

ways and all other owners of city monopolies pay taxes on the full value of their property. That is what I want done here in Cleveland. Tax the possessions of the street railway companies on the basis of the selling value of their stock.

"That is a fair and businesslike proposition. The street railway companies of Cleveland refused a value of \$29,000,000. They pay taxes only on a valuation of \$2,000,000. The other street railways pay taxes on about three per cent. of their value.

"But small property owners have to pay taxes on 50, 60, 80 and 90 per cent. of the value of their property."

"I tell you that, if I were mayor of New York, I would use my power and influence to change the system of assessing taxes. I would have a public court to equalize taxes. I would have the tax assessors present their figures in court, in the presence of the public.

"I would have large wall maps in each case showing the location of the property assessed, and giving the value of the surrounding property in bold, plain figures, so that the members of the court and the public could see at a glance whether there was any apparent discrepancy in the assessed values. I would not allow assessments to be fixed in secret.

"I would make the process as public as possible, so that favoritism would be detected instantly. And I would have the system of valuing property for taxation a continuous one, raising or lowering values, according to the changes of circumstances and conditions. I would abolish the present plan of fixing values at certain periods, or in certain years, and keeping them without change.

"If the owners of great estates and the street railway companies were to be compelled by such a system to pay their fair share of taxes as poorer owners of small dwellings and owners of tenement houses are forced to pay, the tax rate of New York would be reduced one-half.

"This is a practical matter, not a mere doctrine. It squares with business principles. It is just and reasonable. The taxpayers and the rent payers of New York have a tremendous stake in this question, for it lies at the very root of municipal evils. When New York owns her own street railways and other city monopolies, and when the publicity attending the equalization of taxes makes the big property owner pay at the same rate imposed on the small property own-

er, not only will taxes be lower and rents lower, but local politics will be freed from the principal incentive to corruption—corruption that eats into parties and primaries as well as into sworn officials."

The mayor walked up and down the room with his hands locked behind him. The "high rollers" of the Waldorf-Astoria would not have recognized Tom Johnson, the rosy sybarite, in this serious, stern-mouthed man.

"All this can be accomplished in a year, if the people of New York are in earnest about it," he said. "This question of cities is the greatest practical question of the time. It is pressing for a remedy and the remedy is plain.

"Take the Brooklyn Bridge company. It has been owned and operated, not by one, but by two cities. Yet, notwithstanding the admittedly rotten element in New York and Brooklyn municipal affairs, that railway, under Superintendent Martin's management, has been the best and cheapest railway in the world.

"No one has ever accused the employes of the Brooklyn Bridge railway of using their positions for political purposes. There, right in the heart of the Greater New York, you have a perfect and practical illustration of the great principle for which New Yorkers should fight night and day.

"In my opinion the people of New York will be fools if they let the state legislature take away from them the right to manage their own affairs. They should resist all charters and all legislation which interferes with home rule, and they should fight for three-cent railway fares and public and continuous equalization of taxes as the first step toward the public ownership of monopolies. That is progress. That is common sense."

As the mayor ceased speaking the door of his office was opened and a river of office seekers rolled in. But the mayor turned his back on them and went to work at his desk.

"We must take up this question of clear sidewalks to-day," he said to his secretary. "Things must move."

The widow is gathering nettles for her children's dinner; a perfumed seigneur, delicately lounging in the *Oeil-de-Boeuf*, has an alchemy whereby he will extract from her the third nettle, and name it Rent and Law; such an arrangement must end. Ought it not?—Thomas Carlyle, *French Revolution* (Book 6, Chapter 3).

ONE CODE OF MORALITY.

THE LAW WHICH BINDS THE INDIVIDUAL ALSO BINDS THE NATION.

A speech delivered by Rev. Herbert S. Bigelow, of the Vine Street Congregational church of Cincinnati, at the Manhattan Single Tax club's dinner in honor of Thomas Jefferson, held in New York on the evening of April 13.

In a letter to James Madison, Thomas Jefferson used these words:

I know of but one code of morality for men, whether acting singly or collectively. He who says I will be a rogue when I act in company with a hundred others, but an honest man when I act alone, will be believed in the former assertion, but not in the latter.

If Thomas Jefferson could know the drift of our national life to-day, and if he could return to give us a word of counsel, I believe he would improve the opportunity by solemnly reminding us that there is not one code of morality for individuals and another for nations.

If this is a Christian civilization, if we are not a nation of atheists, we must hold that there can be no enduring progress or prosperity which is not founded on righteousness, and that righteousness alone exalteth a nation. And national righteousness is nothing at all but an empty phrase if it is not what Thomas Jefferson said it was. National righteousness is the recognition, in the conduct of public affairs, of the same code of morality which men universally agree to be binding on them in their private life.

We hear much about the nation's duty. If a nation has duties, it must also have a conscience, a moral code, and must distinguish between right and wrong.

But, while the word duty is a good one for the politician to conjure with, we submit that it is often used to-day as a blind by which to win the support of well-meaning people to policies which are immoral, and which it is their duty to shun. In order to do this, another doctrine of national duty is taught, quite the reverse of the teaching of Jefferson. It is taught that the nation is under no moral obligation to respect that code of morality which is binding upon the individual. This doctrine, stated or implied, lies at the foundation of the gospel of imperialism. A prominent preacher in the west was more honest than politic when he boldly stated and defended this double standard of morality.

"The individualist," says this preacher, "has no category of national conduct except his own individual conscience. * * * Because

the individual has no right to murder he thinks the nation has no right to slay."

Well, then, if those simple precepts of morality accepted by the individual conscience are not binding on the nation, what code of morality is binding? Jefferson knew no other code. In truth, there is no other code. Instead of suggesting any other code to take the place of the code of the individual conscience, the imperialist takes refuge in a cloud of words. To quote again from this preacher, the nation is not to be guided by that contracted code of morality which is sufficient for the individual, but it is to be guided by what he calls "inspirations," which, he says, "are set above the grammar of common ethics and make an ethics of their own."

But we are not satisfied with rhetoric. We want to know what these "inspirations" are which are so much above the grammar of common ethics that they make an ethics of their own. Pressed for an explanation, he tells us: "The best policy for a state is that which its own life exfigures."

Now, suppose Sambo were to invade this preacher's henroost. The preacher, discovering him, undertakes to preach Sambo a sermon on the text, "Thou shalt not steal." The preacher quotes Scripture to him, reasons with him, appeals to his sense of justice, but all in vain. Sambo meets every argument with the preacher's own phrases. He says he does not recognize the law, Thou shalt not steal. He insists that his code does not say anything about stealing. He declares, with an air of mystery, that he is guided by inspirations which are quite above the grammar of common ethics. In justification of his act he pleads his appetite for chickens and tells the preacher he always follows the course which his own life exfigures.

In other words, those who cast aside the moral code of the individual as inapplicable to the nation put nothing but empty phrases in its place. Gloss it over as they may, their real teaching is that in the conduct of the national affairs all moral obligations may be repudiated. With them the phrase national duty means no more than the term destiny. It means, as Lowell says, "National recklessness as to right or wrong."

What then shall we say of the politician who urges us as citizens to violate what as individuals we recognize as the most sacred principles

of morality? What shall we say when with air of Omniscience he tells us that it is the manifest destiny of the nation to abandon the path of honor and justice?

When in defense of this national immorality he invokes the names of duty and of God we must say of him in words that were once applied to Philip II. of Spain: "His unctuous piety only adds to the abhorrence with which we regard him." And what are those preachers who make common cause with the politicians in their efforts to dull those simple moral perceptions without which there can be no public morality—what are they but blind leaders of the blind, who bless the things that curse mankind and curse men with their blessings?

It is true that a nation has peculiar functions to perform, but in the performance of those functions there is no code of morals to guide it but the code which the individual should follow in his private life. It is expedient for individuals to delegate certain activities to their public servants, but, just as these individuals can delegate no powers but their own, so they can delegate no moral code but their own. It is wrong for the nation to do what, in case there were no government, it would not be right for the individual to do. It is wrong for individual citizens to allow their public servants to do for them what they would not feel justified in doing for themselves if there were no government. National righteousness means that or nothing.

I learned at the feet of Henry George that philosophy of social reform which teaches that if men will seek first the kingdom of righteousness, all the blessings of a just social order will be added unto them. But this does not mean that social improvement will follow that kind of preaching which applies the moral code to the private life only. It means that individuals cannot hope to enjoy the blessings of a just social order until they awake to the necessity of making their public acts as moral as their private life; until the legislative and administrative acts of their governments are just and right. It is a fact that men who are irremediable in their private life may vote for policies which are infamous. This is because they have not been taught that to be truly moral and to do their full duty to their fellow man they must see to it that they are as just in the capacity of citizens

as they are as fathers and neighbors.

"Thou shalt not steal." The law does not say thou shalt not be caught stealing a little. It does not say some allowance should be made in favor of the man who steals a respectably large amount. It does not say: "Thou shalt not steal contrary to the laws of the state." There are respectable ways of stealing and ways that are not respectable. There are illegal ways of stealing and ways that are perfectly legal. We generally want to know how much a man steals and how he steals it before we decide whether to send him to the penitentiary or the senate. If clergymen had preached as many sermons about the thieves in the halls of legislation as they have preached about the poor thieves on the cross there would be some law-makers on the cross, fewer thieves making laws, more men in the pulpit and better citizens in the churches.

How can the preacher feel that he is teaching a morality that meets the needs of modern life who does not remind men that by far the greater part of the thieving in this world is carried on under the protection of the unjust laws of the state by which forms of robbery have been legalized?

Here in the Astor tenements a few years ago 43 families were found huddled together in rooms intended for 16 families. Women were sewing there for 30 cents a day. From a fourth to a third of this income went to pay rent. I tell you it was these people who equipped the Astor battery which was sent to Cuba. It is the wealth of these people which is represented in the private yachts that go lolling about the summer resorts with their idle crews. It is the wealth of these people which is paraded on the avenues where ladies give dinner parties to their lap dogs. The wine that flows at the banquets of Dives is crimson with the blood of these wretches who pay the rich man's taxes, make his clothes, prepare his feed, furnish his house, nurse his children and dig his grave, all for the boon of living upon the land which they have by their common labor made valuable, and which belongs to them by every law under Heaven save the law which man in his blindness has made.

Whenever one man is permitted to get something for nothing, another man is compelled to take nothing for something. "Thou shalt not steal!" Does that mean merely that we shall not pick one another's pockets? Does it not mean, also, that we are not to put laws on the statute books that en-

able some to get wealth which they have not earned, and which, therefore, deprive others of wealth which they have earned? How can there be any sound public morality which does not recognize the immorality of our tariff laws, land laws and laws protecting the ownership of the great monopolies? The wealth which by such laws is filched from the world's workers is like the insignificant mountain streams. From every cottage in the land these streams flow in such threads at first as scarcely attract attention, but from these beginnings comes the power of the raging river of wealth whose banks are strewn with the wrecks of homes and whose torrents toy with their helpless victims.

Every unjust law on our statute books is a link in the chain of the industrial slave. There is no social salvation except in an enlightened social conscience which acknowledges the same code of morality for public as for private life.

"Thou shalt not kill!" The preacher sneers at the man who is bigoted enough to suppose that because he may not murder, therefore the nation may not slay. I submit that unless the command is as binding upon the nation as upon the individual there is no moral code to guide the nation and no moral restraint to be put upon the rule of force and greed. On what principles can the nation ever be justified in taking life except the principle that would justify the individual in taking life in case there were no government? If the government takes life under any other circumstances it commits murder, and the blood is upon those who teach that a nation may slay at will.

If a highwayman makes an attack upon my life I am justified in taking his life, if necessary, to protect my own. Upon that principle, and upon no other, is a nation ever justified in shedding human blood. It may be that the doctrine of non-resistance is even higher than this. It may be that I should so shrink from violence as to prefer to lose my own rather than to take the life of another. I will not now discuss that. But certainly that common code of morality would not justify me in taking life unless it were necessary to save my own from violence. If there is any justification for capital punishment, it can only be on the ground that public servants are required to do what, without the government, each individual would have the right to do for himself, namely, to protect himself from murderous attack. We may equip armies to resist crim-

inal aggression when the life of the nation is attacked. But when a nation fights not for its own homes, but for the homes of others; when a nation fights, not to maintain the integrity of its own national life, but to rob others of their nationality, that is murder, and, as for myself, I feel that I cannot encourage my country in such a course without putting the mark of Cain upon my own brow.

If the purchase of one man is a crime, what is the moral code which makes the purchase of ten million men a virtue? My neighbor is a Catholic. Have I a right to go into his house and kill him because he will not turn Protestant? If I may not kill men because they will not accept my views of religion, whence comes my right to equip armies and slay my brothers because they will not accept my views of government? "Go ye into all the world and shoot the Gospel into every creature," is the imperialist version of the gospel of the Nazarene.

Last summer, in Chicago, at high noon, a man was dragged from Van Buren street into an alley and murdered for \$33. Are we horrified when a man is murdered for \$33 by the uncouth robbers of the slums, and yet do we share in the guilt of a public policy which murders by tens of thousands for gold fields or for islands, for the expansion of a dishonest trade or the glory of a dishonored flag?

I read a book the other day written by one of the professors in your Columbia university. It reminds me of a remark by Wendell Phillips when he was asked why there was so much learning in Cambridge. His reply was that nobody ever took any away. The Columbia professor, in a chapter on the present colonial policy of the nation, did not attempt to justify the morality of it, but held that it was something that all nations had done, and that this nation was bound to do it, and he told the obstructionists that they were foolish to trouble themselves to denounce the immorality of a course that was inevitable. The subtle atheism of that advice was concealed, of course, beneath a profusion of words. You would have supposed that the professor stood close to the throne of Omniscience, that he was gifted with a knowledge of coming events more than ordinary mortals, that he was such an intimate of the Deity that he could with perfect safety set aside the common perception of morality to be guided by considerations of what he and the Almighty knew was going to be rather

than by what his own heart told him ought to be!

I have read upon the crumbling walls of the cities of the dead the moral of the centuries, that when the ship of faith is not guided by faith in eternal justice its manifest destiny is to drift to its destruction. The American farmer may yet lean upon his hoe with the emptiness of the European peasant in his face. New York and San Francisco may go the way of London and Paris, Madrid and Constantinople, Nineveh and Babylon. This always has been and always must be until some nation proves her claim to immortality by putting justice on the throne to administer the laws of nature.

The tissue of the life to be

We weave with colors all our own,
And in the field of destiny

We reap as we have sown.

Possibly the professor is right. It may be inevitable that America should learn to her sorrow that standing armies stand first upon the backs of the common people and then trample upon their liberties. But what the future has in store is no business of mine. I had rather go down before the forces that lead my country to destruction than mount upon the ruins of her fortune.

THE EVIL THAT GOOD MEN DO.

Has it occurred to you that about all the serious harm ever done in this cool world has been done by the Good People? It is the historic fact.

Not the little, ephemeral personalities like sneakthieving, murder and the benevolent assimilation of a neighbor's wife. Acts harm the actors. These poor fools harm society no more than a madman kills it when he cuts his own throat. The criminal is absolutely powerless as a factor in evolution. We know him, if only late; and he knows himself. Whether we ever catch him and hang him, counts little. His punishment and his futility are in him and on him, anyhow.

But all the great, long, deep, generic wrongs; all the ignorance and bigotry and oppression in human history—all these have been committed by the Good People.

Who blocked the new message of the Nazarene? The rabble? No, the orthodox. Whom does Christ curse—the brute Roman soldiery? Nay, the Good People. Rabbles do not adjudicate systems of religion—such things are approved or rejected by the religious.

Who stood in the path of Luther's reformation—the slums? No, the church. Who silenced Galileo—the