A man who went along only halfheartedly even with the worst decisions would immediately get himself a name as a spy and perhaps a traitor. How can one individual do any good when he is surrounded by colleagues who would sooner corrupt the best of men than do any reforming of themselves? Either they will seduce you, or, if you keep yourself honest and innocent, you will be made a screen for the knavery and madness of others. Influencing policy indirectly! You wouldn't have a chance.

"This is why Plato in a very fine comparison declares that wise men are right in keeping clear of public business.⁸ They see the people swarming through the streets and getting soaked with rain, and they cannot persuade them to go indoors and get out of the wet. They know if they go out themselves, they can do no good but only get drenched with the rest. So they stay indoors and are content to keep themselves dry, since they cannot remedy the folly of everyone else.

"But as a matter of fact, my dear More, to tell you what I really think, as long as you have private property, and as long as money is the measure of all things, it is really not possible for a nation to be governed justly or happily. For justice cannot exist where all the best things in life are held by the worst citizens; nor can anyone be happy where property is limited to a few, since those few are always uneasy and the many are utterly wretched.

"So I reflect on the wonderfully wise and sacred institutions of the Utopians, who are so well governed with so few laws. Among them virtue has its reward, yet everything is shared equally, and everyone lives in plenty. I contrast them with the many other nations which are constantly passing new ordinances and yet can never order their affairs satisfactorily. In these other nations, whatever a man can get he calls his own private property; but all the mass of laws old and new don't enable him to secure his own, or defend it, or even distinguish it from someone else's property. Different men lay claim, successively or all at once, to the same property; and thus arise innumerable and interminable lawsuits—fresh ones every day. When I consider all these things, I become more sympathetic to Plato and do not wonder that he declined to make laws for any people who refused to share their goods equally.⁹ Wisest of men, he easily perceived that the one and only road to the welfare of all lies through the absolute equality of goods. I doubt whether such equality can ever be

7. The allusion is to a comedy—*The Brothers* (lines 145–47)—by the Roman playwright Terence (ca. 190–159 B.C.E.).

8. Plato *Republic* 6.496.

9. Diogenes Laertius (3rd century C.E.) reports that the Arcadians and Thebans united to build a

great city, and asked Plato to be its legislator. He made communism a condition of his going there, and when the inhabitants would not consent, declined the offer (*The Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 3.23).

achieved where property belongs to individuals. However abundant goods may be, when every man tries to get as much as he can for his own exclusive use, a handful of men end up sharing the whole thing, and the rest are left in poverty. The result generally is two sorts of people whose fortunes ought to be interchanged: the rich are rapacious, wicked, and useless, while the poor are unassuming, modest men who work hard, more for the benefit of the public than of themselves.

"Thus I am wholly convinced that unless private property is entirely done away with, there can be no fair or just distribution of goods, nor can the business of mortals be happily conducted. As long as private property remains, by far the largest and the best part of the human race will be oppressed by a heavy and inescapable burden of cares and anxieties. This load, I admit, may be lightened to some extent, but I maintain it cannot be entirely removed. Laws might be made that no one should own more than a certain amount of land or receive more than a certain income. Or laws might be passed to prevent the prince from becoming too powerful and the populace too unruly. It might be made unlawful for public offices to be solicited, or put up for sale, or made burdensome for the officeholder by great expense. Otherwise, officeholders are tempted to get their money back by fraud or extortion, and only rich men can afford to seek positions which ought to be held by the wise. Laws of this sort, I agree, may have as much effect as poultices continually applied to sick bodies that are past cure. The social evils I mentioned may be alleviated and their effects mitigated for a while, but so long as private property remains, there is no hope at all of effecting a cure and restoring society to good health. While you try to cure one part, you aggravate the disease in other parts. Suppressing one symptom causes another to break out, since you cannot give something to one person without taking it away from someone else."

"But I don't see it that way," I replied. "It seems to me that people cannot possibly live well where all things are in common. How can there be plenty of commodities where every man stops working? The hope of gain will not spur him on; he will rely on others, and become lazy. If a man is driven by want of something to produce it, and yet cannot legally protect what he has gained, what can follow but continual bloodshed and turmoil, especially when respect for magistrates and their authority has been lost? I for one cannot conceive of authority existing among men who are equal to one another in every respect."

"I'm not surprised," said Raphael, "that you think of it this way, since you have no idea, or only a false idea, of such a commonwealth. But you should have been with me in Utopia, and seen with your own eyes their manners and customs as I did—for I lived there more than five years, and would never have left, if it had not been to make that new world known to others. If you had seen them, you would frankly confess that you had never seen a people so well governed as they are."

"You will have a hard time persuading me," said Peter Giles, "that people in that new land are better governed than in the world we know. Our minds are not inferior to theirs, and our governments, I believe, are older. Long experience has helped us develop many conveniences of life, and by good luck we have discovered many other things which human ingenuity could never hit on."

"As for the relative ages of the governments," Raphael replied, "you might

1. These objections to communism derive from the critique of the *Republic* in Aristotle's *Politics* 2.1-5.

judge more accurately if you had read their histories. If we believe these records, they had cities before there were even people here. What ingenuity has discovered or chance hit upon could have turned up just as well in one place as the other. As a matter of fact, I believe we surpass them in natural intelligence, but they leave us far behind in their diligence and zeal to learn.

"According to their chronicles, they had heard nothing of ultra-equatorials (that's their name for us) until we arrived, except that once, some twelve hundred years ago, a ship which a storm had blown toward Utopia was wrecked on their island. Some Romans and Egyptians were cast ashore, and never departed. Now note how the Utopians profited, through their diligence, from this one chance event. They learned every single useful art of the Roman civilization either directly from their guests, or indirectly from hints and surmises on which they based their own investigations. What benefits from the mere fact that on a single occasion some Europeans landed there! If a similar accident has hitherto brought anyone here from their land, the incident has been completely forgotten, as it will be forgotten in time to come that I was ever in their country. From one such accident they made themselves masters of all our useful inventions, but I suspect it will be a long time before we accept any of their institutions which are better than ours. This willingness to learn, I think, is the really important reason for their being better governed and living more happily than we do, though we are not inferior to them in brains or resources."

"Then let me implore you, my dear Raphael," said I, "to describe that island to us. Do not try to be brief, but explain in order everything relating to their land, their rivers, towns, people, manners, institutions, laws—everything, in short, that you think we would like to know. And you can take it for granted that we want to know everything that we don't know yet."

"There's nothing I'd rather do," he replied, "for these things are fresh in my mind. But it will take quite some time."

"In that case," I said, "let's first go to lunch. Afterward, we shall have all the time we want."

"Agreed," he said. So we went in and had lunch. Then we came back to the same spot, and sat down on the bench. I ordered my servants to take care that no one should interrupt us. Peter Giles and I urged Raphael to keep his promise. When he saw that we were eager to hear him, he sat silent and thoughtful a moment, and then began as follows.

Book 2

The island of the Utopians is two hundred miles across in the middle part, where it is widest, and is nowhere much narrower than this except toward the two ends. These ends, drawn toward one another as if in a five-hundred-mile circle, make the island crescent-shaped, like a new moon.¹ Between the horns of the crescent, which are about eleven miles apart, the sea enters and spreads into a broad bay. Being sheltered from the wind by the surrounding land, the bay is never rough, but quiet and smooth instead, like a big lake. Thus nearly the whole inner coast is one great harbor, across which ships pass in every direction, to the great advantage of the people. What with shallows on one side and rocks on the other, the entrance into the bay is perilous. Near the

1. The island is similar to England in size, though not at all in shape.