

THE ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

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The elements of social science by R. M. MacIver

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R. M. MACIVER

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SOCIAL SCIENCE**

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OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

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THE ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF SOCIETY

I. WHAT SOCIETY MEANS

WHEREVER there is life there is society. For life can arise and continue only in its own presence, in the society of like beings. In the lowest stages of development the society whence new life arises is incredibly brief and slight, a mere moment of conjunction or proximity, but in the higher stages life is always obviously social. It is born and nurtured in society, it finds its degree of fulfilment, its character, its limitation, in society. Society is more than our environment: it is our nature. It is within us as well as around us. Aristotle revealed this truth long ago when he defined man as a "social animal." All animals are in their degree social, but the highest is of necessity the most social.

Society means likeness. It exists among like beings, like-bodied and like-minded. Otherwise they could not join to pursue their purposes, they could not in any sense live together. Comradeship, intimacy, association of any kind or degree would be impossible without some understanding of each by the other, and that understanding depends on the likeness which each apprehends in the other. Likeness may exist without creating society. There are serious qualifications of the principle that