

an error, which we shall find, for I intend pursuing it much further, to be often very mischievous in practice, and utterly misleading in theory.

*(To be continued.)*

✻ ✻ ✻

## ANARCHIST SYMPOSIUM

### KROPOTKIN

**P**ETER ALEXEYEVITCH KROPOTKIN, a prince who objects to his title, was born in Moscow, in 1842. He was at one time secretary of the Russian Geographical Society, for which he made long and important researches in Asia, and, in addition to his voluminous writings on sociological subjects, he has published much on geographical and other purely scientific questions. Naturally, therefore, he approaches the consideration of the social question exclusively from the modern scientific point of view, and he considers that the sole object of evolution is the increasing happiness of the human race.

For the attainment of universal happiness one fundamental principle must be recognized, viz.: "Do to others as you would have it done to you in the like case," which is practically the Golden Rule, and he explains that this expresses the principles of equality, solidarity, and justice. In all which he is entirely at one with Proudhon and Tolstoy.

But, as might be expected from his scientific training, he is differentiated from them by the conviction that nature preaches an even higher doctrine than any of these, and that is ENERGY. "Be strong," he says. "Overflow with the passion of thought and action; so shall your understanding, your love, your energy, pour itself into others." "What has not the engineer's art DARED, and what do not literature, painting, music, the drama, DARE to-day?" Where institutions block the way of progress toward greater happiness we "DARE to fight, to make a rich and overflowing life possible to all."

Kropotkin is every bit as much of an evolutionist

as is Herbert Spencer, but the two men look at evolution through somewhat different spectacles, Spencer being inclined to emphasize the slow and steady progress of evolution, while Kropotkin's view is well expressed in the following:

"Evolution never advances so slowly and evenly as has been asserted. Evolution and revolution alternate, and the revolutions—that is, the times of accelerated evolution—belong to the unity of nature just as much as do the times in which evolution takes place more slowly." He also points out that order is the free equilibrium of all forces that operate upon the same point—a mathematical way of stating the problem, which is entirely natural to Kropotkin, and he emphasizes the fact that, "if any of these forces are interfered with in their operation by a human will, they operate none the less, but their effects accumulate till some day they break the artificial dam and provoke a revolution."

This is, in reality, a most condensed statement of the main individualistic position. The free working of an individual life is unjustly interfered with. In itself it has a force that appears insignificant, and the wrongdoer feels safe in ignoring its protest. But it links itself to other individualities similarly injured; its force, though perhaps hidden, continues and gathers strength by combination, until finally the wrong, in accord with the strict processes of nature, has to be righted.

This insistence on energy, the bold and free assertion of right life and all its powers, coupled with the conviction that revolution is only accelerated evolution, rendered necessary by the accumulation of individual wrongs, carries Kropotkin to conclusions as regards action widely different from the opinions held by Tolstoy, to whom "love" is the supreme law. I think it would be correct to say that Tolstoy is the Puritan of Love, insisting on its direct observance at all times, and condemning anything that at any moment contravenes the law of love, even though it may seem to pave the way to greater and more generally occupied heights of love.

To Kropotkin, on the other hand, the command of nature to exercise energy, daring, the bold initiative that shall overthrow, at the earliest moment possible, whatever stands in the way of the progress toward greater happiness for the individual and the race, is the imperative command, before which all other moral axioms must bend. He exhausts language to convince his readers that "there is need of great events which rudely break the thread of history and hurl mankind out of its ruts into new roads"; that "the Revolution becomes a peremptory necessity," and that "the building which has become uninhabitable hinders the development of what is sprouting in its crevices and around it."

Kropotkin, as absolute a materialist as Bakunin, and as bitterly opposed to the teachings of the Church as Tolstoy, declares that to-day, under the influence of science, "man has recognized his place in nature; he has recognized that his institutions are his work and can be refashioned by him alone."

Kropotkin is fully as emphatic as are Proudhon and Tolstoy in his condemnation of State-enacted law. He declares that it has no claim to men's respect; that "it is an adroit mixture of such customs as are beneficial to society, and would be observed even without a law, with others which are to the advantage only of a ruling minority, but are harmful to the masses, and can be upheld only by terror."

He emphasizes the point dwelled on with much persistence by Herbert Spencer in his "Plea for Liberty," that "the law puts rigid immobility in the place of progressive development," and insists that, instead of being for the purpose of securing to the individual or society the product of their labor, it exists "to rob the producer of a part of his product, and to protect a few in the enjoyment of what they have stolen from the producer or from the whole of society."

Furthermore, Kropotkin asserts that the law is a comparatively new formation, mankind having lived for ages without any written law, and that it came into being only when society split into two hostile camps, one of which desired to rule the other. He holds that its days already are numbered.

In the next stage of evolution "the laws will be totally abrogated" and unwritten customs will "suffice to maintain a good understanding." With Proudhon he considers that in the society of the future contracts must be lived up to, but he explains that the compelling motives will be the general will, "the necessity, which everyone feels, of finding co-operation, support and sympathy," and the fear of expulsion from the fellowship. He grants, however, that cases may arise where private or public intervention will be necessary to compel right doing.

With Tolstoy, Proudhon and all other Anarchists, Kropotkin has nothing but condemnation for the State. He follows the general line of argument as to the multiplication of laws and officeholders who live at the expense of the toilers, but specially emphasizes the fact that the modern State is bringing every country to bankruptcy, and mortgaging the lives of future generations. He further lays great stress on the argument that the State is tantamount to war.

"One State seeks to weaken and ruin another in order to force upon the latter its law, its policy, its commercial treaties, and to enrich itself at its expense. War is to-day the usual condition of Europe; there is a thirty-years' supply of causes of war on hand. And civil war rages at the same time with foreign war; the State, which was originally to be a protection for all, and especially for the weak, has to-day become a weapon of the rich against the exploited, of the propertied against the propertyless."

Like the writers already considered he declares in the most pronounced manner that no distinction can be made between the various forms of the State, and that, as the result of the evolution that has been in progress from absolute monarchies to limited monarchies, and from these latter to so-called republics, it is now clear that government by representation is just as bad as any of its predecessors.

"Precisely like any despot, the body of representatives of the people—be it called Parliament, Convention, or anything else; be it appointed by the prefects of a Bonaparte or elected with all conceivable freedom by an insurgent city—will always try to enlarge

its competence, to strengthen its power by all sorts of meddling, and to displace the activity of the individual and the group by the law." "The six-hundred-headed beast without a name has outdone Louis IX. and Ivan IV."

It may be noted that the tendency of governing bodies to seek continually to increase their power is an argument that Herbert Spencer dwells on repeatedly.

Such rights as are granted by parliamentary representatives, Kropotkin insists, are entirely worthless, vanishing into thin air the moment the privileges of the favored few are seriously attacked, and he naturally instances the alleged freedom of the press in England, the United States, and Switzerland. "That is what political rights are. Freedom of the press and freedom of association, the inviolability of the home and all the rest, are respected only so long as the people make no use of them against the privileged class. But on the day when the people begin to use them for the undermining of privileges, all these rights are thrown overboard."

That the State is doomed is a fixed conviction that Kropotkin spares no pains to drive home. He maintains that it has reached the zenith of its power and become a tyranny that is no longer endurable, and the method by which this has been accomplished is thus described. "Church, law, military power, and wealth acquired by plunder, have for centuries made common cause; have in slow labor piled stone on stone, encroachment on encroachment, and thus created the monstrous institution which has finally fixed itself in every corner of social life—nay, in the brains and hearts of men—and which we call the State." All which, it will be observed, is entirely in the Tolstoy style.

The process of dissolution has begun already, and the hour of the State's death is near at hand. In Kropotkin's judgment the Latin races are those which are in the lead in the attack on an institution that has had its day; "they want the independence of the provinces, communes and groups of laborers; they

want not to submit to any dominion, but to league themselves together freely."

"After having tried all kinds of government, humanity is trying now to free itself from the bonds of any government whatever, and to respond to its needs of organization by the free understanding between individuals prosecuting the same common aims."

Reading the last quotation it will be seen that the ideal set up is precisely the same as that held by Proudhon and Tolstoy, and with them Kropotkin enlarges on the enormous field occupied to-day by private co-operation, and on the possibilities that have been opened to it with every improvement in the methods of communication. Not only does this hold good with commercial organizations, but "there is also no lack of free organizations for nobler pursuits; the Lifeboat Association, the Hospitals Association, and hundreds of like organizations. One of the most remarkable societies which has recently arisen is the Red Cross Society. To slaughter men on the battlefields, that remains the duty of the State; but these very States recognize their inability to take care of their own wounded; they abandon the task, to a great extent, to private initiative."

Inasmuch as one constant charge made against Anarchists is that they wish to relegate humanity to conditions of primitive isolation, it is thought necessary to emphasize the point just made.

With Tolstoy, Kropotkin holds that "to rack our brains about the details of the form which public life shall take in the future society would be silly," but he insists that it is necessary to come to an agreement about the main features. One principle is imperative—freedom from authority. People will group themselves freely in communes, but it will and must be freely.



**ANARCHIST**—A believer in Anarchism; one opposed to all forms of coercive government and invasive authority; an advocate of Anarchy, or absence of government, as the ideal of political liberty and social harmony.