

Peter Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842-1921) was a distinguished thinker and scientist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A descendant of an ancient princely line and a graduate from Imperial Russia's Page Corps, Kropotkin became a famous proponent and theorist of anarchism.

This edition collects Peter Kropotkin's notable works and articles. Throughout these tests, Kropotkin lays out, in simple, elegant terms, the basic principles of anarchy and his criticism of modern society. The author applies the ideas of "anarchy" not only to politics but also as a methodological and ethical key to understand the essence of social existence.

*AN APPEAL TO THE YOUNG
LAW AND AUTHORITY
THE CONQUEST OF BREAD
MUTUAL AID*

COLLECTED WORKS OF PETER KROPOTKIN illustrated

AN APPEAL TO THE YOUNG

"Peter Kropotkin...was recognized by friend and foe as one of the greatest minds...of the nineteenth century...The lucidity and brilliance of his mind combined with his warm-heartedness into the harmonious whole of a fascinating and gracious personality. " – Emma Goldman.

REVOLT!

Addressed to young men and women preparing to enter the professions, *An Appeal to the Young* was first published in 1880 in Kropotkin's paper, *La Revolte*, and was soon thereafter issued as a pamphlet. An American edition was brought out by Charles H. Kerr in 1899, in the wake of the great Anarchist's first U.S. speaking tour; his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* was also published (by Houghton-Mifflin) that year. A new edition in Kerr's "Pocket Library of Socialism" appeared in 1901; just after Kropotkin's second U.S. tour. (In Chicago, he had been introduced to a large audience by Clarence Darrow, a close associate of the Kerr Company.) Yet another Kerr edition in the 1910s went through many printings, and was still on the Kerr

list well into the 1930s.

Long unavailable in any U.S. edition, it is reprinted here in the standard English translation by pioneer British socialist H.M. Hyndman, whose lush Victorian prose ably captures the eloquence, fervor and charm of this celebrated revolutionary classic.

Revolutionary Classics

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It is to the young that I wish to address myself today. Let the old – I mean of course the old in heart and mind – lay the pamphlet down therefore without tiring their eyes in reading what will tell them nothing.

I assume that you are about eighteen or twenty years of age; that you have finished your apprenticeship or your studies; that you are just entering oil life. I take it for granted that you have a mind free from the superstition which your teachers have sought to force upon you; that you don't fear the devil, and that you do not go to hear parsons and ministers rant. More, that you are not one of the fops, sad products of a society in decay, who display their well-cut trousers and their monkey faces in the park, and who even at their early age have only an insatiable longing for pleasure at any price...I assume on the contrary that you have a warm heart, and for this reason I talk to you.

A first question, I know, occurs to you – you have often asked yourself: "What am I going to be?" In fact when a man is young he understands that after having studied a trade or a science for several years – at the cost of society, mark – he has not done this in order that he should make use of his acquirements as instruments of plunder for his own gain, and he must be depraved indeed and utterly cankered by vice who has not dreamed that one day he would apply his intelligence, his abilities, his knowledge to help on the enfranchisement of those who today grovel in misery and in ignorance.

You are one of those who has had such a vision, are you not? Very well, let us see what you must do to make your dream a reality.

I do not know in what rank you were born. Perhaps, favored by fortune, you have turned your attention to the study of science; you are to be a doctor, a barrister, a man of letters, or a scientific man; a wide field opens up before you; you enter upon life with extensive knowledge, with a trained intelligence. Or, on the other hand, you are perhaps only an honest artisan whose knowledge of science is limited by the little that you have learnt at school; but you have had the advantage of learning at first hand what a life of exhausting toil is the lot of the worker of our time.

I stop at the first supposition, to return afterward to the second; I assume then that you have received a scientific education. Let us suppose you intend to be – a doctor. Tomorrow a man in corduroys will come to fetch you to see a sick woman. He will lead you into one of those alleys where the opposite neighbors can almost shake hands over the heads of the passersby; you ascend into a foul atmosphere by the flickering light of a little illtrimmed lamp; you climb two, three, four, five flights of filthy stairs, and in a dark, cold room you find the sick woman, lying on a pallet covered with dirty rags. Pale, livid children, shivering under their scanty garments, gaze at you with their big eyes wide open. The husband has worked all this life twelve or thirteen hours a day at, no matter what; now he has been out of work for three months. To be out of employ is not rare in his trade; it happens every year,

periodically. But, formerly, when he was out of work his wife went out a charwoman – perhaps to wash your shirts – at the rate of fifteen pence a day; now she has been bedridden for two months, and misery glares upon the family in all its squalid hideousness.

What will you prescribe for the sick woman, doctor – you who have seen at a glance that the cause of her illness is general anemia, want of good food, lack of fresh air? Say, a good beefsteak every day? a little exercise in the country? a dry and well-ventilated bedroom? What irony! If she could have afforded it this would have been done long since without waiting for your advice.

If you have a good heart, a frank address, an honest face, the family will tell you many things. They will tell you that the woman on the other side of the partition, who coughs a cough which tears your heart, is a poor ironer; that a flight of stairs lower down all the children have the fever; that the washerwoman who occupies the ground floor will not live to see the spring; and that in the house next door things are still worse.

What will you say to all these sick people? Recommend them generous diet, change of air, less exhausting toil...You only wish you could but you daren't and you go out heartbroken, with a curse upon your lips.

The next day, as you still brood over the fate of the dwellers in this dog-hutch, your partner tells you

that yesterday a footman came to fetch him, this time in a carriage. It was for the owner of a fine house, for a lady worn out with sleepless nights, who devotes all her life to dressing, visits, balls, and squabbles with a stupid husband. Your friend has prescribed for her a less preposterous habit of life, a less heating diet, walks in the fresh air, an even temperament, and, in order to make up in some measure for the want of useful work, a little gymnastic exercise in her bedroom.

The one is dying because she has never had enough food nor enough rest in her whole life; the other pines because she has never known what work is since she was born.

If you are one of those miserable natures who adapt themselves to anything, who at the sight of the most revolting spectacles console themselves with a gentle sigh and a glass of sherry, then you wilt gradually become used to these contrasts, and the nature of the beast favoring your endeavors, your sole idea will be to lift yourself into the ranks of the pleasure-seekers, so that you may never again find yourself among the wretched. But if you are a Man, if every sentiment is translated in your case into an action of the will; if, in you, the beast has not crushed the intelligent being, then you will return home one day saying to yourself, "No, it is unjust; this must not go on any longer. It is not enough to cure diseases; we must prevent them. A little good living and intellectual

development would score off our lists half the patients and half the diseases. Throw physic to the dogs! Air, good diet, less crushing toil – that is how we must begin. Without this, the whole profession of a doctor is nothing but trickery and humbug."

That very day you will understand Socialism. You will wish to know it thoroughly, and if altruism is not a word devoid of significance for you, if you apply to the study of the social question the rigid induction of the natural philosopher, you will end by finding yourself in our ranks, and you will work as we work, to bring about the Social Revolution.

But perhaps you will say, "Mere practical business may go to the devil! I will devote myself to pure science: I will be an astronomer, a physiologist, a chemist. Such work as that always bears fruit, if only for future generations."

Let us first try to understand what you seek in devoting yourself to science. Is it only the pleasure – doubtless immense – which we derive from the study of nature and the exercise of our intellectual faculties? In that case I ask you in what respect does the philosopher, who pursues science in order that he may pass life pleasantly to himself, differ from that drunkard there, who only seeks the immediate gratification that gin affords him? The philosopher has, past all question, chosen his enjoyment more wisely, since it affords him a pleasure far deeper and more lasting than that of the

to per. But that is all! Both one and the other have the same selfish end in view, personal gratification.

But no, you have no wish to lead this selfish life. By working at science you mean to work for humanity, and that is the idea which will guide you in your investigations.

A charming illusion! Which of us has not hugged it for a moment when giving himself up for the first time to science?

But then, if you are really thinking about humanity, if you look to the good of mankind in your studies, a formidable question arises before you; for, however little you may have of the critical spirit, you must at once note that in our society of today science is only an appendage to luxury, which serves to render life pleasanter for the few, but remains absolutely inaccessible to the bulk of mankind.

More than a century has passed since science laid down sound propositions as to the origins of the universe, but how many have mastered them or possess the really scientific spirit of criticism? A few thousands at the outside, who are lost in the midst of hundreds of millions still steeped in prejudices and superstitions worthy of savages, who are consequently ever ready to serve as puppets for religious impostors.

Or, to go a step further, let us glance at what science has done to establish rational foundations for physical and moral health. Science tells us how we

ought to live in order to preserve the health of our own bodies, how to maintain in good conditions of existence the crowded masses of our population. But does not all the vast amount of work done in these two directions remain a dead letter in our books? We know it does. And why? Because science today exists only for a handful of privileged persons, because social inequality which divides society into two classes — the wage-slaves and the grabbers of capital-renders all its teachings as to the conditions of a rational existence only the bitterest irony to nine-tenths of mankind.

I could give plenty more examples, but I stop short: only go outside Faust's closet, whose windows, darkened by dust, scarce let the light of heaven glimmer on its shelves full of books; look round, and at each step you will find fresh proof in support of this view.

It is now no longer a question of accumulating scientific truths and discoveries. We need above everything to spread the truths already mastered by science, to make them part of our daily life, to render them common property. We have to order things so that all, so that the mass of mankind, may be capable of understanding and applying them; we have to make science no longer a luxury but the foundation of every man's life. This is what justice demands.

I go further: I say that the interests of science itself lie in the same direction. Science only makes real progress when a new truth finds a soil already prepared