

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

A GLARING FAKE.

The Tribune of this morning has the following special, dated Wilmington, Delaware, Nov. 17:

"Four Elders of the Mormon Church have arrived in New Castle and are laying plans for the opening of a crusade in behalf of Mormonism. Ben P. Quilter, one of the legal lights of the Mormon Church at Salt Lake City, visited Wilmington a few weeks ago and made an investigation of the field here. In his report to the Church at Salt Lake, he pointed out the headway made by the single-tax reform and its influence in elections, and recommended the establishment of a Mormon colony here."

"According to the plans already mapped out by the leaders of the movement, the colony will be started in a few weeks and will make its home in Kent and Sussex, where its proselyting agents will begin their agitation."

"The object of the Mormon crusade here is the same as the single-taxers, that is, to procure control of the legislature."

"In such a task the leaders believe they will be successful, as they contend that the new constitution of the state does not contain a provision to prohibit the legalizing of plural marriages."

Fake stories about the aims and doings of "Mormon emissaries" in various states of the Union, and in different parts of the whole wide world, are quite common; but it is a rare thing for such a fabrication to embrace an idea so original as does the above romance, that of a purpose to plant in an eastern state a Mormon colony with a view to controlling the state's legislature and in that way to again accomplish the legalizing of plural marriage.

It is quite true that Delaware is a small state, and that a sufficient influx of Mormons into it, distributed in the right way, might secure control of a sufficient number of members of the legislature to pass any desired law in respect to marriage. It is also true, probably, that the state constitution does not prohibit plural marriage. Such a prohibition is not, we believe, contained in the organic law of either of the older states in the Union, and the legislature in either of them would have a right to legalize plural marriage should it see fit.

But no legislative body in the world has the power to legalize plural marriage, so far as the Latter-day Saints are concerned. Not even the legislature of Utah could restore that system, or make it lawful, in their view, even with an amendment to the State Constitution authorizing such action. According to the belief of the Latter-day Saints, marriage among them is a divine ordinance and institution, regulated by the laws of God. They adopted the practice of plural marriage in obedience to a law revealed to them from heaven, and they discontinued it because of the word of the Lord delivered to them by revelation. No action taken by any legislative authority among the nations of the earth would be deemed by them a sufficient reason for its resumption.

No matter then, how many state legislatures or other law-making agencies, the Mormons may secure an influence over, or control of, politically; no law emanating from such a source will be a sufficient reason, inducement or justification for the resumption by them of the practice of plural marriage. The people of Delaware, and others nearer to the chief

city of the Mormons, are at fullest liberty to draw all the consolation they may require from this assurance.

With the exception of the fact that Mormon missionaries are traveling and preaching the Gospel in Delaware, baptizing those who believe, and, where a sufficient number are converted organizing branches of the Church, there is no truth whatever in the story above reproduced. The Mormons entertain no political designs in relation to the little state of Delaware.

A JEW ON ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM.

Dr. Emil G. Hirsch, a Jewish Rabbi of Chicago, on Sunday last, delivered a discourse on "Agnosticism" in which he defined the distinction between atheism and agnosticism as follows:

"Atheism is dogmatic nihilism. Agnosticism is expectant, cautious, but without anxious, attention to fuller knowledge."

He made the sweeping declaration that "atheism is extinct today," and added:

"No clear thinker will dare at this late hour maintain that the concepts of force and matter, the conservation of energy and evolution of life by natural selection will solve the mystery of being and becoming. Process never accounted for product. Matter and force themselves are mental abstractions, as are cause and effect. The atheistic interpretation of the universe bristles with infinitely greater difficulties than does the theistic. This the adoption of the name 'agnostic' avowed. Its introduction hushed forever and effectually the brazen voice of arrant atheism."

Unquestionably agnosticism, as defined by Rabbi Hirsch, is an improvement upon atheism as defined by him, and the fairness of his definitions will be generally conceded. It follows then that the human race is advancing in abstract intelligence. The developments of physical and mental science are convincing it that it will never be able to satisfy its yearning for a knowledge of the causes of things out of the negative resources of atheism. In other words, science has shown the position of the atheist to be untenable. "The atheistic interpretation of the universe bristles with infinitely greater difficulties than does the theistic," and the very learning of the age inclines the minds of the men who achieve it in the direction of the least pressure, which is towards the possibility, at least, of a Creator.

But while it may be, and probably is, true that "arrant atheism" is on the decrease among learned non-professors of religion, and that there is, among this class, a corresponding disposition to admit the existence of a God, it is not true that this tendency is accompanied by an advance in the direction of pure morals.

While the world is growing more enlightened, and is adding to the number and strength of its arguments in support of the existence of a God, and the truth of the Scriptures, it is steadily becoming more corrupt. Its sins are committed in defiance of greater light, which adds to their gravity, and to the guilt of the race.

As tending to show the trend of advanced thought among Jews in the United States the following sentences from Rabbi Hirsch's discourse may not be without interest:

"But, on the other hand, agnosticism

is as emphatic a protest against the presumption of creed builders and creed hucksters. Before its day the insolence of these pretendedly illuminated watchmen of Zion knew no bounds. They declared to know God fully as well as they knew their next door neighbor, and proceeded to give a detailed description of Him, pretty much in the style of a penitentiary warden advertising the recapture of an escaped convict. We are under great obligations to agnosticism for having redeemed religion from the despotism of this silly, and in its ultimate elements most irreverent, familiarity, which could not but breed contempt. Agnosticism is also the offspring of the conviction that the so-called demonstrations of God's existence are inadequate. No student of philosophy today will deny the contention. These open advanced proofs, upon close analysis, without exception beg the question. They assumed at the very outset what they in the end would demonstrate.

"But agnosticism overlooks one vital aspect of the problem. Religion is poetry and as such not analytical. It always is synthetic. Virtually religion has at all times been conceding that 'man by searching cannot find out God.' Orthodoxy has always emphasized the insufficiency of reason and insisted on the necessity of revelation to give man light on this mystery."

"Judaism, as expounded by its thinkers, has never scrupled to avow that of God we are unable to predicate positive attributes. The fundamental question for us is not what God is in Himself, but what He is for us. Limited by our nature, we cannot go further than to express our feelings and satisfy our need of harmony and unity in terms of our personality. The extra-mundane God we of the liberal school have replaced by the immanent God who reveals Himself to us first and foremost in the higher consciousness of our own duties and responsibilities."

"For Judaism God is not a cold, distant, metaphysical absolute; He is the vitalizing principle of our moral life. Agnosticism fails to take account of this factor. Jewish theism is built upon this basis."

"We cannot comprehend God, but we may apprehend Him."

From the foregoing it will be observed that there is among the Jews of America a tendency quite similar to what is shown by some of the leading Protestant divines in this country; a departure from simple and robust faith in a personal God, who has in times past revealed His will and His laws, and a knowledge of His attributes, to man, and a substitution of vague, dreamy theory, amounting to downright skepticism.

ANNEXATION OF HAWAII.

Senator Morgan of Alabama is an enthusiastic advocate of the annexation of the Hawaiian republic by the United States. He has repeatedly given to the press his views upon this subject, and according to an interview with him which appears in the press dispatches today, his recent visit to the islands has increased the zeal with which he urges Uncle Sam to gather them in. The strategic and commercial reasons advanced by him in support of his position are undeniably cogent, and it is asserted that a poll of the United States Senate shows that Senator Morgan has on his side a strong majority of that body, and that the annexation treaty will be promptly ratified.

The people of Utah feel a peculiar interest in this subject on account of the fact that several thousand natives of the Sandwich islands are Latter-