

does not say "Thou shalt not eat too much, nor drink too much," nature itself teaching that lesson. There are many precepts against eating or drinking too much, but no instituted law; many admonitions and threatenings of the due operation of laws already in existence—natural and spiritual—which will inevitably punish without the intervention of any instituted law.

If by eating or drinking too much, however, the domain of instituted law be invaded in the sense of "stealing" from others what is their just due—as in the case of a man spending upon his own sensual indulgences what ought to go to support his family or pay his just debts—then of course the instituted law may step in as being also offended—not by excess, which belongs to natural law, but by a breach of its commandment "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not fraudulently spend against covenant."

Spiritual law, which is higher than either, says "Thou shalt not steal, kill, exceed, covet, lust," but punishes transgressors in due course. But this law is given to individual consciences, its lower jurisdiction being only left to man when the transgressor invades the rights of others, never when the transgression affects himself and his conscience alone. And the spiritual law which warns not to exceed, in the warning allows when there is no excess. "If meats or drinks, or anything, make my brother to offend"; the occasion is governed by the "if"; if they do not cause him to offend, what then? Surely the expediency is not greater than the law itself which permits eating and drinking? If a man must not eat meat, if he must not eat vegetables, nor drink wine, nor water, in case he should offend a vegetarian or a beef-eater, or a teetotaler, or a wine drinker, what is he to do? If the man is an honest Dogberry he will try to please them all, I suppose, and it is sincerely to be hoped he will in time make way for men who cannot despise gifts simply because they are pleasant and good, and as such, more extraordinarily pleasant and good than other gifts, and correspondingly tempting and testing.

No attempt at forcing natural or instituted law can succeed when it is against the highest law of man's nature. The highest law is the perfect law of liberty, and which is so precious and so high that spiritual law punishes any breach of it but never seeks to prevent by compulsion those who turn it into license. The law of liberty is not degraded by those who abuse it—they degrade themselves; but it would not be liberty if they had not the power to do so. A convict's real punishment consists in loss of liberty, otherwise he is well off; he breaks no law, he is moral, temperate, honest, pure as a whitened sepulchre.

A. B. C.

## CONJUGAL AFFINITY.

To the Editor of the Week:

SIR,—One would have to search long and far to find an equally strange jumble of sense and nonsense to that presented by a recent contribution in the *Canada Presbyterian* to the deceased wife's sister controversy. The writer surrenders the often-cited and much-vexed passage of Scripture usually relied on by those who condemn marriage with a deceased wife's sister, and is so far sensible. He accepts the marginal reading of it, and understands the prohibition as having reference to polygamy. In his view, it forbids taking "one wife to another" in her lifetime. Nevertheless he is a determined opponent to marriage with a deceased wife's sister. On what does he base his opposition after relinquishing the text just referred to? Why, on a most far-fetched, irrational and physiologically-false interpretation of the declaration "They twain shall be one flesh." He says, "being thus one, it follows that the blood relations of the husband stand in the same relation to the wife as her own relations by blood; and her relatives by blood stand in the same relation to her husband as those of his own by blood."

It is pertinent to ask how this "follows"? An assertion of this kind throws a pretty heavy *onus probandi* on the party making it; but the writer of this extraordinary statement condescends no proof whatever, and forthwith proceeds in the coolest possible manner to argue that because husband and wife are "one flesh," a widower has no more right to marry the sister of his deceased wife than he has to marry his own sister: she being, in point of fact, his own sister. He then takes the statutes relating to marriage found in Lev. xviii., and proceeds to found on these another series of unsupported assertions prohibitory of the marriage to which he objects. Thus, he says, "in the law in Leviticus, above referred to, a man is forbidden to marry the sister of his mother, but a sister-in-law stands in the same relation to his wife as his aunt to his mother." A man's wife is "nearer to him than his own mother, and hence his sister-in-law is nearer to him than his mother's sister can be."

The confusion of ideas perceptible in this remarkable effusion is traceable on the one hand to a want of discrimination between love oneness and blood oneness; and on the other hand, to a superstitious feeling in regard to a long-maintained ecclesiastical ban. The statement "They twain shall be one flesh" is merely a strong figurative representation of the unity resulting from a true marriage. It is not expressive of any actual physical transubstantiation, and to argue as if it were is to shock the common sense of mankind. The fact is, that to give up the time-worn and hackneyed prohibition usually held by the advocates of that view of things as forbidding marriage with a deceased wife's sister, is virtually to surrender the case, and only those who are slavish enough to be bound by human authority in matters of religion will trouble themselves to hunt up any other justification of the ecclesiastical ban from Scripture. They may as well spare themselves the trouble if it proves equally barren of all other results than absurd and ridiculous ones, with the instance now under notice. Any interpretation of Scripture that does not square with the most obvious facts of physiology must be abandoned as untenable and unsound.

W. F. C.

## MAY SONG.

Wild flowers in the meadow,  
Grass upon the lea,  
Little streamlet flashing  
Sunlight in its glee.

Babbling o'er its pebbles,  
Murmuring in its bed,  
As it steals so slyly  
Where the shadows spread—

Shadows of the branches  
Of the grand old trees  
With their thousand leaf-tongues  
Laughing in the breeze.

Here and there the fleece clouds  
Floating up on high;

Here and there, through fleece clouds,  
Flecks of azure sky.

Over all the sun-light,  
In a golden flood,  
Deluging with life-power  
Field and flower and wood.

While the joy of nature  
Fills the glorious day  
With the voice of gladness  
Singing—"It is May!"

G. BRUCE.

## SONGS FROM THE FRONT.

## I.—THE VOLUNTEER'S GRAVE.

Before they left the troops planted wild flowers on their comrades' graves. —*Press despatch.*

SEE the dusky pines are waving  
Here above the brave,  
Stately is the soldier's slumber  
In a soldier's grave,  
Ready in his country's danger  
All he had he gave.

Sleep, war now will never wake thee  
By Saskatchewan,  
On thy rest breaks no reveillé  
At the chilly dawn.  
Farewell, comrade, here we leave thee,  
"Forward"—they are gone.

Soldier Boy, we'll ne'er forget thee,  
Deathless are the brave,  
Violets' breath be sweet above thee  
In thy prairie grave,  
O'er thy head in dreamy silence  
May the long grass wave.

NATHANAEL NIX.

## THE SCRAP BOOK.

## RUSSIA AND EUROPE.

STRANGE spectacle! Here are a State and a Government calling themselves national and patriotic, which systematically, from year to year, do things that the most barbarous conqueror could do only in some sudden access of wild rage and stupid fanaticism. For, without a shadow of exaggeration, the exploits of our rulers of to-day can be compared with those of the celebrated Kaliph of Egypt alone. Some optimist may be disposed to say that the policy of the Russian triumvirate is but a temporary aberration, caused by the overweening influence over the Emperor of Potondorzeff, Katkoff and Tolstoi. Yes, the policy of the present Government is surely an aberration; but only for its lack of policy, for its cynical frankness. If Potondorzeff and Katkoff lose their influence and Tolstoi fall, his successor may prove less rash and more cautious. As to the main character of the inferior policy, it cannot help but remain the same. The most elementary consideration of self-defence will render it imperative to preserve intact the main features of their domestic policy. At the end of the nineteenth century the sole safeguard of the autocracy consists in its utter ignorance of the people. It is not enough to confiscate books and suppress liberal papers; the only way to get rid of propagandism is to suppress readers. If peasants read nothing but the *Moscow Gazette*, they will find in the columns relating to "foreign affairs" reports of European politics, of parliaments and free meetings, and many other things that will equally "instigate" to disrespect of the existing Government. If they limit their reading to *Souvorin's Almanac*, they will find in it accounts of the incidence and distribution of taxation which, if rightly understood, may prove as inflammatory as a revolutionary appeal. At the same time, the Government cannot help shutting out society from all part in the management of public affairs. On whom can the autocracy now rely but on the police and the bureaucracy?

Now being driven by-and-bye to a flagrant contradiction with the culture, and to open war with the whole body of instructed classes, the autocracy is driven to be in contradiction with the State itself. It is prompting the very State to ruin by both hands. The gradual impoverishment of the State, the growing embroiling of finances, the progressive misery of the masses tilling the soil, are but the natural and unavoidable consequences of such a régime. And it is no more a secret to anybody that it is just what we are witnessing in Russia.

This most anomalous position of as great a country as Russia cannot last. In one way or another, the catastrophe must come—that is what everybody says at present. Some very accurate observer finds many points of likeness between modern Russia and France before the Revolution. There is a good deal of analogy, indeed; the greatest stands, of course, in the diffusion throughout all the classes of the nation of anti-governmental tendencies, and of those generous and creative ideas which are called "subversions," because they tend to subvert wrong and substitute it by right. The material condition and moral dispositions of the masses are not unlike either. The despotic France of the seventeenth century, how-