

## EDITORIALS

## A TRUTH WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION.

THE Springfield Republican, commenting on the failure in Kansas of enforcing the prohibitory law, says it is the same difficulty that has occurred in Maine, which Neal Dow proposed to meet by increasing the penalties for the law's violation. The Republican adds:

"It is a trouble which will always result regarding a law which has the sentiment of any considerable portion of the community opposed to it, and which neither rewards for conviction nor increased penalties will effectually or permanently remedy. It is necessary that the artificers of the law, like the builders of houses, should take into account the material with which they have to work, and if they do not, failure and collapse will overtake the most symmetrical edifice."

This is good common sense. But the Republican, like some other journals, does not recognize its importance when applied to Utah, but berates temperate and experienced statesmen and philosophical thinkers who apply the same principles to the treatment of the "Mormon" question. Rabid, unreasonable and unrepentant methods are the fashion now, as they have been at intervals during the past. Wisdom would suggest the desired end, and proclaim that the violation of established principles of law and a departure from the essentials of our system of government, are not likely to create a strict regard for laws in general nor add to the glory of our great republic. But when bigotry and passion rule, it cannot be expected that wisdom and good judgment will command much respect. The thoughtful will do well to pause, and reflect before allowing themselves to be hurried along by the tide of popular unreason.

## A DANGER THAT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD.

THE danger attending the present system of conducting wires for the electric light is attracting a great deal of attention. Quite a number of accidents of a serious nature have occurred in many places, from various causes connected with the electric wires, and the necessity of some further protection is becoming generally recognized. In Philadelphia the underground system, which is established in some parts of Germany, is the only one allowed.

An incident occurred in this city a few nights ago, which supports the necessity of having the electric wires laid underground. The wire crossing near the roof of the building occupied by N. Boukowsky being in close proximity to a tin gutter, the electric current jumped to this conducting material and commenced to set fire to the woodwork. Fortunately the prompt application of a little water prevented any damage. A portion of the insulating material which incased the wire was also consumed, showing that it is not always a sufficient protection against the probabilities of fire when the current comes into near proximity to any conducting material.

Another circumstance by which a mechanic came near losing his life occurred a few days ago. One of the employees of Mr. David James, had occasion to go on the roof of the large block of buildings lately erected by Hooper and Eldridge to complete a job connected with the cornice. In the act of stooping down he laid hold of the electric light wire, which is extended across the southwest corner of the roof, a few inches above the roofing material. He was instantly thrown back over head, landing on his back barely a foot from the edge of the roof overlooking the street. Had he been thrown a little more to the right he would have been precipitated into the street, and it would have been supposed he merely slipped off the roof. This wire also left a mark of burning across his hand showing that the wire sometimes gets hot enough to burn, even when the current appears to be going all right.

We consider this matter of so great importance that we surrender much of our editorial space to-day to a communication from the Mayor of Detroit to the Common Council of that city. The Council had hastily, as has occurred in other

places, passed an ordinance giving an electric light company the right to put up poles and wires as in this city. The Mayor saw fit to decline signing the ordinance giving his reasons as follows:

To the Honorable the Common Council:

Gentlemen.—Imbued with a deep sense of my official responsibility, and after careful consideration, having reached the conclusion that the aerial system of transmitting the powerful current of electricity required for lighting purposes by wires trained on poles through the city, which is contemplated by the Brush Electric Light Company, is extremely dangerous to life and to property from fire, I am constrained to return, without my approval, the ordinance entitled "An ordinance authorizing and regulating for the purpose of supplying light, the erection, laying and operating of poles, wires, pipes, lamps and conductors in the public streets, alleys and other public places of the city of Detroit, by the Brush Electric Light Company of said city," adopted at the last meeting of your honorable body.

I fully appreciate the advantages of the electric light; I am very reluctant to offer any opposition to any progressive enterprise whatever, and nothing but a realization of my duties in the premises has impelled me to this action. My original impressions were adverse to the aerial system of transmitting electricity for lighting purposes; these were subsequently partially modified by my desire to avoid occasioning loss to our enterprising citizens who have embarked their capital in the works of the Brush Electric Light Company and erected poles and trained wires through the streets on what was at least a color of authority from the city government, but the recent accidents that have occurred in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and elsewhere, and the profound consternation created thereby, have finally compelled the regretful conviction that the necessity of protection to the city from fire must be paramount to every other consideration. A conflagration might speedily destroy many times the amount of property invested in the Electric Works.

A few days ago, in Philadelphia, owing to the Brush wire having come in contact with a telephone wire, both ends of the circuit and two telephone boxes in different parts of the city were instantaneously burned, and if this had occurred at night the danger of a general conflagration would have been imminent. I am informed by the Fire Marshal that two or three incipient fires have been already occasioned by the same cause in this city; notably this was the case with the fire in Dingeman & Smith's factory. There is no longer any doubt that the dangers arising from transmitting powerful currents of electricity in mid-air and in close proximity to telegraph and telephone wires can scarcely be exaggerated, and no business house or private residence in which a telegraphic or telephonic wire terminates is secure from the danger of fire at any hour of the day or night, when the Brush Electric works are in operation. A magazine of nitroglycerine in the centre of the city would in my opinion, be a less prolific source of danger than the aerial system of transmitting powerful currents of electricity in use by the Brush Company.

The only remedy is to lay the Brush wires underground; this system, Mr. A. J. DeCamp, who has charge of the Brush works in Philadelphia, says, "Will do away with accidents from the meeting of electric wires and telephone and telegraph wires in the open air."

As I am not an expert I may be pardoned for calling your attention to the opinion of Mr. David Brooks, the eminent electrician of Philadelphia, who recently made a professional tour of Europe after attending the Paris electric exposition; in commenting on the recent electric accidents in that city says: "I have yet to find a single case where a fire was caused by underground wires. The only correct way of running the wires is by the underground method. It is the easiest thing in the world to do. In London the wires are coated with gutta percha and laid simply under the ground. It is a mistake to suppose they are laid in the sewers. In underground wires, properly laid, there can be no fires or accidents. A fire will not burn without air, and in the underground system no air can get to the wires."

The system of running the wires on poles is extremely dangerous. In many cases along Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, the telephone and telegraph wires are so close together that a stretching or sagging of a few inches would cause the wires to meet and rub against each other. In a short time the insulating material wears off and the electric wire sends its powerful current along the smaller wires both ways, thus creating a fire at each end of the circuit. Or supposing that an electric wire should break and the two ends thus formed should fall to the ground as they naturally would. If a man should thoughtlessly pick up both ends he would be instantly killed, or if the current were weak he would be very badly shocked. Should, however, one portion of the wire touch the ground in any place, especially where it is wet, then his feet might be connected through the damp ground with another part of the circuit, and two paths thus be opened to the current, with the chances of a dangerous portion of it passing through his body.

"The accident on Friday," continued Professor Brooks, "gives people an idea of the danger of permitting the electric wires to run along the streets on poles. It is fortunate that no more serious accidents occurred."

"Every telephone in the city is in danger," and if those electric wires are not run underground it is hard to tell what wouldn't happen. It would hardly surprise me that, in addition to fires and similar accidents, we should soon hear of a person being shocked to death. It is easy enough to do a thing right in the first place, when the way is plain and easy, and it's easy enough to run the electric wires underground. The way is ready."

Here we have the opinion of an eminent electrician pointing out the dangers of the aerial system, and upon the practicability of the underground system as exemplified in London. In support of this I will add that I was informed by the Mayor of Chicago that he had refused permission to the Brush electric company to operate in that city except by underground cables, and that it had accepted his conditions and agreed to construct them. Nor do I believe there is an intelligent person in this community uninterested in the Brush company, who has given any attention to the subject, who entertains any doubt as to the feasibility and desirability of the underground system.

Either the underground system is practicable or it is not, if impracticable, so great are the dangers arising from the aerial system, no company should be permitted to operate in Detroit. If practicable the Brush company should be at once compelled to adopt it, and to suspend operations until they have reconstructed their system. They should forthwith be required to remove the unsightly poles with which they have disfigured the principal avenues of the city without let or hindrance, or the Board of Public Works should be directed to remove them. I have reached my conclusions on this subject, not only from a consideration of the dangers of fire arising from the aerial system, but also because of its danger to life.

The London Times, of Dec. 15th, says a workman was instantly killed at Hatfield House by coming in contact with the Brush wires, conveying the electric current which lights the mansion. A number of similar accidents have been reported in the newspapers. Suppose a fireman was to break a connection on the Woodward Avenue cable as he strove to reach a high building, and received the full force of the current. It would be certain death to him or to anyone else who might come into contact, direct or through a connecting medium, with a wire in which the passage of so powerful a current was broken. The brave men who compose our fire department, should not be exposed to so imminent a danger. I think all wires should be laid underground, but the safety of the whole city demands that the Brush electric wires, above all others, should be so arranged as to be not only insulated but isolated from all possible contact with wires used for other purposes. The expense would be considerable, but the profits of the companies warrant their compulsion to conduct their business in a way that will not endanger the safety of the community. The real truth of the whole matter I apprehend to be that, in undertaking to utilize electricity as a means of lighting, they are as yet

dealing with a faction of unknown quality; the question is still largely experimental in its nature, and I should prefer the experiment to be carried on elsewhere than with jeopardy to the lives and property of the citizens of Detroit. The ordinance I return you is, in my opinion, fatally defective in several other minor respects, but authorizing as it does the aerial system even temporarily, I simply base my objection on that feature alone. Gentlemen, if you shall defer from me and be moved by any considerations whatever to adopt this ordinance, notwithstanding my objection, you will assume the responsibility for any conflagrations or accidents that may be occasioned and I will be absolved by the community.

WM. G. THOMPSON, Mayor.

The Council was so impressed with the justice of the Mayor's decision that the vote for the passage of the ordinance was unanimously reconsidered and the ordinance was laid on the table.

As further evidence of the importance of this matter, the fire underwriters of San Francisco and also of some places in the East have adopted special and stringent rules concerning the conducting, etc., of wires for the electric light, and insurance companies are requiring the observance of these rules in all buildings on which policies are granted.

## ANOTHER PLAN TO SMITE THE "MORMONS."

THE Christian Union commences the new year with a new and ardent heading and other improvements in the mechanical arrangement of the paper with its issue for January 19th will appear an illustrated supplement on Palestine.

The enterprise of this religious magazine is commendable and a great deal of its reading matter is instructive and well written. On questions relating to Utah and the "Mormons," however, it is like most other eastern publications, considerably "mixed."

In the latest number there is an editorial on the Utah problem from which we make the following extract:

"The real and almost fatal defect of our treatment of the Utah problem lies in the fact that in our Anglo Saxon legislation adultery is not treated as a crime. If a man marries two wives he can be sent to the State prison; if he marries one wife and maintains 20 mistresses, he cannot be called to account at all. It would be an easy matter to prove the offense of adultery against the polygamous Mormons; but the marriage ceremonial which is necessary to constitute the technical offense of bigamy, it is almost impossible to prove. The United States government could, with advantage, borrow a principle from the ancient Mosaic legislation, and make adultery a penal offense in all its Territories. If individual States followed the example thus set them, so much the better. Adultery is a crime against God, man, and the family; the recognition of this fact would strike at the root of the organized vice which in Utah brings disgrace upon the whole people and government of the United States."

We fully agree with the Christian Union in its denunciation of the crime of adultery. It is considered by the Latter-day Saints a capital offense. Their sacred books teach that it is next in enormity to the crime of murder. Under certain circumstances we consider that its proper penalty is death. Our Church counts it in the same degree of wickedness as it was in the Mosaic law. Viewing it apart from Church regulations we think that the State should provide adequate punishment for the crime. And seeing that in New York and other States of the Union it is no offence against the law and that, as the Christian Union admits, a man in those States whether married or not can keep any number of mistresses without violating the law, would it not be quite as well for the preachers and editors in those States to turn their attention to the needs of their own localities instead of making so much fuss about Utah, and with which they have no intimate relations?

The immorality of mistress-keeping is acknowledged in word by the agitators against plural marriage. They also admit the prevalence of the sin. It is well known that it is

indulged in by a large number of public men many of them married, and also that it is no bar to their obtaining any office in the State or Nation, and, in many instances, if they can only keep the thing *sub rosa* it does not stand in the way of preferment in circles where a moral influence is considered absolutely necessary.

All this is wrong. It is an evil of far greater magnitude than the Utah difficulty is ever claimed to be. If polygamy were prevalent, gross and vile as it is thought to be in Utah, its proportions are very diminutive compared with the evils in and growing out of the crime alluded to by the Christian Union. And yet while the whole country is aroused against the former, the latter is passed by with closed lips, or slyly winked at by the knowing and pretendedly sanctimonious.

If the would-be reformers who want to "regenerate" Utah, were sincere in their homilies about morality, and their professed abhorrence of the marriage relations of the "Mormons," they would try to cleanse the inside of their own social platters before meddling with their neighbors. But while they cry out so much about polygamy afar off, they can put up with adultery and kindred sins right at home, without a murmur of disapprobation or a sniff of aversion.

The Union seems to think that if Congress were to borrow a leaf out of the Mosaic book, plural marriage could be reached effectually; that a law against adultery would be a fatal blow against polygamy. Let us examine this a little. The Mosaic code forbade adultery, but permitted, and in some cases required plural marriage; therefore polygamy is not adultery, and the Union's idea is futile. In proof of this, one of the ten commandments of that code, says:

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

But in the same law it is ordained:

"If a man have two wives, one beloved and another hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firstborn son be her's that was hated:

"Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated which is indeed the firstborn.

"But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he hath; for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." Deut. xxi, 15-17.

Also it is written:

"When a man hath taken a new wife he shall not go out to war, etc." xiv, 5.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Deuteronomy will be found regulations concerning the course to be taken by a man whose brother has died childless, leaving a widow. He is required, under penalties there presented, to marry the widow and raise up children to the deceased, the firstborn to bear the latter's name so that it shall be continued in Israel. A very little reflection will suffice to show that this is binding upon a married man as well as a single man, in such case the name of the living brother requiring to be perpetuated just as much as the dead brother's.

Now, the law against adultery provides that the offender shall be put to death. (See Leviticus xx, 10.) But in the case of a married man, whose brother dies childless, leaving a widow, the married man was commanded to have a plurality of wives and was to be under continual disgrace if he would not comply. Therefore the law against adultery is not a law against a plurality of wives.

This is clearly illustrated in the case of David, King of Israel, who, while he kept the law, was a man after God's own heart; but when he transgressed it, was severely punished and rejected. While he kept the law, God gave him "wives into his bosom," and intimated that he would have increased his gifts if David so desired. But, when he took another man's wife, and so broke the law, God denounced and punished him. In David's case, God blessed a man by giving him a plurality of wives and took them away from him as a curse for committing adultery. Ergo, plural marriage is not adultery, and a law against the latter has no bearing upon the former.