

Translator's Preface

1924

People :

Author : Peter Kropotkin

Text :

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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

Kropotkin's "Ethics: Origin and Development," is, in a sense, a continuation of his well-known work, "Mutual Aid as a Factor of Evolution." The basic ideas of the two books are closely connected, almost inseparable, in fact: -- the origin and progress of human relations in society. Only, in the "Ethics" Kropotkin approaches his theme through a study of the ideology of these relations.

The Russian writer removes ethics from the sphere of the speculative and metaphysical, and brings human conduct and ethical teaching back to its natural environment: the ethical practices of men in their everyday concerns -- from the time of primitive societies to our modern highly organized States. Thus conceived, ethics becomes a subject of universal interest; under the kindly eyes and able pen of the great Russian scholar, a subject of special and academic study becomes closely linked to whatever is significant in the life and thought of all men.

The circumstances leading to the conception and writing of this book are discussed by the Russian editor, N. Lebedev, whose Introduction is included in this volume. The present translators have availed themselves of Kropotkin's two articles on Ethics contributed to the *Nineteenth Century*, 1905-06. They found, however, that the author had made very many changes in the first three chapters of his book -- in substance, a reproduction of the magazine articles- and they thought it best to make the necessary alterations and additions called for by the Russian text. These three chapters preserve the English and the turns of phrase of the magazine articles.

In preparing this edition the translators consulted all of the books mentioned by

Kropotkin; they verified all his citations, and corrected a number of errors that crept into the Russian original owing to the absence of the author's supervising care. As is generally known, the book appeared after Kropotkin's death. The translators have added such additional footnotes as they thought would prove of value and interest to the English reader. They have made every attempt to discover and cite the best, most readily available English versions of the books referred to by the author. These added notes and comments are enclosed in brackets, and are usually marked, -- *Trans. Note*. In addition, the Index has been carefully revised and augmented.

A multitude of books had to be consulted in the faithful discharge of the translators' duties. And for these, many librarians -- those most obliging and patient of mortals--were pestered. The translators wish to record their thanks to Mr. Howson, Mr. Frederic W. Erb, Miss Erb, and Mr. Charles F. Claar -- all of Columbia University Library, and to Mr Abraham Mill of the Slavonic division of the New York Public Library. They and their assistants have been very helpful and kind. In the preparation of the manuscript the translators were fortunate to have the competent assistance of Miss Ann Bogel and Miss Evelyn Friedland --always vigilant in the discovery and eradication of errors.

Madam Sophie G. Kropotkin and Madam Sasha Kropotkin -- wife and daughter of Peter Kropotkin -- followed the progress of this edition; they have been ever gracious and helpful. It is their hope that, at some time in the near future, Kropotkin's last essays on Ethics will be issued in English translation. And indeed, our literature and thought will be richer for the possession of all of Kropotkin's writings. His work -- fine and thorough and scholarly as it is -- is only less inspiring than the ennobling memory of his life and character.

Louis S. Friedland Joseph R. Piroshnikoff

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