

made in the near future towards the Yellow sea. In order to hold a port there, Russia would probably find it necessary to secure the control of Manchuria and of Corea, and on that account the feeling in Japan toward Russia is very bitter, the people seeing in the movement of the latter country an attempt to rob Japan of the sweet fruits of her victory.

A European diplomat of high standing is authority for the statement that a secret alliance is believed to exist between England and Japan, and if this should prove correct, it would create but little surprise should the mikado take up arms against the czar. The Japs are at present imbued with a conviction of their own invincibility, pardonable after their battle with the Chinese giant, and with England's moral support (and perhaps definite promises of a substantial nature) they would gladly break up for a march toward St. Petersburg, as their consul-general at Washington the other day said some of them expected to do. Russia, on the other hand, is not isolated. The existence of an entente between that country and France, although officially denied, is not seriously doubted. Then there are signs indicating an understanding between Russia and China, and altogether the situation is such that serious complications in Asia are within the near possibilities. Russia's aggressive steps have been checked more often by the condition of the imperial treasury than by the threatening attitude of her adversaries, but this consideration is now removed to some extent, by the offer of a syndicate to lend the government 400,000,000 francs, which would go far toward the expenses incident to the kindling of the war flames, if the time is considered ripe for such a display. The commotion among the nations of the earth at the close of the century is one of its distinguishing features.

ENGLISH FEATHERED SONGSTERS.

The News doesn't pretend to be an authority on English birds, but it has no hesitation in saying it has had its fill of the English sparrow, just as the Australians have had their fill of the English rabbit. This being the case, notwithstanding the various benefits the little import was promised to secure for us, we are not ashamed to voice the suggestion of a timid friend, that the recent liberation of English larks is possibly to be regarded with fear and trembling. Perhaps the remedy proposed by one desperate Anglophobe, that the gentleman threatening to let the larks loose be enjoined by law from doing so, is too severe. For all we know, the English lark may be a very useful, lovely bird—certainly we have heard and read much of her sweet singing, her mounting upward toward the sun, and so forth. But what we are specially anxious to know is as to her fecundity, her pugnacity and her appetite for bugs. It will be remembered that her half-brother the sparrow was hailed as the most voracious caterpillar-eater on record—our dilliveter from cordline moth fever; whereas experience has shown that about the only thing on earth he will not touch

is a worm. If we extend a welcome to the lark it must be upon conditions, and only to last while she is on her good behavior; for we cannot repress the thought that the mischievous boy who in the very beginning of the sparrow in these parts threatened his annihilation with a trusty flipper but was sensationally restrained by the irate importers of the future pest, was really an agent and instrument of Providence in disguise.

GOOD LAWS AND BAD.

Not always is it possible to judge of the merits of a law by the motives that prompted it, or by the title and language of the enactment itself. Its enforcement is the best test of its quality, and the loopholes it affords for misconstruction and technical quibbling are the features that always exhibit themselves too late, frequently defeating the purpose the statute had in view. In other cases it transpires that the full effect of the proposed law is not foreseen by those who enact it, and it takes a year or two to determine just whether the law possesses more of benefit than of evil. Hence the proposition that all laws regularly placed upon the statute books should be enforced. That is exactly what the good ones are made for—they are presumed to supply a public want. As to the bad ones, there is no speedier way of getting them repealed than by constantly holding the provisions up to public odium, and no method of doing this is equal to the plain, straight enforcement of them.

The community is having quite an experience just now with one or two enactments whose benefits are at least open to question. Notable among them is the act said to have for its purpose the placing of the fire and police departments of certain cities upon a non-partisan basis. The litigation and wrangling and destruction of discipline which that white sepulcher of a statute has wrought during the last year and a half is more disastrous to the welfare of the two departments than all the politics they ever had or in any likelihood ever would have. The title of the bill introduced, and the objects it announced itself as desirous to accomplish, were in the highest degree meritorious. But under the provision for the tenure of office of deservng employees, the community has seen the courts invoked to reinstate men whom their chief did not want because he deemed them incompetent, and whose victory has had a tendency to promote insolence, destroy discipline and create the feeling that a public office in one of those departments was as near a life situation as could be, because of a "pull" or of "influence" that could be exercised upon the board.

Another piece of recent legislation is viewed in many quarters with almost equal disfavor; we refer to the law on tree-spraying. No one will dispute that the objects sought to be accomplished by that statute are praiseworthy. The News applauded the purpose of the bill when first presented, and does so still. At the same time we cannot shut our ears or

our eyes to the complaints and the causes for them against the law. Experience has shown that the spraying as done by many of those presumed to understand the business is a good deal of a sham—the bugs seem to thrive on it, as the condition of many orchards, already twice sprayed this season, will prove today. Then there is complaint as to the evil effects upon bees produced by the operation upon the trees—whose leaves and blossoms are made to receive a poisonous drench which if it does not kill the bees at least injures the honey. Of the same nature is the assertion that berries and small fruits growing under the sprayed trees, also grass or clover with which many orchards are carpeted, receive injury which manifests itself in serious effects upon those who eat thereof. Still more grievous is the fact that two recent deaths of children are directly attributed to the poison that had been squirted from a spray pump upon the fruit of which they had eaten.

Now, we do not mean to say that the benefits derived from the enforcement of this law are all swallowed up in the evils referred to. The latter may be exaggerated, while the former may not be so generally known as to be fully appreciated. There is a grave doubt, however, as to the utility of the measure, and its opponents are by no means slow or idle in making their position known. Its friends, if they are conscious of any strong arguments that can be used in its favor, ought to be making use of them pretty soon, or the rising tide of discontent is likely to overwhelm the measure altogether.

OPIUM AND WHISKY.

One of the sources of revenue to governments, as the world is constituted, is various vices to which people are addicted. England, for instance, derives millions of dollars every year from the opium traffic by which poor slaves of a corrupt appetite in China and the islands of the Indian archipelago and elsewhere are supplied with the material that destroys body and soul. Millions more are made from the liquor traffic, hardly less ruinous, physically and morally.

Once in a while protests are made by people interested in the reformation of mankind, and the effects of the poison on the human system are depicted in glowing colors. It is pointed out that a government, be it general or local, that profits by a traffic which aids the breeding of poverty, crime, ruin, is to a large extent responsible for those results. It is therefore a matter of necessity for governments so challenged to defend themselves, and generally the defense comes in the form of opinions of popular physicians or reports of official commissions.

Recently two British royal commissions have published the results of their investigations as to the opium and whisky habits in their relation to crime and disease. The opium commission was appointed under a resolution of Parliament and was charged with the duty of ascertaining whether the traffic in that drug, except for medical purposes, could be suppressed without violating terms of agreement with the native Indian states and