

TEN DAYS AS THE GUEST OF A LATTER-DAY SAINT.

BY K. A. BURNELL.

When I determined to spend this summer in Christian work in Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California, I assigned a week to this city, but so much is here to be learned, that my tenth day finds me here. My itinerant life the past dozen years has often brought me in contact with Mormons, both singly and in their immense trains, as they have been journeying to these valleys of the mountains. Some of them have impressed me much, as being intensely in earnest, and lead me to believe that important lessons were to be learned if one could get an inside view here. The letters I have read have uniformly made an impression on my mind as being written after a short stay, and that at a hotel and from a very prejudiced standpoint. I prayed much that the door might be opened for me to be one of them, while in this remarkable city and valley. A good Iowa brother warmly commended me to one of his old friends, and when I presented my letter to a brother builder, surrounded with jack-plane and hammer and the sweet odor of pine shavings (how I waked up the past!) I believably prayed like one of old, that I might find favor in his sight, and was soon quartered in his polygamist family. That my opportunities should be the very best, I have sat down by the blacksmith's forge and the tailor's bench, been through the market, stood over the brick makers, smelled the freshness of the mortar as it comes from the plasterer's trowel, chewed pine shavings with the carpenter, and sat down with the small farmer in his family. Gentle and Mormon men have been freely asked my questions. The only billiard saloon-keeper thinks the Saints are no better than others. Governor Durkee spoke kindly of the people, though they of course think there is no demand for his office. The only Gentle effort made religiously is by high church Episcopalians, the attendance at the morning and evening services yesterday numbering each about fifty. The chaplain at the fort is an Episcopalian, as are all the army chaplains that I have met, and while three years' army experience told me somewhat of the difficulties incident to their work, still, if it is a work of love, rather than of profession, I do not see how their influence can be so narrow.

"Bro. Brigham," or "the President," as he is uniformly, very respectfully and often lovingly called, is the man of all men here, the central idea, has a power over 130,000 of this valley as well as an influence abroad, that I believe is unequalled, yea unparalleled in modern times. He has two counselors: the three with the twelve apostles are photographed and hung in every dwelling. The power of President Grant and his Cabinet over the nation does not compare with the unlimited control and dictation of this fifteen over the people. The city has 20 wards, each one having its Bishop, with his two counselors. Each ward has nine blocks, each block contains ten acres and has two teachers, whose monthly duty it is to visit every family, supplying wants temporal and spiritual, and making his reports. The Bishop is the man of his ward. I attended two ward Sunday Schools, held from 10 to 12 a. m., the new Tabernacle services both Sunday afternoons, and a part of the old Tabernacle service yesterday morning, with the evening service at one of the ward churches, and a five and one-half hours' fast day baptismal confirmation and testimony meeting. The latter is held the first day of every month and is a part of the much talked of, and intensely believed Joseph Smith revelation. I stood at the baptismal font last Thursday as ten or twelve were buried beneath the waves, the officiating brother always and very heartily commencing with, "Having authority from Jesus Christ," etc. Some were baptized for their health. Several were boys, which was a service exceedingly interesting. All that were baptized for admission to the church had hands laid on them for the reception of the Holy Ghost. The seven or eight officiating elders all took part, and spoke heartily, naturally and well. I was impressed with their freedom and promptitude. It was as well done as ministers generally do. I think I may say better, because there was a cheerful and most suggestive remove from the cant and sanctimony, that sometimes we see, and that always is so unattractive and often painful. But one little child was presented to "be blessed," similar to our baptism. They make a great deal, yea a very great deal of baptism and laying on of hands. They seem to wish to make of it a saving ordinance.

The testimonies of the nine men and five women in the "testimony meeting," of that day were excellent, in fact I never heard an equal number of experiences or testimonies from people as unlike as they were that were better. Every one spoke with a cheerful, hearty, natural positiveness, and the deep features of the soul as written upon the face, showed how honest they were, and I have no doubt they are taught of God. Of course I gave Gentle testimony from a full soul and it was instructive in the extreme, to hear several in their responding, say, "The strange brother, is doubtless honest, but he needs to take steps further, he needs to be baptized as we understand it. I am continually impressed and reminded of their confidence in Joseph Smith's revelations, and in him as a prophet, with Brigham as his successor, as well as their individual confidences that they are right and that Gentiles are wrong. It is a constant recurrence to the law and the testimony, and when I say I understand that passage differently, then comes another, "Thus saith the Lord." Some features of their church management are grand. Their unity seems complete, and next to the papal power, it is a unity. I have no doubt. Yesterday at the close of the Tabernacle service, sixty names were read of young men who are to go on a mission to settle Bear Lake 100 miles north. This holding themselves in readiness to be sent abroad to preach the gospel if sufficiently experienced, or to settle new regions and build up and sustain the church and kingdom as they understand it, is noble.

(To be continued.)

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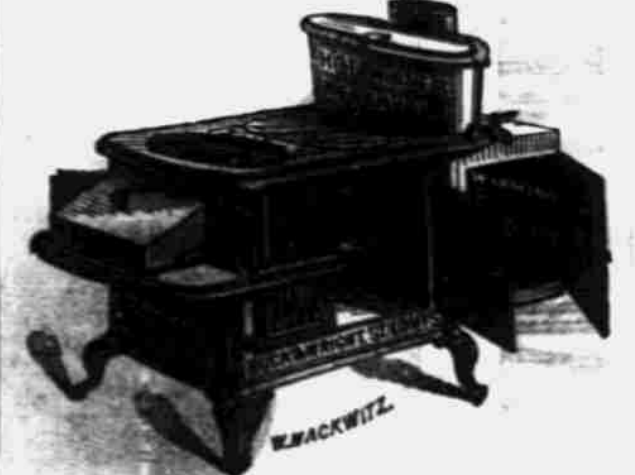
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