

**LABOR AND
NEIGHBOR: AN APPEAL
TO FIRST PRINCIPLES**

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Labor and Neighbor: An Appeal to First Principles by Ernest Crosby

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Labor and Neighbor

An Appeal to First Principles

BY

ERNEST CROSBY

Author of

"Captain Jinks, Hero," "Tolstoy and His Message,"
"Swords and Plowshares," "Garrison,
the Non-Resistant," etc.



CHICAGO:

Louis F. Post, 337 Dearborn Street,
1906

Publisher's Note.

These pages contain the last message of Ernest Crosby, the only full-rounded industrial study which this man of robust thought and clear and picturesque expression has left us.

He was a son of Dr. Howard Crosby, the old-time Presbyterian clergyman of New York, whose memory is an inspiration. Dr. Crosby's personality, while delightful, was commanding. He believed firmly in what he believed, yet was broadly tolerant. Though pastor of a wealthy congregation, he knew no distinctions of caste. A man of infinite moral courage, he thought right, spoke right and did right, as God had given him to see the right, regardless of consequences.

Dr. Crosby's influence was easily traceable in the career of his more widely famous son. A poet of exceptional insight and power of rhythmical expression, a speaker of commanding presence, with a rare faculty of thinking coherently and forcibly in the face of an audience, and of composing extemporaneously with simple eloquence and in unimpassioned manner, a prose author of direct and lucid style, Ernest Howard Crosby gave vitality to his talents and acquirements through the loftiness of his ideals and the inflexibility of his courage.

He was born in New York City, November 4, 1856. His academic training was at Mohegan Lake School. In 1876 he graduated from the University of New York, and in 1878 from the law school of Columbia University. After practicing law for several years in his native city, he joined the group of "rich men's sons," which included Theodore Roosevelt, in the work of renovating politics, and along with Mr. Roosevelt was sent to the lower house of the legislature. Re-elected, he served as chairman of the committee on cities. President Harrison then nominated him to a judgeship in the international court in Egypt, to which he was appointed by the Khedive in 1889. While serving in this capacity, he fell accidentally upon a copy of one of Tolstoy's books, which he read; at first casually and then with intense

thought and feeling. He had been an aristocrat; the book made him a democrat. Soon afterward he resigned his judgeship, and on his way back to America turned aside into Russia to visit Tolstoy, with the result of beginning a friendship with this venerable First Man of Russia which lasted until Mr. Crosby's death. Through that friendship he became also a friend of Henry George, whom Tolstoy described to him as one of the greatest of Americans. After contributing largely to the development of fundamental democracy, both at home and abroad, by writing and speaking, Mr. Crosby died at Baltimore, January 3, 1907.

To some men their ideals are realities, and the author of this book was conspicuously one of these. His ideals were not dreamy ruminations for drawing-room chat or club-house banter. They were not intellectual playthings for leisure hours when the serious work of life is suspended. They were in no wise secondary. His ideals were to him the primary object of his life, its beginning and its end, its form and its substance. They were worthy of it, for they were practical as well as lofty. He loved his fellow men with a love that was more than affectionate emotion and truer than conventional philanthropy. His fraternal love inspired rational thought and generated practical activity. It was the fraternal love we call "justice"—not the "justice" which means brutal vengeance, but that which means moral equilibrium and social harmony.

His was not a wasted life. In essay and speech and poem, Ernest Howard Crosby has left a record that will continue to serve mankind when much of the "successful" work of his contemporaries has been thrust aside as rubbish. And nothing in all that he has done is likely to be of greater public service or to secure a higher place in public estimation than the sympathetic and thoughtful essays on "Labor and Neighbor," which he left in unpublished manuscript behind him and which are comprised in this little book.

These essays, which appeared in print serially in "The Public" of Chicago, from January 4 to April 17, 1908, are now published in book form for the first time.

L. F. P.

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If you should see a flock of pigeons in a field of corn, and if (instead of each picking where and what he liked, taking just as much as he wanted and no more) you should see ninety-nine of them gathering all they got into a heap and reserving nothing for themselves but the chaff and refuse,—keeping this heap for one, and that the weakest, perhaps worst, pigeon of the flock,—sitting round and looking on all the winter whilst this one was devouring, throwing about and wasting it;—and, if a pigeon more hardy or hungry than the rest touched a grain of the hoard, all the others instantly flying upon it and tearing it to pieces—if you should see this, you would see nothing more than what is every day practised and established among men.

—Archdeacon Paley.

When we get to the bottom of the matter, we find the inhabitants of this earth broadly divided into two great masses,—the peasant paymasters, spade in hand, the original and imperial producers of turnips, and, waiting on them all round, a crowd of polite persons, modestly expectant of turnips, for some,—too often theoretical,—service. There is first the clerical person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for giving his moral advice; then the legal person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for telling him, in black letter, that his house is his own; there is thirdly the courtly person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for presenting a celestial appearance to him; there is fourthly the literary person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for talking daintily to him; and there is lastly the military person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for standing, with a cocked hat on, in the middle of the field, and exercising a moral influence upon the neighbors.

—Ruskin.

Labor and Neighbor

CHAPTER I.

The Labor Question.

Many sweating, ploughing, threshing, and then the chaff for payment receiving;

A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

—Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself."

I remember once sitting for half an hour on the platform of the little railway station at La Turbie, just above Monte Carlo on the Corniche Road, and watching two aged peasants at work breaking up the heavy soil with mattocks. Their forms were bent over and stiff with long, long years of toil; their eyes were unobservant, their expression listless. They lifted their implements at each stroke as if they were very heavy, but they did it with the uncomplaining resignation of old machines—rusty and worn, indeed, but still fulfilling the only law of their being. Just behind them lay one of the most beautiful views in the world—the wide sweep of the blue Mediterranean, with two or three steam yachts and other pleasure boats moored near the shore, the fairy-like buildings of the famous resort standing among their groves and gardens—a paradise on earth, with two old grandfathers working themselves to death in the foreground. And I knew too what was going on in that Eden where the serpent has at last succeeded in evicting God. I could see with my mind's eye the luxurious salons with their gambling tables, the *petits chevaux*, the roulette, the *rouge et noir*—the crowds of elegantly dressed people, men and women, young and old, grand dukes and countesses, American ironmasters and French adventuresses, carefully placing their stakes on the green cloth—the clink of the piles of gold pieces, the metallic voice of the