

OCT 12 1916

# The Public

An International Journal of Fundamental Democracy

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**Senator Pettigrew on  
The Real Roosevelt**

**Si Vis Pacem**

By Bertha von Suttner

**Scott Nearing on Brigandage  
Pacifists and President Wilson**

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# Louis F. Post's Greatest Book

For the third edition of "The Ethics of Democracy," Mr. Post has written a new and brilliant introduction. A taste of it can be gotten from the closing paragraphs, which follow a discussion of natural rights. Here they are:

Any substantial controversy between those who conscientiously refer social questions to perceptions of natural rights, and those who conscientiously refer them to perceptions of social utility, is of very doubtful probability. The reference, after all, is to natural law. No one can be presumed to refer questions of social utility to the selfish whims of individuals. That would be as grossly absurd as to refer questions of natural rights to similar shifty tests. Natural rights, or social utility, both principles, relate back to something higher than individual whim or social custom or legislative act or arbitrary rule of any kind. They relate back to a force that has been called "the higher law." Religionists find it formulated in revelation, idealists perceive it vaguely as a moral principle, utilitarians observe it as a condition of social adjustment. But whatever this "higher law" may be, and however various the names we give it, its potency is like that of natural law in the physical realm; it can be neither evaded nor defied. "If your students blunder," said a teacher of engineering to a teacher of political economy, "nothing happens; but if mine blunder, a bridge falls." If that teacher of political economy agreed, he must have done so thoughtlessly. For worse catastrophes than the fall of a bridge happen when political economists blunder. The catastrophe may not come as soon, but it comes. Social decay because of extremes of unearned riches and undeserved poverty is more deplorable than the fall of many bridges.

As there is probably no substantial dispute between idealists and utilitarians, so in all probability is it with idealists and pragmatists. At any rate, to the idealism of these essays, any pragmatism that is really pragmatic is correlative. To have ideals without working toward them is to loaf; to work without reference to ideals is to putter. Could Lincoln have made

emancipation a reality without ideals of human freedom? Could Garrison's ideals of human freedom have blazed the way for emancipation without assaults upon the legalities that shielded slavery? It is only as we throw ourselves, idealist and pragmatist together, into the work of fostering social development in accordance with natural social law that we can accomplish effective and useful social results.

In that spirit these essays were originally written, mostly as editorials for *The Public*. In that spirit they were gathered into this book for its first edition in 1903. In that spirit the second edition was published in 1904. In the same spirit they are put forth in a third edition. This happens to be at a time when public sentiment seems more receptive to both the idealistic and the practical phases of democratic ethics than when the essays were written. It is a time, too, when historic events are revealing with almost unprecedented brilliancy somewhat of the mighty social current which at the close of this book is described as "the great order of things." The broader one's vision over the vast sweep of that current the less does one consider the back eddies of its outer edges, the stagnant sloughs on its lower shores, or its meandering course which seems often to turn upon itself; the more, also, does one's rational faith in a great social purpose grow. All through historic times democracy has been forging ahead. Little democracies have broken down, only to be followed by larger ones. Imperialism has smothered democracies, only to spawn democracies of a higher order. Here is a great struggle of the social man to achieve social maturity. Here is a great war for righteousness in which, if we count by centuries, righteousness steadily triumphs. The stars in their course do fight against Sisera: The ephemeral powers of Might go down before the eternal laws of Right.

This is the spirit of these keenly analytical but optimistic essays. If it appeals to you, order a copy for your library, to be read and reread. Let it be one of your confidants and counsellors in the friendly world of books.

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## EDITORIAL

There was a notable difference between the submarine attacks off Nantucket and the attack on the Lusitania. Though more property was destroyed there was no massacre of women and children or of other non-combatants. Those on the doomed vessels were at least allowed to escape with their lives. For this difference credit is due solely to Wilson's diplomacy. It is a result of the numerous notes he has sent to the German government, the same notes to which Roosevelt and Hughes refer so contemptuously. The alternative to note writing was war. Had that occurred the slaughter of non-combatants would have proceeded and the nation would moreover have suffered additional enormous losses inevitable even to successful war. Disgraceful to its perpetrators as the Nantucket affair undoubtedly is, it is a great improvement over what, but for Wilson, might have been, and over what Hughes promises, if his criticism of Wilson's policy is to be taken seriously.

S. D.

Are not the Militarists overlooking an opportunity of applying their philosophy in the defenselessness of our northern border? When the Canadian forces return from the war in Europe Canada will have probably a million veteran soldiers, who can attack us at will. It is little short of cruelty to leave cities like Detroit and Buffalo exposed to such danger. Militarist logic calls for an elaborate system of defenses along our northern border. It is only thus that we can be assured of immunity from attack. Besides, the construction of such a system of fortifications, together with a proper fleet on the great lakes, will put vast sums of money in circulation, and provide employment for a great number of men. By beginning these fortifications ourselves we doubtless will soon provoke the Canadians into taking retaliatory measures; and thus we shall have an armament rivalry that would be a credit to European countries.

S. O.

\* \* \*

Federal recruiting officers in New York have succeeded in enlisting but 372 men, whereas the State's quota under the Hay-Chamberlain act is 15,000. It was but a few months ago that 130,000 New Yorkers marched in a preparedness parade. Would the suggestion be worth considering for recruiting officers to take a list of these paraders and personally solicit each and every one to enlist? Interesting reading could be derived from the excuses they would give for failure to do themselves what they urged that others should be compelled to do.

S. D.

\* \* \*

Point was given to the complaint of the committee representing the American owners of Mexican mines that appeared before the conference of American and Mexican Commissioners by the statement of James Linn Rodgers, special agent of the United States Government in Mexico City, and adviser to the commission. The committee had complained that Mexican taxes were "grossly excessive and confiscatory." Mr. Rodgers is reported to have offered a brief explanation by saying: "The intent of the new law is to develop small holdings and to place prohibitive taxes on undeveloped large holdings." Would not the same complaint be made by the owners of mineral lands