

sult following a cause, inexorable, certain, inevitable.' It is upon that philosophy that all natural science is founded; and if that foundation fail, chaos is come again. No man can change the sequence of cause and effect in nature. He may indeed remove obstacles against the working of some cause or remove the cause itself, or add or substitute other causes; but he cannot himself make a cause operate differently from the rigid rule laid down for it by the nature of things or the Creator.

The rules of cause and effect in nature are generally called the "laws of nature"; and it is to some extent at least due to this terminology that medical men are often led astray in their conception of the law of the land—the rules governing in legal matters.

The law of the land is in its origin based upon custom. Whether at all, and if at all to what extent, custom is based upon nature we need not enquire; it would lead us into another field, interesting indeed, but of little importance in the present discussion.

When humanity got tired of the primeval method of determining rights, and found it necessary to prevent the vindication of rights by personal and private brute force, it was necessary to find some Judge or arbitrator to determine between man and man. The arbiter must proceed according to some rule; and the rule he should apply he found in the same way as you and I determine how to act in the ordinary affairs of life.

Wherever men have associated together for any length of time, a course of conduct develops suitable in their view to their environment and the association. That course of conduct is a custom, and customs are from the earliest recorded time and earlier, and this in trivial as in important matters. How one man is to accost, to salute, another is a matter of custom, not only in the most polite and advanced but in the most uncivilized and backward societies. Thieves have their etiquette as well as members of the Synod, and stevedores as well as members of the Academy of Medicine.

When the Judge was called upon to determine the rights of two contending parties, he sought for the true rule of right, and

¹ This conception of the inexorability of the laws of nature is essentially modern. It has not yet made its way everywhere, but most of the opposition to its full acceptance is concerning the past, not the present. In medicine in the amulet days, the laws of nature were considered modifiable by human—and diabolical—means.

It is often said that all such matters are questions of evidence; but that is not wholly true. A few centuries ago, the favored one could, by reciting some incantation call to his assistance a legion of angels, good, bad or indifferent. Aladdin could, by rubbing his lamp, call the all-powerful genie to his service. Who would believe such things now? In the old law not long ago many a poor old woman suffered death—a legal murder—because legal evidence proved she was a witch, and God had said "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Now, if fifty witnesses swore they saw an old woman ride a broomstick through the sky, no Judge would allow the matter to go to a jury, and no jury would convict.

It is not simply a question of evidence—the whole manner of looking upon nature has suffered a revolution.