

When the war's over, they send in the bill, not to the friendly powers for whose sake the expenses were incurred, but to the defeated enemy. They demand to be paid partly in cash, which is put aside for use in future wars, and partly in freeholds of valuable estates on enemy territory. Thus they've acquired property in many different countries, and the resultant income, built up gradually from various sources, has now reached the equivalent of more than £327,000 per annum. To each of these countries they send out Utopian citizens, nominally to act as rent-collectors, but actually to live there in grand style and play the part of distinguished local residents. Still, there's plenty of money left over to pay into the Exchequer, unless they prefer to lend it to the country concerned, which they often do, until such time as they actually need it themselves – and even then they very seldom call in the whole amount. Some of these estates they make over to individuals whom they've persuaded to take the sort of risks that I mentioned before.

If any king goes to war with them and prepares to invade their territory, they send off a large force to intercept him before he reaches the frontier³⁵ – for they never fight on their own soil if they can help it, and in no circumstances will they allow allied troops to set foot on the island itself.

Finally, let me tell you about their religious ideas. There are several different religions on the island, and indeed in each town. There are sun-worshippers, moon-worshippers, and worshippers of various other planets. There are people who regard some great or good man of the past not merely as a god, but as the supreme god. However, the vast majority take the much more sensible view that there is a single divine power, unknown, eternal, infinite, inexplicable, and quite beyond the grasp of the human mind, diffused throughout this universe of ours, not as a physical substance, but as an active force. This power they call 'The Parent'. They give Him credit for everything that happens to everything, for all beginnings and ends, all growth, development, and change. Nor do they recognize any other form of deity.

On this point, indeed, all the different sects agree – that there is one Supreme Being, Who is responsible for the creation and

management of the universe, and they all use the same Utopian word to describe Him: Mythras.³⁶ What they disagree about is, who Mythras is. Some say one thing, some another – but everyone claims that *his* Supreme Being is identical with Nature, that tremendous power which is internationally acknowledged to be the sole cause of everything. However, people are gradually tending to drift away from all these inferior creeds, and to unite in adopting what seems to be the most reasonable religion. And doubtless the others would have died out long ago if it weren't for the superstitious tendency to interpret any bad luck, when one's thinking of changing one's religion, not as a coincidence, but as a judgement from heaven – as though the discarded god were punishing one's disloyalty.

But when we told them about Christ, His teaching, His character, His miracles, and the no less miraculous devotion of all the martyrs who, by voluntarily shedding their blood, converted so many nations to the Christian faith, you've no idea how easy it was to convert them too. Perhaps they were unconsciously influenced by some divine inspiration, or perhaps it was because Christianity seemed so very like their own principal religion – though I should imagine they were also considerably affected by the information that Christ prescribed of His own disciples a communist way of life,³⁷ which is still practised today in all the most truly Christian communities.³⁸ Anyway, whatever the explanation, quite a lot of Utopians adopted our religion, and were baptized.

Unfortunately none of us four was a priest – yes, there were only four of us left – the other two had died. So though they've been admitted to all the other rites of the Church, our converts haven't yet received the sacraments that only priests can administer. But they understand about them, and want them more than anything on earth. In fact, just now they're busy discussing whether it would be in order for one of them to be ordained priest, without sending for a Christian bishop to perform the ceremony. And it certainly looked as if they were going to choose a candidate for the job, though they hadn't actually done so by the time I left.

Of course, many Utopians refuse to accept Christianity, but

even they make no attempt to discourage other people from adopting it, or to attack those who do – though there was one member of our congregation who got into trouble while I was there. Immediately after his baptism, in spite of all our advice to the contrary, this man started giving public lectures on the Christian faith, in which he showed rather more zeal than discretion. Eventually he got so worked up that, not content with asserting the superiority of our religion, he went so far as to condemn all others. He kept shouting at the top of his voice that they were all vile superstitions, and that all who believed in them were monsters of impiety, destined to be punished in hell-fire for ever. When he'd been going on like this for some time, he was arrested and charged, not with blasphemy, but with disturbance of the peace. He was duly convicted and sentenced to exile – for one of the most ancient principles of their constitution is religious toleration.³⁹

This principle dates right back to the time of the Conquest. Up till then there'd been constant quarrels about religion, and the various warring sects had refused to cooperate in the defence of their country. When Utopos heard how they'd behaved, he realized that this was why he'd been able to conquer the whole lot of them. So immediately after his victory he made a law, by which everyone was free to practise what religion he liked, and to try and convert other people to his own faith, provided he did it quietly and politely, by rational argument. But, if he failed to convince them, he was not allowed to make bitter attacks on other religions, nor to employ violence or personal abuse. The normal penalty for being too aggressive in religious controversy is either exile or slavery.

Utopos made this law, not only to preserve the peace, which he saw being completely destroyed by endless disputes and implacable feuds, but also because he thought it was in the best interests of religion itself. He didn't presume to say which creed was right. Apparently he considered it possible that God made different people believe different things, because He wanted to be worshipped in many different ways. But he was evidently quite certain that it was stupid and arrogant to bully everyone else into adopting one's own particular creed. It seemed to him

perfectly obvious that, even if there was only one true religion, and all the rest were nonsense, truth would eventually prevail of its own accord – as long as the matter was discussed calmly and reasonably. But if it was decided by force of arms, the best and most spiritual type of religion would go down before the silliest forms of superstition, just as corn is liable to be overgrown by thorns and brambles – for the worst people are always the most obstinate.

So he left the choice of creed an open question, to be decided by the individual according to his own ideas – except that he strictly and solemnly forbade his people to believe anything so incompatible with human dignity as the doctrine that the soul dies with the body, and the universe functions aimlessly, without any controlling providence. That's why they feel so sure that there must be rewards and punishments after death. Anyone who thinks differently has, in their view, forfeited his right to be classed as a human being, by degrading his immortal soul to the level of an animal's body. Still less do they regard him as a Utopian citizen. They say a person like that doesn't really care a damn for the Utopian way of life – only he's too frightened to say so. For it stands to reason, if you're not afraid of anything but prosecution, and have no hopes of anything after you're dead, you'll always be trying to evade or break the laws of your country, in order to gain your own private ends. So nobody who subscribes to this doctrine is allowed to receive any public honour, hold any public appointment, or work in any public service. In fact such people are generally regarded as utterly contemptible.

They're not punished in any way, though, for no one is held responsible for what he believes. Nor are they terrorized into concealing their views, because Utopians simply can't stand hypocrisy, which they consider practically equivalent to fraud. Admittedly, it's illegal for any such person to argue in defence of his beliefs, but that's only in public. In private discussions with priests or other serious-minded characters, he's not merely allowed but positively encouraged to do so, for everyone's convinced that this type of delusion will eventually yield to reason.

Indeed there are some Utopians – quite a lot of them actually

— who, so far from being materialists, go to the opposite extreme. Of course, there's no law against them, for they have a certain amount of reason on their side, and are quite decent characters in themselves. These people believe that animals have immortal souls too, though much inferior to ours, and designed for happiness on a lower plane. As for the infinite happiness in store for human beings, practically everyone feels so sure of it that, although they always mourn for an illness, they never mourn for a death — unless the person in question was obviously uneasy and unwilling to let go of life. This they regard as a very bad sign. It seems to suggest that the soul is conscious of its own guilt, and has gloomy forebodings of punishment to come — hence its terror of dying. Besides, they doubt if God will be at all pleased to see someone who, instead of running gladly to answer His summons, has to be dragged into His presence by force. So they shudder to see a death of this type, and perform the funeral rites in sorrowful silence. They merely say, 'God have mercy on his soul, and forgive his weaknesses.' Then they bury the body.

But when a person dies in a cheerful and optimistic mood,⁴⁰ nobody mourns for him. They sing for joy at his funeral, and lovingly commend his soul to God. Finally, more in a spirit of reverence than of grief, they cremate the body, and mark the spot by a column engraved with an epitaph. Then they go home and discuss the dead man's character and career, and there's nothing in his life that they dwell on with such pleasure as the happy state of mind in which he left it. This method of recalling his good qualities is thought the best way of encouraging similar virtues in the living, and also of pleasing the dead — for the subject of these discussions is believed to be present at them, though invisible to human eyes. After all, perfect happiness implies complete freedom of movement, and no one with any feeling would stop wanting to see his friends when he died, if they'd been really fond of one another while he was alive. On the contrary, the Utopians assume that a good man's capacity for affection, like every other good thing about him, is increased rather than diminished by death. So they believe that the dead mix freely with the living, and observe everything they say and

do. In fact they regard them almost as guardian angels, and this gives them greater confidence in tackling all their problems. Also, the sense of their ancestors' presence discourages any bad behaviour in private.

They pay no attention to omens, fortune-telling, or any of the superstitious practices that are taken so seriously in other countries. In fact they treat them as a joke. But they have a great respect for miracles which aren't attributable to natural causes, because they see them as evidence of God's presence and power. They say such miracles often happen there. Indeed at moments of crisis the whole country prays for a miracle, and their faith is so great that the prayer is sometimes answered.

Most Utopians feel they can please God merely by studying the natural world, and praising Him for it. But quite a lot of them are led by their religion to neglect the pursuit of knowledge. They're not interested in science — they simply have no time for that sort of thing, since they believe that the only way to earn happiness after death is to spend one's life doing good works. Some of them look after invalids, while others mend roads, clean out ditches, repair bridges, dig up turf, sand, or stone, cut down and saw up trees, or cart such things as timber and corn into the towns. In short, they behave like servants, and work harder than slaves, not only for the community, but also for private individuals. They cheerfully undertake all the rough, dirty, and difficult jobs that the average person fights shy of, either because of the physical effort involved, or just because he dislikes them, or despairs of ever getting them done. Thus they create leisure for other people by working ceaselessly themselves — and yet they take no credit for it. They never find fault with other ways of life, or boast about their own. So the more they make slaves of themselves, the more everybody respects them.

They're divided into two sects, of which one believes in celibacy. Its members are total abstainers, not only from sexual intercourse, but also from meat, and in some cases from every form of animal food. They renounce all the pleasures of this life, which they regard as sinful, and yearn only for the life to come. This they try to earn by the sweat of their brows, and by going without sleep — but the hope of reaching it any day now keeps

them lively and cheerful. The other sect, though equally keen on hard work, approves of marriage, on the grounds that its comforts are not to be despised, and that procreation is a duty which one owes both to nature and to one's country. They have no objection to pleasure, so long as it doesn't interfere with work. On that principle they eat a lot of meat, because they think it enables them to work harder. They're generally considered more sensible than the others, though the others are thought more devout. Of course, if the members of the first sect tried to justify their behaviour on logical grounds, they'd merely be laughed at. But as they admit that their motives are religious rather than rational, they're regarded with great reverence – for Utopians are always extremely careful to avoid rash judgements in the matter of religion. People who belong to this sect are known in their own language as Cowparsons⁴¹ which may be roughly translated, Lay Brethren.

All their priests are exceptionally pious, which means that there are very few of them – normally thirteen per town, or one per church. But in wartime seven of the thirteen go off with the troops, and seven more priests are ordained as temporary substitutes. When the army chaplains return, they get back their old livings, and the extra priests remain on the staff of the Bishop – for one of the thirteen is given this status – until they succeed, one by one, to vacancies created by the death of the original incumbents.

Priests are elected by the whole community. The election is by secret ballot, as it is for all public appointments, to prevent the formation of pressure groups, and the successful candidates are then ordained by their colleagues. Priests are responsible for conducting services, organizing religions, and supervising morals. It's considered very shameful to be had up before an ecclesiastical court, or even reprimanded by a priest for bad behaviour. Of course, the actual suppression and punishment of crime is the job of the Mayor and other public officials. Priests merely give advice and warning – though they can also excommunicate persistent offenders, and there's hardly any punishment that people fear more. You see, a person who has been excommunicated is not only completely disgraced and

racked with fears of divine vengeance. His physical security is threatened too, for, unless he can very soon convince the priests that he's a reformed character, he's arrested and punished by the Council for impiety.

Priests are also responsible for the education of children and adolescents, in which quite as much stress is laid on moral as on academic training. They do their utmost to ensure that, while children are still at an impressionable age, they're given the right ideas about things – the sort of ideas best calculated to preserve the structure of their society. If thoroughly absorbed in childhood, these ideas will persist throughout adult life, and so contribute greatly to the safety of the state, which is never seriously threatened except by moral defects arising from wrong ideas.

Male priests are allowed to marry⁴² – for there's nothing to stop a woman from becoming a priest,⁴³ although women aren't often chosen for the job, and only elderly widows are eligible. As a matter of fact, clergymen's wives form the cream of Utopian society,⁴⁴ for no public figure is respected more than a priest. So much so that, even if a priest commits a crime, he's not liable to prosecution. They just leave him to God and his own conscience, since, no matter what he has done, they don't think it right for any human being to lay hands on a man who has been dedicated as a special offering to God. They find this rule quite easy to keep, because priests represent such a tiny minority, and because they're so carefully chosen. After all, it's not really very likely that a man who has come out top of a list of excellent candidates, and who owes his appointment entirely to his moral character, should suddenly become vicious and corrupt. And even if we must accept that possibility – human nature being so very unpredictable – a mere handful of people without any executive power can hardly constitute a serious danger to the community. They keep the numbers down, in order not to lower the present high prestige of the priesthood, by making the honour less of a rarity – especially as they say it's hard to find many people suitable for a profession which demands considerably more than average virtues.

The reputation of Utopian priests is just as good abroad as it

is at home. The evidence and, I think, the reason for this may be found in what happens on the battlefield. While the fighting is in progress, the priests kneel a short way off, wearing their holy vestments, and hold up their hands to heaven. They pray first for peace, and then for a bloodless victory – bloodless on both sides. As soon as their own troops start getting the best of it, the priests hurry on to the battlefield and stop all unnecessary violence. Once they appear on the scene, an enemy soldier can save his life simply by calling out to them, and, if he can manage to touch their flowing robes, his property too is safe from any sort of war damage. This earns them so much respect in every country, and gives them so much genuine authority, that they've often been able to protect their own soldiers quite as effectively as they normally protect the enemy's. Sometimes, at desperate moments when the Utopian forces were in full retreat, and their enemies were rushing after them, intent on killing and looting, the intervention of the priests has been known to prevent a massacre, part the combatants, and bring about the conclusion of a peace on equal terms. For the person of a Utopian priest is universally regarded as sacred and inviolable even among the most savage and barbarous nations.

They have religious festivals on the first and last days of each month, and also of each year – their calendar, by the way, is based on the solar year, divided into lunar months. These first days are called Dogdates in their language, and the last ones Turndates – in other words, Beginning Feasts and Ending Feasts.

Their churches look most impressive, not only because they're so beautifully built, but also because of their size. You see, as there are so few of them, they have to be capable of holding vast numbers of people. However, they're all rather dark, which is not, I'm told, a mistake on the part of the architects, but a matter of policy. The priests think that too much light tends to distract one's attention, whereas a sort of twilight helps one to collect one's thoughts, and intensifies religious feeling. Now this doesn't take the same form with everyone, though all its varieties lead by different routes, as it were, to the same destination: the worship of the Divine Being. For that reason, there's nothing to be seen or heard in their

churches which can't equally well be applied to all religions. Any ceremonies which are peculiar to individual sects are performed privately at home, and public services are so arranged as not to detract in any way from these private ones.

On the same principle, their churches contain no visual representations of God, so that everyone's left free to imagine Him in whatever shape he chooses, according to which religion he thinks the best. Nor is God addressed by any special names there. He is simply called Mythras, a general term used by everybody to designate the Supreme Being, whoever He may be. Similarly, no prayers are said in which each member of the congregation cannot join without prejudice to his own particular creed.

At Ending Feasts they fast all day, and go to church in the evening, to thank God for bringing them safely to the end of the year or month in question. Next day, which is of course a Beginning Feast, they meet at church in the morning to pray for happiness and prosperity during the year or month which has just begun. But before going to church at an Ending Feast, wives kneel down at home before their husbands, and children before their parents, to confess all their sins of omission and commission, and ask to be forgiven. This gets rid of any little grudges that may have clouded the domestic atmosphere, so that everyone can attend divine service with an absolutely clear mind. To do so when one is feeling upset is thought positively blasphemous. For that reason, anyone who's conscious of feeling anger or resentment towards another person stays away from church until he's made it up, and purged himself of these unpleasant emotions, for fear of being promptly and severely punished otherwise.

As they enter the church, the men turn to the right and the women to the left, and the seating is so arranged that the males of each household are in front of the house-father, and the house-mother acts as a rearguard for the females. This ensures that everyone's conduct in public is watched by those who are responsible for his discipline at home. Here too they take great care to see that a young person always sits next to an older one – for if children are left to themselves they're apt to waste their

time in church playing childish games, when they ought above all to be developing a sense of religious awe, the strongest, if not the only incentive to good behaviour.

They never sacrifice any animals, for they can't imagine a merciful God enjoying slaughter and bloodshed. They say God gave His creatures life, because He wanted them to live. But they do make certain burnt offerings – of incense and other aromatic substances, and of innumerable candles. Of course they realize that such things are no use to the Divine Being, but they see no harm in them as a form of tribute, and feel that these scents and lights and other elements of ritual somehow raise people's thoughts, and make them more eager to worship God.

The congregation is dressed in white, and the priest wears multi-coloured vestments, magnificent in workmanship and design, but made of quite cheap materials – for instead of being woven with gold thread, or encrusted with rare jewels, they're merely decorated with the feathers⁴⁵ of various birds. On the other hand, their value as works of art is far greater than that of the richest material in the world. Besides, the feathers are arranged in special patterns which are said to symbolize certain divine truths, and the priests are careful to teach the meaning of these hieroglyphics, since they serve to remind worshippers of God's favours towards them, of their duty towards Him in return, and of their duty towards one another.

The moment the priest appears from the sanctuary wearing these vestments, everyone bows down to the ground in reverence, and there is deep silence throughout the building. The effect is so awe-inspiring that one almost seems to feel a divine presence. After a few minutes the priest gives a sign for the congregation to stand up. Then they sing hymns of praise to God, accompanied by musical instruments, which are generally quite different from anything to be seen in our part of the world. Most of these have a much sweeter tone than ours, though some of them simply won't bear comparison with European instruments. But in one respect they're undoubtedly far ahead of us. All their music, both vocal and instrumental, is wonderfully expressive of natural feelings: The sound is so well adapted to

the sense that whether the theme is prayer or rejoicing, agitation or calm, sorrow or anger, the melodic line exactly represents the appropriate emotion. It therefore enters deeply into the hearer's consciousness, and has an extraordinarily stimulating effect.

The service ends with a set form of prayer repeated by both priests and congregation. It's worded in such a way that, while they're all saying it together, each person can apply it to himself. It goes something like this:

O God, I acknowledge Thee to be my creator, my governor, and the source of all good things. I thank Thee for all Thy blessings, but especially for letting me live in the happiest possible society, and practise what I hope is the truest religion. If I am wrong, and if some other religion or social system would be better and more acceptable to Thee, I pray Thee in Thy goodness to let me know it, for I am ready to follow wherever Thou shalt lead me. But if our system is indeed the best, and my religion the truest, then keep me faithful to both of them, and bring the rest of humanity to adopt the same way of life, and the same religious faith – unless the present variety of creeds is part of Thy inscrutable purpose. Grant me an easy death, when Thou takest me to Thyself. I do not presume to suggest whether it should be late or soon. But if it is Thy will, I would much rather come to Thee by a most painful death, than be kept too long away from Thee by the most pleasant of earthly lives.

After saying this prayer, they again bow down to the ground for a few moments, and then get up and go off to lunch. The rest of the day is spent in recreation and military training.

Well, that's the most accurate account I can give you of the Utopian Republic. To my mind, it's not only the best country in the world, but the only one that has any right to call itself a republic.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, people are always talking about the public interest, but all they really care about is private property. In Utopia, where there's no private property, people take their duty to the public seriously. And both attitudes are perfectly reasonable. In other 'republics' practically everyone knows that, if he doesn't look out for himself, he'll starve to death, however

prosperous his country may be. He's therefore compelled to give his own interests priority over those of the public; that is, of other people. But in Utopia, where everything's under public ownership, no one has any fear of going short, as long as the public storehouses are full. Everyone gets a fair share, so there are never any poor men or beggars. Nobody owns anything, but everyone is rich – for what greater wealth can there be than cheerfulness, peace of mind, and freedom from anxiety? Instead of being worried about his food supply, upset by the plaintive demands of his wife, afraid of poverty for his son, and baffled by the problem of finding a dowry for his daughter, the Utopian can feel absolutely sure that he, his wife, his children, his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren, his great-great-grandchildren, and as long a line of descendants as the proudest peer could wish to look forward to, will always have enough to eat and enough to make them happy. There's also the further point that those who are too old to work are just as well provided for as those who are still working.

Now, will anyone venture to compare these fair arrangements in Utopia with the so-called justice of other countries? – in which I'm damned if I can see the slightest trace of justice or fairness. For what sort of justice do you call this? People like aristocrats, goldsmiths, or money-lenders, who either do no work at all, or do work that's really not essential, are rewarded for their laziness or their unnecessary activities by a splendid life of luxury. But labourers, coachmen, carpenters, and farmhands, who never stop working like cart-horses, at jobs so essential that, if they *did* stop working, they'd bring any country to a standstill within twelve months – what happens to them? They get so little to eat, and have such a wretched time, that they'd be almost better off if they *were* cart-horses. Then, at least, they wouldn't work quite such long hours, their food wouldn't be very much worse, they'd enjoy it more, and they'd have no fears for the future. As it is, they're not only ground down by unrewarding toil in the present, but also worried to death by the prospect of a poverty-stricken old age – since their daily wages aren't enough to support them for one day, let alone leave anything over to be saved up for when they're old.

Can you see any fairness or gratitude in a social system which lavishes such great rewards on so-called noblemen, goldsmiths, and people like that, who are either totally unproductive or merely employed in producing luxury goods⁴⁷ or entertainment, but makes no such kind provision for farm-hands, coal-heavers, labourers, carters, or carpenters, without whom society couldn't exist at all? And the climax of ingratitude comes when they're old and ill and completely destitute. Having taken advantage of them throughout the best years of their lives, society now forgets all the sleepless hours they've spent in its service, and repays them for all the vital work they've done, by letting them die in misery. What's more, the wretched earnings of the poor are daily whittled away by the rich, not only through private dishonesty, but through public legislation. As if it weren't unjust enough already that the man who contributes most to society should get the least in return, they make it even worse, and then arrange for injustice to be legally described as justice.⁴⁸

In fact, when I consider any social system that prevails in the modern world, I can't, so help me God, see it as anything but a conspiracy of the rich to advance their own interests under the pretext of organizing society. They think up all sorts of tricks and dodges, first for keeping safe their ill-gotten gains, and then for exploiting the poor by buying their labour as cheaply as possible. Once the rich have decided that these tricks and dodges shall be officially recognized by society – which includes the poor as well as the rich – they acquire the force of law. Thus an unscrupulous minority is led by its insatiable greed to monopolize what would have been enough to supply the needs of the whole population. And yet how much happier even these people would be in Utopia! There, with the simultaneous abolition of money and the passion for money, how many other social problems have been solved, how many crimes eradicated! For obviously the end of money means the end of all those types of criminal behaviour which daily punishments are powerless to check: fraud, theft, burglary, brawls, riots, disputes, rebellion, murder, treason, and black magic.⁴⁹ And the moment money goes, you can also say good-bye to fear, tension, anxiety, overwork, and sleepless nights. Why, even poverty itself, the one

problem that has always seemed to need money for its solution, would promptly disappear if money ceased to exist.

Let me try to make this point clearer. Just think back to one of the years when the harvest was bad, and thousands of people died of starvation. Well, I bet if you'd inspected every rich man's barn at the end of that lean period you'd have found enough corn to have saved all the lives that were lost through malnutrition and disease, and prevented anyone from suffering any ill effects whatever from the meanness of the weather and the soil. Everyone could so easily get enough to eat, if it weren't for that blessed nuisance, money. There you have a brilliant invention which was designed to make food more readily available. Actually it's the only thing that makes it unobtainable.

I'm sure that even the rich are well aware of all this, and realize how much better it would be to have everything one needed, than lots of things one didn't need – to be evacuated altogether from the danger area, than to dig oneself in behind a barricade of enormous wealth. And I've no doubt that either self-interest, or the authority of our Saviour Christ – Who was far too wise not to know what was best for us, and far too kind to recommend anything else – would have led the whole world to adopt the Utopian system long ago, if it weren't for that beastly root of all evils, pride. For pride's criterion of prosperity is not what you've got yourself, but what other people haven't got. Pride would refuse to set foot in paradise, if she thought there'd be no under-privileged classes there to gloat over and order about – nobody whose misery could serve as a foil to her own happiness, or whose poverty she could make harder to bear, by flaunting her own riches. Pride, like a hellish serpent gliding through human hearts – or, shall we say, like a sucking-fish⁵⁰ that clings to the ship of state? – is always dragging us back, and obstructing our progress towards a better way of life.

But as this fault is too deeply ingrained in human nature to be easily eradicated, I'm glad that at least one country has managed to develop a system which I'd like to see universally adopted. The Utopian way of life provides not only the happiest basis for a civilized community, but also one which, in all human probability, will last for ever. They've eliminated the root-causes

of ambition, political conflict, and everything like that. There's therefore no danger of internal dissension, the one thing that has destroyed so many impregnable towns. And as long as there's unity and sound administration at home, no matter how envious neighbouring kings may feel, they'll never be able to shake, let alone to shatter, the power of Utopia. They've tried to do so often enough in the past, but have always been beaten back.

While Raphael was telling us all this, I kept thinking of various objections. The laws and customs of that country seemed to me in many cases perfectly ridiculous. Quite apart from such things as their military tactics, religions, and forms of worship, there was the grand absurdity on which their whole society was based, communism minus money. Now this in itself would mean the end of the aristocracy, and consequently of all dignity, splendour, and majesty, which are generally supposed to be the real glories of any nation.

However, I could see that he was tired after talking so much, and I was not quite sure how tolerant he would be of any opinion that contradicted his own – especially when I remembered his sarcastic reference to the sort of person who is afraid of looking a fool if he cannot pick holes in other people's ideas. So I just made some polite remarks about the Utopian system, and thanked him for his interesting talk – after which I took his arm and led him in to supper, saying:

'Well, I must think it over. Then perhaps we can meet again and discuss it at greater length.'

I certainly hope we shall, some day. In the meantime I cannot agree with everything that he said, for all his undoubted learning and experience. But I freely admit that there are many features of the Utopian Republic which I should like – though I hardly expect – to see adopted in Europe.⁵¹