

# DESERT NEWS.

## WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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### A FEW FACTS.

IN our local columns to-day appears a statement of interesting facts in relation to the development of Utah during the last twenty years, so far as the growth of population and political geographic changes are concerned. It is taken from the "Compendium of the Tenth Census of 1880," and is consequently as near correct as statistics of that character generally are.

Nearly every anti-"Mormon" speaker who treats upon his favorite and thread-bare theme, strikes an attitude and assumes a look of stale consternation when he reaches that point of his harangue which treats upon the fact of the Latter-day Saints having climbed over the borders of Utah into neighboring States and Territories, and are there a growing power. This manufactured fright at the presence of the objects of so much ill-feeling and green-eyed sentiment in the country surrounding Utah has an exceedingly ludicrous aspect when the events of a few years ago are considered.

Who placed the "Mormons" in the country contiguous to Utah to begin with? When, with their characteristic industry and enterprise they settled the surrounding district over the border it formed an integral part of Utah. There appeared to be such an affection in Nevada, Wyoming and Idaho for the "Mormons" and the lands they inhabited, that considerable slices of Utah, including their settlers were taken into the State and Territories named, and none can deny without falsification, that they have been among the most active and efficient developers of the commonwealths which took them in, and as such are deserving of esteem, consideration and some gratitude.

The wholesale division of Utah into so many parcels and handing a proportionate piece to each of the States or Territories on her border, has been frequently advocated as a proper method of solving what is generally termed the "Mormon question," although we contend there is no such question in existence, only so far as it is manufactured by the enemies of the Territory. The effects of the partial dismemberment of Utah has exploded this theory. If the discontented distorters of the situation are not satisfied with that *modus operandi* in part, its application as a whole would give them still more severe attacks of the anti-"Mormon" gripes, a complaint that is becoming most monotonously common.

### WHY THEY DO NOT.

THE New York *Herald* propounds a reasonable question to what it is pleased to term the orthodox Churches. It asks why their hordes of missionaries do not follow the "Mormon" preachers in their wanderings and oppose their operations.

We are prepared to tell the reason why. The task is more arduous than the *Herald* contemplates. When a sectarian emissary undertakes the task of dogging the footsteps of a "Mormon" missionary he contracts to get up tolerably early in the morning and to get about in a manner much more active than accords with his usual custom. But it would doubtless do him good if he could hold out sufficiently long to gain some experience by the energetic example of the object of his animosity and pursuit.

And when it should come to comparing notes on the basis of the Bible, what a disadvantage the poor man would labor under. The best men among the sectari-

an religionists have not the ghost of a chance in a theological polemic encounter with a well-informed "Mormon" Elder. This has been demonstrated times without number, and has made the clergymen exceedingly shy of that kind of discussion. A few years ago in Birkenhead, England, a Church of England missionary named Mr. Cowley, challenged a man to debate who had only been in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a few weeks. The discussion took place in the presence of a large audience. The challenger was so badly beaten that his own friends were disgusted, and he shortly afterwards was dismissed from his post. The Elder who represented the "Mormon" side is now a resident of this city. This is only one among innumerable instances of the same class, and the clergymen exclaim in despair, "argument is of no use in fighting 'Mormonism,' for the reason that they have comparatively none to offer. In its absence there is a general resort to vituperation and abuse.

We would not object to the orthodox Churches sending out their hordes of missionaries to circumvent the efforts of the "Mormon" Elders. They would make excellent advertizers, and in that capacity might make themselves tolerably useful. In that role they would excel the ordinary man who gets "a shilling a day and board" for walking around sandwiched between a couple of posters. They would help to get congregations for the brethren and, markedly increase, their opportunities for delivering their message. But we are afraid the suggestion of our mammoth and enterprising New York contemporary will not be carried out.

### "RELIGIOUS POLYGAMY."

UNDER the above heading the New York *Independent*, a leading religious weekly, attempts to prove that "Mormon" plural marriage may be rightly and constitutionally suppressed by law. Of course the *Independent* calls to its support the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Reynolds case, from which it quotes largely, and deduces the following:

"The fact that one religiously believes in such marriage is no offense against the law, if he stops with his belief. But if he proceeds to put his belief into practice, then he comes in contact with the law, and the law comes in contact with him as an offender. If he says that he is right on this subject and that the law is wrong, and hence that the law should give place to his opinion as to what is right or wrong, then he makes an assumption of himself which, if admitted, would be the destruction of civil government. If he claims that the practice results from his religion, and is necessary to carry out the principles of that religion, then he assigns a reason for the practice of which the law, in dealing with him, can never take any notice."

This is merely putting in other words the absurd opinion framed for the Supreme Court by Attorney General Devens, that the protection afforded to religion by the Constitution only extends to belief and does not include the practice of religion. And this is to say in effect that the guaranty of religious freedom given in the First Amendment to the Constitution means nothing at all. For the liberty of mere belief cannot be destroyed. It requires no law to protect it. The mind cannot be controlled by Parliaments or Congresses. People will believe what commends itself to their understanding, and no legislation can prevent them.

Religion consists of something more than belief. It is nothing without practice. "An establishment of religion" is the effect of action. Unless something is done there will be no such thing as an establishment of religion. And it is this very thing that Congress is prohibited from interfering with by the Constitution. Further, that body is by the same article forbidden to interfere with the "free exercise" of religion. Does not this include the practice of religion as well as the belief in it?

What would the *Independent's* belief in baptism and the Lord's supper amount to if its editors and readers were prevented by law from being baptised or partaking of the

sacrament? What protection would be offered the Jews in their religious rite of circumcision if they were only allowed to believe in but not to practise it? Congress has just as much right under the Constitution to pass a law prohibiting the Jewish practice of circumcision as the "Mormon" practice of marriage. And when it starts in on this line of departure it may pass laws forbidding baptism or any other religious rite, because, in the language of Devens adopted by the Supreme Court and endorsed by the *Independent*:

"Laws are made for the government, of actions; and while they cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinions they may with practices."

Under such a ruling where is the limit to governmental interference with any "establishment of religion" or "the free exercise thereof?" It makes the guaranty of the Constitution a complete nullity. It leaves no religious liberty but that which all people have of necessity, namely—the freedom to believe what seems right to them. It is the liberty of religious action which needs to be preserved and protected and it was for this that the amendment to the Constitution was passed, or its framing and adoption were a farce.

But the question will be asked, has not the law-making department the right to legislate against crimes committed in the name or under the pretext or plea of religion? We answer unhesitatingly it has, but the mistake is in classing the marriage system of the Latter-day Saints with essential crimes. For instance, the Supreme Court of the United States, in the decision referred to, said:

"Suppose one believed that human sacrifices were a necessary part of religious worship; would it be seriously contended that the civil government under which we lived could not interfere to prevent the sacrifice? Or if a wife religiously believed it was her duty to burn herself upon the funeral pile of her dead husband, would it be beyond the power of the civil government to prevent her from carrying her belief into practice? So here, as a law for the organization of society under the exclusive dominion of the United States, it is provided that plural marriage shall not be allowed."

This is the kind of logic by which the conclusion of that august tribunal was reached: Laws may be passed to protect the destruction of life, therefore they may be enacted against the increase of life! The rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inherent, natural, inalienable. Any interference with those rights or either of them should be made punishable by law even if attempted under the name of religion. Laws in a republic are made for the protection of the citizens in the free exercise of their natural rights, not to oppress them nor prevent their legitimate pursuit of happiness when it does not infringe upon the rights of others. If "Mormon" marriage contained any element of force or deprivation of liberty or property, any disruption of society or breach of public order, it might come within the jurisdiction of secular law; but under the American system of government it cannot be rightly interfered with by Congress, and the Supreme Court of the United States has failed to show wherein it has any analogy with the crimes cited as reasons for its suppression. And however decisive the ruling of that Court may be in law, its conclusions are not in accordance with sound reason, but fill the mind with wonder at their lack of logic and of that clearness of judgment that might be expected of so high a judicial body.

The *Independent* says it has "no idea of proscribing any man for his religious belief." How very magnanimous! We may have just as much dead faith as we please, but no such faith as is shown by works, if those works do not suit the *Independent*. We may think what we choose so long as we do nothing more than think. This is very liberal indeed, and we ought to feel under great obligations to the New York religious organ. Thank you for nothing, Mr. *Independent*. But how does that paper reconcile this avowal with its endorsement of the latest proposition against the people of Utah? The present cry for the legislative commission, involving the disfranchisement of the monogamic "Mormons," is neither more nor less than a crusade against

religious belief, and the *Independent* has declared that it has been all along its opinion that this is the only feasible plan of destroying "Mormonism."

The truth is, the *Independent*, like all the other truly pious sectarian journals and preachers, cannot cope with the truths of "Mormonism" by fair and scriptural means, and therefore desires the political destruction of its adherents as a method of putting down their creed. We are sorry that the *Independent* and its confederates should be so cruelly disappointed, but we assure them that, as true as there is a God in Israel, "Mormonism" will be alive and a power in the earth long after those who have fought against it have gone to their graves and their accounts.

### COYNER AGAIN AFTER COIN.

A CIRCULAR signed by R. G. McNeice and J. M. Coyner is being distributed throughout the country, addressed to the Superintendents of Sabbath Schools, Woman's Missionary Societies, etc., containing an appeal in behalf of the Salt Lake Collegiate Institute, that is, J. M. Coyner. Of course the call is for money. In any address to the country from the persons whose names are given above you may be sure that, like the wails of Poverty Pierce, the whining of T. B. Hilton, and the terrible tales of the pistol evangelists Lyford and McMillan, the nub of the thing is a request for cash. Also that the chief point used to punch up the benevolent and prick the purses of the pious, is the need of something radical and immediate against the "Mormons."

The professional beggars who are now foraging for eastern dollars, announced that Utah "is destined to be a very important factor in the problems of our country's history." So far that is true. But they go on to say that, "There is an irreconcilable conflict between the 'Mormon' hierarchy and Christian republicanism." And that is untrue, with other things that are asserted about "Mormonism" which they bitterly but not originally denigrate "a moral cancer." They say farther:

"The remedies now used for its removal are moral, but if these are not effective the conflict will become material, for Mormonism and Christian republics cannot remain long together—one or the other must go to the wall."

The meaning of this is plain: Presbyterianism and other modern sectarianisms cannot cope with "Mormonism" by moral means, therefore material forces will have to be used. Yet with great inconsistency money is asked for, to continue a movement which is tacitly acknowledged to be a failure. But consistency need not be looked for in that quarter. It is money that is the chief object and, to gain that, consistency need not be carefully studied, so long as the public mind can be clouded with visions of the possible triumph of the great "Christian" bugaboo—"Mormonism."

The sum asked is only eight thousand dollars—a mere trifle considering the work to be done—and this is expected to be wheedled out of the Sunday School children, Woman's Missionary Societies and the soft-hearted public generally. This is the kind of work in which the delectable Pierce delighted most, and in which he was a great success, gathering in the children's dimes and adults' dollars, with a smile that was as oily as the bland and pious smirk with which he has been borrowing money by wholesale, since he went out of the begging business. He was always a fraud and now his exposure has come and has not changed but is only understood. The time of the other frauds, who are obtaining money from young and old on the false pretences put forth in the circular to which we have alluded, will surely come and their true character will be known. Let those who are foolish enough to believe the falsehoods of these prepetual subscription-shovers give away their means if they please, we warn the wise that these anti-"Mormon" appeals mean simply coin for the Coyner.

### THE PIERCE BANKRUPTCY.

WE have been slow to condemn the Rev. G. M. Pierce, and have counseled his friends to extend a charitable sentiment toward him. Our

position has occasioned some surprise in view of the flood of damaging facts that has been gradually overwhelming him. But we considered it nothing but fair that the gentleman should have a chance to explain the methods by which he reached his unenviable position. We hoped the explanation would come and that it would be shown that the financial situation in which he finds himself was the result of circumstance over which he had no control.

We have waited in vain. The only shadow of an explanation that we know of is that he paid enormous interest on the sums borrowed from his scores of dupes. This excuse is worse than none. It is grimly absurd, especially to those who claim he has defrauded them. It is impossible that this could have been the cause of his failure and comparatively enormous deficit. And if it was, it was in the nature of something he could have controlled, by refraining from it.

We have no epithets nor denunciations to hurl at the head of the Rev. Mr. Pierce, his actions stamp upon his infinitesimal soul all the condemnation that is needful. When a man makes scores of financial victims, who doubtless became his dupes because of their belief in his piety, it is bad enough, but when the sufferers include women and children, some of them even said to be widows and orphans, to what greater depths of villainy can a human being descend. Here is a pretentious shepherd of a religious flock against whom the cry of the helpless ascends to heaven. Epithetic denunciation directed at such a miserable object is effort expended to no purpose. The point of the aim is too detestable to be worth the endeavor. The actions of such insignificant souls stand as an eternal anathema upon them in deepest letters, that can only be dimmed by the most contrite repentance, to which we now call this pretended representative of the Savior of the world.

We would dispense ourselves were we to descend to the level of the class of which Mr. Pierce is a leading representative, when they speak of "Mormonism" and the "Mormons." His contemptible and debasing conduct has nothing to do with Methodism—the religion of which he was esteemed as a leading light in this locality. Attenuated as we esteem that system to be, we would feel ashamed of ourselves to pretend to lay his conduct at its door. No matter how deficient in the power of Godliness that religion is, Mr. Pierce's course is repugnant to its precepts. His business course was a living libel upon a religion that does, with all its faults, inculcate the theory of honesty. And we presume that Methodism has no further use for a man placing himself in the position that Mr. Pierce has.

The subject of this article has been guilty of palming off the most infamous slanders and falsehoods upon the "Mormons." He has made a business of it. His object was similar to that which inspired him to scoop in money from everybody that would lend him from 25 cents up to thousands of dollars. He was after "the God he adored"—mammon. We have taken occasion to point this out occasionally. We have named others who are of the same piece of cloth. They are hungry for pelf, and exhibit it in all their outcries against the "Mormons." They make it the objective point of every anti-"Mormon" discourse.

On one occasion Dr. Fisher, whom we have always believed to be one of the oiliest hypocrites that ever wore the garb of bigoted sectarianism, once protested to us because we pointed out his double-faced course. He also alluded to our having mentioned Mr. Pierce after the same fashion. He extolled the latter as a model Christian, while we have always held that he was simply a model priestly specimen of an anti-"Mormon." Time has proved how much Dr. Fisher's estimate accorded with the true status of his sample sectarian.

It is currently reported by those who claim to know, that the Rev. Mr. Pierce is merely the head-centre of this financial scandal, while others are badly tainted with the offensive odor it emits. It is a notable fact, too, that each individual against whom the damaging charges are preferred, are conspicuous for their rabid and senseless opposition to everything and everybody bearing the impress of "Mormonism." But this is nothing new,