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THE UTOPIA OF SIR THOS. MORE..

BY B. O. FLOWER.

PART I.

Long before Professor Drummond had elucidated the great evolutionary truth that the ascent of man was marked by the triumph of altruistic over egoistic sentiment,* Sir Thomas More's keen insight and intellectual penetration enabled him to see that the highway upon which humanity must pass to secure progress, felicity and true civilization must be other than the savage struggle for self alone which had controlled man in the past, when the animal overmastered the spiritual in governmental as well as individual life. The central idea of "Utopia" is the triumph of altruism over egoism. That Sir Thomas More had to conform, in a way, to the dominant ideas of his age in order to be taken with any degree of seriousness—as, for example, when he makes the accomplishment of universal prosperity and happiness flow from the absolutism of King Utopus—is not surprising, as we shall presently see.

Though the philosopher lived in an essentially savage age, in which the brutal theory that might made right was accepted almost as a truism, and which was permeated by selfishness, intolerance and heartless disregard for the weak and unfortunate, he caught luminous glimpses of felicity to be attained through the abolition of class privileges and the establishment of just conditions. In conceiving that human happiness and national prosperity could best be promoted by the application of the Golden Rule, Sir Thomas More was as wise as he was sympathetic, as scientific as he was humane, and was in perfect accord with the best thought and latest discoveries and deductions of enlightened science. This great scientific truth was grasped by More through his rare prophetic or intuitional power, in a selfish, brutal and unscientific age. The central idea emphasized in "Utopia" contains the redemptive potentiality for human society, however crude or wide of the mark the work may be in some of the details of government. When we bear in mind the conditions of the civilization of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and also remember the limitations under which the English philosopher necessarily labored in order to make his work appeal to his young sovereign, we shall appreciate how far in advance of his age was this great prophet of a higher civilization, and shall also understand why at times he halted and in a degree conformed to the monarchical ideas and the intellectual limitations as well as the tyranny of conventionalism which marked his time. Yet, notwithstanding these limitations, "Utopia" was in spirit so true to the best impulses of man, so in general alignment with the then undreamed of evolutionary processes of life and society, that it has not only proved an inspiration to social reformers and humanitarians from his century to the present time, but to-day there are thousands where heretofore there were tens who advocate the central ideas he advanced as the true solution of the problem of human society; and, as I have pointed out, they are borne out by

the theory of evolution, which was at first supposed to be directly opposed to the altruistic conception.

On the threshold of our examination it will also be interesting to note the fact that for generations and perhaps centuries before Sir Thomas More wrote "Utopia" there had existed in the Western World a government which had abolished poverty. This unique civilization flourished in what is known to-day as Peru, and although less complex, and in many respects less advanced than the most enlightened European nations of the age of More, it was incomparably in advance of the nations which surrounded the Land of the Incas, as Peru was commonly termed. The concern which this Western civilization exhibited for the welfare of its children and the many noble characteristics of its government, gave it a prestige, power and glory, despite its crudities and objectionable features, which was not approached by any sister nation, and in various respects it surpassed the Christian nations of Europe of that age. It is true that this civilization went down before the merciless sword of the Spaniard, precisely as Christian Rome went down before the barbarians of the North, or as Poland succumbed to the savage fury of Russia. But the facts which have come to us from Spanish historians are a revelation in that they show in a marked manner what was actually accomplished by a simple people in an age when the dream of enlightened co-operation was not yet born, and when the idea of the divine right of rulers still held the human mind in thrall.

This strange and ancient civilization: in some respects so wise and considerate, was, as one would naturally expect in a rude age, marred by many blemishes. Thus, for example, in matters of religion the ancient Peruvians, like the Egyptians of old, believed their first rulers were children of the sun. They were very dogmatic in their theological views, and, like all dogmatic religionists, showed scant toleration to those who, however sincere, differed from them. Thus from fragmentary records which have come to us, we are led to infer that the soul withering spirit of persecution, which is so thoroughly antagonistic to spiritual growth or intellectual advancement, was present in this ancient civilization, although in justice to the Incas it is fair to say that even the records of their conquerors do not indicate that they were so intolerant as the Christian Spaniards of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A most interesting glimpse of this peculiar civilization, as gathered from the most trustworthy sources, is given in the following words by Clements Markham in an admirable history of Peru:†

In many respects Peru under the Incas resembled the "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More. . . . Punishments for crimes were severe and inexorably inflicted. Not a spot of cultivable land was neglected. Towns and villages were built on rocky hills, cemeteries were in deserts or in the sides of barren cliffs, in order that no land might be wasted. Dry wastes were irrigated, and terraces were constructed, sometimes a hundred deep, by the sides of mountains. The results were commensurate with the thought and skill expended. . . . Provision was made to supply all classes of the people with everything they required that was not produced by themselves, through a system of colonies or mitimas. Inhabitants of a populous district were removed to a less crowded one, the comfort of all classes was promoted by exchange of products, waste places were made fertile, and political objects were also secured. . . . Under the Inca system all who could work were obliged to work, all lived in comfort, and there was ample provision for the aged, for young and children, and for the sick. Tillers of the ground and shepherds received the share of produce called huaccha, and the surplus went to the mitimas in exchange for other products. All other workers were maintained from the share called Inca, including the sovereign and his officers and the army. . . . So perfect was the Inca organization that it continued to work efficiently, and almost mechanically, for some time after the guiding heads had been struck down. The Spanish conquerors found that when they marched through the districts, sacking houses and destroying growing crops, the local officers kept a careful record of the injury done. The accounts were then examined and checked, and if one district had lost more than another, those that had suffered less made up a part of the difference, so that the burden might be shared equally by all. Under such a system there could be no want, for thought was taken for the nourishment and comfort of every creature. There was hard work, while provision was made not only for rest but also for recreation. The dreams of socialists were made a reality in the system which grew up and flourished under the rule of the Incas.

Henry Austin, in his thoughtful work entitled "A Story of Government," observes that "The Spanish historians record with grave amazement that they had discovered a miraculous land in which there was no such thing as a poor or discontented man, in which everybody worked, from the emperor down, a reasonable length of time at tasks fitted to their strength and their ability; in which the problem of mere living, as it confronts us moderns, in our so-called civilized cities, has been satisfactorily settled, in which the average of human happiness was large and increasing."

The facts disclosed by the civilization of ancient Peru have a special interest and value in view of the contemptuous sneers of superficial

thinkers who, with grave assumptions of superior wisdom, never tire of asserting that such a condition as Sir Thomas More depicts could never exist; in reality, it did exist under conditions which were strikingly similar to the popular ideals in regard to rulership, the rights of classes, and the claims of theology which marked the England of Sir Thomas More, as well as other European nations of that age, and from what we can gather from historians, who could not be accused of being partial to the western civilization which Spanish soldiers so ruthlessly and brutally destroyed, a condition of peace, prosperity, and fraternity prevailed in ancient Peru unknown to any nation of Europe contemporaneous with the supremacy of the government of the Incas.

With the recent scientific conceptions as to the ascent of man and the suggestive history of the ancient Peruvians in mind, we will now consider the social vision of England's great philosopher and statesman.

A great many of the reforms which Sir Thomas More described as being practised by the Utopians, and which were regarded as ideal, visionary and absurd in his time, and for many generations after his death, are now coming into successful operation. Take, for example, universal or compulsory education, such as prevails at present in so many states of our republic; this was foreshadowed by More, as we are told that in Utopia every child received a good education, and thus ignorance—the great cause of lawlessness and wretchedness—was banished. Again, the general demand for industrial education, which is gaining such favor among thoughtful and enlightened men and women, prevailed in this island country. On this point we are told that:

"Husbandry is a science common to them all in general, both men and women, wherein they be all expert and cunning, being instructed from their youth, partly in their schools and partly in the country nigh unto the city, brought up, as it were, in playing, not only beholding the use of it, but also practising it. Besides husbandry everyone learned some trade or science as his own special craft, such as cloth-working in wool, flax or cotton, or the smith's craft, or the carpenters trade."

We are further told that "the child is permitted to select the trade or science he desires to master," and "if he wishes to perfect himself in two crafts, he is permitted to do so."

In Sir Thomas More's day the College of Physicians was founded in London, but the treatment of the sick was crude and often barbarous, and our modern methods would have been deemed visionary indeed. Yet the low ideals and limited conceptions of his age did not prevent the author of "Utopia" from describing an enlightened way of treating the sick, which our tortoise-like civilization is gradually acting upon. Thus, we are told that:

"First, and chiefly, respect is had to the sick that be carried in the hospitals, for in the circuit of the city, a little without the walls, they have four hospitals, so large and ample that they may seem four little towns, made thus commodious that the sick may have a generous allowance of room amid charming surroundings. These hospitals be so well appointed and with all things necessary to health so furnished, and moreover they have so diligent attention through continued presence of skilful physicians, that though no man be sent hither against his will, yet, notwithstanding, there is no sick person in all the city that had not rather lie there than at home in his own house."

The persistent demand on the part of organized labor for a ten or eight-hour work-day was anticipated by Sir Thomas More, for in Utopia men worked but six hours a day, and are therefore "not wearied from early in the morning to late in the evening with continual work like laboring and toiling beasts." After the six hours which was given daily to toil each person was free to enjoy and improve himself. Public lectures of various kinds, musical entertainments, and halls where games were played were provided for those who desired to take advantage of these pursuits for self-improvement or wholesome recreation. "For it was held by the Utopians that the time which could be spared from the necessary occupations and affairs of the Commonwealth the citizens should enjoy in freedom for herein they suppose the felicity of life to consist." The six hours a day we are assured is ample for the performance of all necessary work. Indeed, we are told that "That small time is not only enough, but too much for the store and abundance of all things that be requisite either for the necessities or commodities of life," and by way of explanation the author continues: "The which thing you also shall perceive if you consider how great a part of the people in other countries live idle." In Utopia all able bodied men and women perform a modicum of labor and all enjoy ample time for self-culture, for recreation, and for following any line of thought they may fancy. Agriculture, husbandry, and allied pursuits are esteemed very highly throughout the island. Poultry-raising is carried on very extensively by means of incubators, for we are told that "they bring up a multitude of poultry by a mar-

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velous process, for the hens do not set upon the eggs, but by keeping them a certain equal heat they bring life into them."

In the sixteenth century the soldiers were considered among the most honorable of men; war esteemed more than legitimate; it was the pastime of kings, princes, popes, and mighty lords, and received the sanction of conventionalism; on the other hand, husbandry and other noble pursuits which added to the wealth, happiness, and comfort of society were looked down upon with supreme contempt. Sir Thomas More appreciated most keenly that war was one of the most conspicuous survivals of the savage in society and that the contempt for ennobling trades and callings owed its source to false ideals and base conceptions of the true grandeur of nations; hence he tells us that the Utopians "detest and abhor war" as "a thing very beastly," that "they count nothing so much against glory as glory gathered in war," and though both men and women are drilled to a limited extent in the manual of arms that they may defend their fair domain in case of invasion, they discourage war, and when possible avoid the useless and criminal shedding of human blood.

And then, doubtless foreseeing the objections which would be advanced to the peace policy of the Utopians by superficial persons, who would at once exclaim that such a policy would expose a government to wrongs committed against it without the nation being able to redress its wrongs, our author states that when wrongs are perpetrated even against any friendly nation, the Utopians adopt a more excellent and enlightened method of punishment, provided the lives of the Utopians and their allies have not been sacrificed. In cases where other nations "by cunning or guile defraud" the Utopians, or "when violence be done to their bodies, they wreak their anger by abstaining from trading or carrying on any friendly relations with the offending nation, until satisfaction or restitution is made."

If the lives of any Utopians have been sacrificed, the nation is quick to resent it, for the citizenship of this country is regarded as a very sacred trust, to be protected at all hazards, even by war if that be necessary; but in such cases we are told, every effort possible is made to prevent the wholesale slaughter of life, even the lives of their foes, for "they be not only sorry but also ashamed to achieve a victory with bloodshed, counting it great folly to buy precious wares too dear, but they rejoice if they vanquish their enemies by craft," and for that act they make a general triumph, "and conceiving the matter to be manfully handled they set up a pillar of stone in the place where they have vanquished their enemies in token of victory, for they glory and boast that they have played the man indeed, because they have overcome as no other living creation but man could overcome, that is to say by the might of wit, for with bodily strength, bears, lions, boars, wolves, dogs and other wild beasts do fight, and as the most part of them do surpass man in strength and fierce courage."

We further learn that it is a settled policy with the Utopians to kill as few men as possible in the event of war, and to visit their vengeance upon those who cause the war rather than upon the helpless persons who are so recklessly hurried