

question of the right to terminate such claims? By what moral authority does any government maintain the vitality of land tenures which operate to endow a few in every generation with those values that are "given by the development of civilization and by the people of the entire country"? Is it not confiscation from the people to continue enforcing such a system, rather than confiscation from landlords to stop enforcing it?

### THE GREAT ORDER OF THINGS.\*

We live in a time when Deborah's allegorical allusion to the rout of Sisera is big with meaning. Even as "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," so do the eternal forces of moral righteousness, circling majestically on in their appointed orbits, fight against the sordid utilitarianism that holds the moral sense of our generation in captivity. The victory of right over seeming might is thus assured. At all times when "the stars in their courses fight against Sisera," his chariots however numerous and his hosts however mighty, are predestined to utter destruction.

There is a great order of things. As to this all doubt has vanished with reference to the material universe. Fighting with "the stars in their courses," materialistic science has upon this distinctive plane of human experience routed the Siserian hosts. The powers that came of a bigoted rejection of rational truth promoted by a priestly utilitarianism in the disguise of religious faith, those old forces generated by a union of superstitious credulity and irrational incredulity, have here yielded to an enlightened recognition of the dominance of natural law.

We know now that the material universe, from largest to least, is a universe of law—invariable law. Except in obedience thereto, no man—whether greatest of inventors or humblest of mechanics—would any longer think of pursuing his vocation. He perceives that disobedience would

but waste his labor and cripple his powers. He realizes that it is as he conforms, and only as he conforms, to the laws of matter, that his undertakings in the utilization of matter can succeed. He knows that unless he harmonizes his efforts with "the stars in their courses," all he attempts, promising though it may seem at first to be, must utterly fail. In the sphere of material things, disobedience to natural law is fully seen to be as a process self-destructive and as a result impossible.

The law of gravitation, for instance, always holds sway. It can be neither frustrated nor disturbed. Whether we work with it and build ourselves a house, or defy it and dash our bodies to pulp at the foot of a precipice, it is the same law working irresistibly in the same way. It serves the just and the unjust, the righteous and the unrighteous, those who seek its aid for construction and those who seek it for destruction. All these it serves alike, according to their several purposes. If they would build for themselves, they have but to go rightly about it and the law of gravitation helps them. If they would destroy themselves, it permits them to do so. But its constant lesson is the invariableness of its processes, the wasteful futility of opposition, the splendid possibilities of conformity. "The stars in their courses" fight against every Sisera who defies this or any other law of the material universe.

So it is, also, in the moral universe. There, too, the great order of things holds resistless sway. Its laws, analogous to the courses of planets and suns, no human power can overcome nor any antagonism disturb. More than that. Not only is the moral universe, equally with the material, a universe of invariable law, but its laws are sovereign over those of matter. This must be so, for matter is merely a medium for the expression of moral purpose. Except as it is subservient to that end, its existence is inexplicable upon the hypothesis of universal design.

As certainly as physical law dominates matter does moral law dominate the physical. Though conformity to the laws of matter alone will enable us, for illustration, to forge

a knife of keenest blade, the uses of the knife—without which it has no reason for existing and would not be made—fall within the jurisdiction of moral law. We may use it to carve things that minister to human needs or the human sense of beauty, thus serving our brethren and moulding our own characters more and more in the divine likeness, while conquering the stubbornness of external nature; or we may make it an implement for torture and murder. In the one case we advance in moral righteousness by conformity to the moral law. "The stars in their courses" fight with us. In the other case, we defy the moral law. But we cannot overcome it, for "the stars in their courses" fight against us. Though the torture be inflicted and the murder done, the unrighteous purpose they were intended to serve will in the outcome inevitably fail. The stars in their immutable courses fight always and everywhere against Sisera.

Unrighteous we may be in thought and deed, but we can no more establish anywhere in the universe the sovereign sway of moral unrighteousness, of moral lawlessness, of moral disorder, than we could establish a sway of material lawlessness upon the plane of physics. The enemies of Sisera, though captive for a time, cannot fail if their cause is allied to "the stars in their courses." Be their cause what it may, whether material or moral, that of an inventor like the unknown discoverer of fire or the forgotten maker of the first wheelbarrow, of a persecuted and disheartened explorer like Columbus, of patriots on the scaffold or of saints upon the rack, of the philosopher with his deadly potion of hemlock or the Nazarene carpenter upon the cross—whatever the cause, it always has and always must conquer, in so far as it is in harmony with the great order of things.

That this universal truth lacks recognition as such, is evident from the manifest tendency to subordinate what is morally right to what seems to be practically more expedient, to displace loyalty to moral principles with slavery to material utilities—in a comprehensive phrase, to place utilitarianism above idealism.

\*By Louis F. Post, editor of The Public, in the Christmas, 1902, number of The Mirror (St. Louis). Reproduced here by special permission of William Marion Reedy, editor of The Mirror.

That this is the marked tendency of the time, no one who observes can doubt. It may be seen not alone in the counting house, where utilitarianism has a proper and useful abode, but in places where moral ideals should rule. Great statesmen care much for commercial advantages and little or nothing for moral checks and balances. School teachers inculcate love of commercial success at the expense of moral aspirations. From the chairs of political economy in our colleges, the subject of correlative rights and duties in the body politic is marked "taboo," while professor and text writer go far afield in search of plausible excuses and confusing arguments in behalf of privileged classes. Even the pulpit has come to justify Swinburne's bitter rebuke when he wrote of "a Christian church that spits on Christ."

As for "the man in the street," he makes no pretense of being anything but a sordid utilitarian in every fiber of his body and in all the recesses of his soul. He may tell you of the wisdom of honesty in business; but he extols honesty merely because it is wise, merely because it is expedient, merely because it is the best policy, merely because it pays. You never hear him commending it simply because it is right. How can we avoid the feeling that if such men should come to regard dishonesty as the better policy, they would be dangerous persons to meet alone on a dark night if you had something which they wanted and had the power to take? How is it possible to avoid the feeling that notwithstanding all their preachments about the common kind of honesty that pays, their conduct regarding the finer kinds that do not seem to pay would rarely bear inspection?

In every class of society, from top to bottom, and apparently with almost every person in each class, the old appeal to rights and duties seems to have lost its potency. We are accounted dreamers and fools if we urge the righteousness of any cause as a reason for adopting it. The uppermost question everywhere is whether the cause will pay. If it apparently will, then if it is also morally right so much the better; but if it apparently will not, then the fact

that it is morally right cuts no figure. This accounts for the popularity of statistics. So insanely sordid have we become that in dealing with statistics we not only always ignore the moral factor but frequently the mathematical one also. Statistics that show pay dirt are pretty apt to go, no matter how repugnant they may be both to common sense and the plain principles of morality.

As a rule, however, the utilitarianism of the day fully recognizes the dominance of natural law in the material universe in which it seeks to make mankind captive. It realizes the necessity of conforming to the great order of things in its physical aspects. What it ignores, is the predominance of moral law. "Ignores" is hardly the word. Its attitude toward the moral law is one of defiance.

But this is only a passing phase. It is the swing of the pendulum back from the crude conceptions of moral righteousness in the social world which prevailed during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth—a swing which, though backward in one sense is forward in another, for it touches a higher conception of utilitarianism than that which preceded the idealism it has displaced. The return swing is sure to come. Then society will have a better appreciation of correlative rights and duties, a clearer perception of the moral law, and a wider and truer vision of its relationships than have ever come to any but the seers who have gone up into the mountain tops with God.

If utilitarianism has any sway it is not because it is sordid but because with all its sordidness it represents what to idealism is as body to soul. Idealism can express itself in this material world only through utilitarianism. If at one time the ideal seems predominant and at another the material, it is because our conceptions of both are advancing through action and reaction.

That which I have likened to a swinging pendulum is as the ebb and flow of battle. Now one side seems to have the victory and now the other. But in this battle, whatever is true and good in both sides

will conquer. For there is good and truth in both utilitarianism and idealism, and for the good and truth in each "the stars in their courses" fight against Sisera. Whatever is imperfect, inadequate, narrow, indefinite, and one sided in our conceptions of the ideal, is improved, expanded, broadened, defined and rounded out with every succeeding reaction from utilitarian epochs; while whatever is sordid in our utilitarian practice and precept is in turn sloughed off by better and better ideals.

In this great struggle which leads on toward general recognition of the dominion of the highest ideals of morality over the truest utilities of physical existence, toward the same recognition by man of the moral law that he has already given to physical law, toward the adaptation of material righteousness to moral righteousness, toward the natural adjustment of human relationships both individual and social—in this battle for freedom from defective ideals and a sordid utilitarianism, many there be that fight with Sisera. But they cannot alter the predominant law. "The stars in their courses" fight against them. They are doomed to defeat by those who, few in number though they be, attach themselves to the causes that harmonize with the great order of things.

## NEWS

The Venezuelan question (p. 679) remains the subject of principal general interest. No further reports of the battle at San Carlos are published, however, the center of interest having shifted from that battle to the diplomatic negotiations (p. 679) which Mr. Bowen is conducting at Washington. After the announcement on the 28th (p. 680) that settlement proposals contemplating the administration of 30 per cent. of Venezuelan customs receipts in behalf of all the creditor nations equally, had been forwarded to Berlin, London and Rome, it leaked out on the 29th that the blockading powers were insisting upon priority of payment for themselves. On that day they sent a joint reply refusing to accept