

THE SCIENCE OF SOCIETY

BY

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VOLUME I



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PREFACE

The genesis of this book is recorded in the preface to *Folkways* as falling within the year 1899. It has been in the writing, therefore, for some twenty-seven years. Much has happened in the interval to delay its completion. From 1899 to about 1905 or 1906, Professor Sumner wrote along as steadily as his college duties and his condition of health and strength allowed. Never seeming to feel that he had enough material, he still continued to read a great deal; and his progress was retarded, also, by an increasing fatigue in composition. The work of six or seven years was represented by a lengthy draft of parts of this book, consisting of a great number of cases thrown into rough order and connected by a varying amount of comment and generalization. Fragments of this manuscript were nearly ready for the printer; other parts were no more than sketched; certain blocks of materials had not been attacked at all. At about this time he arrived at the topic of the "Mores," which he had located pretty far on in his plan, under a section called by him "The Mental Outfit" (at a point well along in Part IV of this book). He had been telling me that he was about two-thirds through his first draft.

For some time thereafter he spoke of being occupied with "the section on the mores," and finally told me one day that this topic had run away with him. "I have a chapter," said he, "of two hundred thousand words. That's too long for a chapter; I think I'll make a book of it." This is what he did, for he set aside his original project and devoted all his efforts to the volume called *Folkways*, which was published in June, 1907. "My next task," he wrote, in the preface to that book, "is to finish the sociology." But he was now much wearied by the writing of *Folkways* and did not have the energy to return at once to his original undertaking. Then, early in 1908, he suffered an irreparable misfortune in losing for some months all use of his right hand. He was never able to write with any comfort or speed thereafter, though, true to his indomitable purpose, he trained his left hand to substitute after a fashion until his right regained enough strength in some measure to resume duty.

Not alone did he suffer from this handicap, but his general physical vigor was on the decline. He told me that he could do little at best, that the labor of composition was almost unendurable to him, and that *Folkways* would be his last book. He said that all he had written on the general treatise must now be done all over again in the light of *Folkways* and that he never could rise to the task. I offered to assist to the extent of my time and powers, but he refused, asserting that "it wouldn't be fair," and added: "It will be your book now; I'll give you all I've got and you go ahead." I could not accept such terms, and we finally compromised upon the dual-author title-page. During that fall I was able to cover a part of the ground laid out under Self-Maintenance, an early section which he had neglected because, as he said: "I was afraid I might be tempted to write a treatise on political economy, and I have sworn never to do that." I secured his criticism and approval upon something over a hundred pages of written matter (expanded now into Chapters IV-VI, below). This was the extent of our personal coöperation.

Upon December 26, 1909, Professor Sumner suffered a final breakdown in health and was wholly disabled between that date and his death, on April 12, 1910. The enterprise of a seasoned scholar¹ thus devolved upon a man in his thirties, and he has had to grow up to it as he could.

Professor Sumner enjoined upon me, when we were talking over the work I had set out to do upon his collections and manuscripts, that he wanted me to be bound in no degree whatsoever by what he had written; that I was to change it, both as to detail and to structure, as my best judgment dictated; that "the dead hand" was not to figure in any way at all. I have therefore been perfectly free to omit, to add, and to alter as I saw fit; and I have done so in the spirit which he indicated. I am thus responsible for the book as it stands. He cared for nothing whatever except the truth, and I hope I have worn his mantle in that respect, if in no other.

It is next to impossible, in view of all the writings and re-writings, through sixteen years—work that has been done largely in intervals often short and widely inconsecutive—to apportion the parts contributed by the two authors of this book; and I much

¹ See Starr, *Life of William Graham Sumner*.

doubt whether it would be worth while if it were practicable. But I can indicate on broad lines the main elements which each of us has put into the common stock. Professor Sumner collected by far the larger number of cases; he classified and re-classified them over a number of years; in so doing he gradually developed the salient features of the system here set forth; he got the outline of it down on paper, in his manuscripts; and he provided, in *Folkways*, an analysis of the basic societal phenomena, the mores. I have gathered some thousands of additional cases; have worked over, re-classified, added and rejected, translated where necessary, and written up the body of evidence anew; have considerably altered the system, though always within the main outlines of it; have extracted from the manuscripts left by Sumner to me everything which I thought important and relevant; and have made explicit and emphatic the conception of evolution in the mores—an idea implicitly recognized in Sumner's writings but explicitly denied by him.² It is my opinion that he had confused evolution and progress, and would certainly have come to subscribe to the view here taken as to the paramount and vital matter of adjustment of mores and institutions to societal life-conditions. I cannot go into detail concerning the shares of the two authors in the actual text further than to say that there are comparatively few passages of any length or consecutiveness which stand exactly as Professor Sumner left them, and no whole chapters, except that Chapter LVIII remains almost as he left it; §§458, 459, 460, 461, and 463 are likewise mainly in his words. Sentences and short passages of his are embedded throughout the text; many of them will be recognizable to one familiar with his style. The idea of the *Case-Book*³ as a device to relieve the text, while at the same time indicating the inductive nature of the method employed and permitting scrutiny and criticism of the bulk of the evidence, is an expedient which occurred to my mind a few years ago.

There is nothing to say, in preliminary, of the system here set forth. If it is vocal at all, it will speak for itself; if it cannot, no amount of heralding can or ought to lend it an equivocal significance. Throughout, the aim has been simplicity and clearness; the

² See Keller, *Societal Evolution*, 247-248, and note at end of that volume.

³ This *Case-Book* is volume IV of this edition.

audience we both have visualized has been the college student and the general reader. We have felt that the qualities at which we aim ought not utterly to alienate the specialist.

This book does not set out to criticize anyone or to exhibit the only true way of eliciting the truth. It intends, however, to speak bluntly. We object to the "considerate" handling by scientists of what seem to them false or futile positions; that appears to us treachery to the truth. We present a body of unruly facts and the conclusions which we have been able to wring from them by the employment of what we conceive to be scientific methods. Occasionally we find ourselves constrained to offer criticism of other writers; but that is far from being our main objective.

Among a number of points upon which one becomes sadder and wiser by reason of much experience, is this: that there is an inevitable antagonism between induction and exposition. The latter cannot be accomplished by introducing the whole work-shop. It must have some guiding principles. Yet, however honestly such generalizations have been arrived at by the scrutiny of many cases, if they are set first, either in a treatise as a whole or in its constituent sections or paragraphs, the presentation bears a resemblance to deduction which the reader reared, as most readers are, on deduction, or the displeased critic, is not slow to seize upon. It is probably impossible to avoid such appearances except in a very technical and minute investigation. That this situation is capable of worrying even a profound master of science is proved by the reiterated assurances throughout the *Origin of Species* that the author of that fortuitously shortened work has in hand quantities of extra evidence, which he promises to publish later on, for the conclusions he reaches. All that can be done here is to state the conclusions arrived at and then cite representative cases both in support and in contravention of them, in text and *Case-Book*, so as to dispel the impression of deduction from minds from which it can be dispelled.

If a book of this sort, which deals with masses of evidence, is not to become an encyclopædia, it must be terse where it can and turn over much to its cases. It has been necessary throughout to refrain from developing all the implications of the instances cited.

They have been placed in their setting, as we have seen it, and should be studied as part of the demonstration. Much has been left for discussion. It is hoped that this plan will lend to the whole something of the advantage of the legal case-book.

This seems to be the place to introduce several matters of detail concerning the cases. First of all, it is likely that a larger accumulation would have modified our conclusions to some extent. The temptation has been to go on gathering materials. However, there is no end to that process, for vistas of uncertainties are ever opening with more knowledge, and there comes a time when harvesting must be begun if it is to be done at all. Next, except where otherwise indicated, the evidence has been taken direct from the sources cited. We have carefully reproduced the words of our authorities, and have not sought to better either their grammar or even their punctuation. Translations have been made with the utmost fidelity to the original, consistent with rendering the passages into English of an idiomatic order. There is one partial exception here, however. Among the thousands of excerpts taken by the senior author there have been a number concerning which it was uncertain whether they were direct quotations or paraphrases. Many of the citations about which there was uncertainty have been compared with the originals, and with varying result. There has not been time to verify each and all of them, were that necessary. In none of the checked-up cases, however, has any author quoted, whether literally or by paraphrase, been misrepresented. The paraphrases have expressed the essential sense of the passages. In view of this situation, it is quite probable that excerpts occur in quotation-marks which are not exact reproductions of the original and others without quotation-marks which are. And, finally, the persons acting as copyists for the senior author have been occasionally detected in error, for instance, in the matter of exactitude in the reproduction of correct volume-numbers. Much effort has been expended in rectifying such mistakes, but it is not to be hoped that every one of them has been caught. It has not been thought worth while to spend the time and money necessary to the detection of a relatively few insufficiencies of an insignificant order. Errors are more likely to remain undiscovered in connection with quotations from the Russian and Polish, inasmuch as the junior author does not command those languages.

It has been our policy to reduce our lists of cases where we can refer to standard collections of data, such as Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage*, Seligmann's *Der Böse Blick*, or Letourneau's several works; we shall refer out of hand to such authorities, with the proviso, however, that the reference is to their materials and does not imply, unless so stated, an adherence to their conclusions. In respect to Sumner's *Folkways* the case is a little different, for its collections have lain, in good part reclassified, before the writer; I have used the materials from which it was constructed over again with entire freedom. Again, we have no idea of rejecting Spencer, Morgan, and others because they are "old." The case is not dissimilar to that in which Darwin figures; men call him old and out-of-date, but they go back to his collections of data constantly, not having been able, apparently, to assemble anything comparable in all these years. Facts do not become "old," nor, indeed, the conclusions drawn from them by men of power. Lippert's *Kulturgeschichte* is over forty years old, but its essential value of

1886-1887 is still with it; in any case, that work has so deeply influenced both authors that the spirit of it pervades large parts of this book, whether or not the foot-notes give notice to that effect. We pay to this master and to Herbert Spencer our respectful homage.

Further, we have avoided protracted citation of evidence where, in our judgment, the reader is likely to be able to supply cases out of his own unconsciously made collections—where, as is the common saying, the point is “self-evident.” This is a loose use of that word. There will be a good many points commonly accepted by readers as self-evident, which we think we have proved untrue. The sort of “self-evident” which we mean is “evident from the experience of life,” or “familiar from general reading,” and not “evident” because of falling in with prejudice or bias or accepted doctrine about “eternal verities” or “the order of the universe.” If we state it properly, we need cite no evidence whatever that property is monopoly; but we subscribe to no “self-evident” proposition about property being robbery. One is true; the other is but a deceptive jingle.

It has been our method to cleave rather closely to primitive phenomena. This has been done with a purpose, as the sections on evidence, toward the end of this book, explain; nevertheless we have not refrained from employing materials derived from even highly civilized society when they have served our purpose. For that purpose is to show genetic series. Further, we do not hesitate to suggest the applicability of our conclusions, from what is in any case by far the longest stretch of societal evolution, to phenomena of the present day. Indeed, as we have found by experience, the implications from the study of primitive society as to the mores and institutions of civilization are so compelling that our students have spontaneously recognized the fact and have over and again made applications for themselves. It was a wise remark of Wilken⁴ that we “have to go to school to the nature-peoples” in order to comprehend the complex phenomena of modern culture.

It remains, among these more or less miscellaneous remarks concerning our procedure, to say a word concerning our use of terms. In general we strive to employ words in their ordinary signification. There is no point in trying to wrench a word that is in common use over to mean something highly recondite or technical or widely removed from ordinary understanding. If a term has a good many shades of meaning, like “society,” for example, it is necessary to specify which one of these we are going to talk about. It is only when the connotation of a word is highly vague, as is the case with “custom” or “social,” or perverted from its scientific signification, as “sociology” has been, that there is any real justification for new terminology. It is always preferable, in our opinion, to use the current term in the current sense, wherever this does not sacrifice accuracy. We believe, for example, that the conception of “magic” has remained virtually constant. What is today in people’s minds, when they use the term, corresponds well enough with what has been in the minds of men on earlier stages of civilization. What we mean by magic is about what anyone means by it; but it is possible to make explicit much that is implicit, and therefore ignored, in the term as popularly employed. One more illustrative case, from a slightly different angle. Under the subject of spirit-possession, we have treated of various types and degrees and illustrated them as fully as we could from the materials we had. Whether, in so doing, we have seemed to strain

⁴ In *Verspreide Geschriften*, II, 329.

the conception of possession must be left to the reader's judgment, when he has reflected upon the cases. But he may realize that we are always viewing societal phenomena with an eye to their earlier phases rather than to their often highly rationalized contemporary forms. It will probably be agreed that a number of the phenomena cited are "somewhat like possession," though objection may be raised to their classification under that topic. The question is then in order: What are they more like? If we are accused of making "a kind of metaphysical extension of the term," the accusation is an admission that we are classing likes together, which is what, and all, that we are trying to do.

It hardly needs be said that when we use "primitive" we do not always mean "savage." There are plenty of primitives among civilized peoples. Even scientists may be primitive in everything else except their narrow specialties.

If some such caveats as the above be kept in mind, we are confident that our terminology will not constitute a stumbling-block to anyone, whether he is a layman or a specialist. Unless there is some specification to the contrary, our terms mean what they say to the intelligent layman; for it is to him, above all, that we address ourselves.

It is evident at a glance that this book seeks perspectives. In laying out so comprehensive a plan it has been necessary to assign weight and space, or no space at all, as the case seemed to us to demand. We have doubtless distributed emphasis in a manner that will seem to some erratic or unjustifiable; but we believe that we have attained a perspective, however faulty. Along with that purpose we have sought throughout to display interrelations. This has been done by the use of several devices: sections that aim to tie up strands horizontally, so to speak, by cutting across the direction of the main topics; copious cross-references; and a certain distribution of cases. The last of these devices involves a degree of blurring of classification; for, although we have located most of the instances of a particular practice in one place, yet there will be found in other connections what seem to be cases gone astray—sometimes deliberately so misplaced with the purpose of exhibiting or recalling the close connection of topics which the exigencies of exposition have separated. Some instances under the topic of taboo, for example, belong, strictly speaking, to avoidance in the ghost-cult; they are put where they are in order to bring out more vividly the genetic connections involved.

There is, further, a sort of stage-direction that must be set down before going forward to the text. For the understanding of whole sections of this book, the reader must be aware of prospects as well as retrospects; there must be presupposed a certain acquaintance with other sections which have to come later.

The whole thing cannot arrive at once, as it does in actual life; in any analysis something must precede and something else must follow. No matter what the choice of order, it is inevitable that what is not yet developed shall be, to some degree, anticipated. This may be a hard saying, but a little reflection will reveal its reasonableness. We shall try to move from point to point in such manner as to render the necessity of forecasting as little troublesome as may be; our frequent cross-references are designed to further this purpose.

It is our intention, likewise, to leave as few issues as possible hanging in uncertainty. Says George Eliot, in her *Essays*, reviewing Lecky on Rationalism: "The writer impresses us as being in a state of hesitation concerning his own standing-point, which may form a desirable stage in private meditation but not in published exposition." Desiring not to deserve thrusts of this sort, we shall not feel it necessary to go much into issues which are plainly under judgment, but confine ourselves, rather, to those which seem capable of settlement at some period short of eternity. In general, we seek the sense of societal customs and institutions. That means to us their expediency as adjustments in living, whether or not we can come to any conclusion as to their origin. Nor do we regard it as enough merely to exhibit them as adjustments, so proved because of their survival; we hope to show also how and to what adjustment has been made.

Adjustment, as our first chapter states, is the key-word to this book. It is our opinion that no one should undertake to study the evolution and life of human society without having first acquired for himself at least a layman's knowledge of Darwinian evolution. For many years no treatise competent to instruct the layman concerning this theory has been available; but that lack has been supplied. Henshaw Ward's *Evolution for John Doe* is wholly adequate for the purpose. It makes clear that cardinal fact about evolution, which has so often escaped attention, that it is simply and essentially a theory of adjustment. Our book assumes but little antecedent preparation; but it does assume a layman's knowledge of evolution.

When it comes to making acknowledgments for encouragement

and assistance in a protracted enterprise, the junior author knows that he speaks for his associate as well as for himself when he mentions first of all the body of students who have passed through our classes and to whom this book is dedicated. There are numerous passages in the following chapters which were suggested during the give-and-take between instructor and student; and several which are set down in the language of some undergraduate because the point in question was returned by him, upon some test-paper, much better expressed than originally in the lecturer's words. To the several thousands who have sat beneath our instruction, the authors here return thanks for the invaluable life-experiences accorded the teacher of such men. The senior author, in an autobiographical sketch, has spoken for us both. "My relations with students and graduates have always been of the pleasantest, and I think that there can be but few relations in life which can give greater satisfaction than these."

Some years ago, several graduates banded together to form an informal Sumner Club, one of the objects of which was to assist in the dissemination of the ideas associated with Sumner—what was long ago denominated "Sumnerology"—and, in particular, to help the junior author to go forward more speedily with the book now published. Their encouragement, which for some years took the material form of a contribution toward secretarial expenses, manifested itself, at length, in a subsidy of size ample for the completion of the work. To the original nucleus of the Club a number of admirers of Sumner were added, bringing the list somewhat above thirty. These men have made the completion of this book possible within a much shorter time than it would otherwise have demanded; but the encouragement which they have extended to me is but in small part referable to their material contributions. Through their organizer and secretary, Julius C. Peter, from whom needed reassurance has been forthcoming at every period of dejection, I thank them in the name of us both. As for Mr. Peter himself, any conventional acknowledgment of his interest and friendship would be wholly insufficient.

We owe much to Professor Maurice R. Davie, who is not only a heavy contributor to this enterprise by reason of the work he has done on the *Case-Book*, but has also lent invaluable aid and

highly useful criticism at all points. I have been blessed with several searching critics of the whole manuscript in the persons of Mr. Henshaw Ward, Professor James E. Cutler, Dr. Harris E. Starr, and Professor Edwin D. Harvey; and have profited by the loyal aid and keen criticism of Professor Esther L. Brown, who was my secretary for several years. Her part in this book has been no inconsiderable one. I have confined myself to naming those only who have had to do with the whole of the manuscript; if I were to list the colleagues, students, and friends who have assisted me more casually, this preface would be much extended. I hereby thank them all—they are aware of their identity—in the name of both authors, but assure them, at the same time, that I have gone my own way, after listening to their criticisms and admonitions, and that no one of them, or of those whom I have named, is responsible for any of the defects of the published book. I am keenly alive to many shortcomings which they have pointed out but which I have been unsuccessful, I fear, in amending, as well as to many others revealed only to my own private misgivings.

A. G. KELLER.

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