

**THE LAWS OF
EVERY-DAY LIFE**



THOR WRESTLING WITH ELLI

**THE LAWS OF
EVERY-DAY LIFE**

by

H. O. Arnold-Forster

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

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PREFACE

THIS volume is laid before the public in the hope that it may afford some slight help to those who are compelled to form and give effect to their opinion on matters concerning the welfare of our country. It has been too much the fashion to assume that the great rules by which the acts of a wise government ought to be dictated, are matters with which specialists, whether they be politicians or officials, are alone required to make themselves familiar. Now that the actual government of the country is in the hands of many millions, whatever justification there may originally have been for this supposition has passed away; and it has become absolutely necessary that those who have *power* should add to it *knowledge*. This book is not in any way intended to be a manual in the art of government, or of political economy; it is simply intended to show that there are certain great laws and rules underlying our national life which it is our interest to learn and which it is to our advantage to obey. In the following pages a few examples of these laws and rules are given, not with the object of teaching people the whole of the facts connected with them, but to give some sort of notion of the *kind of problems* which may present themselves

to every British citizen, and to convey an idea of the way in which the correct or incorrect solution of these problems may affect the daily lives of all of us.

In an elementary work, especially in a work which is intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, very great omissions are inevitable. This is especially the case in those chapters of the present volume which are devoted to the rudiments of political economy. There is scarcely a proposition therein contained which is not subject to some qualification or limitation, arising out of special circumstances, or due to causes not mentioned in the text. Want of space has made the exclusion of many subjects unavoidable, and the author is perfectly conscious of the great gaps which result from a failure to refer to such questions as “currency,” “exchange,” “population,” &c. But to those who desire to make a special study of political economy many exhaustive treatises on these matters are open. The object of the present volume is to show by simple examples what is the nature of economic laws, and to point out that their effect upon our lives is great and far-reaching.

No attempt has been made to apply strict definitions. On many of the important points of economical science the definitions of the various experts differ. It is not, however, necessary to settle the exact claims of the respective disputants before attempting to speak about the subject matter of their controversies.

The chapters in the present book devoted to “Trades Unions” and “Co-operative Societies” have received

the approval of persons who are recognised as high authorities with respect to the aim and constitution of those important bodies; and special acknowledgments are due to these gentlemen for the valuable help they have given. Throughout the book it has been the special aim of the author to lay down as correctly as possible those rules of public duty and those maxims of wise public action which are accepted by honourable men of all creeds and all parties in the State.

A century ago the Government of this country was practically conducted by a small and special class, the members of which, whatever may have been their disqualifications, were at any rate educated from their earliest youth in the theory and practice of the difficult art of government. The worst of them had learnt to understand, and the best of them had learnt to display, the civic virtues which make a nation great. Now that the small class which nominated Pitt and Fox, Burke and Wilberforce, Lord Ellenborough and Lord North, has given way to, or rather has been swallowed up by, an electorate of over four millions, the need for education in matters of public duty has certainly not grown less than before.

It has, however, been assumed, somewhat too lightly, that the one art and mystery which can be advantageously undertaken without any special knowledge or training, is that of governing a great country. Seven years' apprenticeship is considered as barely sufficient to qualify a man to make a pair of shoes, but seven days' preparation is too often considered

superfluous in order to enable the same individual to deal with the most formidable and intricate questions concerning the welfare of his country.

It is in the hope that it may prove a useful, though small, contribution to the great literature which must ere long be created for the instruction of the new rulers of the British Empire, that the present volume is laid before the public.

H. O. A. F.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE LAWS WE LIVE UNDER

I

Why we ought to know the Law

“EVERY one is supposed to know the law of England.” That is what the law-books tell us. Unfortunately, whatever the law-books may say, it is certain that very few people indeed do really know the law of England, and to pretend that every one knows it, is of course quite absurd. What is meant, however, by the lawyers, is something very different from this. What they really mean is that no one is to be excused for breaking the law merely because he is ignorant of it. And certainly if this be the case, it is advisable that every Englishman should try and learn something of the law which he is bound to obey, and which he may be punished for breaking.

Two Kinds of Law

There are, however, other laws, which are not the laws of England, but which it is equally important to know, and even more dangerous to break. These are the **Laws of Nature and of Reason.**

THE LAWS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

I want in this book to tell you something both about the laws of England which you are bound to obey, and about the laws of nature and reason which you are bound to obey also. But first I want to make quite clear what I mean by the words I have used.

The Law of the Land

By the laws of England I mean those rules and regulations which from time to time have been agreed upon by those who have governed our country, and which have for the most part been written down in charters and in Acts of Parliament. It is easy enough to understand the nature of these laws, and though every one does not perhaps know the punishments which are fixed for those who break them, still it is in the power of any one to find out, if he wishes, exactly what is the punishment which the law allows, and which can never be exceeded.

How to Learn it

For instance, the law of England says that every parent must educate his children or send them to school when they are of school age, and that if he does not do so he must be punished. Nearly everybody knows that this is the law, and nearly every one obeys the rule because it is the law. Everybody, however, does not know exactly the words of the law, or where it is to be found; but any one who wishes to see for himself, can, if he chooses, find and read the actual words of the Act of Parliament in which the rule is laid down, and can learn exactly the punishment which may be inflicted upon those who break it.

THE LAWS WE LIVE UNDER

So, you see, it is not hard to understand what is meant by the law of England. But it is not quite so easy to understand what is meant by the laws of Nature and of Reason. It is worth while trying to understand, however, because it is even more dangerous to act contrary to these laws than to act contrary to the laws of England.

The Laws of Nature

When we talk of the laws of nature, what is it exactly that we mean? We say that by the law of nature there are 365 days in the year, or twenty-eight days in the month. We say that by the law of nature the tides rise and fall upon our shores.

What is it that we mean when we speak in this way? We mean that by noticing what actually happens under our eyes, we have been able to find out that the months and the years come round at certain fixed times; that the tides rise and fall at certain fixed intervals, and having found out that these things take place not once nor twice, but thousands of times in the same way, we have declared that the changes in each case are governed by a law in which there is no alteration.

We all know that the earth goes round the sun in 365 days, or one year, and so certain are we of the correctness of this law, and so sure are we that what took place last year will take place again next year and the year after and for years to come, that astronomers are able to look forward and to tell you in what position the earth will be ten years, or twenty years, or a hundred years hence.

THE LAWS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

How to Learn them, and Why they must be Learnt

Sometimes it is a long time before these great natural laws are found out, and it is only by careful and patient study that we are enabled to discover them. But day by day we are finding out more and more of the secrets of nature, and day by day we are learning how complete and wonderful is the order which governs all things around us.

It is most important that men should study the laws of nature, in order that they may not waste their time in struggling against them. It is only when we do not know the law that we fight against it, and we always suffer in the long run for doing so.

When we know the law, we submit to it, and try to make use of it.

II

A Lesson from the Brook

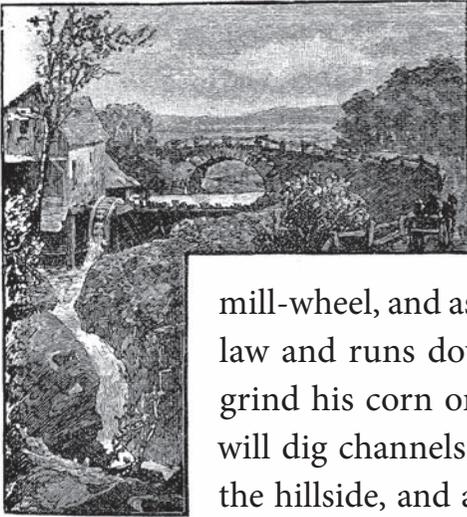
A brook flows from the mountain down to the river, and the river flows down to the sea, and not all the power in the world will prevent the brook flowing down. Down, down it will go till its waters mingle with the waters of the sea. Block it up with a wall a hundred feet high, but still the stream will flow on, and will rise and rise against the wall till it rises to the top, then it will flow over it, and once more it will go, down, down to the sea.

Turn the stream along the mountain side, and dig new channels for it. The water will run in the new

THE LAWS WE LIVE UNDER

channels, it is true; you may turn the stream from its old bed, but it will only run down, down to the river, and down to the sea.

By the law of nature the stream will run down, and the strongest man cannot stop it. But if he be a wise man, though he cannot alter the law, he will know how to make use of it, and he will turn the law to his own



advantage. He will build a dam across the stream, and will hold up the water till it is strong enough to turn his

mill-wheel, and as it follows the natural law and runs down to the sea, it will grind his corn or weave his wool. He will dig channels for the stream along the hillside, and as it runs he will turn

it into numbers of little trenches which will water his fields and make his pastures green and fertile.

Whenever men have learnt the laws of nature they are usually sensible enough not to fight against them. Sometimes, however, they do not know what these laws are, and because they do not know them they fight vainly against a power which they cannot possibly overcome. Nobody tries to make water run up-hill, but people often attempt to do things which are really not a whit more possible, simply because they do not know that they are fighting against the laws of nature.

III

Thor in the Land of the Giants

In the old Norwegian fairy tales we read a story of the great God Thor, which I shall tell you, because, though it is only a fairy tale, it will serve as a parable, or example, to explain what I want to teach you in this chapter.

Thor was one of the greatest of the old Norse gods, and he was famous above all others for his mighty strength. One day, as he was wandering forth on his travels, Thor came to the city of Jötenheim, in the land of the giants. Now, between the gods and the giants there was always rivalry and war, and Thor therefore knew that he was among enemies.

Utgard Loki, the king of the giants, ordered the stranger to be brought before him, and when he saw that Thor was smaller than any of his own subjects he laughed contemptuously at him, calling him a mere stripling. "We have heard much of your strength," said the king: "let us see what a boy like you can do, and then we shall know the worth of this boasting."

Confident in his great strength, Thor consented to make whatever trial Utgard Loki should command. "Here, then," said the king, "is my drinking-horn; pledge me in it; but thou must needs drink deep, for naught but a good drinker will drain it in a single draught." Thor put the horn to his lips and drank a deep, deep draught, but when he looked into the horn he saw that it was still all but full. Again he drank, and still the liquor stood

THE LAWS WE LIVE UNDER

high in the horn. He tried yet a third time, a longer pull than ever, but in vain. He threw the horn from him in despair. The giant and his fellows laughed scornfully at the discomfited god.

“Perhaps,” said the king, “there is yet some other task less hard to perform and better suited to thy strength. See, here is my cat; try and lift it from the floor. It is an easy matter, in which we exercise our children here.” A great grey cat sprang into the room, and Thor, putting his hand underneath her, strained and tugged with his uttermost strength to raise her up. In vain. With all his efforts he only succeeded in lifting one paw from the ground.

Again the giants laughed loud and long, and Thor, maddened by his failures, called upon any one present to try a match with him in wrestling, for never yet had his strength failed him in a bout. “I see none here,” said the king, looking round, “who would not think it beneath him to wrestle with so small a man; but thou shalt see what thou canst do against my old nurse, Elli.”

A very aged, toothless woman was brought into the hall, and Thor struggled with her for the mastery; but ere long he was forced upon his knee, and, owning himself beaten, he sullenly gave up his attempt to fight against powers for which even his great strength was plainly no match.

Next day, before Thor left the city, Utgard Loki sent for him, and, crestfallen and disheartened, the god presented himself before the king of the giants. “Tell me now,” said the king, “hast thou not learnt a lesson of

THE LAWS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

humility, and wilt thou not now acknowledge that with all thy boasted strength there are men, nay, that there are even old women, who are thy superiors?"

"I own," answered Thor, "that I have been fairly worsted, and that shame has overtaken me; yet have I done all that lay in my power, and I grieve that the mighty men of Utgard should so despise me and mock at me."

"Nay, then," said the king, "I will tell thee the truth. It is we who have reason to tremble, it is we who stand ashamed before thy mighty strength. Yesterday thy contest was not against us, but against others, whom the power of magic alone hid from thine eyes. The bottom of the horn from which thou drankest was set in the deep sea, and with thy mighty draught the tides along the shores of the ocean receded far below their usual limits.

"That cat which thou wouldest have lifted was none other than the great serpent, which circles the deep foundations of the solid earth. When, with a strength unknown to man, thy hand raised one of its vast paws, the earth trembled, and the giants of Utgard were themselves seized with fear.

"The grey-haired old nurse who brought thee to thy knee was Old Age, against whom none can wrestle but in vain. Go from this city, I beg thee, and return not again, and know well that it is not in Jötenheim that thou art despised, or that men fail to acknowledge thy strength."

The Moral of the Story

This story is a parable, and teaches us a lesson which should not be forgotten. The lesson it teaches is shortly this: that the strongest man or the strongest nation strives in vain against the laws of nature and reason. It therefore becomes necessary to study these laws, and to find out what they are, in order that we may work with and not against them.

We are none of us likely to try and dry up the ocean, or to shake the foundations of the earth, but many men through ignorance have tried to do things just as impossible, only because they did not see how strong a power they were fighting against.

You will easily understand how necessary it is that we should try to learn something of these laws, in order that we may not waste our time and strength in fighting against them.

Two Kinds of Law

I have tried to explain to you what is meant by natural laws—they are the rules which our experience and our observation have led us to believe are always observed in nature.

Now you will see what are the two kinds of law about which I wish to speak to you in this book. In the first place, there are the LAWS OF ENGLAND, or as they are sometimes called, the LAWS OF THE LAND; and, secondly, there are the LAWS OF NATURE AND OF REASON.

THE LAWS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

In the next chapter I shall tell you something about the law of the land, what it is, and why we ought to obey it.

SUMMARY

THE LAWS WE HAVE TO OBEY

1. As we are bound to obey the Law, and may be punished for breaking it, it is wise to learn what the Law is.

2. There are two kinds of Law which we must obey: the LAWS OF THE LAND, and the LAWS OF NATURE AND OF REASON.

3. Even though we cannot alter the Law, we can make use of it.

4. The Law of the Land may be learnt from books. The Laws of Nature and Reason are learnt by experience and observation.

Part I

THE LAW OF THE LAND

“I KNOW NO HUMAN BEING EXEMPT FROM THE LAW. THE
LAW IS THE SECURITY OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND; IT IS
THE SECURITY OF EVERY PERSON THAT IS GOVERNED, AND
OF EVERY PERSON THAT GOVERNS.”

Burke.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR LAW

IV

The Story of the “Bounty”

IN the year 1789 an English ship named the *Bounty* sailed for the Pacific. It happened that there was much ill-feeling between the captain, who was called Bligh, and several of his crew. One day a party of the sailors, headed by an officer of the name of Fletcher Christian, broke out into open mutiny. They entered the captain’s cabin fully armed, seized the captain himself, and put him and his friends into a little boat belonging to the ship, and then cast the boat adrift on the wide ocean.

After long and painful sufferings the captain and his companions succeeded in reaching the coast of Australia, whence they were finally brought back safely to England. Meanwhile the mutineers, with Christian at their head, went through many adventures and many dangers.

Some of them landed on the island of Tahiti, and at length a party of nine of them, including Christian, made their way to the little island known as Pitcairn



THE MUTINEERS CASTING CAPTAIN BLIGH ADRIFT

THE NEED FOR LAW

Island, in the midst of the South Pacific Ocean.¹ They took with them some of the natives from Tahiti, and among them several women who became the wives of the mutineers.

A Tiny Country

Here, then, was a little colony of about forty people living on a tiny island in the middle of the ocean, a thousand miles from the nearest land. The island itself was three miles long and a mile broad, and the whole population was smaller than that of the smallest English village.

You must remember that the chief people in this little population had come to be where they were through a shameful mutiny, and had acquired their new possession by breaking the laws which it was their duty to obey. It was perhaps for these reasons that they thought that the lawlessness which had succeeded so well in the past would serve them equally well in the future.

The Fruit of Lawlessness

Whatever may have been the reason for their conduct, they decided that it was better and easier to live without law and without rule than to make and obey any law whatever. Each man did what he pleased, without considering the claims of those among whom he lived.

We can hardly wonder at this. "Surely," they might

¹ On arriving at Pitcairn Island the mutineers removed all that they required from the *Bounty*, and then set fire to her.

THE LAWS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

have said, "it is possible for twenty or thirty people, living like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island in the middle of the ocean, to get on without rules and laws."

But it was not possible, as experience very soon showed. Each day a fresh quarrel broke out among the mutineers, and not only did they quarrel among themselves, but, by their violence and cruelty, they soon became the cause of quarrels and acts of violence among the Tahitians whom they had brought with them. Ere long some violent death overtook nearly every one of the Englishmen, till out of nine who had landed on the island two only were left alive, while out of the seven who had gone one only had died a peaceable death.

The Need for Law

Then it was that the two survivors, Edward Young and Alexander Smith,² began to find out that even in such a tiny country as theirs some law and rule were required. Terrified, no doubt, by the fate of their companions, and freed, too, from the bad influence of some of them, the two remaining Englishmen determined to turn over a new leaf. They set to work to instruct themselves, and to instruct those who were with them, in the plain rules of a Christian and civilised life.

During the years which the mutineers had been on the island, several children had been born, and were now growing up. The population of the little island was

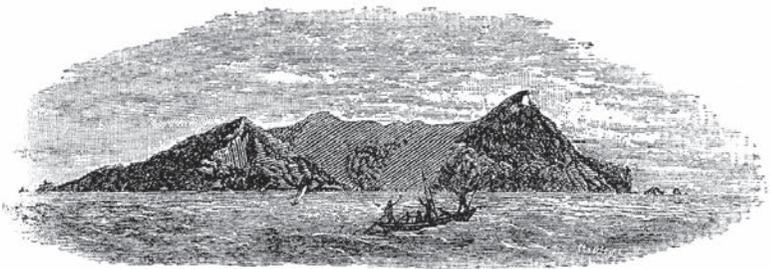
² Alexander Smith was afterwards better known as John Adams.

THE NEED FOR LAW

increasing. It soon became clear that unless some laws were made as to how the land of the island should be divided, disputes would arise as to the share which each person should have. John Adams therefore divided the land into portions, giving so much to each family, and laying down the rule that on the death of any person his land should be divided into regular shares.

Of course, in order that Adams should be able to lay down these rules and compel others to obey them, it was necessary that he should receive some real authority. The islanders, however, soon saw the advantages of being properly governed, and they readily submitted to John Adams, and obeyed the rules he made for their advantage.

From this time forward the history of the mutineers of the *Bounty* becomes a very bright one. Far from all the great wars which at that time were disturbing Europe, they lived on peaceably and in order. John Adams instructed them in the truths of the Bible, and they learnt to live in obedience, not only to its words, but to its spirit.



PITCAIRN ISLAND

The Fruit of Law and Order

In 1849 Pitcairn Island was visited by a British ship of war, the *Pandora*, and this is what the captain says of this little colony which sprang from the lawless and cruel mutiny of the *Bounty*:— “I cannot but add my testimony to those who have gone before me as to the excellent moral and religious character of these people. Evil and crime seem unknown amongst them.”

In 1856 the population had grown so much that the island was no longer able to provide its inhabitants with food, and, by the help of our Government and of many well-wishers in England, the whole people were moved to a larger and more fertile home in Norfolk Island, and there they and their descendants live to this day.

What the Story teaches us

From this story of the mutiny of the *Bounty* there is a lesson to be learnt. This lesson is that where men and women have to live and work together, however small may be their number, and however simple their wants, there must be some sort of government, some sort of law which all will recognise and obey.

Without law and without obedience the mutineers made their beautiful island even more dangerous and more disorderly than the ship which they had deserted. When once order, arrangement, and obedience were put in the place of lawlessness and selfishness, the little island began to prosper, and the people who lived on it to become happy and contented.

THE NEED FOR LAW

And what the descendants of the mutineers found to be true on Pitcairn Island, has been found to be true in every country in the world, at every period in history. Wherever we look, we shall find that no sooner have men and women begun to live together than they have begun also to lay down rules and regulations, and to give power to persons specially chosen to see that these rules and regulations are carried out.

V

Human Tigers

In every nation we find these rules and regulations, and we call them LAWS. The only exception to this truth is in the case of perfectly savage peoples, who are scarcely raised above the beasts among whom they live.

Travellers, for instance, tell us of some of the hill tribes of India, who know no law and obey no authority; if they have a dispute, instead of settling it, they separate, and go different ways; nor will they even live together, but, as they themselves say, "they are like tigers—two cannot dwell in one den," and they have their huts, therefore, scattered singly or in groups of two or three.

Here you have an instance of human beings living altogether without law or order, and you see that they themselves can find nothing better to compare themselves to than the wild beasts of the forest in which they live.

So true is it that without law and order, men become no better than wild animals.

The Growth of Law

The moment a people begins to become civilised, it will begin to make laws and regulations for itself. Among people who have very few wants and very few occupations, we usually find few and very simple laws. When, however, their wants increase and their occupations multiply, so also will their laws have to be increased in number and in exactness, in order to meet all the cases which may arise.

Laws on Pitcairn Island

For instance, on Pitcairn Island very few laws were necessary. Everybody lived by cultivating the land and by keeping cows and pigs. It was necessary, therefore, to make rules as to how the land should be divided for cultivation, and also how much of the land which was not cultivated should be given up to the owner of each cow or pig.

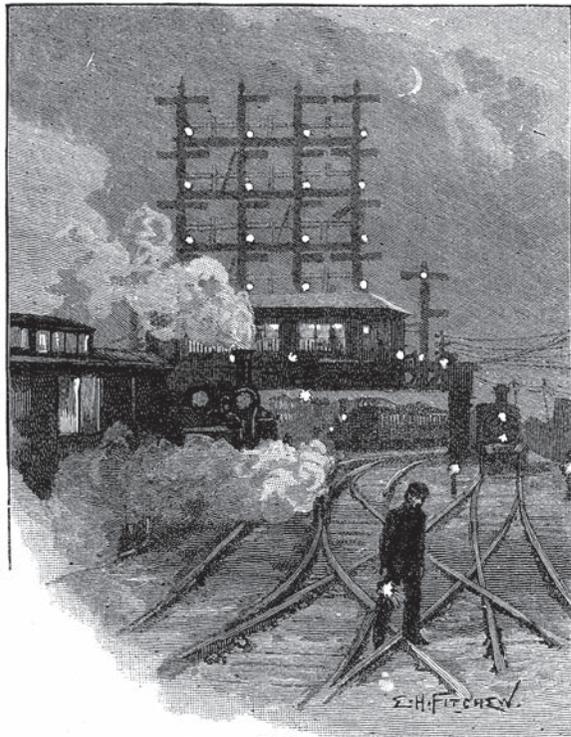
Then, later on, when the inhabitants began to get things from the English ships which touched at the island, and to supply the crew in return with fresh water and provisions, it became necessary to decide how much each person should give in order to obtain the articles which were needed for the common good. Rules had to be made laying down the quantity of yams,³ or fruit, or pork, which each one was to bring, and the amount of work which each was to do in loading or unloading the ship. Such simple rules as these became the laws of the island. The wants and occupations of the people were few; the laws, therefore, were few also.

³Sweet potatoes.

THE NEED FOR LAW

Laws in England

But let us turn from Pitcairn Island to a great country like England, and you will see at once that the case is very different. Suppose a railway has to be made from one town to another, it will have to go through the property of a great many people, and if any of the people to whom the property belongs refuse to sell their ground to the railway, the line would never be made; and a law therefore has to be passed, giving the railway company the right to take the property, which does not belong to it, even against the will of the owners of the property.



CANNON STREET SIGNAL-BOX, LONDON

THE LAWS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

But of course that would be very unfair, if the land were not paid for, and so another law has to be made to settle how much the railway company must pay for the land, and how the price to be paid is to be decided. But that is not nearly all, for no sooner is the railway made than it becomes necessary to settle how it is to be safely worked, and more laws have to be made providing for proper signals to be used, and proper brakes, and for compelling the railway company to put proper fences along the sides of the line.

And even that is not the end of it, for while laws have to be made for the benefit of the people who use the railway on one side, on the other side the railway company itself must be protected by law from those who wish to use it wrongly; for instance, they must have a right to make people pay for their tickets, to make them obey necessary rules and regulations, and to prevent interference with the signals and points, and so on. Thus it will be seen that out of the making of one railway alone there springs up a necessity for many different laws, none of which were required in Pitcairn Island.

And what is true in this instance is true in many others, namely, that *in proportion as the wants and occupations of a people increase, so the necessity for fresh laws and rules will increase also.*

THE NEED FOR LAW

SUMMARY

THE NEED FOR LAW

1. Civilised men cannot live without law.
2. Those who live without law are uncivilised.
3. In proportion as the wants and occupations of a people increase, so will the necessity for fresh laws and regulations increase also.