

CHAPTER I

UTOPIAS AND OTHER FORECASTS

“THE old order changeth, yielding place to new.” But what the new order shall be is a matter of some diversity of opinion. Whoever, blessed with hope, speculates upon the future of society, tends to imagine it in the form of his social ideals. It matters little what the current probabilities may be—the strong influence of the ideal warps the judgment. To Thomas More, though most tendencies of his time made for absolutism, the future was republican and communistic; and to Francis Bacon the present held the promise of a new Atlantis, despite the growing arrogance of the Crown and the submissiveness of the people.

The great diversity of social ideals produces a like diversity of social forecasts. All the soothsayers give different readings of the signs. Even those of the same school, who build the future in the light of the same dogmas, differ in regard to particulars of form and structure. How many forecasts of one sort or another have been given us, it is impossible to say. Mr. H. G. Wells, in a footnote to his “Anticipations,” complains of their scarcity. “Of quite serious forecasts and inductions of things to come,” he says, “the number is very small indeed; a sug-

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gestion or so of Mr. Herbert Spencer's, Mr. Kidd's 'Social Evolution,' some hints from Mr. Archdall Reid, some political forecasts, German for the most part (Hartmann's 'Earth in the Twentieth Century,' *e.g.*), some incidental forecasts by Professor Langley (*Century Magazine*, December, 1884, *e.g.*), and such isolated computations as Professor Crookes's wheat warning and the various estimates of our coal supply, make almost a complete bibliography." But surely the Utopians, from Plato to Edward Bellamy, have given us "quite serious forecasts"; there is something of serious prophecy in both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, much more in Tolstoi and Peter Kropotkin; and the "Fabian Essays" are charged with it. Mr. Henry D. Lloyd's "Wealth against Commonwealth" closes with a brilliant and eloquent picture of a regenerated society, and Mr. Edmond Kelly's "Individualism and Collectivism" is in large part prophetic. All the social reformers who write books or articles give us engaging pictures of things as they are to be; and though the Philosophical Anarchists deal rather more largely with polemics than with prophecy, the Socialists are conspicuously definite and serious in their forecasts. Even the popular scientists — the astronomers, biologists, and anthropologists — often run into prediction; and in the pages of Richard A. Proctor, E. D. Cope, and Grant Allen, and of such living men as M. Camille Flammarion, Mr. Alfred Russell Wallace, and Professor W. J. McGee, we have frequent depictions of certain phases of the future.

Doubtless, any reader can add to this list. Of a

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surety, we have had no lack of forecasts of one sort or another; and now we have some new contributions, — Mr. Wells's "Anticipations," Mr. Benjamin Kidd's "Principles of Western Civilization," two brief but sententious papers by Professor John B. Clark, on "The Society of the Future" and "A Modified Individualism" (published in the *Independent*), a definite Socialist prediction by Mr. Henry D. Lloyd, and a semi-Socialist one by Mr. Sidney Webb.

I

Mr. Wells, in his lecture before the Royal Institution last January, put forth the thesis that, just as we can picture the general aspects of the earth in mesozoic times by a study of geology and paleontology, so by a study of the present sociological drift can we picture the society of a hundred years hence. He thereupon gives us "Anticipations" as a result of the more or less rigorous working out of this method. There is much to be said for the method, and its right employment might probably give us something of great value. Unfortunately, Mr. Wells forgets his thesis, and plunges into pure vaticination. He writes with a spirited aggressiveness, and his pictures are often vivid and impressive. But the greater part of his revelation is of a state of things which seems far removed from what would be produced by any current tendencies, actual or latent.

Mr. Kidd's predictions lack somewhat in definiteness of outline, and need not here concern us. Tol-

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stoi, on the other hand, is specific. He dreams of a return to a more primitive manner of production, and a social change toward a status of Anarchist-Communism. He scoffs at the enormous diversity of wants made necessary by the growing intelligence and refinement of the race, and urges mankind to live more simply. "The town must be abandoned, the people must be sent away from the factories and into the country to work with their hands; the aim of every man should be to satisfy all his wants himself." But the counsel falls upon heedless ears. Urged to live more simply, the race, impelled by natural and irresistible laws, yearly increases the sum of its wants. Science, art, and industry constantly pile up new commodities. Mankind finds that through them it secures longer and healthier, if not happier lives. It recognizes that by this increase of wants more human beings are employed, and that by a slight diminution thereof tens of thousands are thrown into idleness. And finally it recognizes that by a division of labor, in which natural aptitude in particular directions is sought to be secured, the greatest and most economical production follows. Under Anarchist-Communism and the performance of labor in the direction of each individual attempting to create the things needful for himself, there would be entailed upon us a productive waste vastly greater than that heretofore compelled by capitalism, diffusing a degree of want and consequent wretchedness at present unknown. There is no present indication that mankind will take this step.

Something better is to be said for Peter Kropot-

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kin's ideal of a communistic union of shop industry and agriculture. In remote places, outside the current of factory industrialism, there are still survivals of this union, though the communistic feature is generally wanting. Doubtless, under any form of society, even a well-regulated State Socialism, this union would to some extent persist. But if there are any present tendencies toward its growth, they are but feeble and isolated. Kropotkin's recent book, "Fields, Factories and Workshops," which was intended to sound the glad timbrel of rejoicing over the expansion of this movement, turns out to be a rather pitiful threnody on the decline and death of petty industries throughout Europe. Moreover, it is one thing to argue the persistence of this manner of production in scattered places, and quite another to argue it the dominant manner of production in a transformed society of the future. Of the coming of such a society the evidences are painfully scant.

We have also the Single-Taxers, the followers of the late Henry George, who are quite as fertile in prophecy as in polemics. They dream of a millennium through the imposition of a tax on the economic value of land, and the abolition of all other taxes and duties of whatsoever kind. Free competition is their shibboleth; and it is no less the shibboleth of the Neo-Jeffersonians, the followers of Mr. Bryan. Except for the fact that these two schools are somewhat Jacobinical, their general notions of the coming society do not differ greatly from the notions of the orthodox economists. All of these desire, or think they desire, free competition. Arising out of

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an era of competition, Professor Clark sees a coming order wherein the rich "will continually grow richer, and the multi-millionnaires will approach the billion-dollar standard; but the poor will be far from growing poorer. . . . It may be that the wages of a day will take him [the worker] to the mountains, and those of a hundred days will carry him through a European tour."

The dreadful spectre of monopoly, however, arises to threaten these visions. Most of the orthodox economists acknowledge a possible danger from it, but the Single-Taxers and Jeffersonians are sure it is a real and growing menace. Says Professor Clark, "Between us and the régime of monopoly there ranges itself a whole series of possible measures stopping short of Socialism, and yet efficient enough to preserve our free economic system." It is a "free economic system" which all these are bent on having,—the economists determined on preserving it, the others on establishing it; for the Single-Taxers, with their *bête noir* of private ownership of land, and the Jeffersonians, with their *bêtes noires* of railroads and trusts, deny that our economic system is at present "free." Doubtless they are both right; but if there be one fact in the realm of political economy fairly established, it is that the era of competition, whether free or unfree, is dead, and the means of its resurrection are unknown to political science. With old men the dream of its revival is warrantable, for it springs from that retrospective mood of age which gilds past times, and that attendant mood which recreates and projects them into some imagined

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future; but with the younger generation visions of free competition are but as children's dreams of wild forests and shaggy animals—the atavistic reminders of experiences unknown to the individual, though knit into the fibre of the race. The subject is one far better suited to the domain of a psychologist like Dr. Stanley Hall than to the scope of this book.

Finally, we have the Socialists, with their prophecy of the early establishment of a coöperative commonwealth. It is a noble picture, in its best expression based upon the extreme of faith in the coming generations of mankind, however its draughtsmen may criticise the wisdom and justice of the present. There is no doubt that now a ground-swell of Socialist conviction moves like a tide “of waters unwithstood”; everywhere one notes its influences. Even so conservative a scholar as Professor Henry Davies, lecturer on the history of philosophy in Yale University, can write, “There is no doubt that the next form of political activity to claim attention is the socialistic, as it is the most popular and serious of any now before the educated minds of this country.” Its propaganda is carried on untiringly, and that its results are feared is evident from the equal aggressiveness of a counter-propaganda maintained by the ingenious defenders of the present régime against the whole form and spirit of Socialism. But though socialist conviction spreads, the substance sought for seems as far away as ever. It would seem, for the most part, to be but a lukewarm conviction, much like that for which the Laodiceans were so widely famed. Present tendencies

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make for other forms of production, for a vastly different social régime.

II

The dominant tendencies will be clearly seen only by those who for the time detach themselves from their social ideals. What, then, in this republic of the United States, may Socialist, Individualist, and Conservative alike see, if only they will look with unclouded vision? In brief, an irresistible movement — now almost at its culmination — toward great combinations in specific trades; next toward coalescence of kindred industries, and thus toward the complete integration of capital. Consequent upon these changes, the group of captains and lieutenants of industry attains a daily increasing power, social, industrial, and political, and becomes the ranking order in a vast series of gradations. The State becomes stronger in its relation to the propertyless citizen, weaker in its relation to the man of capital. A growing subordination of classes, and a tremendous increase in the numbers of the lower orders, follow. Factory industry increases, and the petty industries, while still supporting a great number of workers, are in all respects relatively weaker than ever before; they suffer a progressive limitation of scope and function and a decrease of revenues. Defenceless labor — the labor of women and children — increases both absolutely and relatively. Men's wages decline or remain stationary, while the value of the product and the cost of living advance by steady steps. Though

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land is generally held in somewhat smaller allotments, tenantry on the small holdings, and salaried management on the large, gradually replace the old system of independent farming; and the control of agriculture oscillates between the combinations that determine the prices of its products and the railroads that determine the rate for transportation to the markets.

[In a word, they who desire to live—whether farmers, workmen, middlemen, teachers, or ministers—must make their peace with those who have the disposition of the livings.] The result is a renascent Feudalism, which, though it differs in many forms from that of the time of Edward I, is yet based upon the same status of lord, agent, and underling. It is a Feudalism somewhat graced by a sense of ethics and somewhat restrained by a fear of democracy. The new barons seek a public sanction through conspicuous giving, and they avoid a too obvious exercise of their power upon political institutions. Their beneficence, however, though large, is but rarely prodigal. It betokens, as in the case of the careful spouse of John Gilpin, a frugal mind. They demand the full terms nominated in the bond; they exact from the traffic all it will bear. Out of the tremendous revenues that flow to them some of them return a part in benefactions to the public; and these benefactions, whether or not primarily devoted to the easement of conscience, are always shrewdly disposed with an eye to the allayment of pain and the quieting of discontent. They are given to hospitals; to colleges and churches which teach reverence for the existing régime, and to libraries, wherein the enforced lei-

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sure of the unemployed may be whiled away in relative contentment. They are never given, even by accident, to any of the movements making for the correction of what reformers term injustice. But not to look too curiously into motives, our new Feudalism is at least considerate. It is a paternal, a Benevolent Feudalism.