

# THE DESERET NEWS.

## SPEECH OF HON. W. H. HOOPER, OF UTAH,

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 25, 1869.

We take pleasure in presenting to our readers the following reprint of a speech in Congress, of Hon. W. H. Hooper, Delegate from Utah Territory:

On the bill to extend the boundaries of the States of Nevada, Minnesota, and Nebraska, and the Territories of Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming—

Mr. HOOPER, of Utah. Mr. Speaker, when it shall be in order I propose to offer the following amendment to the bill offered by Mr. ASHLEY, of Ohio to extend the boundaries of Nevada, Minnesota, and Nebraska, and the Territories of Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming, namely:

Strike out the first and fifth and so much of the sixth section of the bill as relates to Utah Territory.

And on this amendment I propose to speak at this time.

Sir, in the interior of the North American continent, peopling the narrow valleys that lie between mountains from which the snows never disappear, exists a colony of this Republic, a hundred thousand strong, prospering marvelously in spite of rigors of climate and unfriendliness of soil, and distinguished by all the characteristics of the most thriving and moral American communities. This colony, planted some twenty years ago in a savage wilderness, remote from other civilized associations, divided from either ocean by vast spaces of desert, was, like the kindred colonies of Massachusetts, of Maryland, and of the Carolinas, the offspring of religious persecution; a persecution which had not then the excuse since alleged, that the marriage institutions of the Mormons are antagonistic to the civilization of the age, for at that time the question of polygamy had not entered into the public discussion of their religious faith, but which was simply an outburst of the blind intolerance which has so often before driven the sincere disciples of a new religious faith from their homes, with the loss of property and good fame, and forced them to seek such asylum as God in his providence opened for their occupation. Three times before had these people founded a community and erected their altars to the Christians' God, whom they worshiped, though with forms somewhat different from those of the various sects which compose the visible church of this nation, yet relying on the Bible as the foundation of their faith; and each time they were pioneers in civilization and the useful arts, and like the pilgrims in Massachusetts, the Catholics in Maryland, and the Huguenots in Carolina, had based their community on the foundations of religion and law, and introduced the habits of industry and the aids of mechanical invention.

The newspaper and the school were indigenous in their settlements. Nor, guided as were their movements by men born on American soil and reared in the fullest devotion to American institutions, and composed as they were in great part, of immigrants escaped from the grinding despotism of European poverty, and inspired by fervent faith in our Government, did they ever fail in their fealty to the Republic nor exist a single hour without the overshadowing presence of the American flag. These are not mere rhetorical figures, but serious statements of fact, for which I personally vouch and which I am prepared incontestably to prove. This people, healthily grown now to the stature of a State, having subdued the hostile forces of nature in a region before considered a desert, and filled the valleys of Utah with fertile farms, with successful manufactories, with workshops, with homes; having built up numerous cities and villages and constructed hundreds of miles of roads and telegraphs; having diffused the mountain streams over the barren plains, till all the fruits and grains of the temperate zone now flourish where only the sagebrush grew before; having established schools for all the children and built up a system of territorial government not inferior in practical excellence to any other in the land; having, as the last and crowning labor, accomplished the

grading of between three and four hundred miles of the great railway whose center rests on Utah, while its extremities reach the older States—this people, with this record, stands arranged as though these acts were crimes and its very existence an offense; and I, as its Representative, find myself compelled to assume an attitude of defense and ask the interposition of the just and reflecting members of this House between the citizens of the Territory of Utah and an act which confessedly threatens its very existence, and seeks again to make those citizens the victims of a persecution which they are justified in believing forever ended.

While I shall indulge in no undue severity of language in opposing a measure which must have its origin either in fanaticism or in motives still less excusable, and while I shall refrain from unkind allusion to the chief sponsor of the bill, notwithstanding his want of personal courtesy and all common fairness in seeking to pass it in the absence of the Delegate representing the people whose interest in the measure is fourfold greater than that of any other constituency—I, whose stake in this issue is so great, must be pardoned for some intensity of feeling when I reflect upon its nature. If, indeed, it were possible, as I hopefully believe it is not, by destroying the autonomy of Utah and partitioning out its settlements among neighboring Territories and States whose capitals are remote and the exercise of whose authority over them must of necessity be feeble—if it were possible to exasperate this people to the point of resistance to law, and thus invite the fearful calamities of civil strife, how infinitely more terrible would be the consequences than on any of the previous occasions when they have been smitten and scattered by the hand of violence. I am reminded of the description given by Colonel Kane, in a lecture delivered before the Historical Society of Philadelphia, of a scene which had been visited by a similar calamity, and I must be excused for quoting his words as a fragment of history full of warning against future dangers.

[Here follows an extract from Colonel Kane's work, which was published in our columns last fall, and with which our readers are doubtless familiar.]

But I trust, sir, that any apprehensions of such evils may not be prophetic. I trust so, because I know the deep seated respect of the Mormons for the forms of law, and because I cannot for a moment believe that while the wounds inflicted in the late national struggle are still unhealed, and while amnesty and conciliation are the watchwords of all parties, and while all men are inspired by a generous emulation to excel in works of charity and forgiveness and to inaugurate a lasting reign of peace; I cannot believe, I say, that under these circumstances a majority of the people's representatives will deliberately so outrage the feelings and violate the rights of the citizens of Utah as to enact against them measures as despotic as those which within our recollection gained for Poland the sympathies and drew down on her oppressors the execration of the whole unprejudiced portion of the civilized world.

I trust, sir, that no member of this House will vote on this bill without a careful examination of its provisions and of the changes which it meditates on the map of the region affected. The boundaries of Utah, as will be seen at a glance, are already those indicated by nature as fitted to divide adjoining States, and its limits are much less than those of any other Territory. Its form is nearly square, and the geographical center is made conformable to the probable centre of population. But this bill so cuts and mangles the Territory as to diminish its size to the point of insignificance and to shear it of its fair proportions and utterly destroy its symmetry. As though in very mockery of the wishes of its inhabitants it is sought to reduce it to a narrow strip of country running north and south, containing only about twenty-two thousand square miles, and even cutting off from its northern frontier all the settle-

ments nearest to the Pacific railroad; thus preventing that great thoroughfare which the citizens of Utah have so ardently longed and which they have so cordially welcomed and have so gladly assisted to build from even touching the Territory within which it is intended to confine them! Are gentlemen afraid to allow a direct contact between their own civilization and that of Utah that they should thus seek to build up artificial boundaries between the two and confine the latter within a Chinese wall of territorial limits? Were the question of Mormonism not involved, or some other appealing equally to special prejudice, I do not hesitate to say that a map thus disfigured with mutilations would not for a moment be contemplated with favor. Will the members of this House allow this prejudice so to overcome their judgment and sense of justice as to blind them to the enormity of the proposed change? I do not believe it.

Moreover to accomplish the end in view the boundaries of three States and four Territories are also to be changed, and one Territory is to be blotted from existence; in fact it is as though a legislative earthquake had prevailed upon the map and so transposed the parts that each could scarcely identify any longer that which formerly belonged to it.

The States of Nebraska and Minnesota, already containing the one sixty thousand square miles and the other fifty thousand square miles, are each to be doubled in size; while Nevada, containing one hundred and eight thousand square miles, is given some twenty-two thousand square miles now belonging to Utah and containing some ten thousand of its people. An even larger amount of its population is to be transferred to Wyoming, a Territory now without local government and nearly destitute of inhabitants except the transient settlers drawn there by the work on the railroad; while a generous slice is appropriated to Colorado, though six hundred miles from its capital and all practical local government. But the authors of the bill hope, it is said, to gain some votes for the measure by reason of this wholesale mutilation, to make which legal the consent of three State Legislatures must be obtained besides that of Congress. By giving to the States of Nevada and Minnesota and Nebraska additional territory it is claimed that the Representatives of those States on this floor will be brought to sustain the bill. This may be so, sir; were those States now small in size I could understand the temptation on the part of their Representatives to plead local interest in extenuation of an act violative of real justice; and particularly in the case of that State which, lying contiguous to Utah, would absorb a large portion of its industrious population to assist in paying the taxes already so onerously bearing on her citizens. But if these gentlemen are at present swayed by an argument of self interest like this it cannot be that they have reflected on the great injustice inflicted on the people thus expatriated; for while Utah, by industry and economy has thus far escaped all territorial indebtedness, the citizens thus forcibly transferred—sold like serfs with the soil they till—would be made responsible for obligations they never incurred, and in fact compelled to pay the debts contracted by their neighbors. Surely no man's sense of right can be so blunted as to permit his approval of a wrong like this.

No; the end sought by this measure is not the promotion of justice nor the benefit of the region affected. It is the destruction of an obnoxious system of religious faith through the temporal ruin of its disciples. That it would result as intended of course I do not believe; for all the persecutions of the Mormons thus far have eventuated in the increase of their prosperity. It is true still, as it ever has been, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. But if it were possible thus to extinguish Mormonism in the United States it could only be done by the expatriation of the entire people. Similar things have been done in other ages and lands, it is true, but at what fearful

cost? A hundred thousand of the citizens of France were destroyed and expelled during the great religious contests of that country in a single century; and the result was the emigration of the best of her scholars and artisans to Holland and Britain and America, and the ingrafting upon the learning and industry of those countries and the rapid growth, under the influence of free institutions of those sciences and useful arts that have contributed so greatly to their glory and prosperity. But can such a thing, in this age of enlightenment, occur in free and tolerant America? Can this Republic institute oppressive measures against her own citizens for the purpose of driving them weeping from her soil? Is it possible that she can be so indifferent to the growth of new States, to the increase of population, to the production of material wealth, as deliberately to wage war on a whole community like that of Utah, which has so triumphantly demonstrated its power of self-support and self-government? I am confident, sir, that this cannot be; and in order that the people of the country and their representatives may not be ignorant of the true character and history of the people against whose prosperity the measure is directed I must be pardoned for a rapid review of their past record and their present condition.

At the early history of the Mormons I shall but glance. Their expulsion from Missouri and from Illinois will in after times constitute one of the darkest, the most painful, and most shameful chapters in American history. Long before a suspicion existed of their practice of polygamy they were driven from State to State by the bigotry and avarice of their neighbors, who impiously coveted their valuable improvements, while their piety could not tolerate a difference in religious faith. I trust there is no such feeling in the land today. And everywhere as this persecuted people in search of freedom of conscience planted colony after colony on the frontiers of civilization did they establish monuments of their industry and intelligence which were the wonder of all beholders. In Missouri they introduced implements of culture and mills for grinding grain and laid the corner-stone, which still remains, of a temple to be reared for the worship of the ever-living God. Their industrial achievements in Illinois are well known; and not even mob violence and the ravages of time and the elements have been able yet to obliterate the evidences of their industry and skill. After the bloody extinction of their hopes in that State they turned their faces again westward, resolved, like the Israelites of old, to dare even the terrors of the unexplored wilderness and the tender mercies of the beasts of prey rather than longer trust to the charity and justice of their fellow-Christians.

With this stern resolve they crossed partially settled Iowa in 1846. Being scantily clad and but poorly provisioned, many perished by the way. The close of the autumn found them encamped upon the banks of the Missouri, in what was then called the Pottawatomie country. Here they wintered, laying out the town now known as Council Bluffs. In the spring of 1847, [the summer of 1846—Ed. D. E. N.] when preparing to send forward their pioneers to seek out a home and a route thereto, the United States Government called upon the Mormons for a battalion of five hundred men to aid in vindicating its honor in the conflict with Mexico. In spite of the sacrifice involved in a compliance with this call there was no hesitation in the response, and the men promptly volunteered. They made the march across the continent under the command of Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, and were honorably discharged in southern California the following year. The congratulatory order of Colonel Cooke is full of the most unqualified testimony to their patriotism, subordination, endurance and general good conduct, and I invite its perusal by all who still credit the injurious calumnies with which we have been assailed: