

[COMMUNICATED.]

WORDS OF WISDOM?

The habits and methods, the social economics, the industrial drifts, the religious theories and assumptions of society, are all so many topics of consideration for the observer and the student, not as a matter of sentiment alone, but because these carry influence, and he is passive or active to the prevailing spirit. Such an one may note things which to him are not the best, which are inconsistent and injurious perhaps; but his criticism of individuals possesses limits, particularly in this country where each one claims sovereignty and that unrestrained liberty of personality voiced in the vulgar expletives, "I shall do just as I darned please;" "What are you going to do about it?" etc.

Even should habit degenerate into repulsive exhibition, into absolute immorality unreachably by law, interference would most likely be resisted, and family life would have to submit to the example of the drunkard, the profane man, the idler, or the irreligious, content to create its own safeguards and "leave the neighbor to his own sweet will." No can society at large protect itself save by withdrawing its countenance, or barring its gates, even if in doing so a thousand similar peccadilloes are condoned, provided they are secret and do not obtrude themselves on the public gaze. Society itself changes, and the standard of today is suggestive of more restraint than in years ago. The ideal man is not now the one who can drink the most wine, nor are the excesses or immoralities of the young man sheltered as readily as of old, under the plea that he is engaged in "sowing his wild oats," while he may have the "entree" into what are deemed irreproachable circles, all offenses are considered as "under the rose!"

If neither criticism by the individual nor by society is allowable, where is the remedy then for abuses, for violation of the decalogue or other positive standard of right or wrong? Shall we look to the public press as to the censor of personal or community misdoing? Will it stand by the truth and righteousness? Or is it deemed guilty of innovation when it rebukes hypocrisy and sin, and "whips the naked rascal round the world?" Alas, the press itself is honey-combed with venality! Its interests and subsidies favor corruption, save where this is exhibited so flagrantly that lack of comment might convey the impression that it was "a partaker of other men's sins." No, the press is not immaculate. It reflects the best and worst features of society. It covers up party misfeasance; and it claims immunity from libel when exonerating an opponent by an unblushing assumption of interest in truth.

But a condition is possible where all these forces can work harmoniously for individual good, and for the creation of a community ideal, both based upon the observance of good counsel, on an appreciation of law, on a recognition of authority, and of unmistakable interest individually and collectively, as suggested by revelation and sustained by inspirational force in the hearts of all believers. In this aspect

of things, what to the world would be intrusive criticism, here would spring from the thought of interested brotherhood, and comment upon the habits, weaknesses and tendencies of the community could grow from jealous love and regard for its moral, financial or spiritual health, for each component part of the body might be as sensitive to conditions as is the physical to an aching tooth, a crushed toe, or a felon on the finger. The Press of such a people would of necessity be the conservator of every interest, diverse though these might be. It would be a corrector, an educator, an adviser; its spirit of rebuke would not be misunderstood, for it would be the rebuke of a friend, and "without deceit" like "the kisses of an enemy!" Weaknesses, failings and even wrongdoing, while deprecated and uncovered, would be subject to the loving desire for reformation according to an enlarged and intelligent repentance. True society would grow into an unbroken unity, and universal relinquishment of folly, evil or unwisdom, would demonstrate the quality of both seed and soil in the production of what the prophet called "plants of renown;" or there would come the revelation of that assurance from a still higher authority, "every plant that my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up!"

This is the only legitimate "higher criticism," because it works for the salvation of humanity, for the redemption of man, and the consummation of a prophetic condition of society called Zion, where worldly selfishness and personal advantage shall "cut no figure" in private or public life, but laymen and officials of all grades, from understood common interest, shall sanctify by righteousness and justice their position on the earth.

May it be said that these thoughts come from present stringent conditions, and that a rehearsal of present counsel and a portrayal of deviation is unwelcome to the people called Latter-day Saints? This cannot be; "first principles" have a flavor about them which is ever enjoyable, and if this is enhanced by times of anxiety and difficulty, no apologies need be used for their presentation.

The "Word of Wisdom," as originally given to the Saints, was "not by way of constraint or commandment;" in later times it has been reviewed authoritatively as a commandment which very many honor, particularly the young. But the consumption of tea is yet great in Utah; and it we allow that one-third of this importation can be credited to those not in the Church, careful investigation shows that its members use about one hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds per annum, at a cost in round numbers of over forty thousand dollars; while the consumption of coffee on the same average reaches three hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds at a cost of forty-five thousand dollars. Local expenses for tobacco (plug, cut and cigarettes) amounts to over eighty-five thousand dollars; or combining these three articles, the Latter-day Saints of Utah spend no less than one hundred and seventy thousand dollars, or by adding the country north of Salt Lake City, the aggregate is not far from a

quarter of a million dollars annually for three articles deemed non-essential, injurious and forbidden by their religion.

If we were called upon to pay an annual tax of this magnitude, the spirit of rebellion would assert itself in unmeasured terms; but inasmuch as we tax ourselves, we do so complacently and with excuses and apologies which only testify to the fact that we are conscious of our weakness and indulgence at the behest of fashion or custom or habit. We cannot blame the importer or the merchant. Both yield to the law of demand and supply, and many of the latter who sell these articles wish in all good conscience that less and less was sold. They know that the means spent for these would not be hoarded, but something more beneficial would come to the families of this favored Territory.

How would a year's abstinance from these articles do for Israel? If it were spontaneous and universal for twelve short months, how many debts might be paid and obligations wiped away? Would the public health suffer? Would morality, virtue, faith, religion, become of less value or be less active? Nay, would not the community be improved, would not the example of sacrifice have its weight? And if a year's trial proved its value, might not this become a permanent thing in the midst of a really progressive people?

Then if the use of liquor and beer could be dispensed with by members of the Church (for some use them) is it not possible that there would be more strength in other directions? Self-conquest is the mightiest of all victories; and while none would desire to have life short of any of its comforts, even if only traditional ones, is not compensation possible from increased enjoyment of the legitimate and good, and does not this constitute the essential spirit of "Words of Wisdom" given by the fathers who have "fallen asleep," and by their successors in this peculiar way, this extra thoughtful time?

LETTER FROM PALESTINE.

HAIFA, Palestine, July 24, 1893.—In my last letter I gave a brief account of my journey as far as Naples, Italy. I will continue from there in this one.

Naples is a large, fine city, has a number of attractions and places of interest. In looking over my guide-book I was surprised to find that its population was greater than that of Rome, being a little over half a million, while Rome has but 400,000. I was obliged to remain in Naples three days before I could get a ship for Palestine, so I had opportunity to visit the places of note, which I did with some difficulty, not being able to speak one word of Italian. Sunday, May the 14th, I was taken on board the steamship Ophir. This was an English vessel with about a thousand English passengers on their way to Australia. There was a fine orchestra furnished by the boat owners along, who made very nice music for us. A piano and other instruments being on board enabled us to have considerable entertainment in the musical line. One night we had a very good concert which lasted two or three