

## Correspondence.

SALT LAKE CITY,  
January 2nd, 1871.

Editor News:—Yesterday being New Year's Day, I, after attending church as duty required, seated myself with a book in hand, recently written by an eminent English historian on European history; in which I found a few ideas that appeared to me worth noticing. Hence I commit them to paper for publication, if you think them worthy of a place in the News.

The writer, after making several statements of historical facts, draws his own conclusions of the effects on society, which these facts have produced. It was the conclusions which induced me to notice them. For some years past I have been of the opinion that there ought not to be any great gap between the information of the rulers and of the common people; and that accurate information among the people as a body is essential to the well-being and wealth of a nation. To effect this, there ought to be boldness and freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and generally civil liberty. Our legislative department has taken the same view, in that it has left all these matters to be regulated by the common people.

The historian above referred to, expresses his opinion in these words:

"Seeing, therefore, that the efforts of government in favor of civilization are, when most successful, altogether negative; and seeing, too, that when those efforts are more than negative, they become injurious,—it clearly follows, that all speculations must be erroneous, which ascribe the progress of Europe to the wisdom of its rulers. This is an inference which rests not only on the arguments already adduced, but on facts which might be multiplied from every page of history. For no government having recognized its proper limits, the result is, that every government has inflicted on its subjects great injuries; and has done this nearly always with the best intentions. The effects of its protective policy in injuring trade, and what is far worse, in increasing crime, have just been noticed; and to these instances, innumerable others might be added. Thus, during many centuries, every government thought it was its bounden duty to encourage religious truth and discourage religious error. The mischief this has produced is incalculable. Putting aside all other considerations, it is enough to mention its two leading consequences, which are: the increase of hypocrisy, and the increase of perjury. The increase of hypocrisy is the inevitable result of connecting any description of penalty with the profession of particular opinions. Whatever may be the case with individuals, it is certain that the majority of men find an extreme difficulty in long resisting constant temptation. And when the temptation comes to them in the shape of honor and emolument, they are too often ready to profess the dominant opinions, and abandon, not indeed their belief, but the external marks by which that belief is made public. Every man who takes this step is a hypocrite; and every government which encourages this step to be taken, is an abettor of hypocrisy, and a creator of hypocrites. Well, therefore, may we say, that when a government holds out, as a bait, that those who possess certain opinions shall enjoy certain privileges, it plays the part of the tempter of old, and, like the Evil One, basely offers the good things of this world to him who will change his worship and deny his faith. At the same time, and as a part of this system, the increase of perjury has accompanied the increase of hypocrisy. For legislators, plainly seeing that proselytes thus obtained could not be relied upon, have met the danger by the most extraordinary precautions; and, compelling men to confirm their belief by repeated oaths, have thus sought to protect the old creeds against the new converts. It is this suspicion as to the motives of others, which has given rise to oaths of every kind, and in every direction.

In England, even the boy at college is forced to swear about matters which he cannot understand, and which far riper minds are unable to master. If he afterwards goes into Parliament, he must again swear about his religion; and at nearly every stage of political life, he must take fresh oaths; the solemnity of which is often strangely contrasted with the trivial functions to which they are the prelude. A solemn adjuration of the Deity being thus made at every turn, it has happened, as might have been expected, that oaths enjoined as a matter of course, have at length degenerated into a matter of form. What is lightly taken is easily broken. And the best observers of English society,—observers, too, whose characters are very different, and who hold the most opposite opinions,—are all agreed on this, that the perjury habitually practiced in England, and of which government is the immediate creator, is so general, that it has become a source of national corruption, has diminished the value of human testimony, and shaken the confidence which men naturally place in the word of their fellow creatures. The open vice, and, what is much more dangerous, the hidden corruption, thus generated in the midst of society, by the ignorant interference of Christian rulers, is indeed a painful subject; but in one which I could not omit in an analysis of the causes of civilization. It would be easy to push the inquiry still further, and to show how legislators, in every attempt they have made to protect particular interests, and to prevent particular crimes, have not only failed, but have thereby created a new source of corruption, and have thereby shaken the confidence which men naturally place in the word of their fellow creatures. The open vice, and, what is much more dangerous, the hidden corruption, thus generated in the midst of society, by the ignorant interference of Christian rulers, is indeed a painful subject; but in one which I could not omit in an analysis of the causes of civilization. It would be easy to push the inquiry still further, and to show how legislators, in every attempt they have made to protect particular interests, and to prevent particular crimes, have not only failed, but have thereby created a new source of corruption, and have thereby shaken the confidence which men naturally place in the word of their fellow creatures.

Exactly in the same direction, nearly every country has taken steps to prevent usury, and keep down the interest of money; and the inevitable effect has been to increase usury, and the interest of money. For, since no prohibition, however stringent, can destroy the natural relation between demand and supply, it has followed, that when some men want to borrow, and other men want to lend, both parties are sure to find means of evading a law which interferes with their mutual rights. If the two parties were left to adjust their own bargain undisturbed, the usury would depend on the circumstances of the loan; such is the amount of security, and the chance of repayment. But this natural arrangement has been complicated by the interference of government. A certain risk being always incurred by those who disobey the law, the usurer, very properly, refuses to lend his money unless he is also compensated for the danger he is in, from the penalty hanging over him. This compensation can only be made by the borrower, who is thus obliged to pay what in reality is a double interest; one interest for the natural risk on the loan, and another interest for the extra risk from the law. Such, then, is the position in which every European legislature has placed itself. By enactments against usury, it has increased what it wished to destroy; it has passed laws, which the imperative necessities of men compel them to violate; while, to wind up the whole, the penalty for such violations falls on the borrower; that is, on the very class in whose favor the legislators interfered.

In the same meddling spirit, and with the same mistaken notions of protection, the great Christian governments have done other things still more injurious. They have made strenuous and repeated efforts to destroy the liberty of the press, and prevent men from expressing their sentiments on the most important questions in politics and religion. In nearly every country, they, with the aid of the church, have organized a vast system of literary police; the sole object of which is, to abrogate the undoubted right of every citizen to lay his opinions before his fellow-citizens. In the very few countries where they have stopped short of these extreme steps, they have had recourse to others less violent, but equally unwarrantable. For, even where they have not openly forbidden the free dissemination of knowledge, they have done all that they could to check it. On all the implements of knowledge, and on all the means by which it is diffused, such as paper, books, political journals, and the like, they have imposed duties so heavy, that they could hardly have done worse if they had been the sworn advocates of popular ignorance.

Indeed, looking at what they have actually accomplished, it may be emphatically said, that they have taxed the human mind. They have made the very thoughts of men pay toll. Whoever wishes to communicate his ideas to others, and thus do what he can to increase the stock of our common knowledge, must first pour his contributions into the imperial exchequer. That is the penalty inflicted on him for instructing his fellow creatures. That is the black-mail which government extorts from literature; and on the receipt of which it accords its favor, and agrees to abstain from further demands. And what causes all this to be the more insufferable, is the use which is made of these an insular exactions, wrong from every kind of industry, both bodily and mental. It is truly a frightful consideration, that knowledge is to be hindered, and that the proceeds of honest labor, of patient thought, and sometimes of profound genius, are to be diminished, in order that a large part of their scanty earnings may go to swell the pomp of an idle and ignorant court, minister to the caprice of a few powerful individuals, and to often supply them with the means of turning against the people resources which the people called into existence.

of Europe, legislators are the exponents and the servants of the popular will, the progress has, on this account, been more undeviating than elsewhere; there has been neither anarchy nor revolution; and the world has been made familiar with the great truth, that one people is, that its rulers shall have very little power, that they shall exercise that power very sparingly, and that they shall by no means presume to raise themselves into supreme judges of the national interests, or deem themselves authorized to defeat the wishes of those for whose benefit alone they occupy the post entrusted to them.

Yours truly,  
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Other Machines drive their Shuttles, and  
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