UTOPIA

Colin Richmond

Edward IV, sailing from Lynn to the Low Countries in 1470, never gets there, as the boat sinks with all hands.

Henry VI is restored. The Kingmaker runs the country for a few years and in 1474 executes George, Duke of Clarence, for treason.

The demented king dies in 1475, and Edward, Prince of Wales, smoothly succeeds him, age eighteen.

Warwick at Calais, preparing an expedition against Burgundy, is assassinated in 1477 by a Burgundian agent.

Edward V, without Warwick, proves a disastrous king and is deposed in 1483 by a select committee of the Commons.

The deposed king is imprisoned in the Tower and drinks himself to death in a matter of months, saving another select committee of the Commons, which has dithered, the task of deciding what to do with him.

Edward's widow, the redoubtable Anne Neville, takes over as regent until their son is of age to ascend the throne in 1485. He is fifteen and reigns as Richard III, having been named for his grandfather. In 1485 he dispatches the so-called Georgian party into oblivion at the battle of Deptford, on the outskirts of London. The son of the late Duke of Clarence is killed in the fighting. Opposition ceases.

Richard III rules wisely for fifty years, eschewing foreign wars and devoting himself to good works throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Common Knowledge 22:1
DOI 10.1215/0961754X-3322828

Richard dies in the first English settlement in the New World, called New York after the city he has made his capital. He is killed by the Iroquois, whom he has been attempting to convert to Christianity. The body is brought home and is buried without pomp or ceremony of any kind in the minster at York. A cult develops immediately, and the saintly Richard is canonized only a year after his death in 1536. The widespread popularity of the cult snuffs out the first feeble flickers of anti-Catholic feeling, and the English church is reformed by Thomas More, without there being any need for the stake.

More also reforms Parliament, the civil service, and the legal system and so successfully promotes overseas trade and home industry (especially iron making in the Weald and market gardening at Chelsea) that England becomes a prosperous nation. Enclosure and engrossing are outlawed, and there are penalties for keeping flocks of sheep larger than a thousand. With an improved diet and the strict observance of two days in the week as oily-fish days, the population becomes almost universally healthy, particularly as, since the death of Edward V, there has been a reluctance to overindulge in beer and wine drinking.

Thomas More, with the backing of a complacent House of Commons (lawyers have been banned from standing as either borough or shire members) that readily votes the necessary funds (there being no foreign wars requiring taxation), creates a nationwide system of health care that includes the building of almshouses for both sexes in every city and town above a certain size. Parliament no less readily (there are by 1550 more than two hundred women members in an assembly of four hundred: the House of Lords was abolished by public acclamation in 1540) grants money for free universal education to the age of twenty.

Thomas More dies in his beloved Chelsea in 1560 and is buried in his parish church (without pomp or ceremony of any kind). Mourners line both banks of the Thames all the way to Lambeth. Richard IV, king since 1535, attends the private funeral and vows to continue the policies of the late chancellor, which he does by appointing Thomas More's daughter, Margaret Roper, to succeed him.

In harmonious relation with its colonies in the Americas, England acts as a peacemaker in Europe, which is on the brink of self-destruction as a consequence of religious warfare, and enters modernity as an agricultural nation that has evaded and will continue to evade civil commotion, industrialization, and the least manifestation of capitalism.

Note

Elizabeth Woodville, having gone into sanctuary at Westminster in 1470, miscarries. A parliamentary public inquiry into what should be done with her and her three daughters decides on their retirement to the Poor Clare establishment

at Denny, in Cambridgeshire, the only condition being that none of the three should marry. Elizabeth attends lectures at the university and becomes a notable bluestocking. Cecily matures into a horticulturalist, and Mary, before she dies, age fifteen, composes a novel that, discovered in manuscript only in the eighteenth century, wins the approval of Horace Walpole, who publishes it at Strawberry Hill in his Gothick Series under the title *A Girl at Odds with Herself*.