

called higher knowledge, which was nothing but an admixture of heathen philosophy with Christian doctrine. It denoted an alleged mysterious information hidden in the letters of the written word and available only to a few superior minds, while the common people had to be content with the literal meaning of the words. A Gnostic was one who professed to be in possession of this hidden knowledge. The term agnostic is the very opposite of gnostic and denotes one who refuses to believe not only the alleged hidden knowledge of the Gnostics but also the plain revealed truth, unless this is capable of mathematical demonstration.

In this sense the word is of very recent origin. It is only within the last decade that it has obtained currency in our literature. About seven or eight years ago, if our memory is not at fault, an English clergyman, Rev. Machonochie of Manchester, attracted some attention by his tendency to approach the Catholic church. In the controversy that ensued he stated that he did not believe in the dogmas of the church anyway, and that the rites were more or less farcical. A trial for heresy resulted and during this the term agnostic was applied to him, but whether the word was especially coined at that time or had already obtained a place in the vocabulary of theologians, specialists must determine.

THE LAW AND THE DILEMMA.

The sometime friends of and clamorers for the Geary anti-Chinese law have probably learned much within the past month as to public sentiment upon a question that really deserves to be deemed of pressing national importance, and yet is a question that cannot be answered by clamor nor solved by mere legislative enactment. There are, and in all ages have been, problems which one drastic legislative measure showed itself unable to settle, which, indeed, endured a score of hostile enactments and still had to be decided and eliminated by concession on both sides, by arbitration, by a consideration of the underlying point of difference without too strict a regard for the legal forms, procedures and penalties designed for its removal.

We shall not now be deemed partisan, or even pro-Chinese, for insisting that the bill in question is unpopular; for a reaction against it has plainly manifested itself in the very sections where it was most vehemently insisted upon. Neither may our position be questioned when we assert and maintain the general proposition that the best way to get rid of an unpopular or a bad law is strictly and energetically to enforce it. But, whether unpopular or not, the law is upon the books, and by the highest authority has been pronounced constitutional. Ordinarily, the only thing left would be to carry its provisions—drastic or ridiculous—into effect. But here comes the difficulty. Statisticians say that the enforcement of the law will require a very large sum of money, running into the millions, while there is less than twenty thousand dollars available for the purpose. A grievous financial obstacle would

accordingly seem to stand in the way. Besides this, there is a moral obstacle that cannot so easily be surmounted. The instructions of the secretary of the treasury, and undoubtedly they represented the feelings of the President, were to the effect that no hostile action should be taken against the Chinese until the law should have been passed upon by the highest court. The officials evidently assumed the extraordinary position that the enactment must be deemed unconstitutional until the contrary was proved; and of course they were disappointed with the decision of Justice Gray. But the effect of their subtlety on the original question was far-reaching. Being so closely in accord with the views of the leading Chinese companies, their doubts were accepted as an authoritative declaration that the terms of the law would never be enforced. The result was the Chinese took the bad advice of their leading countrymen, they ignored the law, they refused or neglected to register, and thus at once put themselves in the position of law-breakers—a position which most of them might have avoided had their advisers so willed it. This latter phase of the question involves a discredit to the proscribed race which goes far towards depriving them of the sympathy that would otherwise be felt for them. Supposing that China had passed a law requiring all Americans to register within a certain time on penalty of being deported, does any one suppose they would have been excused or justified in refusing to comply? Certainly not; where the alternative was presented to them—either to register or to leave—they would have excited no real sympathy if refusing to register they had still whined about leaving. That is the position of the Chinese here; and much as the law in some of its aspects—especially in the motives that prompted it—may be condemned, there is no justification for the failure of those affected by it to comply with provisions that could in no sense have worked them an injury.

The question is interesting throughout, and the dilemma in which the two nations find themselves would be amusing if it were less serious. There will be need of much skill in unraveling and probably a display of such diplomatic ingenuity as the country has not been favored with for a long time.

A PAIR OF COMPLIMENTS.

Alluding in hostile and denunciatory terms to the opening of the World's Fair last Sunday, the New York *Mail and Express*, which from the beginning has been the most violent advocate of Sabbath closing, makes the following statement: "It is to the everlasting credit of many of the states and territories, even Mormon Utah, that the exhibits of these commonwealths were scrupulously closed."

As this was probably intended as a compliment, we who belong to one of the commonwealths referred to probably ought to accept it with gratitude; save for the sneer, we should be inclined to do so. But we cannot understand a compliment conveyed in such a connection by the term "Mormon Utah,"

especially when emphasized as "even Mormon Utah." The inference would naturally be that generally speaking Utah is a Sabbath breaker, and that the closing of its territorial building on the particular day mentioned was an exceptional recognition of Sunday as a exciting comment.

The *Mail and Express* is a conspicuous example of the numerous class that slowly learn to be just to an opponent and never unlearn a misconception. Hence it frequently makes itself ridiculous for its blunders and pitiable for its bigotry. It has done so in this case. For, whatever else may be said against the people of Utah, there has never been the charge that they were violators of the Lord's day. If it wished to, the Presbyterian *Mail and Express* might easily ascertain that Mormon Utah, particularly the Mormon part of it, is conspicuous among all communities on the face of the earth for its observance of the Sabbath. It would then find how pointless is its jibe, how pharisaical its cant and hypocrisy.

If it prosecuted its inquiries at all diligently, the rancorous *M. & E.* would find that Mormon Utah believed in another doctrine: it believes in minding its own business; and it entertains the notion, quite foreign to some of its critics, that there is more Christianity and statesmanship and sense in endeavoring to convert people from an error—such as Sabbath-breaking—than in employing legislative, or as the *Mail and Express* has suggested, armed force to compel them to abandon it. Mormon Utah does not seek to measure everybody else by its own half-hushel; it believes in human liberty and the free agency of man. As to the question of opening the World's Fair on Sunday under the regulations that are provided and with the motives that are declared, "even Mormon Utah" is bound to say the *Mail and Express* has not on its side had all the argument, and that there are worse ways of spending the Sabbath in Chicago and even in saintly New York, where the benign influences of the religious press ought to be most potent, than in walking in orderly manner through the grounds of a World's Exposition, admiring the best handiwork of man and contemplating the works and wonders of God.

WESTERN JOURNALISM UP NORTH.

On the editorial table is number one of volume one of the *Kesio Claim*, a rather bright-looking journalistic venture hailing from the mining regions in and about the Kootenay lake region of British Columbia. The paper has the distinctive feature of being strictly American of the western type though published in her majesty's dominions. The editor begins his "salutatory" (what a host of memories that hackneyed word revives!) by announcing that he is imbued with a desire to perpetuate that feature of journalism. He declares it to be his belief that the Kootenay country is the richest mineral district in the known world, and that Kesio is the coming mining city of America; that its citizens are more enterprising and public-spirited than any other section of the broad Do-