

## SECRETARY NOBLE ON "MORMON" AFFAIRS.

SECRETARY NOBLE touches on the "Mormon" question in much the same manner as the President does. Still he avoids the rock of religious belief on which the President runs headlong. He deals with practices, and while he does not sanction the measures proposed for further assaults upon the "Mormons," he favors the retention of the present laws, so as to give time to see whether the professions in regard to those practices were made in good faith. There is little to object to in these remarks, taking the Secretary's position into consideration.

But he mentions the fact that "the revelation containing polygamy remains unchanged," as though this was a matter with which the Government had anything to do. It has been alleged against the "Mormon" Church that it seeks to control the State. Passing by the untruthfulness of the charge, is it any more proper for the State to seek to control the Church? Revelation, doctrine, principle, creed are the peculiar province of the Church. The State has no powers in relation to them. The Constitution forbids Congress to interfere with the "free exercise" of religion. The legislators and jurists who have given the widest scope to the powers of Congress in relation to religious practices, have conceded that in matters of faith and worship Congress is entirely powerless.

Revelation may be believed in *ad libitum* while it does not affect the believer to the extent of infraction of the secular law. If God gives a revelation, God alone can change or revoke it. If people believe God has given a revelation, they must believe He has revoked it, before it will be changed, in their understanding. If they determine to comply with the laws of the land and do so in good faith, their convictions of the rightfulness of their faith or of the wrongfulness of the law cannot be lawfully called in question.

That the people of Utah have determined to comply with the laws forbidding polygamy we think is beyond reasonable question. If their course is not yet sufficient to convince the skeptical, we think it will do so in time and that even Secretary Noble will be compelled to say it is enough."

But he has some personal notions respecting the purpose of the adop-

tion of the declaration forbidding polygamy. He says:

"What is expected because of these proceedings is, no doubt, a removal of the Utah Commission; the preservation of the elective franchise to the members of the church in all the States and Territories, where they may be and a test oath may be required of them; a restoration of the property of the Church; and possibly the admission of Utah to Statehood with or without a test oath against polygamy."

If these expectations entered into the preparation and adoption of the manifesto, they are not known to the people who participated in the work. It is all news to us. We believe it is so to our friends in this Territory. It is always unsafe to hazard opinions about motives. The Secretary of the Interior has in this departed from the rightful domain of fact and law, and wandered into the doubtful field of mental speculation. The "Mormons" have simply ceased the practice of plural marriage and made a public announcement of the fact, as a submission to laws which have been declared constitutional by the court of last resort. They have done so without any defined expectation of results.

If after all this, the disfranchisement which has been threatened against law obeying "Mormons" shall be effected, it will be proof beyond question to the "Mormons" that all the outcry against polygamy has been insincere, and made to cover a deeper design which is political in its character and wicked in its purpose. We certainly hope that this will not be accomplished, and we believe that hope is shared by the "Mormon people generally."

## THOSE "FORTY CASES."

THE telegraphic synopsis of the report of the Secretary of the Interior, published in Monday evening's News, says he refers to a conversation held by him with Delegate John T. Caine, in reference to a letter written by the Delegate and containing the Declaration made by President Woodruff on the plural marriage question, and the Secretary adds:

"In the conversation which took place when this letter was delivered, it was objected that Mr. Caine and the President of the Church would have to meet the specification of forty cases with more than a general denial."

These "forty cases" mentioned by Secretary Nobles are those reported by the Utah Commission as having probably entered into polygamy since the date of their last report. President Woodruff, in his declara-

tion, denied that either forty or any number of persons in Utah, had entered into polygamy during the period specified, and the Secretary of the Interior says the "specification" will have to be met with "more than a general denial."

We would like to know why. The Utah Commission entered a general charge. It scarcely amounted even to that. They said the registrars had reported to them about forty cases of persons whom they had reason to believe had gone into polygamy since the date mentioned. It will be seen that this was very craftily put. No specifications were made. No names were given by the Commissioners. No places or dates were mentioned. The Commission did not even state what were the reasons for supposing that these unnamed persons had broken the law against polygamy. It was a blind accusation and a lame excuse for making it. We do not think the Commission believed it, and we are sure that if they had been in possession of any evidence to substantiate it, the proofs would have been in the hands of the Prosecuting Attorney and United States Marshal in a very short time, and the suspected individuals would have been arrested. There is no language strong enough to characterize the ineffable meanness of the cunningly devised and unsupported story.

Why, then, should the burden of proof be placed upon President Woodruff and Delegate Caine, who simply deny what the Commission only half affirm? Are they to be required to prove a negative? On the contrary, should not the Commission be required to prove the affirmative? They assert, others deny, and they should bring forward the evidence, if they have any, to justify their assertion. And Secretary Nobles should certainly know better than to ask the gentlemen who simply meet a general allegation with a general denial, to disprove something for which not the shadow of an atom of proof has been adduced.

But there is something more to this bald assertion, made for a purpose by the Utah Commission. In the conversation with Delegate Caine, the Secretary of the Interior admitted that the Commission should produce the names of the persons alleged to have thus broken the law, that the facts might be elicited. And he authorized the Delegate to make formal application for those names. This may not be