

THE LAWS WE LIVE UNDER.



CHAPTER I.

THE LAW OF THE FAMILY, THE LAW OF THE SCHOOL, AND THE LAW OF THE LAND.

As soon as a little child is able to understand anything at all, it learns that there are some things that it is allowed to do, some things that it is required to do, and some things that it is forbidden to do. In other words, it comes under the **Law of the Family**. Without obedience to parents on the part of the children, and without respect for each other's rights and each other's wishes, there would be no peace in the family. Without attention to rules about hours for getting up and going to bed, and for meals, there would be great confusion and great discomfort for every member of the family.

As children grow older, they are sent to school, and they learn that there, too, there are rules that must be followed, and that the orders of the teachers must be obeyed **without question or delay**. If each pupil came and went when and how he pleased, if he learned only what he liked, and moved and talked as it suited his own convenience or fancy, the whole school would be a babel of noise and confusion, and even those who really wanted to learn would not have a fair chance of doing it. And besides that, the older and stronger

boys and girls might tyrannise over the younger and weaker ones, if there were not the authority of the teachers to check and to punish such conduct. All the children, older and younger alike, are thus placed under the **Law of the School.**

LAW OF THE LAND PROTECTS PERSONS, PROPERTY, AND COMFORT.—SAVAGE TRIBES HAVE NO SUCH LAW.—AUSTRALIAN NATIVES.—SECURITY ENCOURAGES CULTIVATION AND THRIFT. —PENALTIES SHOULD BE SPEEDY AND CERTAIN RATHER THAN SEVERE.

In just the same way in the larger family and the greater school of the world, it is necessary that there should be some power to protect the weak from the strong, the cruel and the greedy. We need that **our persons should be preserved from violence, our property from theft and injury, and our comfort from annoyance, by the Law of the Land.** In rude ages, and among savage tribes, the strongest man can seize on anything that he wishes to have; and he can keep what he has earned, what he has found, and what he has stolen, until a still stronger man than he is desires it, and takes it from him. Among such barbarous races, women are treated like beasts of burden, and made to do everything that is most disagreeable; and children often perish for want of care, or are even killed in infancy, because it is so hard to rear them. In such a state of society no one cares to do anything for the future, even to put seeds into the ground, or to rear domestic animals, for they could not expect to reap the crop or to keep the animals they had tamed and their young ones. When the white people first came to Australia they found the black natives hunting kangaroos and opossums, but they neither cultivated the ground nor reared animals, so that when they could find food they ate it, and when they did not succeed in hunting they starved. It takes a very great deal of land to support in a very poor and miserable way a people who live by hunting.

It is reckoned that on some of the most fertile land of America it took a square league, or **nine square miles of land**, to support **one Red Indian** hunter and his family.

I dare say the Adelaide natives were very much surprised to see the white people come out of their great floating houses, begin to build a city, to fence land and plough it, and put seed into the ground, and plant trees, and put in vegetables. They would have eaten the good grain up as long as it lasted, and then taken to hunting kangaroo again. They did not know that by the laws the white people brought from England with them **the man who built a house could keep it**, and that no man and no fifty men, however strong they might be, could take it from him without his consent; and that the farmer would have his corn, and the gardener his vegetables, even if he were to fall sick, and was not able to fight for them. And that if he were to die, his widow and children, though they were feeble, would be secured in the possession of his property. Anyone can see how hard it is for a man to have spent time and money on anything if other people are allowed to steal it or to injure it. And, therefore, in all civilised nations, there are laws made and maintained to punish evildoers. The more certainty there is that the wrongdoing will be discovered, and the more **certainly and speedily** the crime or offence can be punished, the better for everyone. In some half-civilised countries punishments are very severe; but from the want of policemen, or from the dishonesty of judges and other law officers, the chances are so great that the criminal may not be caught, or may not be punished when he is caught, that this severity does not prevent crime so much as if the punishment were lighter but sure to follow the offence. A very old lawmaker of Greece, Draco, was said to have **written his laws in blood** because he made the punishment of death so common. He said that the least crime deserved death, and he did not know any other punish-

ment for greater ones. But Draco's example is not followed now, and it is only for the very greatest crimes that death is inflicted. Imprisonment, with or without hard labor, is the general punishment; and it is inflicted for so many weeks, or months, or years, or even for life, in proportion to the greatness of the crime. Some lesser crimes, or what are called misdemeanors, are punished by a fine in money, with imprisonment till the fine is paid.

LAWS NECESSARY FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES.—POLICEMEN NOT TO BE RESISTED.—LAWS TO BE OBEYED.—REASON WHY THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN.—DUTIES OF A CITIZEN.—GIRLS ARE CITIZENS AS WELL AS BOYS.—WHAT WOMEN OWE TO JUST LAWS.

There is **another important reason** for the establishment of courts of justice besides the trial and the punishment of criminals who kill or assault their neighbours, or rob, or steal, or cheat, or destroy property. You know that **disputes** often arise between one person and another about money, or about the right to a piece of land, or about fulfilling a bargain, and as each person sees only his own side of the question, they can never agree; so that it is necessary to have a **law court**, which all the people in the country are bound to acknowledge as just and fair, to **hear both sides of the case**, and to settle how far either party is wronged, and how much the person who is in fault shall pay for **compensation**, or to **make up for the wrong**.

It appears to cost a great deal to South Australia to build court houses and prisons, and to pay judges, and magistrates, and policemen; but it is far cheaper to do this than for every man to defend his own life and property, and to keep a sword or a gun always at his side, or to pay a man to watch his premises for fear of thieves by day and burglars by night. A hundred policemen protect Adelaide and all the suburban villages round about: a hundred and

twenty mounted troopers keep order over the country, and the 260,000 other inhabitants scattered over a vast settled and unsettled territory are able to go on with their own affairs in peace and security. You will understand, therefore, how necessary it is that the **law should be respected**, and that **policemen should not be resisted** when they are in the discharge of their duty, even if they make a mistake and arrest an innocent person. If the man is innocent, the trial will prove it; but if policemen may be resisted without severe punishment following, we would need to employ many more of them, and to pay them higher wages. In the same way, though all the laws of the land may not be perfect, and we may not believe them to be altogether just, **so long as they are the laws we are bound to obey them**. We are free to speak against them, to write in favor of their being altered, and to vote for members of parliament, who promise to endeavor to improve them; but **every good citizen must respect them while they are in force**.

It is considered necessary that the children in the public schools should learn something of the **laws they live under**, and the **duties of a citizen** which they will be called on to discharge when they are grown up; and for this reason this little book has been written. Every boy who is now at school will, when he reaches the age of twenty-one, have a right to vote for members of parliament, who make and who alter the laws of the land. He will also be liable to serve on a jury to **try criminals**, and also to try **civil causes** relating to disputes between one person and another. He may also rise to be a member of parliament himself, or to be a member of the ministry for the carrying on of the government of South Australia. He may be a lawyer to plead before the courts of law, or a judge to pronounce sentence according to the verdict of the jury. There is no office of honor or of trust to which a boy may not rise, if he makes good use of the opportunities given to him in the public schools. In speaking of the

duties of a citizen, which is the main subject of this primer, the word citizen must be understood **in its widest sense** as one subject to the laws of the land, and having an interest in all things which concern all other subjects or fellow-citizens. The word does not mean in this sense an inhabitant of a city, but a **member of a community**. The French people have a feminine form of their word *citoyen*—*citoyenne* (which is very awkwardly translated in English by the word *citizeness*), for they consider that women have an interest in the affairs of the nation as well as men. Although the girls in our public schools may never have to vote at elections, or to serve on juries, and cannot aspire to be ministers of state or judges, they have too much interest in good government, and too much influence in the world, to be safely left in ignorance of the great natural laws of Providence or of the laws of the land. It has been by the advance of civilisation and the operation of just laws that women have been raised from being the drudges or the toys of men to be their companions and, in many respects, their equals. The progress of the world in health and in wealth, in knowledge and in goodness, depends on the character and conduct of its women as much as on that of its men; and there can be no greater mistake for girls to make than to suppose that they have nothing to do with good citizenship and good government.

